Netherlands Enterprise Agency

Violence @ work

A guide for SMEs to prevent violence in the workplace

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Contents

Introduction

Do you know whether employees in your company and in your subsidiaries, joint ventures, factories or farms feel safe at work? Are your company staff aware of their rights? Are the managers conscious of the impact of an unsafe environment on employees' absence and illness rates? Violence – one of the most hidden forms of human rights abuse – is a prevalent and significant risk in the workplace. Violence in the workplace can occur in all companies, including your company or supply chain.

Companies are expected to identify, address and prevent the risk of adverse impacts on human rights linked to their business activities. Locally and internationally, there are many different guidelines which regulate labour conditions and human rights. Governments worldwide use several different global frameworks and instruments, the most prevalent of which are the OECD Guidelines for multinational companies. These guidelines are based on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs).

The actions of companies and their suppliers are increasingly scrutinised. Your customers and employees, as well as governments, employer representatives, unions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) expect businesses to respect human rights and adhere to responsible codes of conduct. Respecting human rights in your company will have a positive effect on its reputation and will increase productivity. For this reason, it makes economic sense to take human rights into account. Entrepreneurs increasingly want to do business in a meaningful and ethical way; they want to ensure that they are contributing to a sustainable economy and society, in line with international agreements on the responsibilities of companies in areas such as environmental protection, anti-corruption efforts, and human and labour rights.

This guide aims to support your business in preventing and eliminating violence. It informs you about characteristics of violence in the workplace, as well as its causes and effects. The guide provides tips to tackle and discourage violence at work in an effective way. By sharing workplace initiatives of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), brands, unions and other key players, this guide illustrates how your company can contribute to the elimination of violence at work. It helps you to get started on creating a positive working environment where violence will not be tolerated.

2. WHAT is violence at work?

This chapter briefly sums up some common definitions to give you a better understanding of violence in the world of work.

Violence at work
Most people associate violence at work with physical assault. However, violence at work encompasses much more and can be of a physical, psychological and sexual nature[1]. It is any act in which a person is abused, threatened, intimidated or assaulted while at work. This concerns any behaviour that embarrasses, umiliates, intimidates, annoys and/or alarms people. It may be based on race, gender, culture, age, sexual orientation, language, HIV status and/or religious preference. The perpetrators do not need to have a deliberate intent to hurt the victim; what is important is whether the behaviour is perceived as unwanted. It is the person who is violated who determines the seriousness of the act.

World of work
The world of work includes all locations where employment-related business is conducted as a result of employment responsibilities: a factory, an office, a farm, any off-site business-related locations (during travel, meetings and events), as well as public transport used for commuting.

It also covers informal employment, such as selling products in the street, and artisanal production or piecework in the home. Communication for work via electronic media is also included. The world of work is a broad and all-encompassing concept.
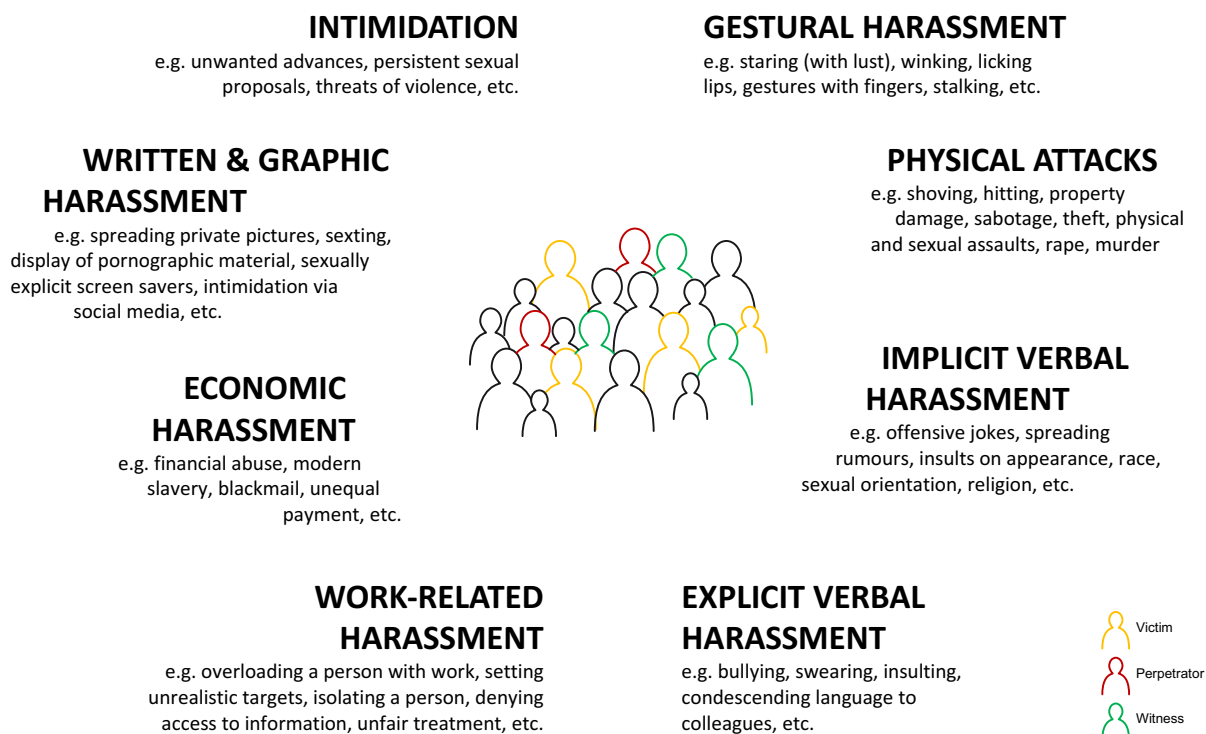
Violence can have an internal and an external origin:
- Internal violence comes from colleagues, managers/directors and supervisors.
- External violence is perpetrated by, for example, customers, patients, students or members of the public.

