



World Food Programme  
Programme Alimentaire Mondial  
Programa Mundial de Alimentos  
برنامج الأغذية العالمي

**Executive Board**  
First regular session  
Rome, 25–27 February 2019

---

Distribution: General	Agenda item 4
Date: 11 January 2019	WFP/EB.1/2019/4-A
Original: English	Annual reports
	For consideration

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

---

## **Annual Report of the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services for 2017**

### **Draft decision\***

The Board takes note of the annual report of the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services for 2017 set out in document WFP/EB.1/2019/4-A.

### **Introduction**

1. The Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services offers its conflict resolution services to WFP employees based on the principles of confidentiality, informality, independence, neutrality and impartiality.
2. This report provides both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the matters brought to the attention of the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services (the Ombudsman Office) during 2017, and highlights of the changes with previous years.

### **2017 at a glance**

- 368 employees contacted the Ombudsman, corresponding to an increase of 71 percent over 2016 (215 employees).
- 776 issues were brought to the Ombudsman, almost double (96 percent) that of 2016 (394 issues).

---

\* 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.

---

### **Focal points:**

Ms G. Kluck  
Director  
Office of the Ombudsman and  
Mediation Services  
tel.: 066513-2024

Ms T. de Jong  
Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services  
tel.: 066513-3517

- 16 percent of employees who contacted the Office of the Ombudsman were headquarters employees.
- 84 percent of employees who contacted the Office of the Ombudsman came from the field, corresponding to an increase of about 20 percent on the previous year (2016: 67 percent). This increase was evenly split among gender the same as the previous year.
- In 2017, the Office of the Ombudsman conducted visits to 27 offices in the field: 3 regional bureaux; 13 country offices, and 11 sub-offices; a fourfold increase from seven visits in 2016. This was due to an increase in travel by the Ombudsman and the hiring of a Conflict Resolution Officer.

### **Respectful workplace advisors in the field**

- There were 105 Respectful Workplace Advisors (RWAs) in 2017, compared to 103 RWAs in 2016 and 94 in 2015.
- In 2017 RWAs were contacted by 215 employees; down 11 percent from 240 employees in 2016.
- One Basic RWA Training was held in Rome for 16 newly nominated RWAs. The Leadership Group, the Executive Board Secretariat, Human Resources, Legal, Inspector General and Oversight and Wellness Departments all contributed to the training programme.
- Since 2012, RWAs have also been Ethics Ambassadors and disseminate information on the Code of Conduct and the Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy (AFAC) on behalf of the Ethics Office.

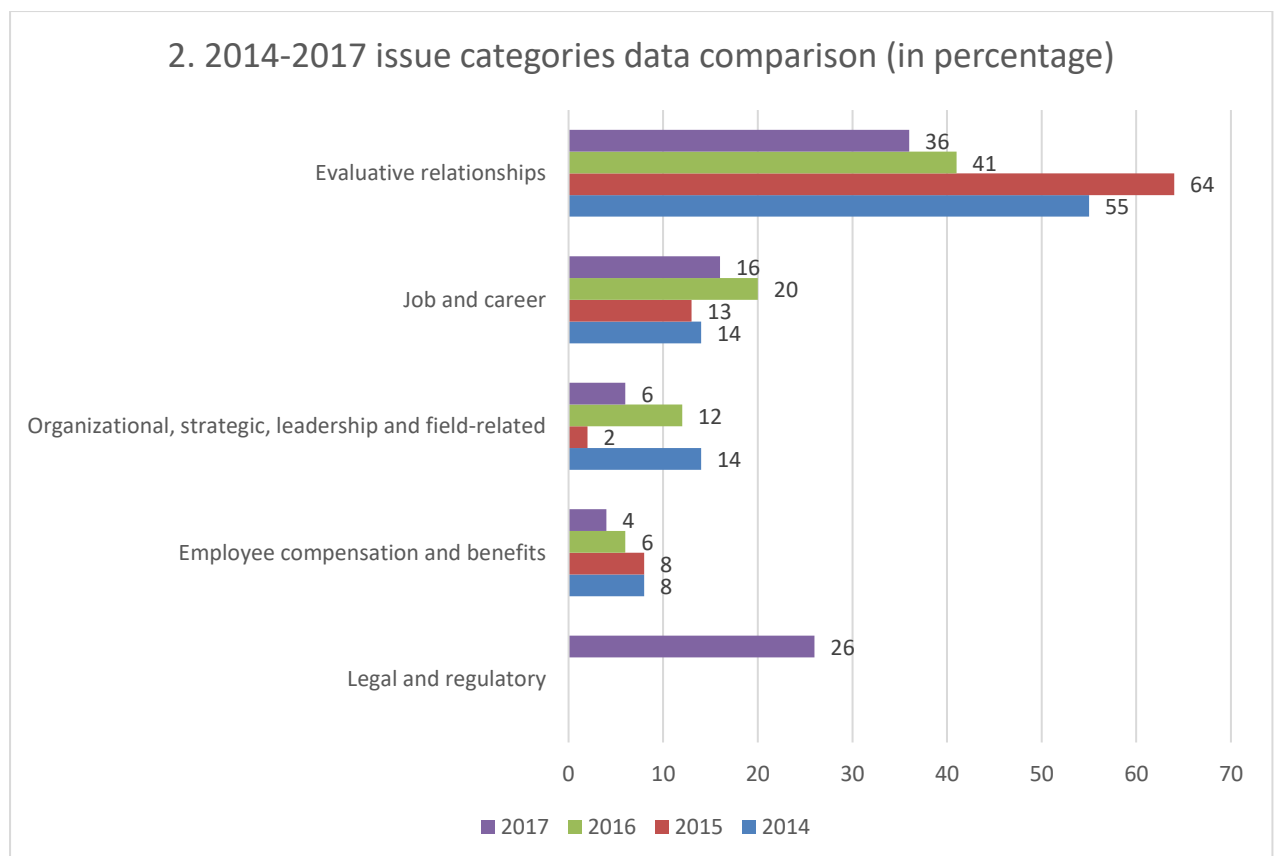
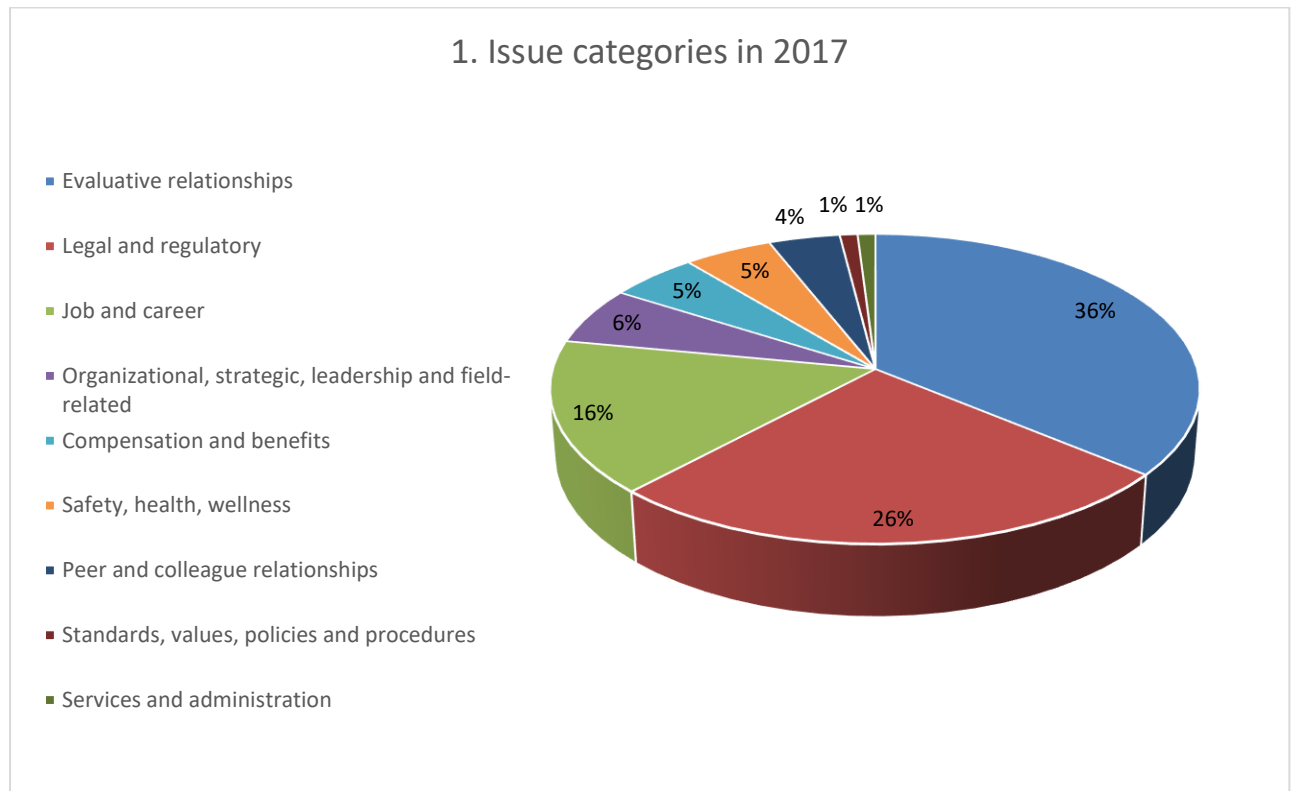
### **Overview of issue categories in 2017**

