

ethics office



code of ethics





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1. unrwa mission statement

The mission of the UNRWA is to help Palestine refugees achieve their full potential in human development under the difficult circumstances in which they live.

In line with this mission, the Agency works towards five strategic outcomes:

- (a) *Palestine refugees' rights under international law are protected and promoted;*
- (b) *Palestine refugees' health is protected and disease burden is reduced;*
- (c) *School-age children complete quality, equitable and inclusive basic education;*
- (d) *Palestine refugees' capabilities are strengthened for increased livelihood opportunities;*

and

- (e) *Palestine refugees are able to meet their basic human needs of food, shelter, and environmental health.*



2. introduction

Ethical behaviour in the workplace is essential for us to deliver effective and efficient services to beneficiaries. An unethical workplace culture will have a negative impact on everyone. Focusing on the Agency's mission and on meeting the needs of beneficiaries is a feature of an organization that has a culture of accountability. We must advance the Agency's mission instead of focusing on individual achievements.

In a culture of accountability, there is no expectation to have a rule for every situation. Rather, shared values guide decision-making and serve as the moral compass that informs our actions as new situations unfold. Ethically informed decision-making is facilitated by the Agency's clear values.

We should always bear in mind that how each of us behaves will determine our relationship with beneficiaries, donors, partners and colleagues, and impact the Agency's reputation overall. Even one unethical act can undermine the Agency's mission.

Organizational culture is something that we shape together. It demonstrates who we are as an Agency, what we stand for, and how we achieve results.

2.1. applicability of this code of ethics

This Code of Ethics is a resource designed to provide all UNRWA personnel with a general understanding of the expectations for our ethical behaviour. It is intended to help us develop and maintain a shared commitment to, and appreciation for, our organizational values and a culture that puts serving Palestine refugees first, as part of the overall mission of the United Nations.

This resource is available for everyone to read, including personnel, our partners, and beneficiaries. All personnel are expected to read it and to be guided by it in the course of their day-to-day activities with the Agency, whether when at work or outside of work. Managers may use this Code in discussions with their teams. Any interested person may read it to better understand how we, as UNRWA personnel, work towards the successful achievement of our mission.

Sharing and discussing this Code widely will increase knowledge and awareness of the expectations for our behaviour, thus reaffirming our commitment and improving our own accountability.

This Code reinforces UNRWA's regulatory framework, values, and guiding principles by offering more detailed guidance and advice on how to conduct ourselves ethically in relation to UNRWA, our beneficiaries, colleagues, partners, and donors.



Throughout the Code of Ethics, you will find references to the specific rules and policies that form the basis of the standards of conduct. They are referred to as the 'regulatory framework.' Below are some of the foundational regulatory documents:

references

- UN Charter
- Standards of Conduct of International Civil Service (2013)
- UNRWA, Area Staff Regulations (2018)
- UNRWA, Area Staff Rules (2018)
- UNRWA, Area Staff Personnel Directives
- UNRWA, International Staff Regulations (2018)
- UNRWA, International Staff Rules (2017)
- UNRWA, Financial Regulations, (2012, rev. 2013)



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3. united nations core values and unrwa's guiding principles

3.1. united nations core values

Values are fundamental belief systems that guide our behaviour. As international civil servants working within the United Nations (UN) system, we align ourselves with those values that are enshrined in the UN Charter and the Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service.

These are:

- Fundamental Human Rights
- Dignity and Worth of the Human Person
- Equal Rights

All that we do must be guided by:

- Professionalism
- Integrity
- Respect for diversity

This Code is a reiteration of these values and principles, and the expectations for UNRWA personnel. It is designed to help you understand not only the expectations for your own conduct, but also the reasons why your commitment to meeting these expectations is so important to UNRWA's mission.

references

- UN Charter
- General Assembly Resolution A/RES/46/182 (1991)
- General Assembly Resolution A/RES/58/114 (2004)



3.2. unrwa's guiding principles

UNRWA's guiding principles put the core values of the United Nations into action. They set forth the ways we must behave to realize those values.



For example, the UN value of fundamental human rights is reflected in UNRWA's commitment to humanity, and our work protecting the rights of Palestine refugees.

Dignity and worth of the human person dictate that we do not commit or tolerate any form of harassment or discrimination.

UNRWA operates by the following Seven Guiding Principles:

Principle 1: We take pride in serving Palestine refugees

Our primary commitment as UNRWA personnel is to help Palestine refugees achieve their full potential in human development until a just and durable solution is found to the refugee issue.

