



# Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services

## First regular briefing to the Executive Board January 2021

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# Year 2020 in review

## ➔ Ombuds Cases: 384 cases in 2020

- 11% decrease compared to 2019.
- This was expected due to:
  - Travel restrictions impeding CO visits.
  - Personal contact is critical to come forward: 152 cases first 3 months with 4 CO visits versus 232 in following 9 months.
  - Virtual missions do not lower the threshold like in-person missions do.
  - HR responded effectively to the situation: few cases on COVID-19-related issues as compared to other UN Ombuds Offices.



# Year 2020 in review

## ➔ Roll out of Ombudsman Office Capacity Building Strategy:

- Part of CAP and people policy.
- Purpose: to provide skills to employees on all levels which enable them to take their responsibility and be proactive in situations of conflict.
- Seven training modules on conflict prevention and resolution, including conflict competencies and respectful leadership.
- Mainstreaming gender and anti-racism.
- 29 trainings to 900 employees completed in 2020.
- Training of 140 HROs globally.

# Year 2020 in review

## ➔ Team Climate Assessment

- Purpose: address frictions in teams or between team and manager and improve workplace culture.
- Consists of:
  - Confidential interviews with team members.
  - Drawing up a plan with the manager(s).
  - Providing harmonious workplace coaching to managers.
  - Providing team interventions or facilitations, as necessary.
- Requires accountability.
- By: Office of Ombudsman & Mediation Services or outside provider.

# 2020 Emerging issues

## ➔ Mental health and emotional wellbeing

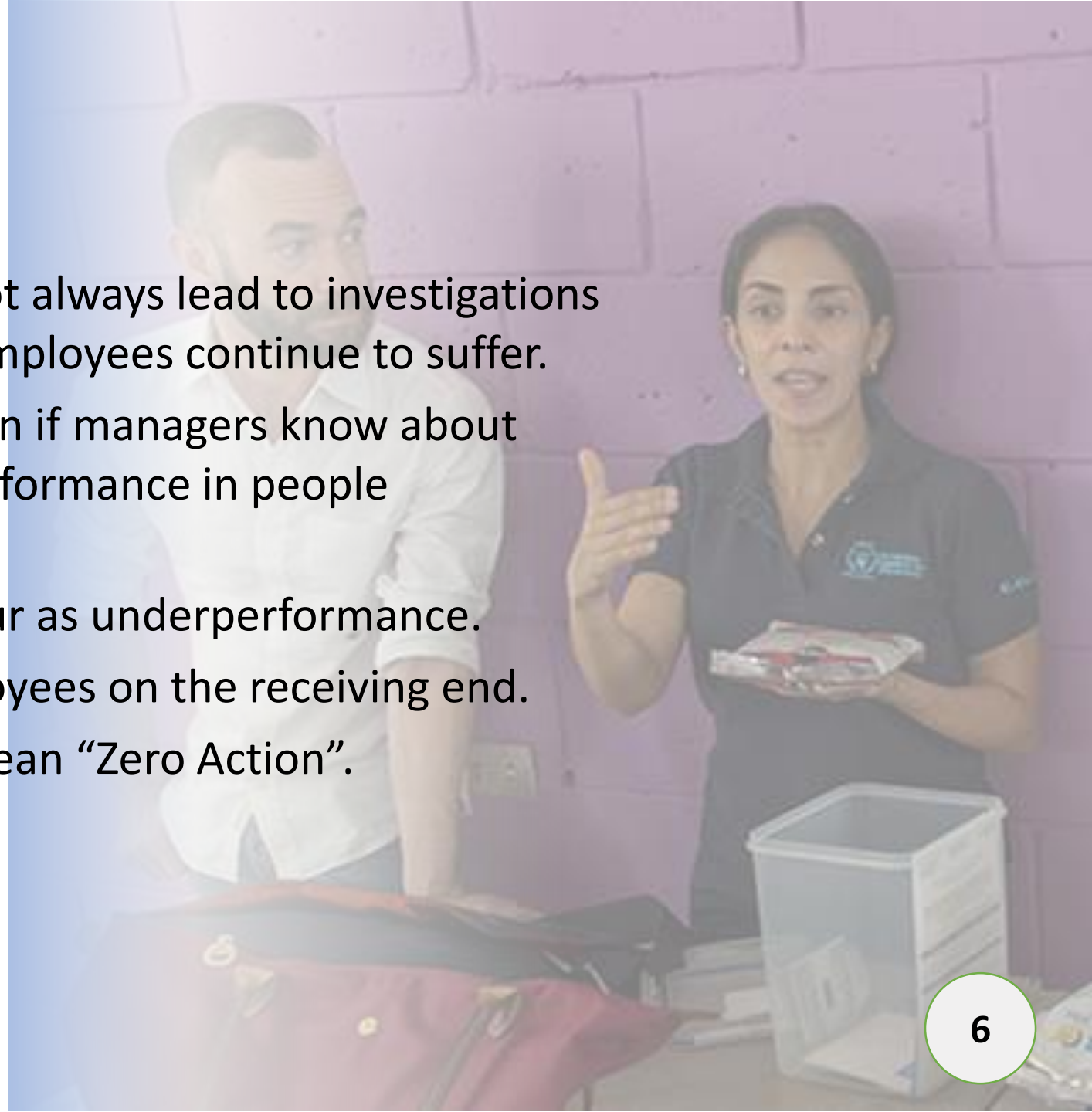
- Increase of incivility-related stress and mental and physical health issues.
- "unhappy workplaces": working remotely doesn't make much difference in impact.
- Mental health conditions and neurodiversity to be better understood by management and peers.
- 2021: continuation of COVID-19 restrictions and related uncertainty and vulnerability require rethink of care, cohesion and connection.