3. A "case" is when a visitor (any WFP employee) contacts the Ombudsman in relation to a specific situation, conflict or concern.
4. A case comprises one or more "issues". A person could bring a case based on a number of issues, for example, an entitlement not being rewarded; ambiguous policy on that entitlement and the non-responsive behaviour of the entitlement provider.
5. Classification of the issues is undertaken solely by the Ombudsman after careful assessment, using the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) nine main issue categories. Each of these can be broken down into further sub-categories that allow the problem to be better identified.

### **Main categories**

6. The 368 cases brought to the Ombudsman's attention included 776 issues, and 84 percent of employee issues fell into four categories:
  - 1- Evaluative relationships: 36 percent
  - 2- Legal, regulatory, financial and compliance-related: 26 percent
  - 3- Job and career: 16 percent
  - 4- Organizational, strategic, leadership and field-related: 6 percent

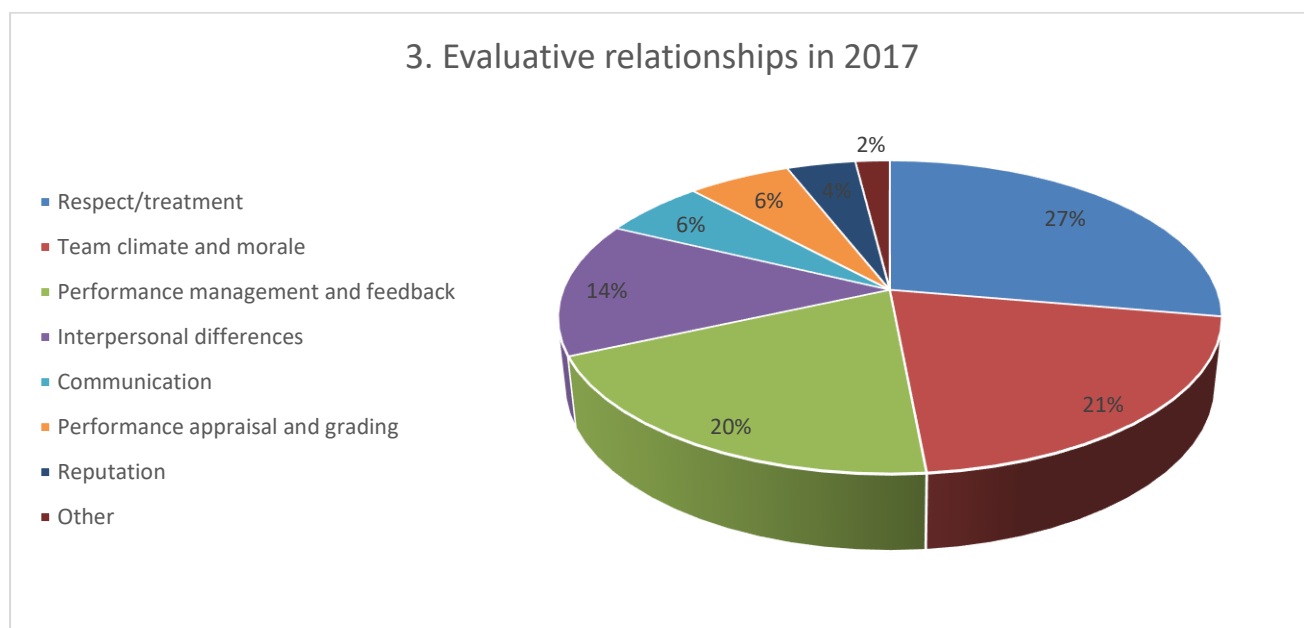
7. The Ombudsman's issue categories:



8. In accordance with IOA standard reporting, the Ombudsman added a new legal and regulatory category in 2017, which includes HSHAPD-related issues.<sup>1</sup>
9. In 2017, the Ombudsman received five percent fewer issues related to evaluative relationships, as compared to the previous year, whereas the organizational, strategic and mission-related category decreased by six percent. The new legal and regulatory category accounted for 26 percent of all issues.

### Evaluative relationships – a closer look

10. Evaluative relationships make up 36 percent of all issues brought to the attention of the Ombudsman. This category covers concerns and issues, as well as conflicts, between employees who are in an evaluative relationship. The category is sub-divided as follows:

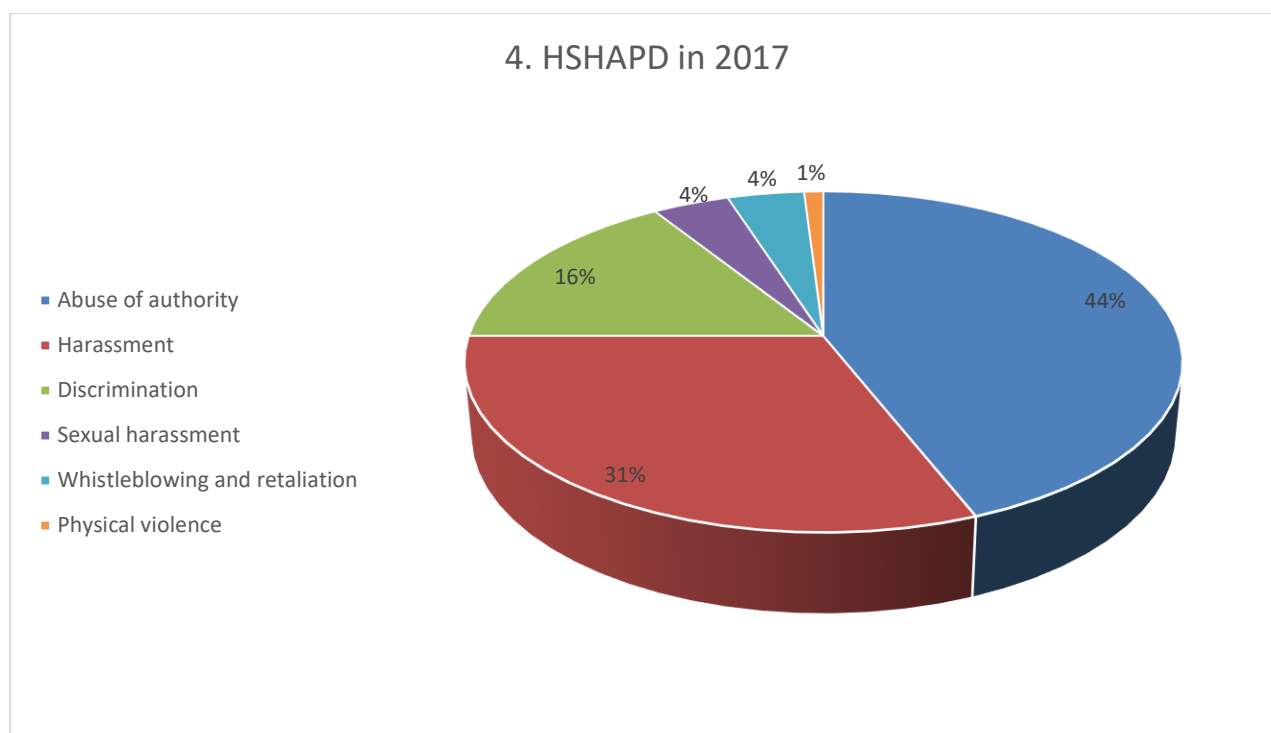


11. The largest sub-issue category, with 27 percent, is respect/treatment, which includes demonstration of a lack of consideration for people including not listening, dismissive or rude behaviour, and unfair or preferential treatment. Team climate and morale is the next highest subcategory at 21 percent, closely followed by performance management and feedback, which includes supervisory effectiveness in performance coaching, and providing feedback and guidance outside the regular performance appraisal.

### Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority and Discrimination (HSHAPD)

12. In 2017, of the 368 cases handled by the Office of the Ombudsman, 27 percent or 101 cases were HSHAPD-related, a two percent increase on 2016, when then the proportion was 25 percent. That said, 2017 saw an increase of 87 percent in the number of HSHAPD cases brought to the Office of the Ombudsman (101 cases up from 54 cases in 2016). Please note that a case represents an employee, and that a case can hold one or more issues.
13. The pie chart below shows the percentages of the various HSHAPD-related sub-categories.

<sup>1</sup> Although this Annual Report refers to 2017, it is based on the Executive Director's Circular OED2018/007 "Protection from Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Abuse of Authority, and Discrimination" that was issued on 1 March 2018, because that was the current circular at the time of issuance of this report.



### The Ombudsman's strategic goals

14. Through its informal conflict resolution services, the Office of the Ombudsman contributes to the "Organizational readiness towards the 2030 Agenda".
15. The six strategic goals are:
  - i) Build awareness that the Office of the Ombudsman is a *Safe Place* to go for *any* category of employee with *any* workplace concern;
  - ii) Emphasize that the Ombudsman also provides services to meet the specific needs of managers and supervisors;
  - iii) Increase efficiency within WFP because through de-escalating conflict and by building conflict-management skills, more time will become available for the WFP mandate;
  - iv) Expand the effectiveness of WFP employees through more harmonious work relations and work climate, creativity and innovation, allowing problem-solving capacities to be unleashed;
  - v) Decrease the reputational risk for WFP as a result of team breakdowns, employee turnover and productivity loss by actively intervening in conflict situations; and
  - vi) Contribute to identifying and providing recommendations to address overarching and systemic issues, while working through an inter-disciplinary approach with others, in particular with HR, OIG, Legal, ETO, Gender, Wellness and Security.

### The Office of the Ombudsman's core pillars

16. The Office of the Ombudsman achieves its six strategic goals through its core pillars of work. These are instrumental in helping individuals and teams strengthen their professional relationship and problem-solving skills, and de-escalating conflict, while supporting WFP and its leadership in redressing systemic issues.
  - i) **One-on-ones:** confidential conversations in person, or by phone, Lync or Skype to assess and identify what the issues are, and explore options to resolve the situation. Issues affecting teams or certain groups can also be brought to the Ombudsman's or RWA's attention.

- ii) **Conflict resolution capacity building:** conflict competencies lie at the core of the success of any organization as they build on a number of essential skills such as listening to understand; dealing with different personalities in a team; effective problem solving; and preventing and de-escalating problems or arguments.
- iii) **Systemic issues and organizational change:** when a concern is raised, the Ombudsman will identify any systemic issues that need to be addressed within the organization and provide recommendations.
- iv) **Mediation:** the Office of the Ombudsman provides confidential mediation services to WFP employees for resolving work-related differences and conflicts whereby the two parties work together towards a resolution to their conflict, assisted by a neutral third party called “the Mediator”.

### **Key systemic issues**

17. The Office of the Ombudsman deducts systemic issues from the conversations it has with employees who contact the Office, and with management and stakeholders who the Office contacts to obtain their insights and reflections. Systemic issues can also be identified through the Ombudsman’s direct observations.
18. The Office of the Ombudsman has through its large number of conversations, the far majority held with employees in the field, a particular window on the organization’s functioning and offers insights that otherwise may not surface. The organization is invited to reflect upon the recommendations presented in this report.

### ***The cost of conflict***

19. The Office of the Ombudsman’s 2016 Annual Report invited WFP to consider the cost of conflict at work. While work-related conflicts are inevitable, the organization could potentially save a myriad of costs if more WFP employees were better equipped to address any work-related conflict<sup>2</sup> in an appropriate and timely manner.
20. How does unresolved conflict affect an organization and how can WFP measure these costs? To answer this question, the Ombudsman refers to Helmut Buss, former Joint Ombudsperson for Funds and Programmes who carried out research on the cost of conflict.<sup>3</sup> Buss argues that the way employees manage conflict can either add to or take away from an organization. Proper conflict management contributes to a positive enabling environment that drives greater performance and innovation. In contrast, conflict avoidance harbours the risk of escalation to the detriment of productivity and morale, among other things.

---

<sup>2</sup> Conflict means challenges such as discord, abrasive management, harassment, including sexual harassment and violence.

<sup>3</sup> Helmut Buss, Controlling Conflict Costs. [http://fpombudsman.org.s195742.gridserver.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Helmut-Buss\\_Controlling-Conflict-Costs-The-Business-Case-of-Conflict-Management-2011.pdf](http://fpombudsman.org.s195742.gridserver.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Helmut-Buss_Controlling-Conflict-Costs-The-Business-Case-of-Conflict-Management-2011.pdf).

