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For consideration

Executive Board documents are available on WFP's website (<https://executiveboard.wfp.org>).

Annual report of the Office of the Ombudsman for 2016

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the annual report of the Office of the Ombudsman for 2016 (WFP/EB.A/2018/4-C).

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the decisions and recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

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The Office of the Ombudsman

2016 Summary Report

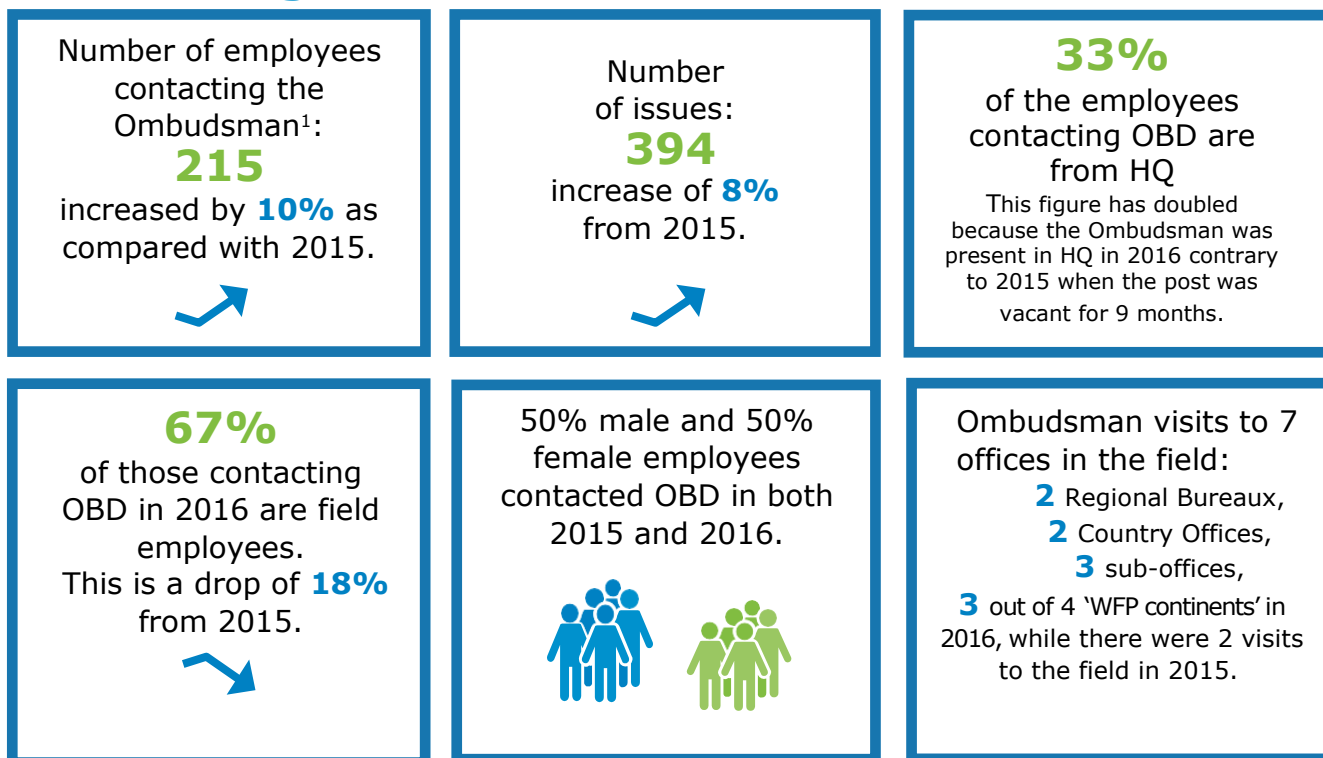


World Food Programme

2016 SUMMARY REPORT

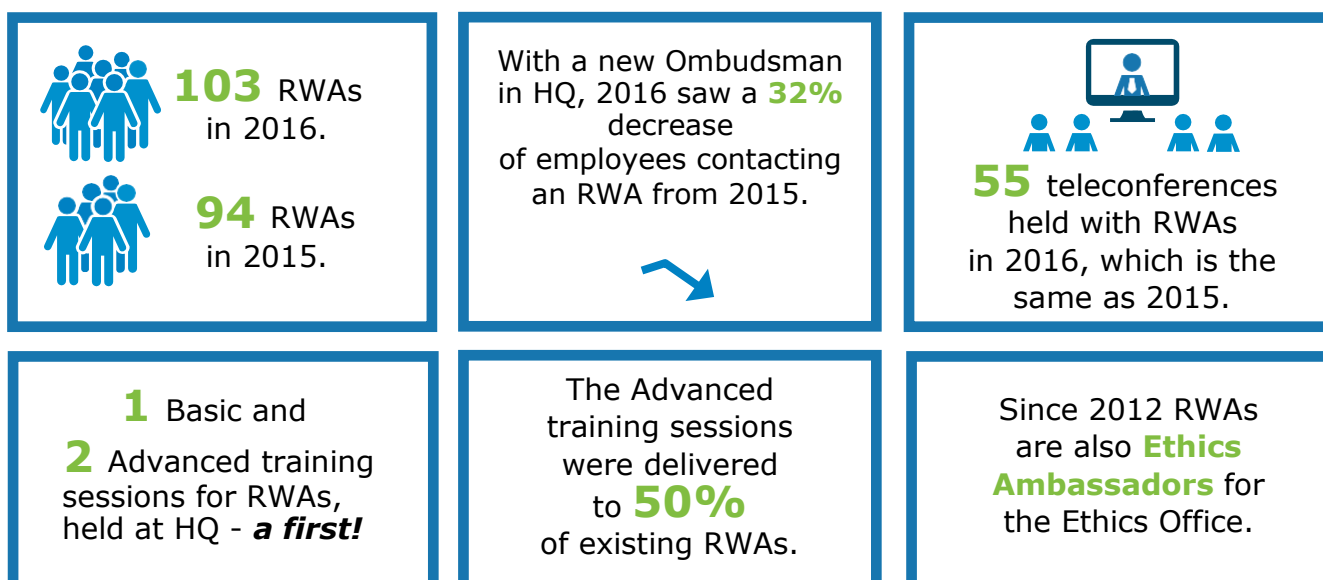
The following report gives the highlights of the activities carried out under the leadership of Gabrielle Kluck, Director of the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services (OBD), who joined WFP in February 2016.

2016 at a glance:



Respectful Workplace Advisor Network

The OBD Respectful Workplace Advisor (RWA) Network is designed to help WFP employees that are working in the field to access informal conflict resolution. RWAs are mainly national staff, nominated by their peers for this role as confidant, where they serve as a confidential and neutral sounding board for colleagues. RWAs work according to the same principles as the Ombudsman and provide guidance without making interventions.



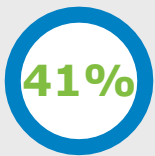
¹Employees include staff, consultants, interns, volunteers, SC and SSA holders.

MAIN ISSUES IN 2016

Main Categories

Issues brought to the Ombudsman fall into the International Ombudsman Association’s uniform reporting categories.

Some **83%** of employee issues fell into four categories:



1. Evaluative relationships



2. Career progression and development



3. Organizational, strategic and mission-related



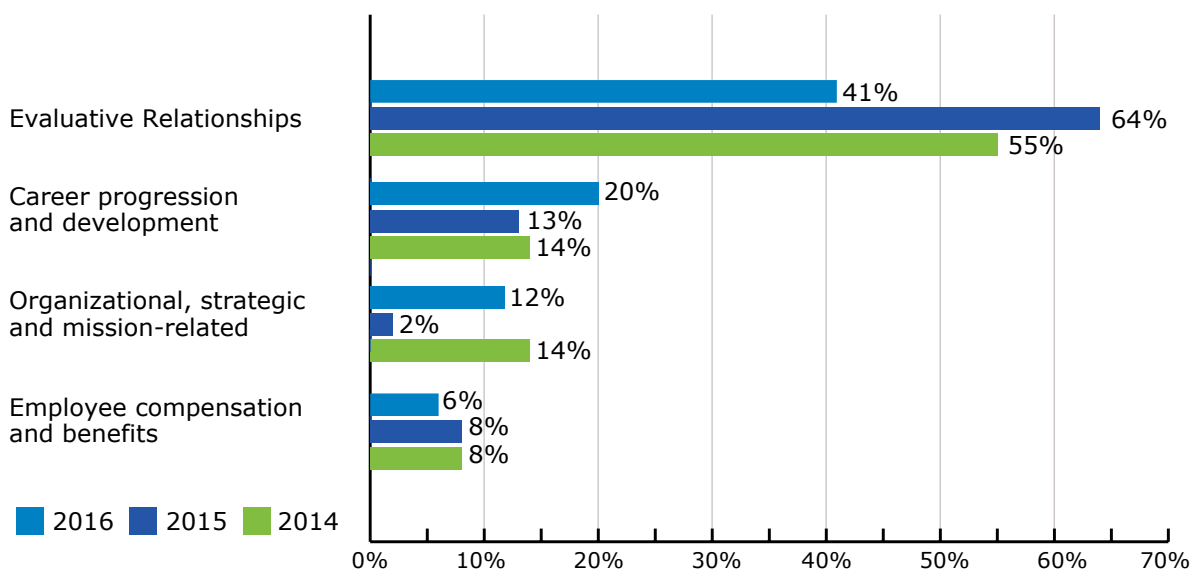
4. Peer and colleague relationships



THE OMBUDSMAN’S ISSUE CATEGORIES:

1. Compensation and benefits
2. Evaluative relationships
3. Peer and colleague relationships
4. Career progression and development
5. Legal, regulatory, financial and compliance
6. Safety, health, and physical environment
7. Services/administrative issues
8. Organizational, strategic, and mission-related

2014-2016 Issue Categories Data Comparison



In 2016, employees contacting the Ombudsman on evaluative relationships dropped by 23% over the previous year, while organizational, strategic and mission related issues increased sharply from 2% to 12%, to almost the 2014 level.

STRATEGIC GOALS

OBD, through its informal conflict resolution services, contributes to “Organizational readiness towards 2030 Agenda”. The six strategic goals of OBD are:

1. Build awareness that OBD is a *Safe First Place* to go for *any* category of employee with *any* workplace concern;
2. Build awareness that OBD also provides services to meet the specific needs of managers and supervisors;
3. Increase the efficiency within WFP: through de-escalating conflict and by building conflict management skills more time becomes available for the WFP mandate;
4. Expand the effectiveness of WFP employees because with more harmonious work relations and work climates, creativity and problem solving capacities are unleashed;
5. Decrease the reputational risk for the Organization as a result of team breakdowns, employee turnover and productivity loss by actively intervening in conflict situations; and
6. Contribute to solving overarching and systemic issues and make recommendations for how these could be addressed, using an inter-disciplinary approach by including offices and units such as OED, Legal, ETO, HR, Wellness, Security, Gender and OIG.

CONFLICT: CHALLENGES SUCH AS DISCORD, ABRASIVE MANAGEMENT, HARASSMENT INCLUDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE.



CORE PILLARS

While adhering to the Ombudsman principles of [confidentiality, neutrality and impartiality, independence and informality](#), OBD achieves its six strategic goals through its core pillars of work. These are the areas of OBD activity that are instrumental in helping individuals and teams grow their relationship skills, solve problems and conflict; and support the organization and its leadership to address systemic issues.