Your company will have to address violence within this broad scope of the world of work.

Forms of harassment and violence
There are no clear and objective grades to measure the impact of violence on the victim, team or company. This impact depends on the frequency and intensity of the violence, as well as on the character of the victim, historical trends, the local culture, and so on. The graph below shows different forms of violence.

INTIMIDATION
e.g. unwanted advances, persistent sexual proposals, threats of violence, etc.

GESTURAL HARASSMENT
e.g. staring (with lust), winking, licking lips, gestures with fingers, stalking, etc.

WRITTEN & GRAPHIC HARASSMENT
e.g. spreading private pictures, sexting, display of pornographic material, sexually explicit screen savers, intimidation via social media, etc.

PHYSICAL ATTACKS
e.g. shoving, hitting, property damage, sabotage, theft, physical and sexual assaults, rape, murder

ECONOMIC HARASSMENT
e.g. financial abuse, modern slavery, blackmail, unequal payment, etc.

IMPLICIT VERBAL HARASSMENT
e.g. offensive jokes, spreading rumours, insults on appearance, race, sexual orientation, religion, etc.

WORK-RELATED HARASSMENT
e.g. overloading a person with work, setting unrealistic targets, isolating a person, denying access to information, unfair treatment, etc.

EXPLICIT VERBAL HARASSMENT
e.g. bullying, swearing, insulting, condescending language to colleagues, etc.

Victim
Perpetrator
Witness

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[1] Adriana Cruz and Sabine Klinger 2011. Gender-based Violence in the World of Work: Overview and Selected Annotated Bibliography. ILO; Background paper for discussion at the meeting of experts on violence against women and men in the world of work (3–6 October 2016). ILO.
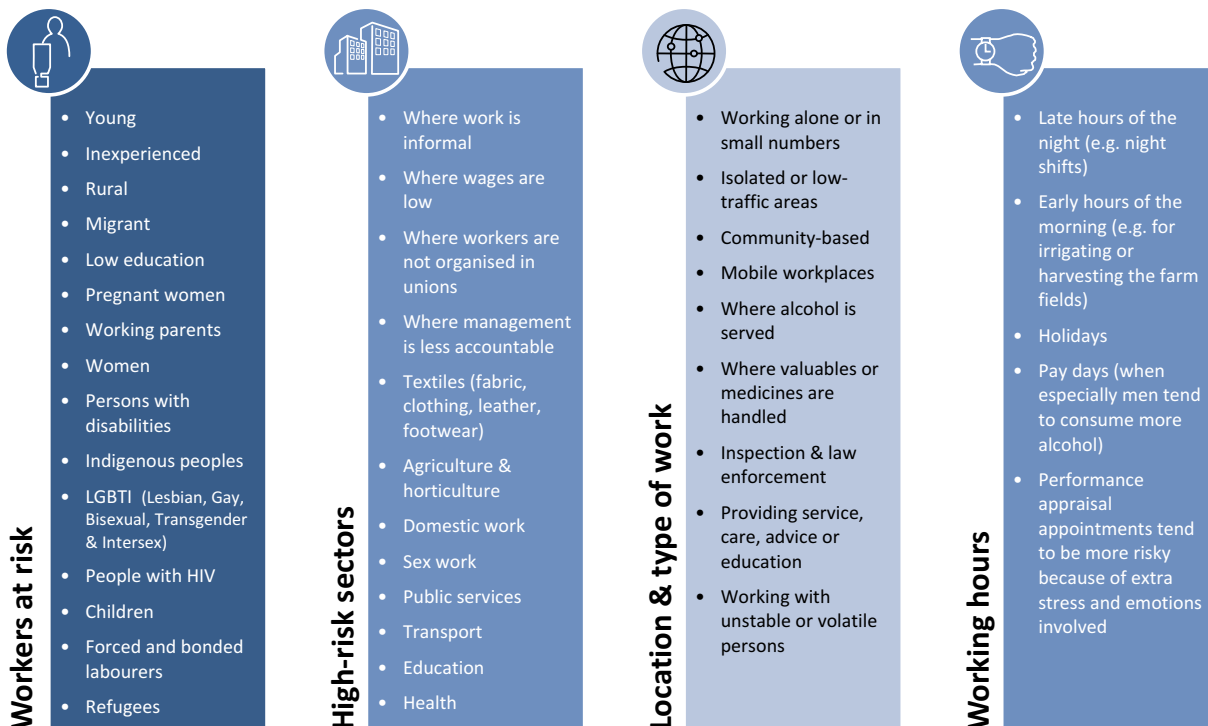
Factors that increase the risk of violence at work