**Eight hidden costs of conflicts**

1. Wasted time
2. Lowered job motivation
3. Absenteeism
4. Health costs
5. Loss of skilled employees
6. Reduced quality of decisions
7. Restructuring inefficiencies
8. Presenteeism<sup>4</sup>

*Source: Helmut Buss*

21. It is not easy to calculate the exact cost of conflict for two reasons: it is difficult to establish a causal link between certain costs and a conflict; and it is difficult to quantify all conflict-incurred costs. Conflict-incurred costs range from direct costs (litigation costs) to secondary costs such as productivity cost (value of lost time), continuity cost (the loss of "community" and ongoing relationships) and emotional costs (lowered job motivation and productivity).
22. Furthermore, Buss argues that easy visibility of negative consequences of conflict does not automatically equate to easy measurability of the resulting costs and vice versa. An incident of theft or sabotage is easily measurable, but if not associated with conflict, it remains an invisible, or hidden cost. Other negative consequences of conflict, such as loss of morale, may be apparent, for example, when a whole team is affected – but its cost is difficult to measure.
23. Many indirect or hidden costs are typically overlooked by employers because they are not immediately associated with conflict and are accounted for as part of the normal cost of doing business. Yet it is clear that when conflict persists, productivity suffers: productivity not only declines when valuable time is wasted in badly managed conflict, it decreases further when conflict results in absenteeism and presenteeism. According to Buss, the cost of presenteeism may be much greater than the cost of absenteeism.
24. While the overall cost of conflict may be difficult to measure, certain categories of costs such as turnover costs can be measured or estimated. Tangible turnover costs include advertising costs, interview expenses and training, and time spent bringing new hires up to speed. Intangible costs due to high turnover that may be more difficult to measure include the impact on morale and lowered engagement.
25. Buss cites research that found that managers spend between 30 to 70 percent of their time dealing with employees in conflict, whereas employees spend between 2 to 8 percent of their working hours dealing with conflict. A 2016 survey by UNOMS<sup>5</sup> found that employees spend up to three hours per week dealing with conflict, which is 7.5 percent of a 40-hour workweek.

---

<sup>4</sup> Employees not being productive at work.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services.

### **Unresolved conflict may be a large reducible cost for WFP**

26. Like all organizations, WFP has its own organizational culture. The Ombudsman observes that conflict avoidance is sufficiently prevalent in WFP's organizational culture to be a concern. Where otherwise WFP focuses on accountability and compliance, and develops tools and training to help achieve them, WFP seems at times to forget that conflict is inevitable in the workplace, and insufficiently trains and equips its employees to become competent as well as confident in dealing with conflict.
27. According to Buss, some organizations show an inclination to resolve problems through their hierarchical chain of command, pushing them up the line. Other organizations prefer formal processes, outside the line. These organizations, often unknowingly, encourage avoidance and power-play resolutions, where supervisors and managers shy away from pro-actively engaging in conflict resolution. Consequently, the cost of conflict increases.
28. Apart from this kind of avoidance culture, other obstacles to the timely tackling of conflict include an organizational culture that is task-oriented and prioritizes operational achievements over staff welfare; a lack of recognition when a problem needs attention; a lack of knowledge of what to do in a situation of conflict; a lack of clarity on what is expected from a supervisor in addressing conflict situations, including underperformance; and a lack of accountability, preventing pro-active engagement in conflict resolution.
29. While WFP employees are well versed in working in emergency settings, they could handle conflicts in the workplace more effectively, and as soon as these disagreements take place. Conflict management skills are needed to de-escalate and manage conflicts, to the benefit of, ultimately, WFP's beneficiaries.
30. When conflict is not addressed it affects WFP's productivity, cohesion, continuity and reputation. It also affects WFP employees' ability to respond to challenges. Everyone in WFP needs to be skilled in dealing effectively with conflict, preventing escalation and reducing related costs.

### **Recommendations**

31. In addition to the 2016 recommendations of the Ombudsman regarding the section on cost of conflict:<sup>6</sup>
  1. Determine the underlying reasons for the observed tendency of WFP to avoid conflict.
  2. Create awareness on the cost of conflict to encourage employees to speak up, prevent, intervene, and manage conflict at work;
  3. Include conflict management competencies and people's skills in job profiles;
  4. Assess candidates on their people's skills and capacity to create enabling work environments during recruitment and promotion exercises;
  5. Offer tailor-made conflict skills training to meet all employees' different level of responsibility.

### **Use of short-term contractual arrangements**

32. WFP is challenged with being efficient in a complex and global environment, seeking both flexible and cost-efficient solutions with regard to hiring personnel. This section zooms in on issues related to the use of consultant (CLT) and service contracts (SCs), and provides additional observations to support the recommendation made in the Office of the

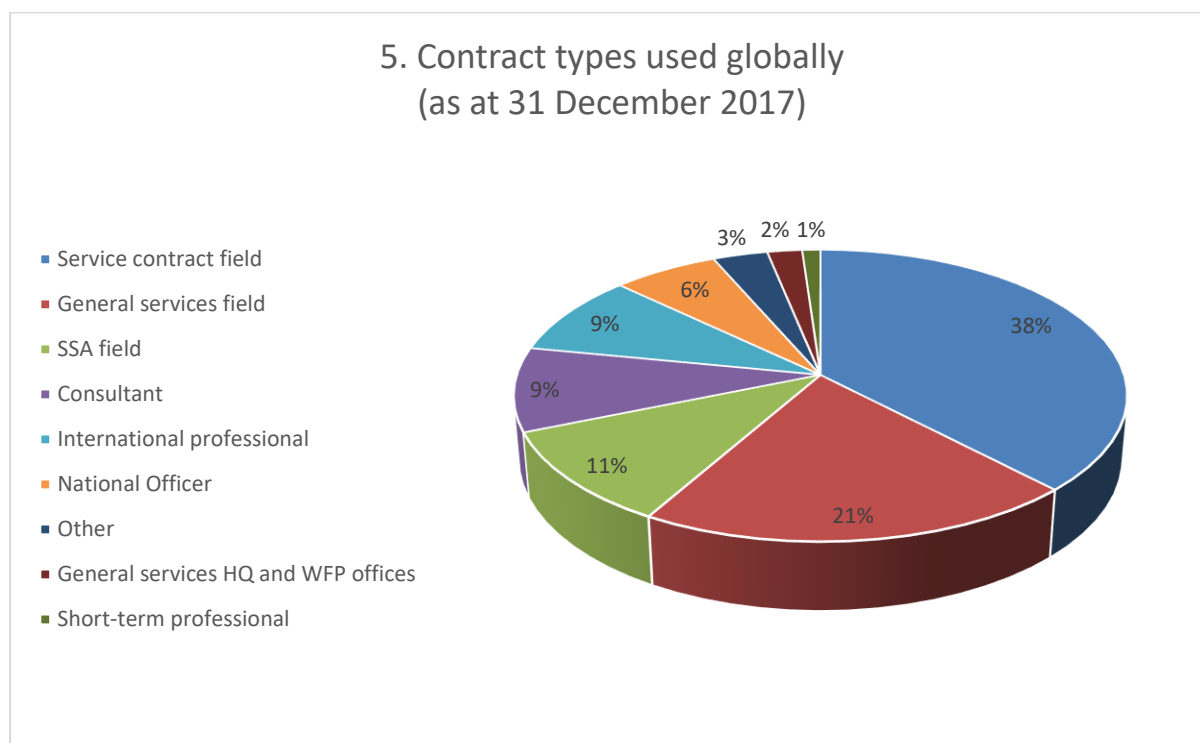
---

<sup>6</sup> Page 6 of the Office of the Ombudsman's Annual Report 2016.



Ombudsman's 2016 Annual Report to reassess the need and criteria for recruiting temporary staff.