- 1. One-on-one's:** confidential conversations to identify what the issues are and to explore options to resolve the situation. Issues that affect groups of employees or teams can also be brought to the Ombudsman's -or RWAs'- attention.
- 2. Conflict Resolution Capacity Building:** the coaching approach of the Ombudsman office is targeted to help employees gain insights and skills themselves, to deal better with the issues they are confronted with, and to become more effective in achieving better results.

ODB COACHES ROSTER

OBD has a coaches roster for those employees who like to engage in a personalized coaching trajectory. The OBD Coaches are equipped to work with groups and teams to improve their inter-relational dynamics and subsequently their outputs. They are all well established in their field, have a solid reputation and a broad set of skills.

In 2016, WFP employees ranging from junior levels to managerial and Director levels have availed of this service.

- 3. Systemic issues and organizational change:** when receiving concerns, the Ombudsman takes a bird's eye view to identify the wider or overarching, systemic issues that need to be addressed to affect positive change within the organization.

Organizational changes can range from improving policies to streamlining cooperation between units, to increasing awareness about certain issues in order to take action.

- 4. Mediation:** OBD provides mediation services to WFP employees. Mediation is a powerful intervention for resolving work-related differences and conflicts. It is a confidential and informal procedure where the parties having a dispute work together towards a resolution to their conflict, with the assistance of a neutral third party called "the Mediator".



SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY

Shuttle diplomacy is a form of mediation where the Ombudsman will contact one party on behalf of the other and vice versa to solve the conflict or disagreement. Depending on the nature of the issue, this form of mediation is either suitable to solve the issue without direct confrontation; or shuttle diplomacy prepares the employees involved to talk to each other to solve the issue themselves.

COST OF CONFLICT

We usually refer to cost of conflict in terms of litigation costs. In addition, there are eight “hidden costs” to the organization that are not immediately associated with conflict and are accounted for as part of the normal working life.

Under the radar

Unresolved conflict may represent the largest reducible cost for an organization and yet, managers and leaders shy away from dealing with it. They would rather have other WFP offices, such as HR, OIG, or OBD, deal with any conflict within the manager’s work teams.

WFP continuously strives to instil a high level of accountability and best practices in its workforce and has developed tools to this end. However, in WFP, we sometimes forget that conflict is inevitable and that it will happen at work, and that when it does, we need to respond appropriately and in a timely manner, even if it is hard to do so. We need to acknowledge conflicts between us, between the intent of policies and how they work in practice; and that at times our past decisions have led to negative consequences that now conflict with our goals. Then, we need to address the situation, whether it be a policy or our approach; improve our conflict management skills; and make every effort to make things better so that we create

more cohesion within our teams and the Organization. In this way, we become an even better performing WFP for our beneficiaries.

Ombudsman’s Recommendations:

1. Prioritize mandatory training on conflict competencies for all WFP employees;
2. Clarify that a manager’s responsibility includes conflict resolution;
3. Take action when sick leave and turnover numbers are high in a certain area; and
4. Hold exit interviews to understand the reasons for leaving WFP.

8 HIDDEN COSTS OF CONFLICT

- 1- wasted time
- 2- reduced quality of decisions
- 3- loss of skilled employees
- 4- restructuring inefficiencies
- 5- lowered job motivation
- 6- sabotage and theft
- 7- absenteeism
- 8- health costs



SYSTEMIC ISSUES

The following three systemic issues stand out:

1. Abuse of power

WFP's culture has been built in emergency settings where a more directive management style is considered effective and where employees have developed a higher tolerance for abrasive managers. The majority of WFP managers have a people-oriented management style that they adequately adapt in different settings. However, those with an abrasive style negatively affect the work climate and employee morale and, as a result, productivity decreases, stress increases and, ultimately, WFP can lose talent or miss out on innovative opportunities.