Principle 2: We are part of the United Nations

As personnel working within the UN system, we ensure that our conduct is consistent with and reflects the values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations: faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, and in the equal rights of men and women. The Charter expects from us the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity. We are guided by the core values of the UN system: professionalism, integrity, and respect for diversity, and will maintain an international outlook at all times.

Principle 3: We are committed humanitarian workers.

As such, we respect the four universal humanitarian principles that are the foundation for humanitarian action worldwide:

We are committed to humanity. As humanitarians, we must address human suffering wherever it is found. The purpose of humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure respect for human beings.

We are committed to impartiality. Our humanitarian actions must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinction on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class, political opinions or other distinguishing factors.

We are committed to neutrality. Irrespective of our personal beliefs or opinions, we must not take sides in hostilities or engage in public disputes or controversies of a political, racial, religious, or ideological nature.

We are committed to independence. Our actions must be autonomous from political, economic, military, or other objectives. UNRWA formulates its own policies and implementation strategies. We must actively avoid implementing – intentionally or negligently – the policy or objectives of any government or other political or military actor, except where those objectives coincide with independent humanitarian objectives, and are based on the needs of affected people.

Principle 4: We act and serve with integrity

Integrity is the foundation of our standards. When we act with integrity, we consistently apply our values and principles in our daily work. We are honest, fair and incorruptible. We are motivated by professional concerns and not personal ones. We resist pressure to compromise ethics, and we courageously stand up for what is right. We authentically apply ourselves to our work serving Palestine refugees.

Principle 5: We respect the human rights, dignity, and worth of all persons and protect the rights of Palestine refugees

As international civil servants, we respect the human rights, dignity, and worth of all persons. In UNRWA's context, we are focused on the protection of Palestine refugees' rights. We are committed to supporting meaningful participation of refugees and other beneficiaries in decisions that affect their lives. In standing up for their rights, we must be mindful of our own behaviour towards Palestine refugees.

We must not engage, or tolerate others who engage, in any form of sexual exploitation and abuse of Palestine refugees or members of the local community. Such acts violate every value and principle for which UNRWA stands.

Principle 6: We respect local culture whilst being faithful to UN values

We demonstrate tolerance and understanding for all cultures, customs, and traditions of all peoples, and we avoid behaving in ways that may be perceived as insensitive to others. However, when a local tradition or practice is contrary to any human rights instrument adopted within the UN system, we are to be guided by that applicable UN standard.

Principle 7: We build strong relationships

Our success in protecting the rights of Palestine refugees depends on building strong relationships with each other, governments, vendors, and other organizations with whom we partner. We emphasize consultation, cooperation and consensus-building, but we do not compromise our independence and neutrality. We will continuously seek to improve our performance and will foster a climate that empowers everyone, supports positive change, respects diversity of opinion to encourage innovation and contributes to a harmonious workplace.

The following Standards of Conduct for UNRWA personnel further elaborate on these guiding principles.

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4. our standards of conduct

Because we serve with integrity, everything we do must be guided by our values and reflect our principles. This section explains some of the areas where questions of ethical behaviour arise most often. It is designed to help you identify the right course of action and highlights when you should seek advice. In the section below, you will find examples of how our guiding principles apply to our standards of conduct, which are drawn from UNRWA's rules and policies.

unrwa guiding principles

- principle 1 We take pride in serving Palestine refugees.
- principle 2 We are part of the United Nations.
- principle 3 We are committed humanitarian workers.
- principle 4 We act and serve with integrity.
- principle 5 We respect the human rights, dignity and worth of all persons and protect the rights of Palestine refugees.
- principle 6 We respect local culture whilst being faithful to UN values.
- principle 7 We build strong relationships.

unrwa standards of conduct

- standard 1 We respect all beneficiaries and do not exploit them in any way, ever.
- standard 2 We respect people of all nationalities, genders, religions, races, abilities and cultures.
- standard 3 We protect our privileges and immunities.
- standard 4 We respect the humanitarian principles.
- standard 5 We do not commit any acts of fraud, corruption, waste and abuse and will report such acts whenever we witness them.
- standard 6 We perform our official duties and conduct private affairs in a manner that avoids conflicts of interest, thereby preserving and enhancing public confidence in UNRWA.
- standard 7 We safeguard and make responsible use of the resources and information to which we have access by reason of our employment with UNRWA.
- standard 8 We do not commit any form of harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination and abuse of power and will report such acts whenever we witness them.
- standard 9 We do not commit any gender-based violence and domestic abuse and will report such acts whenever we witness them.
- standard 10 We always seek advice about gifts, hospitality, awards and honours.
- standard 11 We contribute to building a harmonious workplace based on team spirit, mutual respect, understanding and accountability.