33. In 2017, WFP used short-term contracts for 62 percent of its employees<sup>7</sup> (for details on contract types used, see charts 5 to 8). Most frequently used short-term contracts are consultant contracts for internationally recruited employees<sup>8</sup> and service contracts for locally recruited employees. Short-term contracts offer varying degrees of compensation, benefits, entitlements and protection.



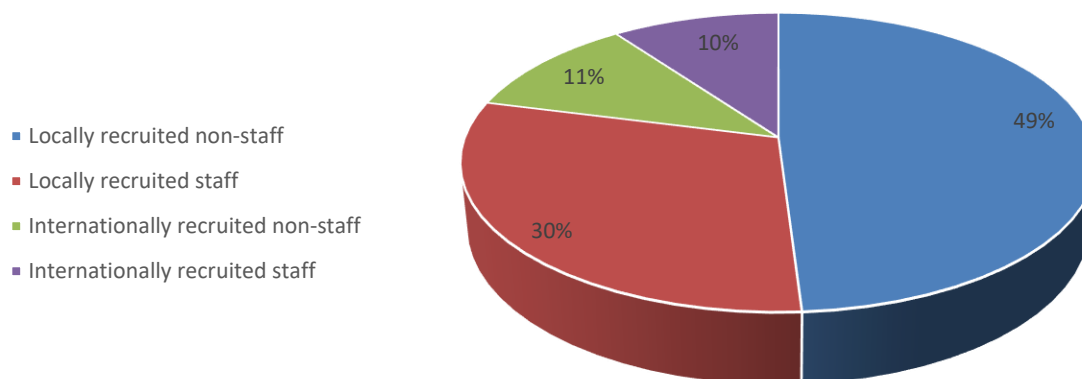
#### **Staff versus non-staff contracts globally**

34. With the exception of short-term professional staff, employees holding short-term contractual modalities are subjected to different conditions of service and are not considered 'staff members'. Staff members comprise: International Professional Staff, Short-Term Professional Staff, JPOs, National Professional Officers and General Service Staff (HQ and field); non-staff employees consist of: International Consultants, United Nations volunteers, Fellowship Holders, Interns, General Service Short-Term, SC holders, Special Service Agreement (SSA) Holders and WFP volunteers. It should be noted that WFP refers to the totality of its personnel as employees.

<sup>7</sup> Based on the HR staffing figures of all WFP employees as at 31 December 2017 (total number of WFP employees stands at 16,218).

<sup>8</sup> 15 percent of consultancies were on a "When Actually Employed" basis as of 31 December 2017.

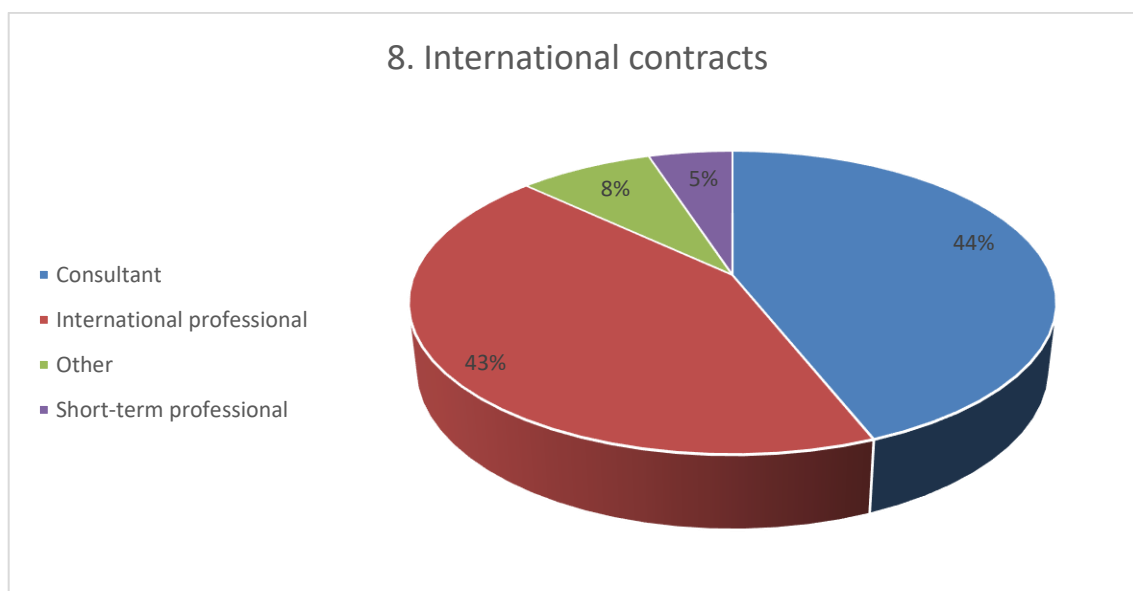
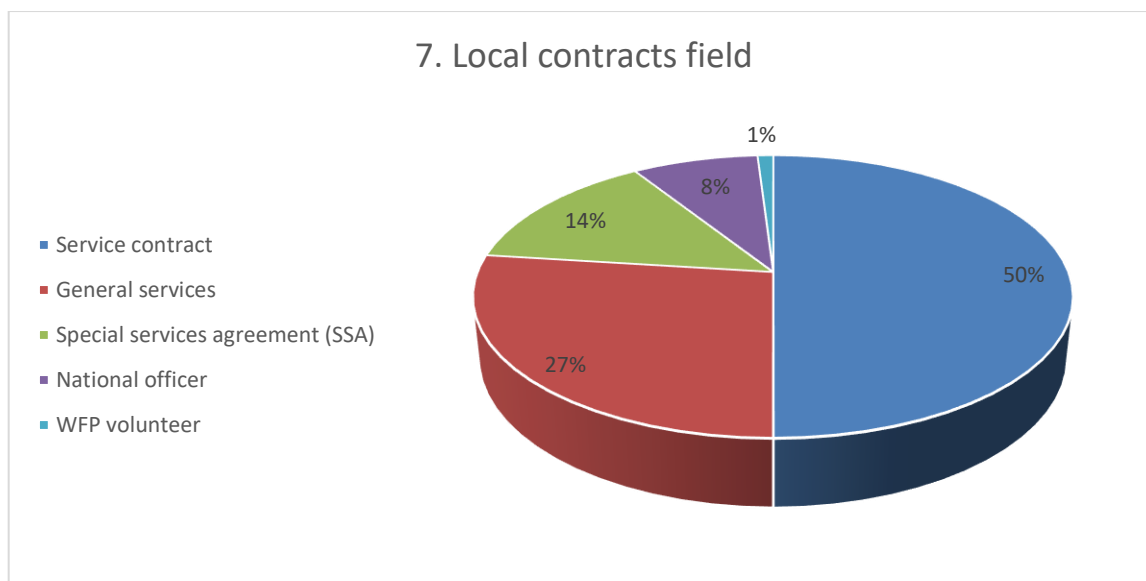
### 6. Staff and non-staff contracts globally (as at 31 december 2017)



#### Improper use of contracts

35. Over one third (approximately 38 percent) of WFP employees hold a **service contract**. As stated in the SC Manual, “the SC is a non-staff contract. It is a legal document between WFP and an individual whose services are contracted”.<sup>9</sup> It is not uncommon for SC holders to serve for many years, exceptionally even up to twenty years, despite the Manual’s guidance that “regional bureaux or country offices should consider use of alternative contractual tools if services are required for a longer time”, and “if services continue for a long time, establishing a fixed-term position should be seriously considered”. This issue was addressed under several former Executive Directors but was never conclusively resolved.
36. In addition to the high number of SC holders in the field (see chart 5), the Ombudsman notes that a limited number of country offices do not have any fixed-term staff among their employees and solely rely on short-term contractual arrangements.

