



OBD
The Ombuds Office

Briefing to the Executive Board

February 2025

Agenda

1.



Uncertain Times

- Restructuring, Funding Situation
- Employees in Emergencies
- Duty of Care
- Communication and Feedback

2.



2024 in Figures

- Main Concerns
- OBDs Visitors
- Abusive Conduct at WFP
- Interventions and Building Capacity of WFPs employees

3.



A more Effective WFP, Increasing Impact

- The Cost of Conflict
- New Ways of Collaboration Within WFPs Internal Justice System

4.



Moving Forward

- Implementing the New Mediation Framework
- Ombuds Support to Employees in Current Situation

Uncertain Times

Employee voices

"I am really worried about what will happen to our beneficiaries – I have sleepless nights."

"There is so much unhealthy competition in our office as everyone is afraid they will lose their job."

"I wish I had more info on where we are heading. It's very difficult to plan at the moment – professionally and personally"

"Since the reduction in staff the workload has increased so much, I don't know how to cope."



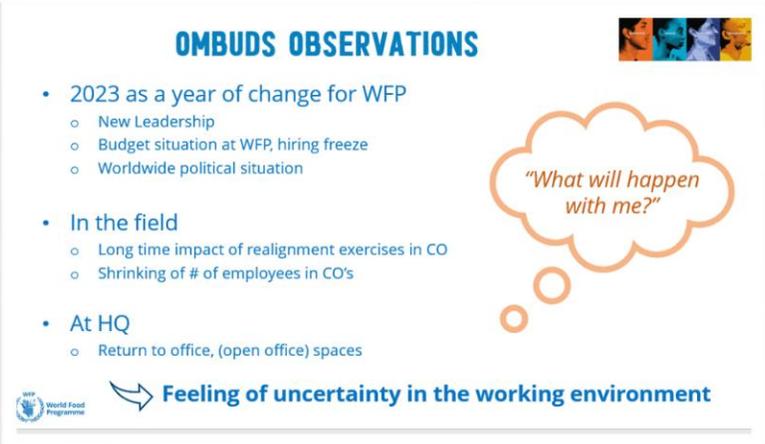
Prolonged period of uncertainty

Ongoing restructuring and current funding outlook creates feelings of uncertainty and anxiety among employees at WFP:

Strong fears of employees about losing their jobs leads to frictions

Concerns of more vulnerable employees

Lack of clarity of Regional Bureaux on their future role

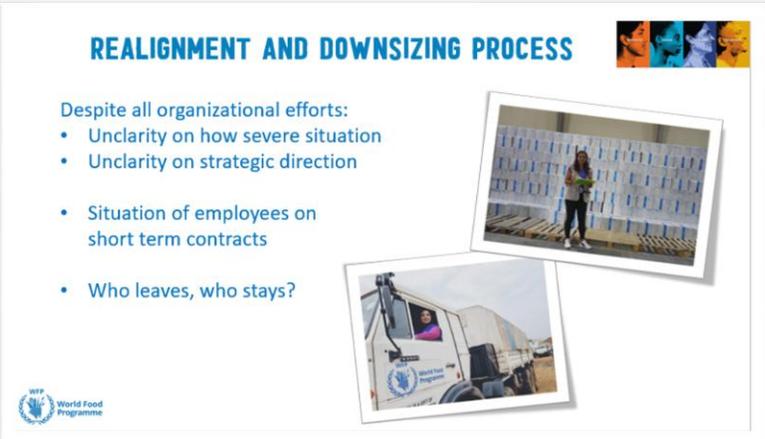


OMBUDS OBSERVATIONS

- 2023 as a year of change for WFP
 - New Leadership
 - Budget situation at WFP, hiring freeze
 - Worldwide political situation
- In the field
 - Long time impact of realignment exercises in CO
 - Shrinking of # of employees in CO's
- At HQ
 - Return to office, (open office) spaces

"What will happen with me?"