Under the influence of globalisation, the supply chains of industries have become increasingly diffuse, complex and fragmented. Companies no longer have a clear and direct relationship with the people who make their goods, especially when the products come from multiple suppliers. As a company, you have influence and a responsibility within your own organisation, its overseas departments and primary suppliers, upstream and downstream. Requesting unrealistic targets and delivery times, for example, will put downward pressure on payment and working conditions in your supply chains. This will result in further outsourcing of production, unstable work contracts, long working hours and tension in the workplace. This tension often leads to abusive and violent behaviour of supervisors and managers, who shout at their workforce in an effort to speed up production. For them, verbal abuse is also a way to cope with the stress of meeting demanding targets.

Other factors that contribute to violence are, for example, low levels of unionisation, a lack of institutional procedures for grievances and complaints, and the inherent difficulties in monitoring violations of employees' rights[2].

To address and prevent violence, you have to be aware of the risks. The following figure presents the main work-related factors that increase the risk of violence at work.

Both men and women can become victims of violence. However, most of the victims of interpersonal violence are women. Men are predominantly the perpetrators of violent crimes, even in cases where other men are the victims. At least one in three women around the world is estimated to be forced into sex, physically beaten and/or is otherwise abused in her lifetime. According to a report by FNV and Sisters for Change (2016), one in fourteen women employed in India's textiles sector has experienced physical violence in the workplace; one in seven has been raped or forced to commit sexual acts.

Workers at risk	High-risk sectors	Location & type of work	Working hours
• Young	• Where work is informal	• Working alone or in small numbers	• Late hours of the night (e.g. night shifts)
• Inexperienced	• Where wages are low	• Isolated or low-traffic areas	• Early hours of the morning (e.g. for irrigating or harvesting the farm fields)
• Rural	• Where workers are not organised in unions	• Community-based	• Holidays
• Migrant	• Where management is less accountable	• Mobile workplaces	• Pay days (when especially men tend to consume more alcohol)
• Low education	• Textiles (fabric, clothing, leather, footwear)	• Where alcohol is served	• Performance appraisal appointments tend to be more risky because of extra stress and emotions involved
• Pregnant women	• Agriculture & horticulture	• Where valuables or medicines are handled	
• Working parents	• Domestic work	• Inspection & law enforcement	
• Women	• Sex work	• Providing service, care, advice or education	
• Persons with disabilities	• Public services	• Working with unstable or volatile persons	
• Indigenous peoples	• Transport		
• LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Intersex)	• Education		
• People with HIV	• Health		
• Children			
• Forced and bonded labourers			
• Refugees			

[2] Jo Morris and Jane Pillinger 2016. Gender–based Violence in Global Supply Chains: Resource Kit. ITCILO and Fair Wear Foundation: p. 52.

Main barriers to addressing violence at work

Why is it so difficult to prevent violence? Understanding this problem will help you craft strategies to address and prevent violence.

Social norms

When working abroad, your company is faced with societies elsewhere that have their own set of social norms and values considered acceptable to this group or society[3]. There are many norms related to the types of work done by women and by men; for example about women's mobility outside the home; about the value of women's work and men's work; and about the justification for violence against women, LGBTI, indigenous groups. In addition, these norms are often integrated to such an extent that in some cultures the discriminated groups themselves believe that they are inferior and deserve to be abused. A culture of accepting violence – sometimes not by formal law and regulations but by cultural habits – brings to pass that neither men nor women inform others of the negative experiences that they have endured or are enduring. Other cultural customs that may increase the risk of violence in the workplace include the "normalisation of violent behaviour", the lower social status of employees and the practice of treating them in an aggressive manner, and the "customary rules of hierarchy and exhibiting power as the boss of a production site".

Lack of law and regulations and awareness of rights

Many employees lack awareness of labour laws (if these laws exist!)[4] that combat harassment in the workplace. Often, if they register a complaint, they are punished or discriminated against; some are dismissed or receive a negative appraisal, while others are blacklisted or harassed. Because they lack awareness of their rights, victims often do not know what steps to take (especially those who are illiterate). This situation not only exists in developing countries; it is still an issue in many European countries. In Germany, 50% of those experiencing harassment either did not know where to report incidents, or did not report these for fear of losing their jobs[5].