<sup>9</sup>The SC is intended for engaging national personnel under the following conditions: a) for temporary functions determined to be limited and for specific periods such as emergencies, special operations and programme activities with a limited period of time. Appropriate contractual tools should be applied for longer term engagements; or b) For support services that would normally be outsourced to a company but such companies are not available or it is not advisable to do so due to prevailing circumstances, i.e. custodial, security and IT services (SC Manual).



37. While **international consultants** play a key role in supporting WFP to fulfil its mandate, the issuance of consultancies to cover medium to long-term needs, requires careful consideration. Over the past years, the use of consultants has significantly increased: 7 percent compared to 2016, and 46 percent compared to 2014. As a result, in 2017, 44 percent of internationally recruited employees were consultants.<sup>10</sup> In addition to offering flexible contractual arrangements, the hiring of consultants is usually less costly than employing fixed-term employees. The Ombudsman noted that in certain circumstances consultants are hired even if funds for established fixed-term positions are available.
38. Consultant and service contracts do not carry an expectation of extension or renewal. For both types of contracts, minimal justification is necessary for separation. Situations where renewals are frequent and uncertain create job insecurity and may lead to stress and anxiety. It can also lead to an unhealthy competitive environment where people resort to aggressive and at times hostile behaviour to secure their positions, which affects consultants as well as fixed-term employees.

<sup>10</sup> As compared to 43 percent of International Professional Staff (IP) and 48 percent of IP and Short-Term International Professional Staff (STP) combined. Although considered staff members, STP face similar challenges as consultants in terms of their ability to speak up because they are subject to frequent contract renewals.

39. In the case of extension or renewal, consultants, like most other temporary employees, with the exception of SC holders, need to observe a mandatory and unpaid Break-In-Service (BIS), which affects their financial security. Furthermore, given the prevalent use of short-term contracts, BIS requirements put constraints on co-workers and hamper continuity. In addition, it creates extra and burdensome administrative work as the consultant will be disconnected from IT services and will have to re-submit a number of the documents to be rehired. Table 1 gives an overview of BIS requirements.

<b>TABLE 1 - BREAK-IN-SERVICE</b>			
<b>Contract Type</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Break-in-Service</b>	<b>Longer term use</b>
<b>Consultant (CLT)</b>	11 months	1 month	Mandatory BIS of 3 months or more after 4 x 11 months of service
<b>Service contract</b>	From 6 up to 12 months	n/a	Renewable after 12 months - no limit currently
<b>Special Service Agreement</b>	Less than 6 months, may be extended up to 11 months	n/a	May be converted to SC

### **Compensation, benefits and entitlements**

40. Compensation is a frequently cited issue by SC holders. Because these contracts are temporary, remuneration scales do not include a step system. In case of contract renewal, the SC framework does allow for a two-percent increment upon satisfactory evaluation (called 'merit pay') introduced in September 2017. However, merit pay is not automatically granted because it requires the supervisor's recommendation. Furthermore, some countries have different practices in place. SC holders perceive this as a lack of acknowledgement of their efforts, which in some cases is compounded by the fact that SC remuneration scales are not adjusted or implemented in a timely manner.
41. Gender pay gap is a particular concern for female consultants. This is because, in the cases brought to the attention of the Ombudsman, new hires are required to show their former pay cheques, which is a key factor for WFP to determine a salary offer. Therefore, if women were paid less than their male colleagues in their former jobs, their pay gap would be continued in WFP.
42. This pay gap might also be continued should the female consultant obtain an International Professional position, as her fixed term salary could again be based on her previous level of pay.
43. Under the current policy, consultants are not entitled to take annual leave or uncertified sick leave. This means they need to plan their leave during their mandatory BIS or take unpaid leave. It also makes it more difficult for them to attend to family needs.
44. Female consultants used to be especially vulnerable due to the lack of leave entitlements. Before the enhancement of the Medical Coverage for Supernumeraries (MCS) plan, that came into effect on 1 May 2018, female consultants who became pregnant had to resign. Once their contract ended, they were no longer covered by medical insurance nor did they have any guarantee of being rehired, which was a cause of great stress. An overview of benefits and entitlements per contract type is provided in table 2.

<b>TABLE 2 – BENEFITS AND ENTITLEMENTS</b>			
<b>Benefits and entitlements</b>	<b>CLT</b> <i>Employee</i>	<b>SC</b> <i>Independent contractor</i>	<b>SSA</b> <i>Independent contractor</i>
Pension	X	✓	X
Medical insurance	✓	✓	✓
Leave	X	✓	X
Maternity leave	✓ <sup>11</sup>	✓	X
Paternity leave	X	✓	X
Uncertified sick leave	X	✓	X
Certified sick leave	✓	✓	X

45. In addition to creating inequalities, the continuous use of these contracts deprives these employees of what would normally be acquired through an acknowledged employment relationship, such as pension benefits for consultants, or access to redress for SCs.

#### **Redress and internal justice**

46. To settle disputes WFP provides informal and formal options (see table 3). Although SC holders can dispose of informal internal redress for all kinds of disputes, when it comes to formally settling claims or disputes relating to the interpretation, execution, or termination of their SC, they have to engage in binding arbitration under the UNCITRAL<sup>12</sup> Arbitration Rules. This excludes them from the option to lodge an internal formal appeal.

<b>TABLE 3 – REDRESS</b>		
<b>Redress procedures and mechanisms</b>	<b>CLT</b>	<b>SC/SSA</b>
<b><i>Informal dispute resolution</i></b>		
Ombudsman and Mediation Services	✓	✓
Conciliation - external		✓
<b><i>Formal appeal procedure</i></b>		
Appeal to ED	✓	
FAO Appeals Committee	✓	
ILO Administrative Tribunal	✓	
Arbitration - external		✓

47. Accessibility to formal *external* redress is limited by the fact that conciliation – as a mandatory first step – and arbitration procedures are costly and may not be locally available.<sup>13</sup> At present, it is not clear who can act as conciliator or arbitrator or what criteria arbitration is based on, which can easily result in inconsistent outcomes. Nor is it clear how costs of arbitration are paid for. Lastly, the Ombudsman is concerned that by using

<sup>11</sup> Changed as of 1 May 2018.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Commission on International Trade Law

<sup>13</sup> Approximately two percent of SC holders have initiated arbitration over the last five years.

arbitration, systemic issues such as abuse of power and sexual harassment risk going under the radar because arbitration does not generate jurisprudence.