  **Feeling of uncertainty in the working environment**



REALIGNMENT AND DOWNSIZING PROCESS

Despite all organizational efforts:

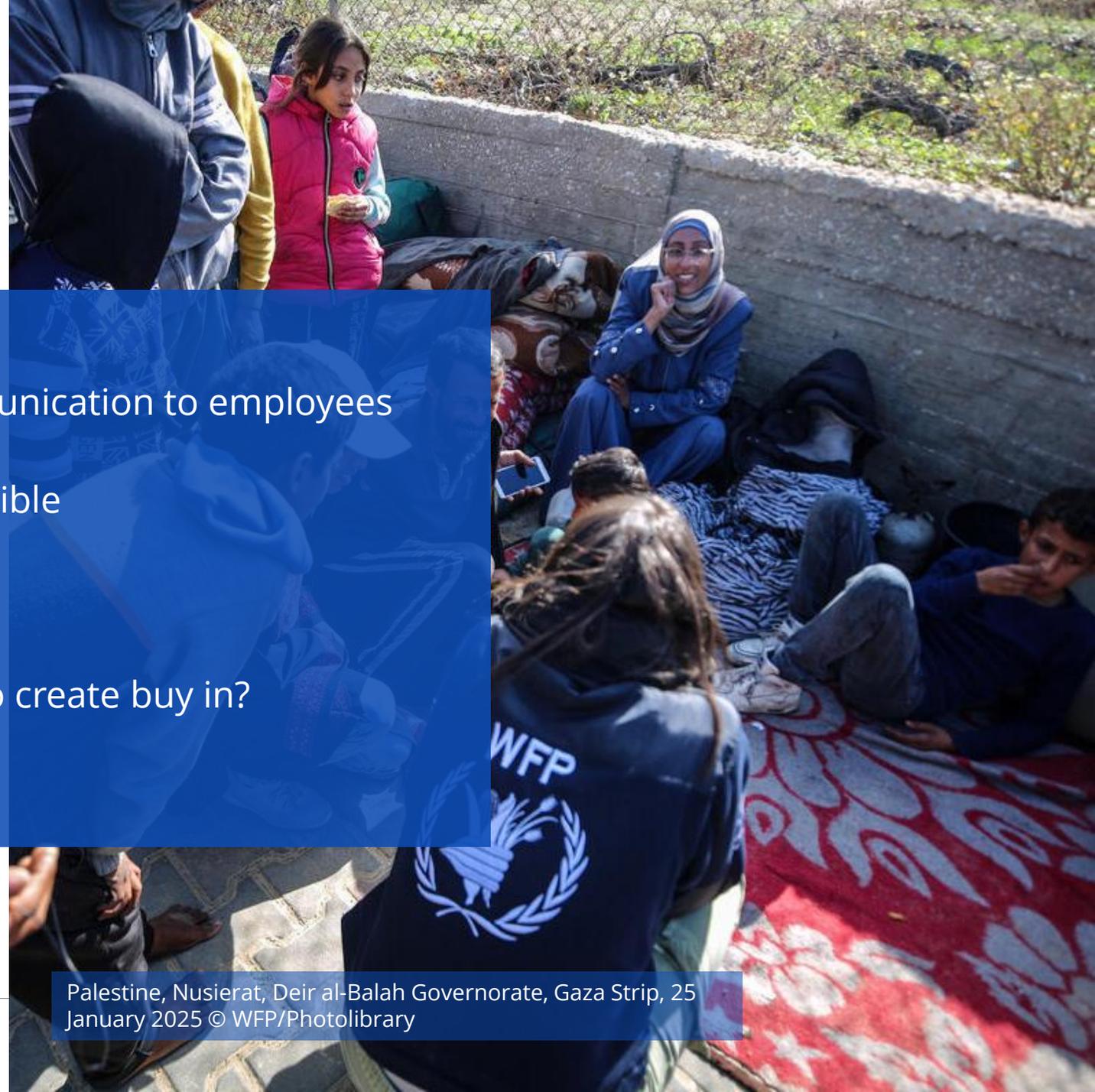
- Unclearity on how severe situation
- Unclearity on strategic direction
- Situation of employees on short term contracts
- Who leaves, who stays?



Prolonged feelings of uncertainty: Slide of OBDs briefing to the EB in November 2023 and March 2024

What WFP can do

- Empathy, compassion and proactive communication to employees
- As much clarity on the way forward as possible
- Specific support for employees affected
- High speed of change management: how to create buy in?



Palestine, Nusierat, Deir al-Balah Governorate, Gaza Strip, 25
January 2025 © WFP/Photolibary

Emergency Settings

- Increase in emergencies in 2024
- Decrease in respect for international humanitarian law

→ **Impact on mental health of employees**

→ **Consequences for employees when access to field is not possible**



Maungdaw, Myanmar: WFP warehouse on fire following attacks on 22 June 2024

Duty of Care Framework

- Appreciation of employees
- Equal treatment of different employee categories

Concern: Perceived gap between wording and reality on the ground

Employees ask:

What does it mean concretely to me?