Migrant farm workers in the United States (US)

Hundreds of thousands of migrant workers (men, women and young girls, especially from indigenous peoples) in the US work in fields, packing houses and other agricultural workplaces, where they face a significant risk of various forms of violence. The exact prevalence of such violence among farm workers is difficult to determine, since the sector is characterised by a high amount of seasonal, migrant and often illegal population.

Human Rights Watch identified sexual violence and harassment as an important concern in the agricultural workplace, fostered by a severe imbalance of power between employers and supervisors on the one side and their low-wage, immigrant workers on the other. "Victims frequently face systemic barriers – exacerbated by their status as farm workers and often as unauthorised workers – to reporting these abuses and bringing perpetrators to justice."

The farm workers often do not speak English well enough to understand their rights or to defend themselves in case of abuse. Frequently, they also depend on their employers for housing and transport, which makes them particularly vulnerable. Farm workers who do push back against the abuse, or who report incidents to management, say that "they suffer retaliation, getting fewer hours, more abusive treatment, or, worst of all, losing their jobs altogether". They receive threats from the perpetrators (often foremen, supervisors, farm labour contractors or company owners) to call immigration services or fire them as well as their entire household.

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[3] United Nations High Level Panel (UNHLP) 2016. Leave No One Behind. A Call to Action for Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment.

[4] Although the majority of governments now prohibit violence against women consistent with their international obligations, 46 economies do not legislate against domestic violence, 41 do not legislate against sexual harassment and 59 do not legislate against sexual harassment in employment. In the Middle East and North Africa, about four in five countries lack legislation on domestic violence and sexual harassment in employment (UNHLP 2016: 44).

[5] In European countries, health-care employees, social services employees, teachers, municipal housing inspectors, hotel and restaurant employees, and commerce and transport employees are often mentioned as the ones running the highest risk (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work - European Risk Observatory Report). Employees that work in places where they handle money, valuables or prescription drugs (e.g. cashiers and pharmacists) are in particular more vulnerable. In the Netherlands, violence against emergency staff increased dramatically in the past few years: 75% of health-care employees had to deal with violence, 73% of police officers, 44% of fire officers and 75% of hospital staff (source: SIRE 2011). More than 25% of the workforce in the Netherlands has been bullied at least once by co-workers or managers. In Germany, according to the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (2015), half of the people interviewed had experienced some form of harassment.

Lack of reporting

In general, there is a lack of reporting and evidence, which may give you the feeling that problems do not occur. Victims of violence are reluctant to report abuse, out of fear of retribution or under threat of their reputation, position, job security and payment[6]. They feel shame, doubt their self-worth and blame themselves for what happened[7]. For LGBTI employees especially, the existing stigma and hostile environment related to their sexual orientation further discourages victims from reporting. Similarly, for indigenous communities such as the Mexican workers in the US, harassment is an extremely sensitive topic to discuss openly. "Indigenous peoples typically have experienced discrimination in their home countries; they distrust governments and authorities even more than other unauthorised workers"[8].

Violence in the maquiladoras in Mexico[9]

Violence and discrimination is an endemic problem in assembly plants (maquiladoras) throughout Central America. In Mexico, many young women (between 16-24 years old) migrate from rural areas to maquiladoras, hoping to find a better life. More than 4,500 maquiladoras employ some 1.3 million employees; 75% of them are young women. Factory work can offer women an avenue to escape poverty. Being far from home in isolated places, however, employees run enormous risks. Poverty is the defining feature of life for those working in and living around the maquiladoras.

The working conditions are tough; the intensity of international competition puts pressure on factories to reduce costs and increase productivity. This situation leads to low salaries, withholding of wages, unsafe and illegal working conditions, unstable job contracts, excessive working hours and illegal restrictions on the freedom of association.

Violations against health and safety regulations, as well as pregnancy-related discrimination (e.g. the obligation to undergo a pregnancy test when applying for a job) are normal working conditions for women in the maquiladoras. Situations occur where women choose to wear diapers because of restrictions on toilet visits. In addition, temperatures can often exceed 30 degrees Celsius. The risk of infections and medical complications particularly apply to pregnant and menstruating women. Sexual harassment and assault are a serious societal problem; 46% of women employed in the formal economy suffer from some type of sexual harassment. To make things worse, employees have little awareness of their rights. One employee said that she thought that being sexually harassed both by her supervisors and by her peers was "just part of being a female working at the maquila". Finally, transport is often unsafe, so that hundreds of women working in maquiladoras have been murdered on their way home from work.

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[6] Source: a study of violence in the workplace performed by CNV International in four countries across four continents.

[7] A 2011 Washington Post-ABC News poll in the US found that one in four women and one in ten men had experienced workplace sexual harassment; only 41% of women who had experienced harassment said that they had reported it to their employers.

[8] Source: Human Rights Watch.

[9] Source: Verité 2009; Jo Morris and Jane Pillinger 2016: p. 38; Human Rights Watch 2012.

3. WHY should you prevent violence at work?

Violence in the world of work is a human rights violation. It is a threat to the dignity, security, health and well-being of everyone involved. Abuses of human rights have an impact on employees and employers, their families, communities, economies and society as a whole, while also harming the reputation of your company.