4.1. applying our principles to our standards of conduct

unrwa standards of conduct

guiding principles

standard 1

We respect all beneficiaries and do not exploit them in any way, ever.

1 3 4 5

standard 2

We respect people of all nationalities, genders, religions, races, abilities and cultures.

1 2 3 5 6

standard 3

We protect our privileges and immunities.

2 3 4

standard 4

We respect the humanitarian principles.

3 4

standard 5

We do not commit any acts of fraud, corruption, waste and abuse and will report such acts whenever we witness them.

4 5

standard 6

We perform our official duties and conduct private affairs in a manner that avoids conflicts of interest, thereby preserving and enhancing public confidence in UNRWA.

2 4 6

unrwa standards of conduct

guiding principles

standard 7

We safeguard and make responsible use of the resources and information to which we have access by reason of our employment with UNRWA.

2 4 5 7

standard 8

We do not commit any form of harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination and abuse of power and will report such acts whenever we witness them.

5

standard 9

We do not commit any gender-based violence and domestic abuse and will report such acts whenever we witness them.

5

standard 10

We always seek advice about gifts, hospitality, awards and honours.

6

standard 11

We contribute to building a harmonious workplace based on team spirit, mutual respect, understanding and accountability.

7

As UNRWA personnel, we are obligated to apply the United Nations and UNRWA Standards of Conduct to our daily working lives. Here are some of the major ways that we carry out these obligations, in line with our guiding principles.

Principle 1: We take pride in serving Palestine refugees.

Standard 1: We respect all beneficiaries and do not exploit them in any way, ever.

This Standard of Conduct Also
Applies to Guiding Principles:

3

4

5

There can be a significant disparity in economic and social power between UNRWA personnel and our beneficiaries. We must be alert to the potential for exploitation and abuse, regardless of intention, and take every measure to avoid even the appearance of inappropriate behaviour.

We do not exploit refugees in any way, and we take action if we ever witness this happening.

We never exchange money, employment, goods or services for sex, sexual favours, or other forms of humiliating, degrading treatment, or exploitative behaviour. This includes any exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries. We never engage the services of sex workers. We must not engage in any sexual activity with children (under 18 years of age).



Sexual exploitation or abuse is a catastrophic failure by members of UNRWA personnel to adhere to the Agency's ethical obligations. Sexual exploitation is any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes. This may include profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. Sexual abuse is the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature against a person, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

We never resort to violence against beneficiaries. This includes corporal punishment of students by teachers or instructors in any UNRWA school or training centre, under any circumstances.



Corporal punishment includes any application of physical force to a child or any other behaviour that is intended to cause physical pain, discomfort or humiliation, including verbal abuse. Such behaviours are detrimental and counterproductive, and wholly unnecessary for the education of children.

We deliver educational, health and other services to beneficiaries in accordance with our guidelines. We do not discriminate in providing benefits and services to any beneficiary on any ground whatsoever. Denying benefits to a beneficiary based on discriminatory practices undermines our mission and our reputation.

We must take action if we witness or have concerns about sexual exploitation and abuse, corporal punishment or any other exploitative or discriminatory behaviour. This includes formally reporting through official reporting channels (see information on avenues to report at the end of this Code of Ethics) and ensuring that victims receive available support.

scenario

What if I see a colleague privately meeting with a teenage girl? She is not attending school. Her family has little money. The colleague gives her money and small gifts, and I have seen her in his office several times after working hours.

This could be sexual exploitation or abuse. Suspicions or rumours of sexual exploitation and abuse must be reported immediately as this is considered serious misconduct. You must immediately report what you see to the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Focal Point in your Field, the Department of Internal Oversight Services (DIOS) Investigation Hotline or Field Director. Information on how to report any concerns of misconduct is available at the end of this Code of Ethics.

references

- Secretary-General's Bulletin: Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13), (9 October, 2003)
- Standards of Conduct of International Civil Service, Paras 5, 6, 14, (2013)
- UNRWA Area Staff Regulations, Regulation 1.4, (2018)
- UNRWA International Staff Regulations, Regulation 1.4, (2018)
- General Staff Circular No. 06/2010, Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment – including sexual harassment – and abuse of power (2010)
- General Staff Circular No. 07/2010, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Complaints Procedure (2010)
- General Staff Circular No.01/2013, Prohibition of violence (2013)



Principle 2: We are part of the United Nations

Standard 2: *We respect people of all nationalities, genders, religions, races, abilities and cultures.*

This Standard of Conduct Also Applies to Guiding Principles:

1 3 5 6

Working within the United Nations system is more than just a job; it means living the values of the Organization in your daily activities and behaviour. Achieving this requires behaviour that reflects our values and the international nature of our work.