A WFP food distribution at a camp for displaced people near Goma, DRC. WFP/Barbara Pereira Mendes

Communication and feedback culture



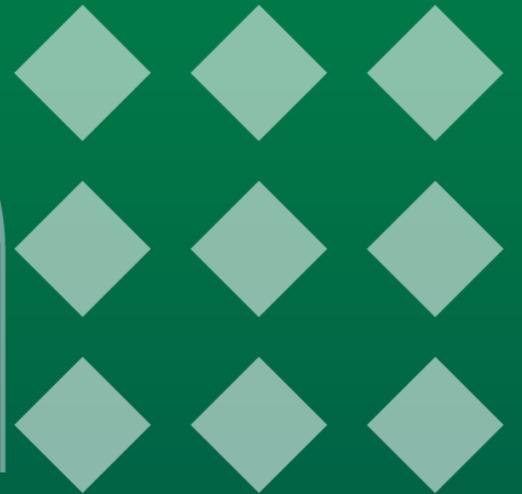
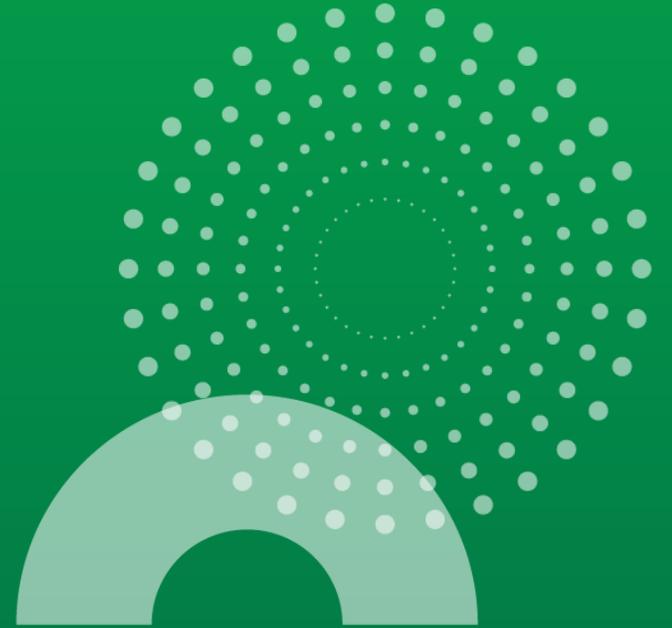
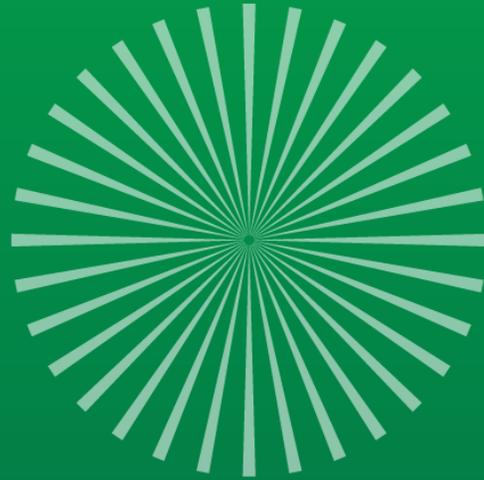
Need to improve:

- Interpersonal communication skills
- Giving and receiving feedback

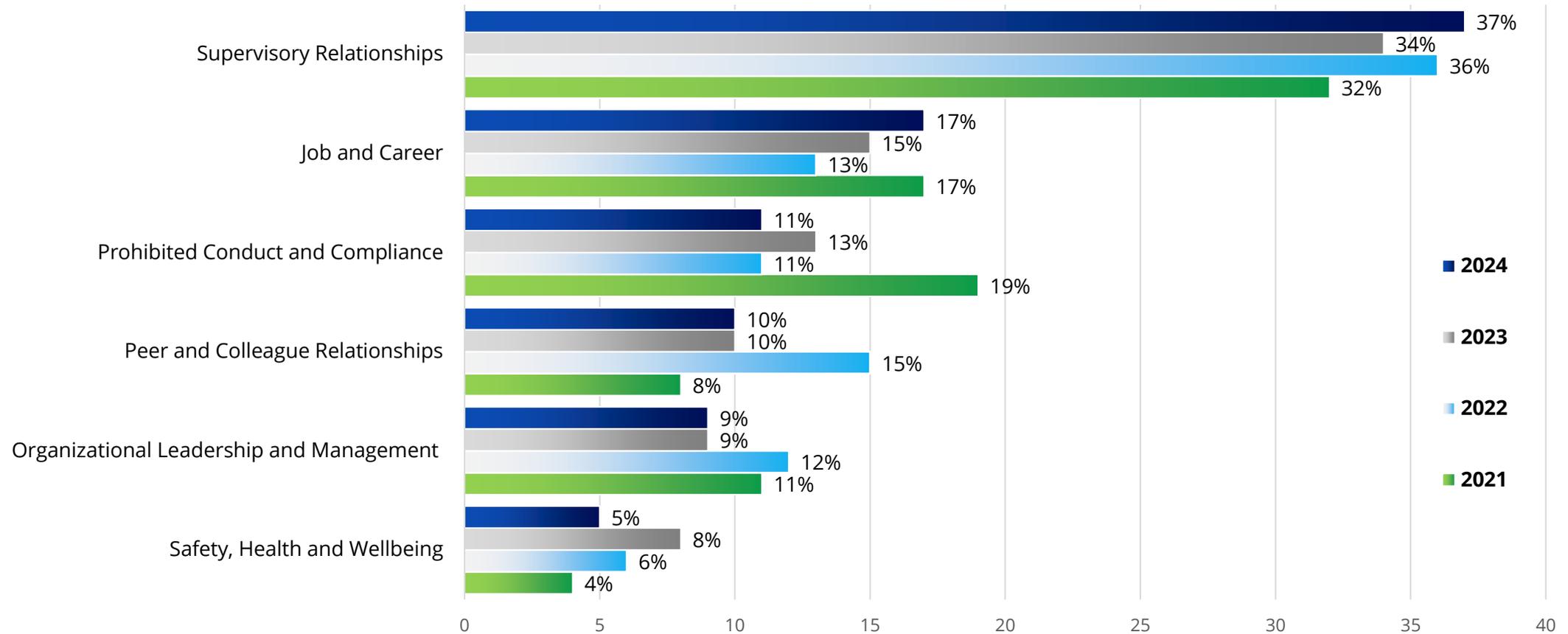
Leaders:

- Need to be more equipped to identify and address conflict situations
- Action and accountability regarding supervisors perceived as incompetent and abusive