Cost of violence against women

A 2014 KPMG report estimates that the cost of gender-based violence (in general) in South Africa includes "health, justice and other service costs, lost earnings, lost revenues, lost taxes and second-generation costs, which are the cost of children witnessing and living with violence, such as increased juvenile and adult crime." Although these numbers do not refer to violence in the workplace in particular, it is clear that the cost of violence for society is high.

The private sector has a responsibility to provide decent work. Investing in the protection of human rights in your business and in your own supply chain reduces the risks to your business and builds a strong business case, particularly for the following reasons[10]:

- **Your company's brand image and reputation**
  A poor public image caused by violence in the workplace influences consumers' buying habits and erodes your relationship with other stakeholders. Bad publicity has negative consequences for business continuity and contributes to difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. More than ever before, companies are being challenged to ensure credible and coherent communication with a wider range of stakeholders. This requirement is enhanced by technological developments that facilitate access to information. As brand reputation is important for all companies, it is imperative seriously to invest in due diligence in order to assume your responsibility to protect human rights, which includes preventing violence in the workplace.

- **Reduced costs**
  In addition to physical and emotional harm caused by violence, there are direct financial costs to your company resulting from victims' illness and absenteeism[11],

high employee turnover, workplace accidents, disability or even death, and the costs of recruiting new staff. Indirect costs include the victims' decreased functionality and performance (e.g. lower productivity), quality of work and timely production. Violence at work can also include the destruction of property. Court cases or compensation orders related to harassment and violence can divert and drain an enterprise's budget, and can lead to higher insurance premiums. If cases are lost or settlements arranged, there can be major direct financial implications.

- **Lower turnover of employees**
  Employees, supervisors and managers with a high workplace satisfaction have fewer workplace conflicts and tensions. This satisfaction also reduces the frequency of absenteeism and of employees leaving the company permanently. Companies committed to ensuring a safe and happy workplace have higher staff loyalty, motivated employees, decreased absenteeism and a higher quality of work, all of which improve the supply and value of your products.

"According to research by TNO, harassment by supervisors and colleagues in the Netherlands resulted in an estimated additional average of seven days of absenteeism per victim."[14]

- **Increased business productivity, profitability and innovation**
  A safe workplace leads to a lower employee turnover and absenteeism, and contributes to a higher productivity. This situation may positively influence your profitability. It also has an impact on the openness and creativity in the workplace, nurturing innovation and knowledge building.

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[10] Adriana Cruz and Sabine Klinger 2011; Jo Morris and Jane Pillinger 2016: pp. 70-71. ILO and IFC 2016. Better Work.

[11] The health effects of violence at work can present themselves in various forms: stress, anxiety, sleep disturbances, incapacity to work, pain attacks, depression, physical emotions, headaches, stomach cramps and social isolation.

[12] Source: Factsheet pesten, intimidatie en discriminatie op het werk

4. HOW can you act to prevent and eliminate violence at work?

Your company has the responsibility to prevent violence and address this human rights risks. How can you create such an environment where violence is not tolerated?
Adequately dealing with violence requires that you take measures across two dimensions: taking the right steps and considering the right domains. These two dimensions are presented in the table 1. The concrete measures that you should consider are pointed out at the intersection of these two dimensions.

You are recommended to take the following steps:
- **PREVENT** violence from happening.
- **BE ALERT** to signs of violence, adequately and timely, if it unfortunately occurs.
- **ACT** appropriately to help the victims and restrain, punish and rehabilitate the perpetrators.
- **MONITOR** your daily adherence to your own policy and **LEARN** from previous incidents, in order to continuously improve your anti-violence strategies.

In each of these steps, you must consider the following five domains:

1. Policy & governance
The starting point to prevent and eliminate violence, to address it when it occurs and to safeguard your business interests is a clear, unequivocal and practicable written policy, including a firm statement by your management. This policy should guide the companies in your subsidiaries and first suppliers on how to prevent, be alert, act, and monitor and learn. In addition, it should be applicable to management, employees, clients and anyone who may have a relationship with the company.

This policy should be in line with local law. For this reason, it is highly recommended to consult with local lawyers and other local experts, specialised networks, industry associations and embassies in order to gain a better understanding of the local contexts and the main risks for your company. Based on your risk assessment, you will be able to define your sphere of influence and decide how to mitigate these risks.

Your policy (code of conducts, contract or corporate social responsibility strategy) needs to be clear on:
- the definitions of what you mean by "violence in the workplace" – this includes which behaviours (e.g., violence, intimidation, bullying, harassment, and so on) the management considers inappropriate and unacceptable in the workplace, and what compliance with local law and international standards implies.