Abuse of power often flies under the WFP's radar, because abrasive and abusive managers generally excel in building strong relationships with their supervisors and key stakeholders. And if they "get things done" as is often the case, they will have a good PACE record, and their bad treatment of employees is not recorded. Then, when these managers get rotated and promoted to other positions, they leave the new colleagues wondering why WFP is not living up to its responsibility of creating an enabling work climate.

Compounding the abuse of power is WFP's hiring practice: the Organization avails of a large quantity of employees on Consultant and Service Contracts (SCs) but does not give them the same benefits or job security and can let them go at a moment's notice without an explanation.

These categories of employees are very reluctant to address situations of abuse of power or to speak up and stand up against bullying supervisors or peers, because their fear of retaliation is real. Furthermore, WFP is reluctant to deal with abuse of power, and to provide timely

feedback on performance for a variety of reasons. The manager may have loyalties to certain employees over others. Employees may be in denial about the impact of abrasive behaviour. Sometimes, it is because we do not know how to address the situation. Other times, it is because it is not seen as necessary to act.

Recommendations:

1. WFP leadership needs to scrupulously reflect about how it addresses -or ignores- abusive and abrasive behaviour of managers and supervisors, and develop a holistic approach for both prevention and effective managing of instances of abuse;
2. Implement a 360 performance assessment system for supervisors and their managers (second level supervisors) and identify adequate remedial steps to be taken;
3. Deliver coaching skills to managers and supervisors for their employees: build employees up; develop potential; address performance gaps with guidance and on-the-job training;
4. Provide early and frank feedback on performance to allow for changes and to prevent future problems; and
5. Reassess the need and criteria for recruiting Consultants, SC and SSAs.



2. Sexual harassment and violence (SH&V)

In 2016 WFP conducted the "Zero Tolerance" campaign for Sexual harassment, violence, and Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (SEA) referring to beneficiaries.

The Ombudsman was contacted by survivors of sexual harassment and violence at work who wanted to understand where and how they could formally report their cases. However, it appeared that the survivors were not confident that their complaints would be taken seriously; that they would be handled confidentially and professionally; or that they could expect protection from retaliation or ridicule. Moreover, the current Policy on Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority (HSHAP), dating back to June 2011, contains some clauses that also deterred these survivors from coming forward. This was not the intention of the Zero Tolerance campaign. WFP needs a policy and a culture that enables and enforces zero tolerance.

The Ombudsman researched the magnitude of sexual harassment and violence in humanitarian aid, as well as what a state-of-the-art policy should include. OBD then met with HR, Legal, ETO, Security, Gender, IG, Investigations, Audit and Wellness in early 2017 with the aim of rewriting the HSHAP policy together and plan a multi-disciplinary action for organizational change. A policy itself does not change behaviour, only personal ownership and commitment to change, across the board, will change behaviour.

Two organizations² have conducted surveys about the experiences of SH&V among humanitarian aid workers and the figures are shocking. The survey results, available on their websites, indicate that a majority of respondents experienced SH&V; that the perpetrators were mainly colleagues of the survivor; and that a considerable number of respondents suffered more than one incident of SH&V during their career. The surveys also indicate that few survivors report those incidents, and far fewer are satisfied with how their organizations handled their reports.

Furthermore, there is a common concern: *"It is still the norm that perpetrators are promoted or moved; whereas survivors are fired or, due to hostile work climate, they resign"*. (Quote from ReportTheAbuse.org)

