

CONCEPT NOTE

IMPACTFUL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT FOR LEADERS LEARNING PROGRAMME Jan. 2022

1. Background

The success of the United Nations depends upon leaders who are adept at not only delivering results but also managing a workforce in an ambiguous and complex environment. Conflict management is a powerful component for effective leadership.

The UNFPA policy on the Prohibition of harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of authority and discrimination calls Managers and supervisors, inter alia, to *“Promote a harmonious working environment and create an atmosphere in which personnel feel free to express concerns about inappropriate behaviors and to use, without fear of reprisal, all recourse mechanisms and services available to them”* and to *“Monitor their work units for conduct that may be in violation of this policy, respond promptly to allegations, take them seriously, and ensure that the necessary actions for which they are responsible are taken”*.

Constructive conflict and a healthy confrontation of ideas and perspectives are a necessary ingredient to organisational improvement and innovation, and a sign of a healthy speak up culture. However, at times, workplaces are caught in debilitating conflicts that escalate due to lack of leadership intervention. Leaders don't feel adequately equipped to bring resolution nor to build consensus and choose to ignore the conflict all together. This has a great impact on organisational efficiency, psychological safety, workplace culture and employee mental health.

In this context, the OED PSEAH unit has partnered with the Office of the Ombudsman for United Nations Funds and Programmes to launch a new programme “Impactful Conflict Management for Leaders”.

The programme was piloted by OED in cooperation with the Office of the Ombudsman in 2021 with a group comprising DED-Management, Chief of Staff and members of the Integrity family (Ethics, Change management, DHR, Legal, OAS, PSEAH).

2. Target audience

The programme is directed at regional, country and liaison offices Representatives, Deputy representatives, Assistant representatives, and HQ Directors, deputy Directors and Chiefs (213 individuals overall).

3. Programme objectives and content

Purpose

The overall purpose of the programme is to empower managers in managing conflicts and making early interventions to conflicts, by developing their conflict resolution skills and equipping them with tools to effectively handle workplace issues.

Programme components and objectives

The programme comprises 3 online modules. Before each module, participants are invited to complete a number of recommended or mandatory prerequisites (reading or completion of online courses).

Content	Pre-requisites	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Module 1: Conflict management, including the victim-centred approach 	<p><i>Recommended</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online Course: Conflict management in the UN Workplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop understanding about conflict and communication in the workplace Expand awareness of one’s own tendency in dealing conflict Learn problem-solving approaches to resolving workplace conflict constructively
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Module 2: Mediation Skills - Key Principles and Techniques 	<p><i>Mandatory</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online Course: Mediation as an Effective Way of Resolving Disputes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn how mediation can be a valuable tool when solving workplace conflicts Learn about fundamental techniques mediators use Reflect on how to apply these techniques to their work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Module 3: Psychological Safety in Teams 	<p><i>Recommended</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online Course: Challenging Conversations – part 1 and 2 Reading: Psychological Safety and Learning Behaviour in Work Teams; High-Performing Teams Need Psychological Safety. Here’s How to Create It 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the importance of psychological safety in teams as the belief that members of a team can take risks such as speaking up, admitting mistakes, sharing ideas, or disagreeing Identify psychological safety as a key component to performance and a trigger for learning behaviour Learn how to measure and improve psychological safety in teams

Learning modalities

A learning site dedicated to the programme will be created on the UNFPA Moodle learning management system. The learning site will include the learning modules, documentary and video resources, recording of online sessions, as well as a discussion board allowing for interactive discussions amongst participants.

Some prerequisite online courses will be taken on Taleo to automatically track completion.

4. Evaluation and sustainability

The PSEA Unit will engage with DHR to discuss whether the programme will become a formal DHR certified training and will liaise with the change management team to discuss how the programme’s impact could be measured using indicators developed as part of the “Civility in the workplace” change

management initiative.

The programme evaluation will be conducted at 3 levels:

- Post-training feedback survey
- General feedback from managers reporting an improvement in their ability to handle workplace issues.
- Positive overall institutional perception from staff established through in-house staff surveys on overall culture change.

5. Roll-out plan

Participants have been grouped by regions to facilitate the organisation of sessions by time zones.

11 groups have been formed, corresponding to the organisation of 33 sessions overall. Each group comprises a maximum of 24 participants, as recommended by the Office of the Ombudsman.

It is proposed to start with the 33 senior managers from HQ. Participants will attend 1 module a week over 3 weeks.

The breakdown proposed is the following:

Regions	Grouping	Tentative Calendar
HQ (33)	2 Groups	<i>March 2022</i>
APR (40)	2 Groups	<i>TBD</i>
ECAR (15) / Arab States (20)	2 Groups	<i>TBD</i>
ESAR (46)	2 Groups	<i>TBD</i>
LACR (24)	1 Group	<i>TBD</i>
WCAR (35)	2 Groups	<i>TBD</i>
TOTAL: 213 PARTICIPANTS	11 GROUPS	

6. Communication

- January: An announcement presenting the programme will be communicated to all senior managers. The programme will also be presented in a DHR town hall.
- February: HQ senior managers will be invited to enrol in one of the 2 sessions offered for each module.