These definitions should be written in concrete, understandable language, and be translated and easily accessible to all employees;
- your commitment to provide trainings and the establishment of anti-harassment committees;
- the importance of being alert and reporting incidents;
- what to do when incidents occur (including mechanisms for responding to cases of harassment/violence, the disciplinary actions and sanctions required, the guidance provided on handling complaints, and contact points for reporting any incidents);
- the roles and responsibilities of managers, staff and suppliers;
- the consequences of violent acts, including the commitment to provide support services to victims (developing procedures for resolving complaints, establishing a confidential counsellor to assist employees who seek help, assuring that no reprisals will be taken against employees who report violence).

JJH Textiles : Zero-tolerance policy and women in management

The Dutch company JJH Textiles has a textile factory in Bangladesh and an ecological dyeing factory in India. What do the directors do specifically to combat violence and discrimination in the workplace? "We consciously intend to turn our textile factory in Bangladesh into a 99% female-driven company within three years. Women who show that they want to grow further are given opportunities. As long as there is a lack of qualified female executives being trained, the company will continue to work with male executives. We are, however, adamant that sexual harassment will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Already at enlistment, we are clear about this policy by including a clause in the contract that sexual harassment or violence will result in dismissal on the spot. It is no exception that supervisors expect sexual favours from their subordinates, as was the case with a sales manager who – with obvious intentions – told a young girl that she had to work at night. The perpetrator denied, but there was no doubt about the matter as the girl had recorded the conversation on her phone.
More than half a dozen male executives have been fired in recent years for that reason. In the case of dismissal on grounds of abuse, the staff is called together to disclose the reason why the offender is dismissed. The security personnel are also trained to act against aggressive behaviour in the workplace."

You should consider including provisions in your policy that you will recruit women into higher positions. Studies show that increasing diversity, by including more women in management and executive roles and herewith introducing leadership behaviours that are critical to company performance, creates a working environment which promotes innovation, helps employees to connect with one another and builds a supportive atmosphere (see McKinsey & Company on the gender gap and the case for greater diversity in the workplace).

Furthermore, one selection criterion for management positions could be, for example, a demonstrable understanding of the prevention and elimination of violence.
For the employees in your company, it is important to provide space for their right to freedom of association. In addition, you can consider the introduction of anti-harassment committees, dispute settlement bodies and/or confidential helplines for employees. Also think of appointing an internal female confidante - someone whom employees feel that they can trust and talk to easily. This person may be the cleaner or another fellow employee. Often, victims feel more comfortable to speak with such a person rather than with their supervisor (especially women are much more likely to report cases of sexual abuse or violence if the confidante is a woman).

To make sure that you constantly improve your policy and governance structure, have a plan for monitoring, learning and evaluating in place.

2. Awareness

Invest in good communication! Do not reduce your policy to a paper exercise. Ensure that ALL your employees and suppliers understand and are fully aware of your company policies and procedures, their rights and obligations, how to prevent risks themselves (e.g. do not enter any location where your feel threatened or use a buddy system), and the importance of having a workers' committee and of monitoring incidents.

Managers who are aware of the negative business impact of violence on such aspects as productivity, retention rates and the quality of production will be more supportive of the implementation of your policy.

Victims often do not know their rights

Sorayda Liliana Gonzalez (48) from Guatemala was once a victim of violence. She is convinced that education is important to raise awareness of sexual intimidation in the workplace. "You need an environment in which there is room for discussion about it. Victims of sexual violence at work are often not aware of their rights, and lack the knowledge and the means to make their voices heard."

3. Competences

Being aware of violence is a crucial preliminary step; however, this awareness does not automatically mean that managers, supervisors or employees feel as though they have the necessary skills to address situations of violence. Your managers and supervisors have the responsibility to ensure that the workplace is safe and free from violence. They must contribute to a culture of respect and trust, which requires a deep and nuanced understanding of violence in the workplace as well as the conviction that they have the capacity to act.

Training can strengthen the managers' ability to improve their communication skills, handle unrealistic targets imposed and cope with workloads, work pressure and production targets. Critical reflection among middle managers and line supervisors is of importance, as is a dialogue with employees. Training managers/supervisors in motivational techniques to encourage employees and increase productivity can lead to improved efficiency, productivity, performance and retention of employees. It is also important to capacitate your management staff in addressing incidents when they occur: what to investigate, how to document reports and how to minimise the harm suffered by the victim.

Training the managers and employees to set up anti-harassment committees (run by the employees themselves) or to organise themselves could be established in collaboration with local NGOs and/or unions. In workplaces with hundreds of employees, peer-to-peer training has proven to be an effective mode of teaching. Where violence against women is prevalent, you should also invest in engaging men as role models to lead conversations with other men about interpersonal violence and its root causes.

4. Processes

In order to implement your policy, it is important to develop clear and written processes that outline the steps necessary to prevent, actively raise awareness, report, act, monitor and learn. This implementation starts with a fair and transparent system and process for recruitment, promotion, contracting and payment of salaries. It also entails providing clarity on the steps to take as a victim, as well as ensuring a correct follow-up on complaints and their consequences for the victim and the perpetrator. Make sure as well that you remain alert by regularly assessing all kinds of signals which might indicate forms of violence in your workplace (physical illness, sick leave, unexplainable accidents, absence from training, and so on).