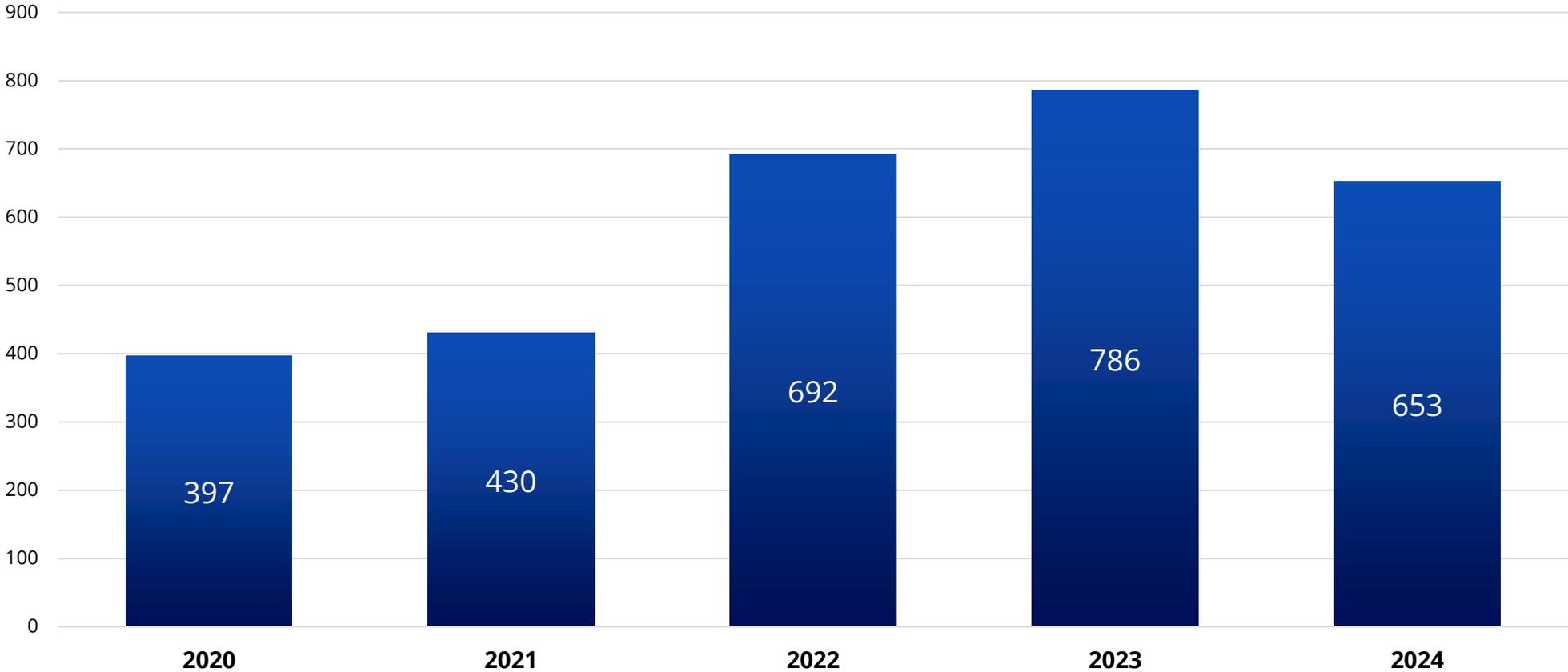
2024 in Figures



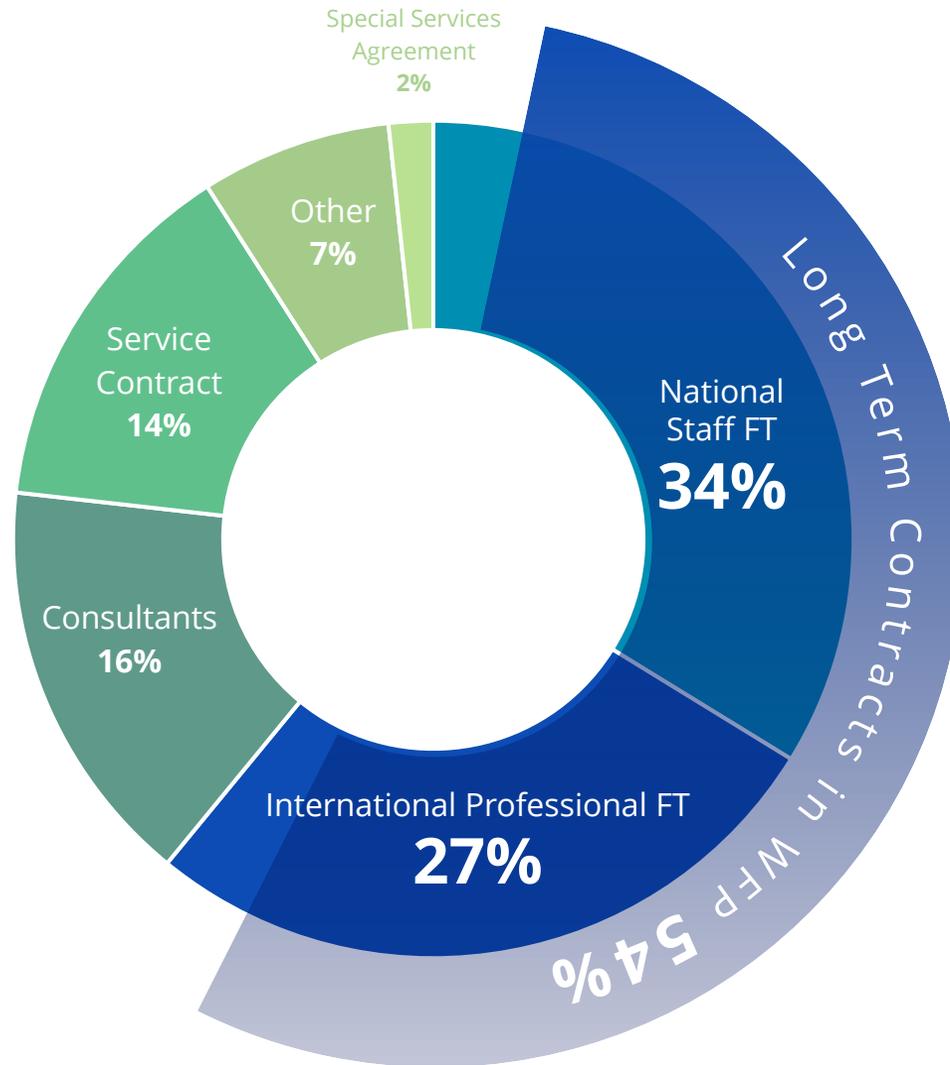
Main Issue Categories – Data Comparison 2021-2024 (%)