Respect includes not just tolerating but actively accepting each other. UNRWA and its personnel are committed to gender equality and combatting racism. In this commitment lies a rejection of stereotypes, a refusal to condone sexual misconduct and any kind of harassment or discrimination, and a dedication to prevent gender-based violence. Achieving diversity, equality and inclusion requires a commitment from all of us.

Achieving equality and full respect for all people requires everyone's full participation. We are all affected by bias (whether conscious or unconscious), which may lead to some of us experiencing certain privileges while others may face undue discrimination. We may have colleagues who are subject to disrespectful treatment and even violence from others.

You should demonstrate tolerance and understanding to those who belong to marginalized communities of any type. For example, you should support their inclusion in meetings and listen to their contribution to your project.



Regardless of different backgrounds, location, and characteristics, we must all abide by the highest standards of conduct, including in relation to non-discrimination, human rights, and gender equality. This requires specific steps to minimize the influence of biases, and to address discrimination.

references

- UN Charter, Article 1.3
- Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service, Paras 14 and 15 (2013)
- International Staff Regulations, Regulation 1.6 (2018)
- General Staff Circular GSC/06/2010, Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment – including sexual harassment – and abuse of power (2010)



Principle 2: We are part of the United Nations

Standard 3: *We protect our privileges and immunities.*

This Standard of Conduct Also Applies to Guiding Principles:

3 4

The privileges and immunities that we enjoy as personnel of UNRWA are solely conferred upon us in the Agency's interest. They allow us to exercise our functions independently. Such privileges and immunities include immunity from legal processes for words spoken and deeds performed in our official capacity. We are exempt from national taxes on UN salaries, and immune from national service obligations while in service. Our immediate families may have immunity from immigration restrictions. Each of us is responsible for ensuring that we do not abuse these privileges. For example, we must observe and follow local laws, including traffic and criminal laws. We must satisfy our financial obligations, including rents, utility bills, alimony and child support. Not only are these important personal obligations, but they also reflect our integrity and honesty as UNRWA personnel.

references

- UN Charter, Article 105
- HQ Legal Instruction no. 1 of 2009, Revision 3, Privileges and immunities and related responsibilities of the Agency and its staff members, (2020)
- Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, Article V, (1946)
- Standards of Conduct of the International Civil Service, Para 43, (2013).
- Area Staff Regulations, Regulation 1.8., (2018)
- International Staff Regulations, Regulation 1.5, (2018)



Principle 3: We are committed humanitarian workers

Standard 4: *We respect the humanitarian principles.*

This Standard of Conduct Also Applies to Guiding Principles:

4

As humanitarian workers, we are committed at all times to the four universal humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Being neutral and impartial means that we do not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature and that we conduct ourselves tactfully and with discretion in both our professional and personal lives. Maintaining a neutral position at all times allows UNRWA to carry out its mission in support of Palestine refugees.

Considering the particular context in which we operate – the absence of a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, ongoing denial of refugees' rights, prolonged military occupation and recurring armed conflict in a number of UNRWA fields make it particularly important for us to behave at all times in a manner befitting our status as UNRWA personnel. While we are not required to give up our national sentiments, or our political and religious convictions, we must always operate with the reserve and tact expected of us as international civil servants.

This means that we do not publicly support, represent or associate with any entity that exists to influence any government's policies. We commit to not publicly discussing these policies, or related opinions or controversies, including posting or sharing material on social media. However, we may promote and share the messages of UNRWA and other UN organizations within our personal networks.

There are four basic principles which guide humanitarian aid: [humanity](#), [neutrality](#), [impartiality](#) and [independence](#). They are central to our work as an Agency with a humanitarian mandate, namely, to assist and protect Palestine refugees. These humanitarian principles not only guide our work but make it possible.

references

- UN Charter, Article 101.3
- Standards of Conduct of the International Civil Service, paras. 2-8, 23-24, 31, 34, (2013)
- Area Staff Regulations Regulation 1.4, (2018)
- International Staff Regulations, Regulations 1.4, 1.8, 1.10, (2018)



The recognition of these principles is essential to maintaining appropriate relationships with our government partners, remaining in a position to effectively advocate for Palestine refugees and all beneficiaries, ensuring the sanctity of our shelters in times of crisis and maintaining access to the most vulnerable populations.

Humanity means human suffering must be addressed wherever and whenever it is found, with a priority on protecting life and health and ensuring respect for human beings. Humanity is the basis for the establishment of UNRWA and remains an essential principle in carrying out our mandate, particularly in emergency situations such as in Syria and Gaza. As UN personnel, respect for the principle of humanity entails that we prioritise our humanitarian calling above our personal interests and are ready to serve the Agency at any moment, especially in crisis situations. It also entails integrity, professionalism and respect for universal human rights.

