

## TOOL 4.13

### Raising Awareness and Communication of GBVH Commitments and Approaches

- » **GOAL:** Provides information on how to improve employee awareness through training and everyday reminders
- » **TARGET UNITS:** Executive Board, Senior Management, Communications and Public Relations, Human Resources, and Unions

It is important that employees are aware of what action they can take if they witness, hear about, or experience workplace violence and harassment. To support this, companies must clearly communicate to employees and communities about the actions they have taken around gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH).

However, raising awareness and communicating about GBVH will also create expectations about a company's response, so GBVH-awareness raising initiatives should start only when the company is ready to accept disclosures and support survivors by completing the actions associated with **TOOLS 4.9–4.12** in this Tool Suite. In particular, it is important that the company has policies and procedures in place and the Respectful Workplaces focal points/contact team are well-trained and resourced.

Awareness-raising materials should be co-designed with select employees to ensure that they are appropriate, meaningful, and effective. Ultimately, communication activities should not only raise awareness, but also enhance company accountability for addressing GBVH.

In developing communication materials, consider including information about the following:

- Definitions and examples of workplace bullying and harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), and domestic and sexual violence (DSV)
- The Workplace Behavior Spectrum, which demonstrates how behavior falls on a spectrum and that self-reflection and action can move the company culture to be more respectful (see Figure 4A in **TOOL 4.9**)
- Impact of GBVH on the individual, business, and community
- Laws relevant to workplace bullying and harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse, and domestic and sexual violence
- Support and protective services available in the community for survivors and perpetrators of workplace violence and harassment

- › When raising awareness about support services and protective services for sexual exploitation and abuse and domestic and sexual violence, consider including information about medical and psychosocial support, counseling, emergency accommodation, police and legal protection, and welfare services
- › Some of these services may also apply for more severe forms of sexual harassment, and counseling may also apply for bullying
- The company's Respectful Workplaces policy and procedures (see the guidelines and sample policy in **TOOL 4.12**), including the names and contact details for the contact team, and
- Any mandatory reporting requirements.

It is important that all genders<sup>86</sup> are included in awareness-raising activities, as workplace violence and harassment can adversely affect women, men, children, and those who do not identify as male or female. Certain forms of violence, such as sexual harassment, SEA, and DSV, are often gender-based and predominantly affect women and girls and those who do not conform to gender norms.

- Ensure that communications materials are written in a language which employees understand. In addition, consider providing information in various formats including online and offline, written materials, and visual and verbal explanations.
- Provide regular policy reminders and updates. For example, provide reminders of expected behaviors, policies, and any updates at the commencement of employment or during induction and at least annually during professional development, staff training days, or any other suitable occasion.
- Regularly engage employees in short scenario-based training to help them develop the skills to raise issues if they witness, hear about, or experience workplace violence and harassment.
- Invite external specialists to give presentations.

There are a few golden rules when it comes to raising awareness for respectful workplaces:

- **Treat your employees as allies.** Employees will respond better if you ask them to help you to prevent and respond to workplace violence and harassment than if you treat them as potential perpetrators.
- **Link your initiatives to company values.** Having company values that link to the work on GBVH and Respectful Workplaces will help your employees understand what the company stands for, as well as their responsibilities and rights.

<sup>86</sup> A person's gender identity may be the same as or different from their birth-assigned sex beyond the binary framework of male and female.

**FIGURE 4B | Example of Respectful Workplaces Awareness Raising Campaign**



Source: IFC Respectful Workplaces Program

### GBVH communications strategy

A communication strategy on GBVH needs to outline the target audience, the context of the issue, the intended outcomes, the key messages, the preferred medium (some options are outlined below), and the preferred messenger(s) for the communication activities. It is also important to allocate sufficient resources and staff time or experts to the rollout of the communication strategy.

Approaches to raise awareness and enhance communications can include (but are not limited to):

**A series of micro-trainings to be delivered through 10-minute Toolbox Talks:**

A key to communicating around issues of GBVH is breaking the issue into key topics and discussion points so that supervisors and staff can talk about the issue at events such as Toolbox Talks<sup>87</sup>. Topics could include, for example, key definitions and terms of GBVH, highlights of policies, ways to disclose incidents, support available to survivors, etc.

<sup>87</sup> A Toolbox Talk is an informal group discussion that focuses on a particular safety issue at the workplace. For more information, see: Harvard University's [Toolbox Talks](#).

**Onboarding video for new employees:** An onboarding video can be used as a training and communication tool which explains the company commitments on GBVH and walks the new employee through the policies and procedures in place. It is critical that this video focuses on the company values and also incorporates key elements of company culture to orient the employee. It can feature leadership and staff interviews, document the company journey, and highlight progress made on GBVH at the workplace, such as changes in awareness, employee wellbeing, etc.

**Posters or informational pamphlets at the workplace:** One way for companies to enhance communication is to put up posters or distribute pamphlets at the workplace and regional offices. The messaging should be easy to understand (e.g., minimize use of jargon), meaningful to the person receiving it, seen by the intended audience, and memorable. Materials used to raise awareness on GBVH initiatives at the company must not use images that could be upsetting to employees, especially survivors.

**Social media campaigns:** Social media is an effective tool to mobilize action, create dialogue, and foster discussions. Companies can leverage social media by developing content (e.g., WhatsApp images or cartoons, Twitter and other social media content) that can be shared by and with senior leadership and employees in the organization (see an example in Figure 4B, above). Companies need to realize that social media campaigns are most effective when they are embedded in other activities such as face-to-face and on-the-ground activities. An overreliance on social media will not be effective beyond some initial public relations<sup>88</sup>. With all communication activities, and especially larger campaigns, it is recommended to test the content and messaging with a smaller sub-group before launch.

**GBVH webinar or in-person all staff trainings:** There may be an identified need to roll out webinars and further coaching to take a deeper dive into issues and update the understanding of key GBVH concepts and company procedures. If an external expert is hired for this engagement, collaboration with the company's HR department will be essential.

<sup>88</sup> Partners for Prevention, "[Using social media for the prevention of violence against women](#)," Bangkok, Thailand: Partners for Prevention, 2013.