Number of Cases 2020-2024



Visitors by Contract Type 2024



- Share of visitors to OBD on FT contracts higher than their share within WFP workforce.
- Employees on FT contracts feel safer to speak up, more willing to address issues.

Building Capacity of WFP's employees 2024



81
trainings to

3,400
employees

Conflict Resolution, Effective
interpersonal Communication

Responsibilities of supervisors to
prevent and address conflict in teams

Giving and Receiving Feedback

Team Interventions and Support 2024



34 COs

Visited

16 TCAs

Involving 350 employees

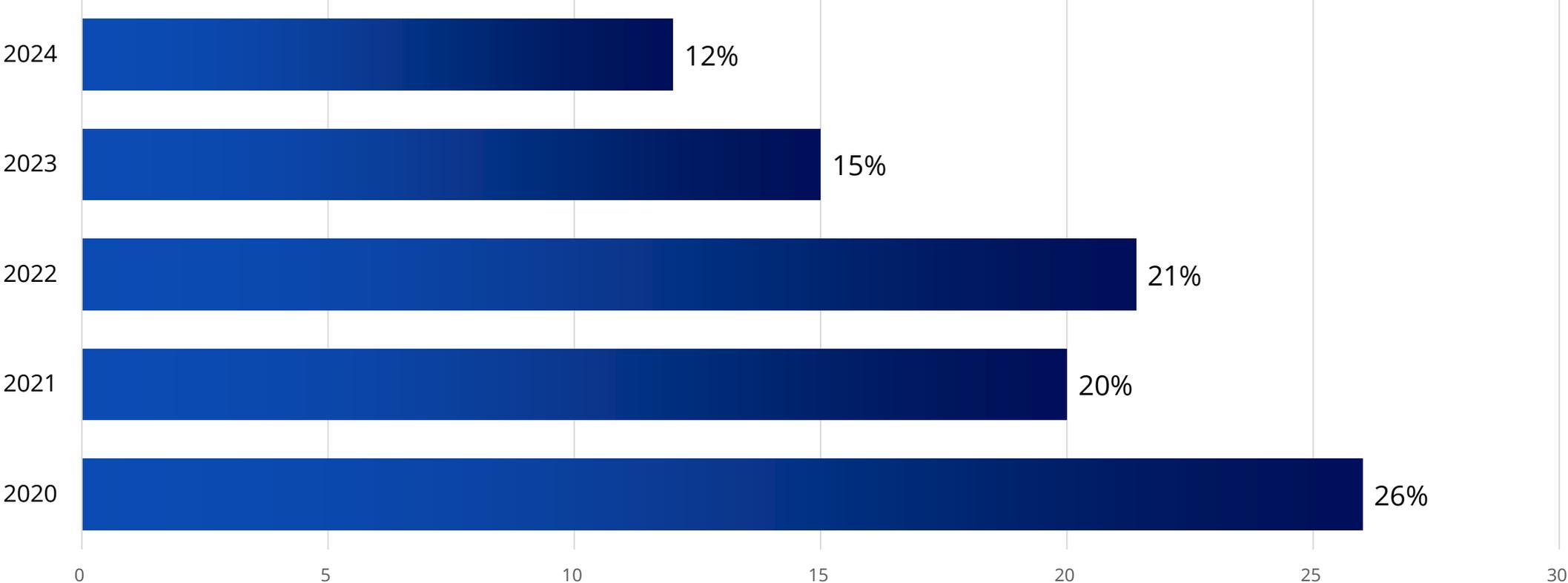
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Mediations