Management needs to communicate frequently with existing local trade unions – or employee representatives in the absence of unions – to identify risks and discuss cases of harassment together, as well as to create a positive environment. You can also jointly develop and negotiate clauses in collective bargaining agreements (for example, on topics such as childcare facilities, clean toilets, hygienic conditions and maternity benefits) or integrate anti-violence issues into your broader labour strategies (for example, by making sure that sexual harassment is a part of all occupational and health-related initiatives). Furthermore, if cases of violence are reported, cooperate with employee representatives or unions as independent middlemen to handle complaints. See to it that the unions or employee representatives are promptly informed, so that they are able to help the victim in filing a complaint and are available to oversee the procedure.

5. Tools

Your staff will need a set of tools to implement your policy and processes.

To raise awareness among your employees, invest in communication tools:

- Organise an official launch of your policy at a full staff meeting.
- Notify new staff of your policy as a part of their induction.
- Provide training and information sessions for all employees to make sure that they understand and are aware of what their rights are and how to prevent risks themselves.
- Make communication materials (e.g. posters) which are visible in the workplace, explaining that violence will not be tolerated (display your policy on notice boards and posters or distribute brochures).
- Organise safe spaces where employees can raise questions.

Television and radio can be an ally of your company in bringing about change, by challenging commonly held gender norms about what behaviour is acceptable or typical[13]. As an executive or international company owner, your leverage enables you to influence companies in your supply chain and the industry as a whole.

By publicly stating, for example, that everyone is entitled to a safe workplace and that this attitude is also in your own business interests, you expose people to a different view and create a counter-narrative. This position gives you an opportunity to advocate the elimination of violence at the national and international level.

Consider workplace design interventions, such as workplace layout, locks or physical barriers, lighting and electronic surveillance. When using signs, helpline stickers or any other communication posters, make sure that they have clear symbols, given that the illiteracy rate among employees is often still high. Also remove offensive or pornographic materials such as calendars. To prevent violence, organising safe transport is also recommended.

If incidents occur, make sure that you have functioning hotlines to report these, create safe locations to care for and treat victims, and designate other locations to remand the perpetrators into custody.

Finally, to ensure that the managers and supervisors comply with your policy, it is important to regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the existing mechanisms for preventing and handling harassment and abuse (prevention, alertness and action). Identifying and monitoring the frequency of abuse is a precarious job. In order to monitor violence, you may consider various tools such as surveys, consultations and research activities as a part of your due diligence and regular factory audits. You can monitor the inappropriate use of computer technology with special software. For more in-depth discussions with staff, there are NGOs that support companies in facilitating a dialogue by using various participatory techniques to assess life and job satisfaction (which is especially useful in regions with high illiteracy rates). Gathering stories can be of use to monitoring and can also play a part in your external communication strategy, by informing the public of the progress and dedication which your company is exhibiting. Training sessions and the functioning of your governance instruments can all be regularly evaluated.

East Africa[14]

Over half of the flowers bought in Europe or the US are produced in Africa, mainly in Kenya and Ethiopia. The number of people, especially women (about 70% of the employees), working in this sector has been growing. In Kenya alone, more than two million people have a job in horticulture. According to Women Working Worldwide, the pressure in this sector is high (especially on holidays such as Valentine's Day) to produce a supply of fresh and high-quality flowers. The farms have to deal with very tight deadlines, impacting the well-being of employees.

The type of work that women usually do is packaging, harvesting, tending flower beds and watering. These kinds of jobs depend on finesse, dexterity and an attention to detail, whereas men do the heavier manual work. Women have limited access to training, which reduces their lifetime productivity and prevents them from being promoted to a higher position. Female workers face widespread sexual harassment in cut flower farms, which they often think that they have to tolerate. Managers often ask for sex in return for workplace favours, bonuses or promotions. The sense of shame combined with the fear of losing their jobs, as well as the worry of reprisal and the lack of awareness of complaints procedures, means that many cases go unreported.

According to HIVOS, the problem of sexual assault is "grave" in Kenya, but there are some developments. "Conditions are improving on farms that subscribe to the ideals of fair trade and do business that aims to be socially responsible. Besides organising transportation for their employees, they pay higher wages, provide a safe and healthy workplace and offer possibilities for employees to organise themselves through worker and gender committees." Read more about the experiences of HIVOS in the flower sector in Kenya here.

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[13] Increased access to cable television in Indian villages increased the acceptance of women working outside the home and reduced the tolerance of domestic violence (UNHLP 2016).

[14] Jo Morris and Jane Pillinger 2016:p.24-25; http://www.women-ww.org.