### Consequences

48. The organization's use of short-term contracts for lengthy periods of time is a systemic cause for inequalities that can lead to demotivation and loss of morale, workplace conflict, and to abuse of power. These negative consequences may not always be recognized as such. Inequality accentuates vulnerability, power differences, and could possibly undermine internal cohesion and harmony.
49. The Ombudsman is particularly concerned with the apparent silence of short-term employees, including short-term professional staff. Such employees are bound to keep a low profile or choose to remain silent on certain issues because they fear repercussions when their contract is up for extension or renewal, or when they aspire to a fixed-term position.
50. The Ombudsman is further concerned that having a large number of employees who, due to their contractual status, appear to be less inclined to speak up, could stifle the exchange of ideas, prevent learning and feedback opportunities, and hinder innovation and organizational development.
51. When individual interests are felt to be at odds with the interests of WFP, people may seek alternative ways or opportunities to safeguard their interests. For example, the Ombudsman observed that talented employees have looked for opportunities elsewhere and left WFP when they found fixed-term contracts with other United Nations agencies or NGOs.
52. The various issues stemming from the use of temporary contracts may ultimately impact the effectiveness and productivity of the organization. This is also acknowledged by the International Labour Organization in their report entitled: "The employment relationship" (2006) as well as the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) in their report on the use of non-staff personnel (2014).<sup>14</sup> The JIU Inspectors state that the impact of the misuse of non-staff is multi-dimensional and affects staff and non-staff as well as the organizations concerned:

*"Staff and non-staff morale is affected by the improper use of non-staff contractual modalities (...) Organizations are also affected by the misuse of non-staff personnel, as they face reputational risks, high turnover, high administrative overheads, the lack of a stable and motivated workforce, a potential increase in fraud or corruption cases as well as a potential increase in legal challenges."*

### Recommendations (cont.):

6. Establish clear criteria for issuing short-term contracts: who should get which contract, under which circumstances, and for how long? And ensure better compliance with these criteria.
7. Systematize merit pay for SC holders upon satisfactory evaluation.
8. Improve SC holders' access to formal redress.
9. Ensure equal pay for female and male consultants. Determining the salary levels for the work to be undertaken plays an important role to achieve this.
10. Reconsider the usefulness and the length of the mandatory BIS for consultants given its disruptive effect on the employee, colleagues and the organization.
11. Use funds for fixed-term positions to hire fixed-term employees rather than hiring consultants.

---

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.unjiu.org/sites/www.unjiu.org/files/jiu\\_document\\_files/products/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU\\_REP\\_2014\\_8\\_Final.pdf](https://www.unjiu.org/sites/www.unjiu.org/files/jiu_document_files/products/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU_REP_2014_8_Final.pdf).

12. Enable employees' voices and mitigate 'silencing' factors by promoting empowering leadership skills that enhance two-way communication, feedback, job performance, innovation and motivation.

### **Leadership – zooming in**

53. At the core of any organization are the qualities and competencies of its leadership. The values that leadership holds, their behaviour and their skills and competencies are key to creating cohesion, trust, and a thriving workplace. Leadership skills are not easy to acquire however.
54. When discussing leadership qualities, this report will specifically look into abusive leadership and abuse of authority or power, which was identified as a key systemic issue for WFP in the 2016 Annual Report of the Office of the Ombudsman.
55. Abusive leadership can be very damaging to the organization and its employees, although it is often difficult to detect for the supervisors and peers of the abusive manager, as it generally consists of a pattern of behaviour rather than clearly identifiable stand-alone actions. Abusive management often gradually leaves its mark on others, and as such it is difficult to pinpoint this behaviour as abusive conduct. Furthermore, if a story of abuse at work is told, the story regularly fails to make an impression.
56. Most abusive managers are not aware of the impact of their management style on others and therefore they are not aware of the consequences either; they might not intend to be abusive at all. It is also true that employees vary in their degree of susceptibility to abusive behaviour, and this depends on several factors, such as their contract status. Nevertheless, generally abusive management affects a number of employees over time.<sup>15</sup>

### **Interpersonal skills as essential leadership skills**

57. What happens if interpersonal issues at work are swept under the carpet, either because no one wants to deal with them, it is thought unnecessary, or because there is a lack of relevant skills? What happens if abrasive or abusive management is not addressed? What is the real cost to our employees and to WFP?
58. First, employees are bound to experience a degree of demoralization, frustration, anxiety and stress. Ultimately, abusive management costs WFP a lot of money. The cost of lost productivity; time spent on worrying and dealing with conflict; cost of turnover; cost of employees not speaking up; and thus the cost of lost opportunities and lost ideas to become a better organization.
59. WFP employees need to work efficiently and respectfully with others, many of whom have totally different responsibilities, backgrounds, objectives and areas of expertise. No matter who we work with, no matter how good a team player we think we are, our supervisors and colleagues will sometimes challenge us, our beliefs, our habits, our perceptions, and how we are doing our work. Any one of these challenges could result in disagreements and ultimately, in conflict and discord.
60. Therefore, being able to manage relationships at work is an essential part of being an effective, contributing employee, and even more so for supervisors and managers who

---

<sup>15</sup> The term «abusive» is used to mean abuse of authority as per Executive Director's Circular No. OED2018/007. Although this Annual Report refers to 2017, it is based on the Executive Director's Circular OED2018/007 "Protection from Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Abuse of Authority, and Discrimination" that was issued on 1 March 2018, because that was the current circular at the time of issuance of this report.

are responsible for others. As such, managing work relations is key to creating an enabling and harmonious work climate, and therefore a key leadership skill.

61. Leadership skills need to be constantly practised and reflected upon. When employees are willing and able to reflect on their behaviour; on the impact that behaviour has on others; and to personally grow, the organization will be better able to build resilient teams that bring about positive change.
62. Interpersonal skills are leadership skills that need to be taken seriously as key competences for all WFP employees and especially for those in mid- and senior level positions. WFP needs to become more alert and responsive to those instances where "getting the job done" come at a too high cost. Getting the job done through the empowerment of employees working together is rewarding for everyone involved: the organization, the manager and the employees in the manager's team, and ultimately for the beneficiaries.

#### **Recommendations (cont.):**

13. Prevent abuse of authority. This requires creating awareness and a common understanding of what abusive management is; and of its patterns and impact. This is for the benefit of both the abusive manager or supervisor and the employee on the receiving end.
14. Define what people's skills are required for promotion into positions of management and leadership; and provide structured interventions to employees in those positions or those earmarked to become managers who appear to have insufficient skills.
15. Strengthen a culture of respect and dignity within WFP: hold conversations and dialogues about what a respectful workplace means for all categories of employees, including managers; identify what employees need from WFP, and what each individual will bring to create such a workplace, while referring to the United Nations core values of integrity, respect for diversity, and professionalism, as well as to the WFP Code of Conduct.
16. Address abusive management before it escalates to a formal complaint or investigation. Often there is awareness that a problem around management exists, but reluctance or hesitation to intervene. The burden of bringing abusive management to the attention of the organization should not exclusively lie with the individual who is on the receiving end.
17. Establish a standard process to address instances of abusive managerial behaviour in an effective way, especially when the manager in question is unaware of the impact of their behaviour; there are appropriate, tried and tested assessment tools and approaches available.

#### **RWA Programme**

63. WFP's Respectful Workplace Advisor (RWA) Programme has been active since 2007. In essence, this Programme is a network of employees that serve as focal points for the Office of the Ombudsman in the regional bureaux, country and sub-offices. As such, the RWA Programme enhances the access to informal conflict resolution by all WFP employees who are based in the field.
64. As focal points of the Office of the Ombudsman on the ground, their role is to expand the Office's outreach and to reinforce informal dispute resolution in WFP country offices. They also act as a confidential and neutral sounding board, as well as a valuable source of information for employees with regard to accessing appropriate informal and formal



dispute resolution services when they experience a workplace conflict. An RWA will not act on behalf of the employee in question, mediate or intervene in other ways.