11 Employee
Support
Sessions

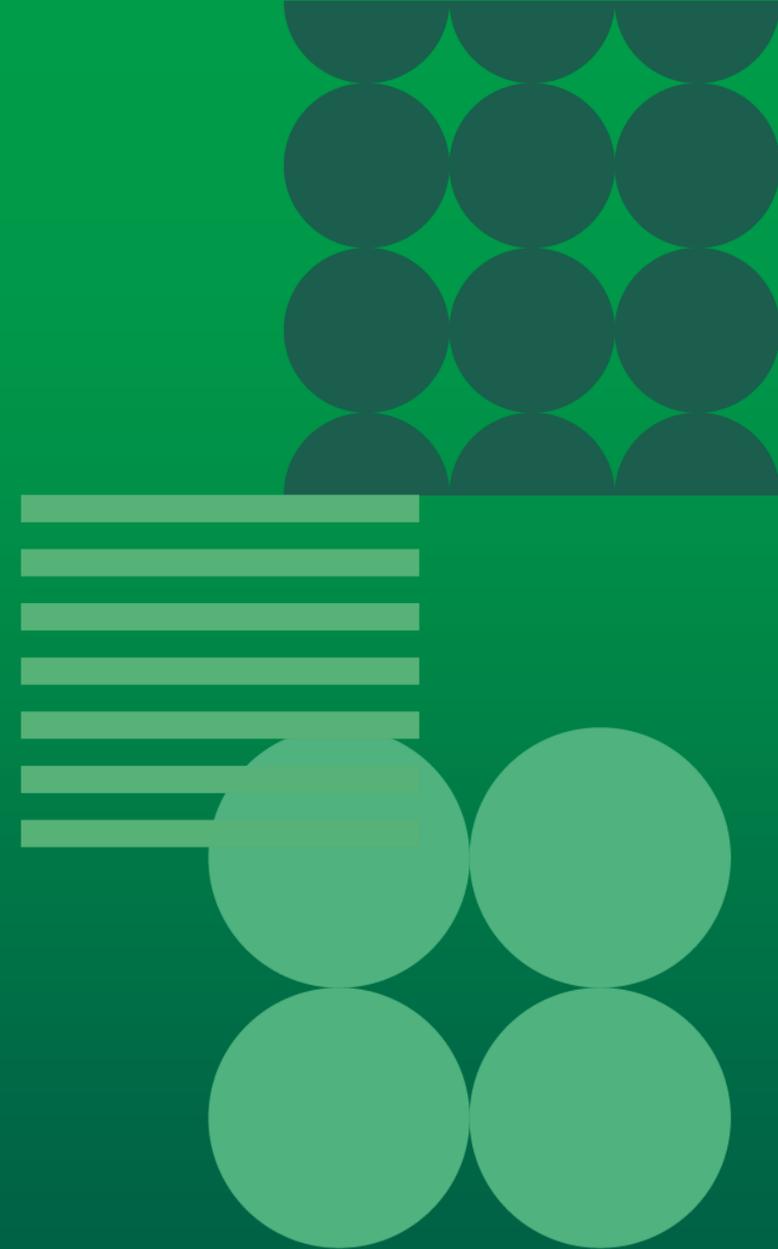
Involving 230 employees

Abusive Conduct Cases out of total caseload 2020-2024 (%)