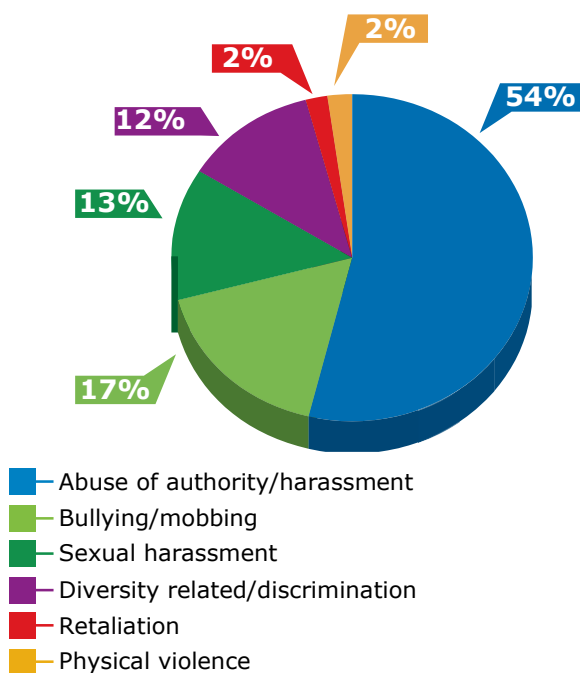
There appears to be a lack of awareness within WFP about the prevalence and the nature of SH&V experienced by its employees. WFP leadership and Management need to acknowledge that SH&V happens in humanitarian aid and, therefore, in WFP, take action to ensure employees have knowledge of and access to recourse, and address instances of SH&V immediately, or this grave form of abuse will continue, as will the silence from the survivors.

² www.reporttheabuse.org and www.humanitarianwomensnetwork.org

Recommendations:

1. Develop a better **HSHAP Policy and Framework**;
2. Create a stronger **Protection against Retaliation Policy** for those who report SH&V
3. Assign designated investigators and prioritise the tracking of these cases;
4. Train security staff to sensitively respond to SH&V incidents;
5. Include SH&V, as mandatory part of training courses within WFP – for all levels: to build awareness about what our responsibilities are; and what our options are when we are targeted;
6. Create a culture where employees feel supported to come forward with and address instances of SH&V;
7. Ensure that the Global Staff Survey³ includes questions about SH&V;
8. Conduct a special survey on SH&V, not only about its prevalence and nature, but also about what employees need from WFP leadership and from their peers to minimize the incidence of SH&V, to break their silence, and for WFP to start taking action.

HSHAP Cases



Some 25% of all cases, or 54 cases in total, brought to the Ombudsman in 2016 were HSHAP-related cases. These cases include both Abuse of Power and SH&V issues as mentioned previously. The pie chart above shows the percentages of the different HSHAP related sub categories.

3. Leadership

WFP lacks a comprehensive training or mentorship system to adequately prepare an employee for leadership positions. This allows for different interpretations of what constitutes “good management”. WFP will be better served by having a shared vision on what leadership competencies it needs to fulfill the demands of being efficient and effective, while working in different settings, including emergencies, to end hunger by 2030.

Recommendations:

1. Determine the necessary competencies for WFP leaders and use the feedback from international and national employees;
2. Build a career and appraisal trajectory, with periodic assessments, for potential leadership talent;
3. Focus on people's skills: listening to understand, coaching skills, gender awareness, self-reflection and conflict resolution management skills;
4. Train all employees on how to hold difficult conversations on work assignments and expectations; PACE; work-related concerns; and on ethics and integrity-related matters;
5. Use Diversity and Inclusion programmes to not only create awareness, but to commit to action and to be accountable.

³Last GSS was held in April 2015

UN JOINT INSPECTION

UNIT RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2015, the UN JIU reviewed⁴ the Ombudsman Offices within the UN, including the UN Secretariat; UNHCR; IOM; FAO; and WFP.

The JIU states that *"the budgets and staffing of Ombudsman Offices are negligible from the point of view of the organizations. Although, by many estimates, the work of the Ombudsman Offices significantly reduces organizational costs, organizations are not investing enough resources in their Ombudsman Offices. On the contrary, their budgets are subject to routine and wide cuts"*. (Executive Summary)

Unfortunately, OBD was subject to the above mentioned routine cuts in 2016.