Impartiality means that the aid we provide is based solely on need, without discrimination. We do not prioritise beneficiaries based on nationality, race, gender, religious beliefs, political beliefs or any factor other than need. For example, when distributing aid, we base our decisions about who receives aid on needs-based assessments and not on personal relationships or connections.

Neutrality means that we do not take sides in situations of armed conflict, public controversies or other political, racial, religious or ideological disputes. Attending demonstrations or signing petitions that are political or could become politicized is considered a breach of the principle of neutrality. In addition, displaying controversial flags or symbols, or holding political meetings or religious services in UNRWA installations is also a breach of the principle of neutrality.

Independence means that our actions are not influenced by any political, economic, military or other non-humanitarian objectives. There are many actions which could violate the principle of independence. When we accept a gift, favour or other benefit from any government or other source external to UNRWA without prior authorisation, this could create a perception that we are willing to implement priorities that are not in line with UNRWA's own strategy and operational plans. In addition, lobbying national governments to improve our professional or personal situations, or to reverse decisions that are unfavourable to us, is also a breach of independence.

Participation in outside political activities may be considered a breach of neutrality, independence and a potential conflict of interest. Nevertheless, we are all encouraged to exercise our right to vote, as well as maintain our individual political or religious beliefs. However, UNRWA's international status means that our conduct must reflect our independence and neutrality at all times. Therefore, there are limits to publicly expressing our views on political issues and to taking part in political activities.

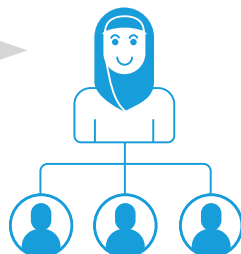
For example, we may not stand for or hold any political office at any level, unless we first resign from UNRWA. Membership of a political party is possible, but not if it means we are required to take any action that could affect our independent status or the appearance of independence and neutrality. It is inappropriate to publicly criticize governments, including on social media, and we must exercise judgement in taking part in campaign events or activities.

UNRWA personnel must not take part in demonstrations of a political or politicized nature as it constitutes a public pronouncement that contravenes the principle of neutrality. Soliciting or receiving funds for any political purpose, party or government is not allowed. This includes publishing articles or speaking out in favour or against political decisions.

as a manager what is my obligation?

Be sure to monitor the UNRWA installations for which you are responsible, and take action if you discover inappropriate activity, materials or use of UNRWA installations.

Report any such issues to the relevant Field Director. Always seek guidance if you are unsure what to do.



scenario

What if a member of my household is running for local office? Will this affect my employment?

The manner in which you and the members of your household behave may compromise the image and interest of the Agency. You have a responsibility to communicate to your household members your obligations as a United Nations personnel. As it pertains to your family member, this will not affect your employment as long as you do not openly participate in any political campaigns yourself or help them to solicit funds for their campaign.



do 'humanitarian principles' mean that unrwa will be silent in the face of injustice?

No. UNRWA has a mandate to protect and advocate on behalf of Palestine refugees with governments. As part of the United

Nations, our senior leaders speak out against violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. However, only those personnel who are authorised may make these statements, via official channels. Speaking out publicly outside of the official channels can interfere with UNRWA's mission and the ability of our leaders to speak out. As UNRWA personnel, we can share any statement issued by the United Nations that speaks to injustice or adheres to the UN position on the relevant issue.

For more information about social media, see the conflicts of interest section.

references

- UN Charter, Article 100
- Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service, Paras. 8-10, (2013)
- Area Staff Regulations, Paras 1.1 to 1.4 and 1.7, (2018)
- International Staff Regulations, Regulations 1.10 and 1.11, (2018)
- International Staff Rules, Rule 1.2 (Outside Activities and Interests), (2018)
- Area Personnel Directive A/1 (2007), Part V. UNRWA, Neutrality Framework (2018)



Principle 4: We act and serve with integrity

Standard 5: *We do not commit any acts of fraud, corruption, waste and abuse and will report such acts whenever we witness them.*

This Standard of Conduct Also
Applies to Guiding Principle:

5

Fraud, corruption, waste and abuse directly harm our mission, our beneficiaries and our reputation. We often see massive frauds in the headlines, but most begin as very small thefts. This is why we must guard against any form of theft, fraud, waste or abuse, and follow all administrative rules, which are designed to ensure UNRWA's assets are managed appropriately and are not wasted.



warning signs of fraud and corruption

UNRWA has a **zero-tolerance policy** for all fraud and corruption.

