



## Ending Violence against Women: Prevention and response in the world of work

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development affirmed the centrality of gender equality and the empowerment of women to the achievement of sustainable development, with the elimination of violence against women as a crucial component. The elimination of all forms of violence against women, as a target area (Sustainable Development Goal 5.2) is included under Goal 5, “to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”, and is crucial for the achievement of Goal 8 “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”, and it must be achieved within the deadlines set in the 2030 Agenda.

That inclusion confirms that such violence is not only a barrier to gender equality, women’s empowerment and overall sustainable development, but it is also an impediment to the achievement of other Goals, including on poverty eradication, just and peaceful societies, or decent work and economic growth. As such, addressing violence against women should constitute a priority in policies and programmes aimed at the achievement of the other Goals. Principles of universality and human rights infuse the Sustainable Development Goals and commit that all women, regardless of their location, situation or circumstances, are entitled fully to enjoy their human rights and to lives free from violence.

Violence and harassment against women, including, but not limited to, sexual assault, sexual harassment, bullying, stalking, trafficking and family violence, has long affected women’s lives. Whether this occurs within the world of work – in a broad sense, ranging from the physical place of work to commuting, to participation in work-related events - or outside of it, the detrimental effects of violence and harassment on women and on their work environment are substantial. Violence and harassment that occur in other spheres, such as the home, can spill over into the workplace, and can be counted in lost lives, lost productivity and reduced earning power. In addition, violence in the wider society can serve as a barrier to labour market participation of women. Women who do overcome these barriers, thereby challenging negative gender norms and power relations, can face greater violence and harassment as a result.



Experts worldwide increasingly acknowledge the cost of violence and harassment against women on workers and employers alike. These costs include increased absenteeism, high turn-over, increased sick leave, loss of competitiveness and harm to an enterprise's reputation. At a macro level, violence against women also results in greater economic and social inequalities worldwide, disrupts economic empowerment of women and entrenches negative stereotypes against women. Along with this awareness of costs comes the recognition that decent work and violence are incompatible, and that proactive strategies are needed to reduce the effects of violence and harassment on workers' health and wellbeing and its economic impact on enterprises.

The world of work can play a critical role in addressing and preventing violence against women and girls because workplaces are contexts through which social norms are shaped and can be changed. For example, the workplace provides a privileged entry point through which to reach vulnerable or isolated groups, including women who have limited contact with community networks and other organisations, and it can serve as a nexus for services in the community. However, the workplace is not merely a context in which referrals are made or interventions carried out by outside actors. Workers and employers themselves are actively addressing and preventing violence and harassment through workplace policies, programmes and collective bargaining agreements. Positive values of respect and equality fostered by these world-of-work actors can influence those of the greater society, helping to overcome gendered stereotypes and shift negative power relations.

### **CSW 61 Side-event**

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has begun an historic standard-setting process on "Violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work", the first discussion of which will take place at its International Labour Conference in June 2018. This discussion of a possible new Convention and Recommendation on violence and harassment takes place at a time when a range of researchers, decision makers and activists are increasingly understanding the importance of the world of work as a context to develop and implement strategies to prevent and to respond to violence and harassment against women, regardless of whether this occurs at work or elsewhere.

The 2016 UN Secretary General's report on "Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls" has noted the significantly negative impact of violence on "women exercising their economic rights, including through their access to employment", placing the question of violence at the centre of next year's CSW priority theme: "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work".

Building on their ongoing collaboration on gender-equality and women's empowerment in the workplace, UN Women and the ILO are organizing a CSW side-event, bringing together experts, Member States, representatives of employers and trade unions and civil society. The event will provide an overview of the latest research, policy developments and good practices on preventing and addressing violence and harassment against women in and through the world of work. This event should also contribute to highlighting key trends and challenges, as well as opportunities to step up efforts for preventing and eliminating all forms of violence and harassment in the world of work.

The CSW side-event will aim at contributing to:

- Raising awareness of key stakeholders of the latest research and legal and policy developments as well as of evidence of what works for preventing violence and harassment in the world of work, particularly related to improving decent work for women; and the role that the world of work can play to prevent violence against women occurring in other contexts;
- Raising awareness of key stakeholders of the latest research and legal and policy developments as well as of evidence of what works for responding to violence and harassment in the world of work, particularly related to improving decent work for women; and the role that the world of work can play to respond to violence against women occurring in other contexts;
- Informing the possible development of a Toolkit for practitioners on the prevention of violence and harassment against women in the world of work; and
- Providing inputs for the ILO's standard-setting discussion on (an) international instrument(s) on "Violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work".

### **Content of the event**

**The CSW side-event is planned for Thursday 16 March 2017, Conference Room 2, 1:15 to 2:30pm.**

The format of the event will be confirmed as speakers are identified, but it is expected that it will include opening remarks from UN Women and ILO, followed by a panel discussion, with speakers representing all key stakeholders (Governments, employers, workers, unions, civil society, academia and others as relevant). The selection of the moderator and list of panellist are under finalization.

The event will be open to CSW delegates, to all individuals with access to UNHQ and to guests with invitations.