At the same time the JIU notes that *"Owing to their broad understanding of the organizational culture and their unique position of being 'eyes and ears' of the organization, some Ombudsmen make recommendations for change in policy and practice in relation to systemic issues identified. As a result, the Ombudsman is also emerging as an agent of change."* However, *"the review noted that most of the Ombudsman Offices are understaffed and heavily burdened with managing individual cases, which leaves them very little time to deal with systemic issues."*

OBD is facing a similar predicament with a heavy caseload, with a potential for its caseload to triple if more outreach and visits could be undertaken. At the same time, there are many systemic issues on different levels to be addressed for which there is great capacity but insufficient resources. An investment case was made for a P4 post. However, only a small amount of extra funds were received, from which the OBD recruited a part-time Consultant in late 2016 to work as Conflict Resolution Officer, while re-submitting the investment case for a full time post.

Out of the total eight JIU recommendations, the most important ones for WFP are:

Recommendation 5: *"It is recommended that the legislative bodies of the United Nations system organizations make it possible for the Ombudsman to report to them."*

Action taken: The 2015 Annual Report of the WFP Ombudsman has been distributed to the Executive Board for information, whereas this report will be distributed for its consideration.

Recommendation 6: *"... request the Ombudsman to include continuous training and certification of Ombudsman practitioners in the work plans":*

Action taken: OBD invests time and effort to keep abreast with developments within the profession as well as to help further it.



⁴ https://www.unjiu.org/sites/www.unjiu.org/files/jiu_document_files/products/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU_REP_2015_6_English.pdf

WAY FORWARD

Systemic issues: Bringing systemic issues to the attention of the WFP leadership for action, through feedback and recommendations, is one of OBD's core pillars. The Ombudsman looks forward to continuing the dialogue on organizational change with a view to strengthening WFP so that we fulfil our mandate of ending hunger by 2030.

Field visits: To enable access to our services to all WFP employees, the Ombudsman will continue to travel to WFP field duty stations, including Sub Offices.

RWA network: RWAs play an important role to diffuse tension and conflict in the field, and act as an early warning system for the Ombudsman. Further enhancement of the network will be undertaken by exchanging best practices among UN agencies on the nomination and training of new RWAs, while intensifying the guidance of the RWAs by strengthening the role of the RWA Network Coordinator.

Internal mediation: During 2016, the Ombudsman noted that a larger number of concerns could be resolved in an internal mediation process and recommends that managers be more pro-active in engaging in mediation. OBD plans to boost the use of mediation by creating more awareness about this service and improve its availability.

Sexual harassment: The HSHAP Working Group began in April 2017 to amend the current policy and to add a plan for cultural change within WFP regarding the abuse of power, sexual harassment and violence. The Ombudsman's door is always open to employees who face harassment, abuse of power, sexual harassment and violence. OBD is committed to assess the best options for each situation. At the same time, the Ombudsman will identify overarching systemic issues and make recommendations for structural and cultural

change to the leadership and relevant offices of WFP.

Conflict competency skills: Building conflict competency skills is a core pillar of the Ombudsman Office. The coaching approach and the OBD's roster of coaches will continue to provide key services to employees next year. OBD is looking to provide input to creating a consolidated management development programme throughout the Organization and to enhance the leadership capability in WFP when it comes to dealing effectively with workplace conflict.

Capacity of the OBD: In general, experience has shown that the "Ombuds Utilization Rate" –the percentage of employees in an organisation that would use Ombudsman services during a year– ranges between 2 and 5%, depending upon the capacity and accessibility of the Ombudsman office. With more than 15,000 employees, for WFP there is a potential of 750 cases per year, compared to the 215 cases OBD handled in 2016.

Furthermore, the JIU report on the UN Ombudsman services stipulated that one Ombudsman can handle maximum 150 cases per year and that more cases would decrease the Ombudsman's contribution to organizational change through feedback and recommendations on systemic issues. The WFP Ombudsman Office therefore continues to seek extra staff in order to realize its mandate to its fullest.



Any comments on the report findings and OBD activities, services or mandate, are welcome.

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