As an UNRWA staff member, you **HAVE DUTY TO REPORT** witnessing or receiving information about fraud and/or corruption involving UNRWA personnel or affecting UNRWA funds and assets.

Here are some of the most common **warning signs**:



Reports formally it to the Director of UNRWA Affairs in your field or to the Department of Internal Oversight Services at hotline@unrwa.org



united nations relief and works agency
for palestine refugees in the near east

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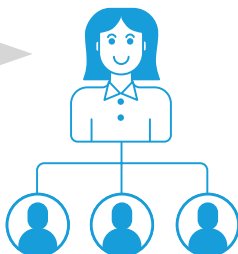
scenario

What if my manager insists that I arrange travel for her in a way that violates our rules? What should I do?

It may be fraud, attempted fraud or it may be just a misunderstanding of the rules. You should speak with your manager and explain the rules. If your manager insists on violating the rules, you should report this to the DIOS Investigation Hotline or Field Director. Information on **how to report** any concerns of misconduct is available at the end of this Code of Ethics.

as a manager what is my obligation?

You are responsible for ensuring that our property and resources are used appropriately, by you and your team. Set a positive example by following the rules and fully complying with audits and investigations. Make sure that your staff understand and follow the rules and that you are monitoring compliance.



references

- UNRWA, Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy (2015)



Principle 4: We act and serve with integrity

Standard 6: *We perform our official duties and conduct private affairs in a manner that avoids conflicts of interest, thereby preserving and enhancing public confidence in UNRWA.*

This Standard of Conduct Also Applies to Guiding Principle:

2 6

A conflict of interest arises when your personal interests and obligations conflict with, or take precedence over, your professional obligations to UNRWA.

Even possible or perceived conflicts of interest should be addressed promptly to avoid misunderstanding.

The interests of UNRWA and its beneficiaries must always be prioritised. This means that we must prevent, disclose and address any conflicts of interest. If you are in any doubt about a possible conflict of interest, the most appropriate course of action is to disclose it.

UNRWA does not seek to regulate your private conduct, unless your behaviour may cause reputational damage to the Agency, contravene UN values or principles or your obligations as an international civil servant, or interfere with the performance of your official duties. As UNRWA personnel, your personal conduct and that of your family might be the object of public scrutiny.

There are many ways in which conflicts of interest can arise. The next sections cover this more in depth.

references

- Standards of Conduct of the International Civil Service, Para. 23, (2013)
- Area Staff Regulations, Regulation 11.5, Articles 22 and 23, (2018)
- Area Staff Rules Rule 101.4, (2018)
- Area Personnel Directive A/1, Part IV, (2007)
- International Staff Regulations Regulation 1.16 and Regulation 11.4, Articles 22 and 23, (2018)
- International Staff Rules Rule 1.2, (2018)



outside employment and board positions

Outside occupations may create conflicts of interest. We always need to obtain approval to participate on a panel, committee or any similar endeavour. Board membership is not permitted as it implies fiduciary authority.

We are expected to dedicate our time and efforts to UNRWA as a priority. Outside work or activities, paid or unpaid, may interfere with our ability to serve UNRWA. Some activities are also incompatible with our status as international civil servants or otherwise conflict with the best interests of UNRWA.

As UNRWA personnel, before engaging in any outside employment or activity, we must request approval in accordance with the applicable procedures. If this approval is granted, we must undertake the activity during our own time. Approvals are granted for a period of 12 months or until there are material changes that may affect the request.

Outside employment for which we have to seek approval includes self-employment, working for someone else and volunteer work, whether it is paid or unpaid. Some common forms of outside employment include working as a private tutor, offering medical services to anyone outside of your official duties, taking on a consultancy, taking an internship in another organization, part-time work in a law firm and working in a family restaurant or shop.

outside activities

UNRWA is proud of its personnel and encourages them to engage in healthy developmental and charitable activities outside of work. Many of these outside activities may be engaged in without permission. These include regular religious and charitable activities, pursuing a university degree, and membership in professional and social organizations such as bar associations, alumni groups and sports clubs.

With all outside activities, it is important that they do not conflict with the interests of UNRWA or with our status as international civil servants.

Certain other activities require prior approval by UNRWA if they are not part of your official duties. These include:

- Issuing statements to the press, radio or other agencies for public information;
- Accepting speaking engagements;
- Taking part in film, theatre, radio or television productions;
- Submitting articles, books or other material for publication, including on social media.