5. Measures to prevent, eliminate and deal with violence in the workplace

	Prevention	Be alert and take action	Monitor & Learn
Policy & Governance	• Clear & firm HR, occupational safety & health policies (including contracts, code of conduct) and statement, procedures, norms & values, aligned with global & local laws • Recruit / appoint more women in supervisory & higher management positions • Clearly define incentives to prevent and penalties for harrassment for management, staff, suppliers & customers • Establish unions, workers counsils, and anti-harassment, dispute settlement & women committees	• Clear roles & responsibilities of managers, staff, suppliers how to be alert and take action • Appoint approachable counselors tasked with investigating and resolving complaints • Clear procedures outlining what to do when incidents do occur and you need to take action • Clear & explicit procedures on dealing with a victim: public apology, counseling, medical aid and/or financial compensation • Clear & explicit policies on dealing with a perpetrator: warning, suspension, termination of employment	• Establish a formal policy on continuous monitoring, learning & improving within the company and with suppliers • Evaluate roles & responsibilities based on analysis of incidents and actions and behaviours of stakeholders • Improve govenance & workings of unions and committees, based on your learnings • Map 'hotspots' where there is frequent harrassment in particular areas & suggest remedial action
Awareness	• Inform all stakeholders about laws, policies & procedures, and contact persons to file complaints • Share information about forms of violence, how to detect them, how to deal with a victim and perpetrator, its negative impact on a person, and why certain workers are particularly vulnerable. • Provide FAQ on laws and corporate policy, procedures, norms & values • Make managers aware of negative business impact of violence on productivity, quality, retention, etc. and of benefits derived from eliminating harassment	• Clear procedures & contact persons to file complaints yourself or on behalve of someone are known by all employees & suppliers • Join campaigning initiatives of other stakeholders via radio/ social media/ posters • Organize safe speak-outs where victims or vulnerable groups can speak of their experiences (if feasible in the cultural context)	• Monitor & share changes in self-awareness of management and staff triggered by training • Monitor and share the business benefits gained from less violence & harrassment • Rallies, public events, press releases, etc. to show positive effects of anti-violence strategies
Competencies	• Train managers, supervisors, employees on appropriate conduct, rights & responsabilities, on functioning of anti-harrassment committees • Encourage & empower managers to promote violence prevention and be a role model • Train managers in positive goal setting, motivation & feedback skills to increase productivity & quality (use effective & modern training methods with discussions, presentations, plays, games, & stories)	• Train managers, staff & union officers on how to recognize harrassment and eliminate violence in the workplace • Train hotline staff on being professional, patient, listening & giving compassionate responses • Train supervisors, managers & counselors on how to listen to a victim and how to handle a (suspected) perpetrator	• Monitor training participation of the target audience (input) and training effectiveness (outcome) against predetermined training KPI's • Improve training curriculum & formats together with participants and based on effect measurements
Processes	• Establish a fair & transparent system & process for recruitment, promotion, contracting, payment of salaries • Create space for your employees to make use of their freedom of associciation • Facilitate social dialogue between employers, workers, representatives, government, NGO's, etc. and engage with unions	• Daily assess physical illness, sick leave, unexplainable accidents, tension, fights and tears at work, loss of work motivation, productivity, resignation & dismissal, and missing out on training • Investigate all reported incidents, take accurate notes and involve appropriate stakeholders • Have interim measures in place to deal with complaints, such as temporarily moving a victim or suspect from their work location; Assist the victim to make a complaint • Have clarity on steps to take as a victim or a witness in filing a complaint & getting support • Follow-up all tips and complaints by clearly communicating about next steps, actions taken, and consequences for victim & perpetrator	• Regular & anonymous surveys, focus group sessions & audits (internally & with suppliers) about the incidence of violence (using data disaggregated by seks) • Monitor increases in productivity & quality due to decreases of violence • Monitor differences in use of social media to unearth harrassing activities (e.g. spreading of nude pictures of colleagues)
Tools	• Invest in communication tools to raise awareness: official launch to present your policy, information, sessions, bill boards, make use of your leverage via radio/ tv channels, etc. • Provide a secure & safe physical work space with good working conditions (e.g. child care facilities, clean toilets, lighted work space) & safety precautions (e.g. emergency exists, etc.) • Provide safe (access to public) transportation and arrange group transport at night or through dangerous areas • Create a positive working atmosphere in which staff feels valued & safe	• Hotlines, anonymous apps, etc. to enable victims to call for help and file a complaint • Basic security cameras, smart security cameras (e.g. with facial recognition capabilities), web crawlers to spot online harrassment. • Group dialogues to enable victims to open up about harrassments and the effect it has on them • Safe locations to hold (suspected) perpetrators in custody until law enforcement officers arrive • Safe locations, medical supplies & equipment to care for and treat victims (first aid)	• Anonymous, confidential surveys (e.g with mobile apps) to identfy high risk situations • Analyse data collected via formal channels (e.g. hotlines, apps, counselors, confidential minuts of meetings, etc.)

6. Useful sources

- [CNV International (Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond Internationaal)](#)

- [Fair Wear Foundation](#)

- [FNV Mondiaal (Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging)](#)

- [Gender-based violence in global supply chains: Resource Kit, International Training Centre ILO and Fair Wear Foundation](#)

- [Human Rights Universal Declaration and the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work](#)

- [International Labour Organization](#)