# Continuing issues

## ➔ Abusive behaviour

- Toxic work environments do not always lead to investigations (or substantiation). Risk that employees continue to suffer.
- Need for more consistent action if managers know about abusive behaviour or underperformance in people management.
- Acknowledge abusive behaviour as underperformance.
- Listen to and involve the employees on the receiving end.
- “Zero Tolerance” should not mean “Zero Action”.

## ➔ Walk the talk



# Continuing issues

## ➔ Leadership

- HR Leadership framework: Positive development.
- Focus on leadership competencies and training in management and people skills for middle management.
- Hiring and promotion decisions to be based on competencies and capability rather than on confidence and charisma. We sometimes confuse the two.
- Pipeline for RC and HC positions and other UN leadership positions feeding into the Global Executive Leadership Initiative (GELI).

# Continuing issues


## ➔ Gender, Diversity & Inclusion

- Create an environment where all persons can flourish and be acknowledged.
- Include sensitive and soft-spoken individuals who often are left behind.
- Gender equity is not about changing women, it is about changing the workplace; it is about leaders, work cultures and systems.
- Our new values and people policy are a strong foundation to foster empathy, integrity, courage and authenticity, especially in leaders.



# WFP as anti-racist organization

- Becoming an anti-racist organization implies facing our individual and collective colonial past.
- Need for a discussion on white savior complex.
- International Professionals are seen as having more privileges than others.
- Review policies and practices on systemic racism.



*“Let’s find the people who  
dream of changing this world  
and who have not yet been  
changed by that world”*