Area staff members who are considering or invited to engage in any of the above activities should consult with the Ethics Office to obtain guidance on their request and to be directed to the appropriate manager with the delegated authority from whom to request approval. For international personnel, the approval should be sought from the Chief of Staff.

references

(for both outside employment and activities):

- Standards of Conduct of the International Civil Service, Paras. 45-49, (2013)
- Area Staff Rules, Rule 101.4, (2018)
- Area Personnel Directive, A/1, Part IV, (2007)
- International Staff Regulations, Regulation 1.17, (2018)
- International Staff Rules, Rule 1.2 (s)-(v), (2018)



social media

In recent years, social media use has become a prominent form of communication that many of us use to stay connected and share ideas. Social media posts are considered public statements. Therefore, the use of social media, including in your private capacity, is governed by UNRWA policy. Even if you try to limit access to your friends, posts can be forwarded, screenshots can be taken and all can be shared via word-of-mouth. For this reason, our obligations as international civil servants involve using social media in a way that does not contravene the values of UNRWA.

We should not say or do anything on any site (website, app or any social media platform) that would reflect adversely on the reputation of UNRWA or other UN organizations, or call into question our neutrality, impartiality and independence. We should not say or do anything that could be seen as denying the humanity of any person. That includes, for example, writing or sharing any content of a political nature, liking or sharing content of a denigrating or discriminatory nature, or joining an open or closed social media group that contravenes our values.

Only UNRWA communications personnel or personnel who receive authorisation from the Commissioner-General may make public statements on social media on behalf of UNRWA. We are invited to share official messages issued by UNRWA and other UN organizations via our personal social media accounts.

scenario

What if I take special leave without pay? Can I publish my master's thesis in a scientific journal? Can I give my political opinion on social media?

Even while you are on special leave, you are still a member of UNRWA personnel. Thus, you need permission for any outside employment or activities (including your master's thesis) just as if you are actively working. You are still required to respect UNRWA's rules and regulations, including sharing your political opinion on social media.

references

- UNRWA, Website and Social Media Policy Regarding Official Use, (2014)
- UNRWA, Website and Social Media Policy Regarding Personal Use, (2014)
- UN Secretariat, Guidelines for the Personal Use of Social Media, (2019)
- General Staff Circular No. 05/2021, Reminder on Engagement of Media, Use of Social Media and Standards of Conduct, (2021)



outside financial interests and disclosure

Taking a financial interest in a company that does business with UNRWA as a supplier or implementing partner can create a conflict of interest.

In order to demonstrate our special care to avoid and prevent conflicts of interest, certain personnel of UNRWA are required annually to disclose information about their financial investments and holdings, and their outside activities.

Even if you are not required to engage in the annual financial disclosure process, you should be careful not to hold financial investments in companies that do business with UNRWA, and to disclose any situation where a company in which you have a financial interest begins to seek business with UNRWA.

You should not assist any private person or company in their efforts to do business with UNRWA, or be hired by UNRWA, where this may lead to actual or perceived preferential treatment. On the other hand, sharing generally available information about tenders or positions is allowed.

references

- United Nations Secretariat, ST/SGB/2006/6 Secretary General's Bulletin Financial Disclosure and Declaration of Interest Statements, (2006)
- Area Staff Rules, Rule 101.4, (2018)
- Area Staff Personnel Directive A/1, Part IV and Annex E (2007 rev 2014)
- International Staff Regulations, Regulation 1.16, (2018)
- International Staff Personnel Directive No. I/101.8 (2007)



family and personal relationships

Your personal relationships must not affect your ability to be – and appear to be – impartial in your official duties. To this end, UNRWA generally does not allow the hiring of an immediate family member (parent, sibling or child), unless a suitable candidate who is not a close relative cannot be identified. Spouses may only be employed provided that he or she is fully qualified for the post and that the spouse is not given any preference by virtue of the relationship to the staff member. Neither spouses nor family members shall be assigned to serve in a post which is superior or subordinate in the direct line of authority to the staff member to whom he or she is related.

Issues can arise in other contexts, including romantic or other close relationships between personnel, or between personnel and an external partner. While we value close working relationships among colleagues and with our partners, it is critical that we foster an environment free of favouritism, including nepotism. Some may believe that they can behave objectively regarding a family member or romantic partner. However, studies have shown that in most cases, this is not possible.

It is inappropriate to have an intimate relationship with a person whom you directly or indirectly manage. Such a relationship constitutes a conflict of interest and may also constitute an abuse of authority, even if the relationship is consensual. Therefore, any intimate relationship with someone in the same team or with someone who may have a significant influence on your role must promptly be disclosed to your first or second supervisor, the deputy director or the director.