Making WFP more Effective and Efficient

Advancing Internal Justice



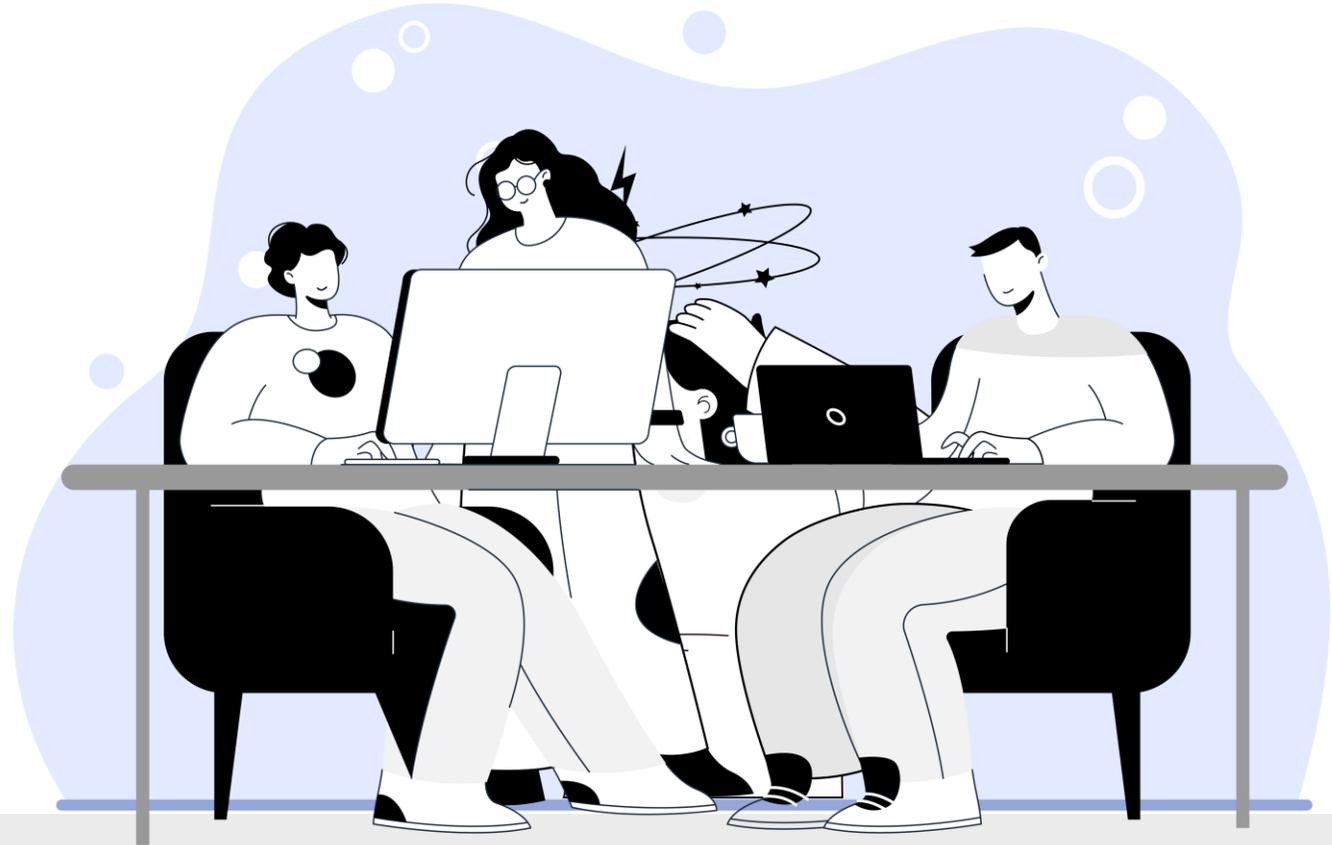
Making WFP more Effective and Efficient

The cost of workplace conflict:

- Financial impact
- Productivity Impact
- Reputational risk

35,86 billion USD / year
Cost of workplace conflict in the UK*

4 hours / week
Average time spent on workplace
conflict by managers in the USA**



* Saundry, University of Sheffield Management School, Urwin, University of Westminster, 2021

** Myers-Briggs, 2022

Advancing Internal Justice at WFP

Enhanced collaboration with Staff Relations, OIGI, Ethics

Informal Conflict Resolution as a cost-saving tool

Increased impact: Joint mission by the Ombuds Office and the Ethics Office to the Ecuador and Peru Country Offices, January 2025

Moving Forward

Ombuds support to employees in current situation:



Implementation
new Mediation
Framework



Drop-in service



Group sessions
for mutual
support



Increased in-
person outreach
in RBs and HQ



Regional
presence

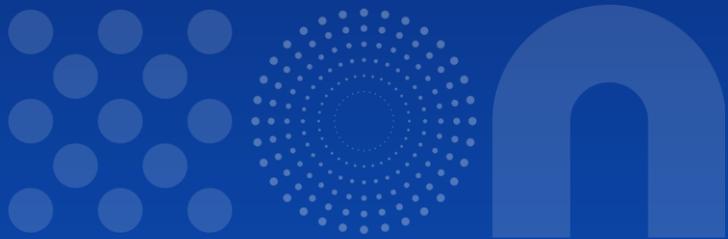


World Food
Programme

OBD

The Ombuds Office

Thank you!



Ombuds@wfp.org

Contacting the Ombuds Office is always a safe first step –
Everybody is welcome with any work-related issue