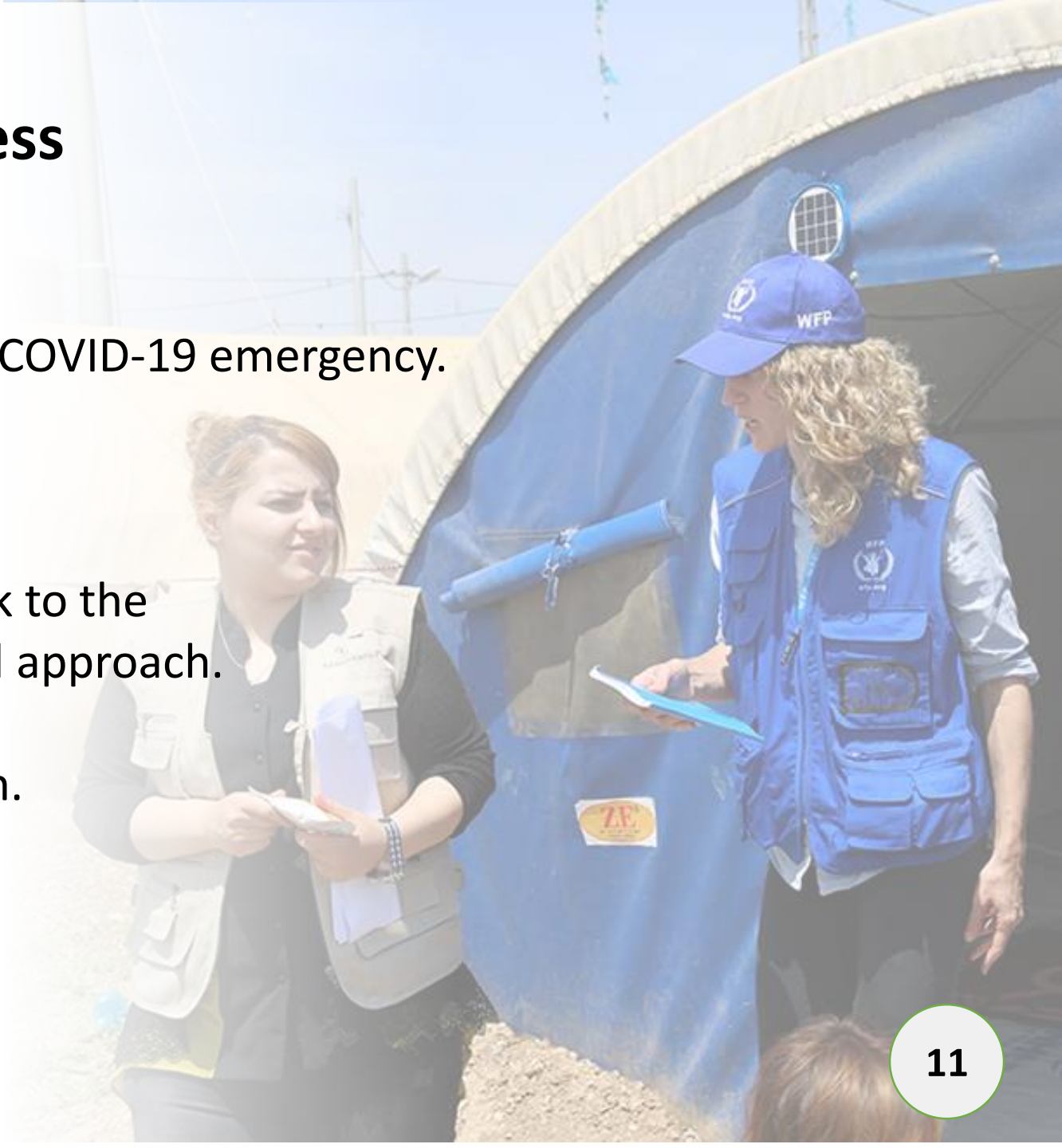
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# WFPs Cultural Change Process

## The good news:

- ➔ Response of HR and management to COVID-19 emergency.
- ➔ Resilience of WFP's employees.
- ➔ New people policy: consultations, link to the WFP strategy; integrated value-based approach.
- ➔ Decision to be anti-racist organization.

*It's the WFP's People Decade  
"The Roaring People Twenties"*





Thank You!

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*Contacting the Ombudsman is always a safe first step - Everybody is welcome with any work-related issue*