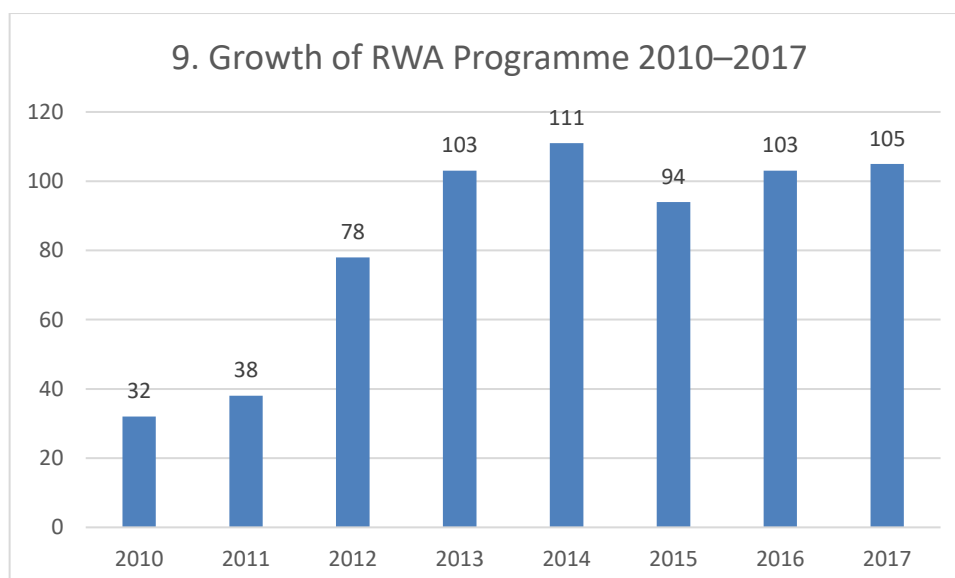
65. RWAs are nominated by their colleagues through a confidential nomination process and take on this role voluntarily in addition to their regular responsibilities. To be able to deal with visitors and their issues, the RWA is required to obtain a proper understanding of the formal and informal conflict resolution systems in WFP, and of HR procedures and policies.
66. The benefit for the organization is that by giving the skills to local employees and a means to practice conflict resolution, RWAs acquire valuable work-related skills, help to prevent and de-escalate conflict, assist in forming better teams that become more resilient in dealing with conflicts and ultimately, RWAs and team members become better leaders

### **RWA-handled cases**

67. In 2017, the 105 RWAs handled 214 cases involving a total of 304 issues. Their caseload saw a slight decrease from previous years: in 2016, 103 RWAs received 240 cases, in 2015, 94 RWAs handled 272 cases, whereas in 2014, 111 RWAs received 180 cases.
68. In 2017, the most common concerns WFP employees raised with RWAs were peer and colleague relationships (23%), job and career (16%), service and administration (13%), closely followed by evaluative relationships.

### **RWA Programme Manager**

69. The Office of the Ombudsman RWA Programme Manager provides guidance to the RWAs individually, facilitates the monthly teleconferences, and supports the Ombudsman in strategic matters as well as individual cases.
70. During the teleconferences, RWAs have an opportunity to confidentially exchange best practices and share relevant WFP developments within their regions or countries.
71. In July 2017, a basic RWA training for 16 newly nominated RWAs was held in WFP headquarters.
72. The year 2017 ended with a total of 105 RWAs. The Office of the Ombudsman is committed to having one RWA per country, with additional RWAs for (sub-) offices with 100 employees or more.
73. Chart 9 shows how the RWA Programme developed in the organization from 2010 up to 2017.



**RWA challenges:**

- i) Limited availability of private spaces to discuss confidential concerns, as shared and open workspace are the norm within WFP. One country office has provided a dedicated “RWA meeting room”, to alleviate this problem.
- ii) Limited time available to exercise the RWA role: some RWAs cannot fully be available for their colleagues due to heavy workloads. This can be due to a lack of staffing resources or on some occasions, they lack their manager’s support to be able to contribute as RWA.

**RWAs’ dual role**

- 74. The RWAs are also Ethics Ambassadors. In this role, they create awareness of the WFP Code of Conduct along with its policies on retaliation and whistleblowing. The Ethics Office Annual Report provides more details on this aspect of the RWAs’ work.
- 75. During 2017, a total of 31 RWAs participated in a “train-the-trainer” session on Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption (AFAC) through several conference calls conducted by the Ethics Office. As a result, the RWAs conducted several training sessions in eight country offices and 51 sub-offices, training 982 WFP employees directly, with another 490 employees receiving AFAC training material electronically.

**Looking ahead****#MeToo movement**

- 76. In October 2017, the #MeToo movement began to expose sexual harassment and assault in Hollywood, then quickly broadened its focus to include other sectors. #MeToo empowered women and men to share their experience of sexual harassment and assault at work. As sexual harassment and violence also happen in humanitarian aid, per the Ombudsman’s 2016 Annual Report, the Office of the Ombudsman will closely follow this movement.

**Issuance of the new HSHAPD circular**

- 77. The new circular for Protection from Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Abuse of Authority and Discrimination (HSHAPD), initiated by the Ombudsman in early 2017, was issued in March 2018. The circular is likely to lead to a greater number of employees coming to the Office of the Ombudsman (and elsewhere) with related issues.

**Inter-Divisional Standing Committee on HSHAPD**

- 78. This circular led to the establishment of the Inter-Divisional Standing Committee on HSHAPD.<sup>16</sup> with the purpose of coordinating and responding to HSHAPD-related matters. The Committee members are the Directors of Human Resources, the Legal Office, the Ethics Office, the Office of the Ombudsman, and the Inspector General.

**Global Staff Survey 2018**

- 79. The last Global Staff Survey was conducted in April 2018, and the Office of the Ombudsman will be available for those directors and staff committees that wish to have a sounding board or advice on the outcomes.

**The Executive Board Bureau**

- 80. The Ombudsman has been invited to meet informally with the Executive Board Bureau in early 2018, to present its 2016 Annual Report and welcomes the opportunity to highlight the main observations of that year.

---

<sup>16</sup> Executive Director’s Circular OED2018/007.

**The Executive Board**

81. The Ombudsman presented its 2016 Annual Report to the Executive Board in June 2018, as per the JIU recommendations in their 2015 Report. The Ombudsman's 2017 Annual Report will be presented to the Executive Board in February 2019.

**Capacity of the Office of the Ombudsman**

82. The Office of the Ombudsman has not seen a staff increase since its inception in 2005. Given the continuous increase in the number of cases and activities, the Office has resubmitted its request for additional funding for more staff.

**Respectful Workplace Advisors**

83. Under the guidance of the new RWA Network Manager, the status and tenure of the current RWAs will be assessed to map exactly who is on board, since when, and where the gaps are.
84. The RWA nomination processes will be run in those countries that require new or additional RWAs. It is expected that about 30-40 new RWAs will be needed to meet the goal of one RWA in every country office with 50 or more employees, with additional RWAs in those-country offices where there are around 200 employees or more, and an RWA for each sub-office of about 100 employees.

**Abuse of power**

85. The Ombudsman is committed to working with key stakeholders such as managers, HR and the Ethics Office, to reduce the incidence and the impact of abuse of power. Cultural change is necessary to achieve this and is something that requires a broad and consistent effort across WFP.

**Acronyms used in the document**

AFAC	Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy
BIS	break-in-service
CLT	Consultant
HSHAPD	Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Abuse of Authority and Discrimination
IOA	International Ombudsman Association
IP	International Professional Staff
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
RWA	Respectful Workplace Advisors
SC	service contracts
SSA	Special Service Agreement