If you are involved in recruitment, procurement or eligibility for assistance, you need to be particularly careful to act, and be seen to act, with the utmost transparency and integrity. All personnel participating in interview panels are required to complete conflict-of-interest disclosure forms in relation to each recruitment exercise. Disclosure of a conflict of interest is often accompanied by recusal, that is, disqualification of the personnel who disclosed the possible conflict of interest from participating in the interview panel.



scenario

What if I have recently started a relationship with a colleague in my office? We are considering marriage.

If you are in a relationship with a colleague within your team, you should disclose it confidentially to your first or second supervisor, the deputy director or the director. If your partner is working in a different office or team then you are not obliged to disclose it, unless you have a working relationship with that person that can significantly influence or impact your role. Measures can then be considered and taken to avoid any conflict of interest or other effect on your professional duties and on other personnel in the office.



Most conflicts of interest can be addressed and resolved when you disclose them promptly. Often, they can be addressed in a way that allows the working arrangement to be maintained while still protecting UNRWA's interests. Contact your manager or the Ethics Office for further guidance.

Principle 4: We act and serve with integrity

Standard 7: We safeguard and make responsible use of the resources and information to which we have access by reason of our employment with UNRWA.

This Standard of Conduct Also Applies to Guiding Principles:

2 5 7

Proper use of the organization's resources shows we are stewards of the funding and assets that are provided for the primary benefit of supporting and achieving our mission. The greatest asset UNRWA has is its personnel. How you use your working time directly impacts our mission. It may seem like a minor issue to cut short your hours, or not give your best work, but this is a misuse of resources. We must devote working time to work.

Similarly, UNRWA's equipment is available to help us achieve our mission efficiently and effectively. Use of UNRWA phones, computers, vehicles or other assets for personal reasons (beyond minor exceptions) prevents that use for our mission and sends a message to our stakeholders that we are not good stewards of UNRWA's resources.

references

- Area Staff Rules, Rule 104.3, (2018)
- International Staff Rules, Rule 4.7, (2018)
- International Personnel Directive, I/4/part I/rev 2/amend 1, Paras 30-31, (2021)



gifts and awards

Accepting gifts and awards can also create a conflict of interest. However, this can be a sensitive cultural issue and therefore lead to an ethical dilemma. For more information on accepting gifts and awards, see Standard 10: We always seek advice about gifts, hospitality, awards and honours.

political activity

Political activities can also lead to a conflict of interest for personnel. For more information on handling political activities see Standard 4: We respect the humanitarian principles.

references

- Standards of Conduct of the International Civil Service, Paras. 4 and 25, (2013)



handling confidential information

Another important UNRWA asset is our knowledge and information. Much of our work involves sharing information about the status and needs of Palestine refugees.

As a general rule, we should exercise discretion and use good judgment in handling information. When we are communicating information outside of UNRWA, we must ensure that this is done in accordance with applicable rules and procedures and seek authorisation as required.

We should assume that, unless clearly specified otherwise, the information we are handling is of an internal nature. Internal information is that which has not been made public, such as correspondence or third-party information made available to UNRWA.

Some of the information we handle is confidential and should not be shared, either with others or for our personal use. This information is classified as strictly confidential, confidential or restricted/internal. Some examples include:

- Agency system administrator/superuser credentials.
- Reports detailing any information security vulnerabilities of the Agency.
- Data related to Palestine refugees, such as personal identifying information and registration numbers.
- Draft decisions relating to UNRWA budgets and programmes.
- Recruitment processes, including names of candidates or test scores.
- Standard Operating Procedures, manuals, directives and guidelines.

We are all responsible for ensuring that confidential information is securely handled and protected from unauthorised use.

Information that has been obtained in the course of our duties should never be used for personal benefit. This could include work that we produce during our work at UNRWA. This is the property of UNRWA and UNRWA retains the right to use it. Of course, some information, such as press releases and website information, is public. If you have any doubts about whether information is confidential or can be shared, contact your supervisor.

scenario

What if I want to share photos from a mission on my social media page?

Before posting pictures and other information on social media, consider carefully whether this would reveal confidential information, such as your immediate location, the presence of UNRWA officials in a particular location and the private dealings of others. In addition, you must ensure you have the consent of any beneficiaries who are present in your photographs or mentioned in your statements. We must always be mindful of the security and privacy rights of our personnel and beneficiaries.

references

- Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service, Para. 24, (2013)
- Area Staff Regulations, Regulation 1.5, (2018)
- International Staff Regulations, Regulation 1.12, (2018)
- IMTD Technical Instruction No. 24 Revision 1, (2021)
- General Staff Circular No. 01/2021, UNRWA Data Protection and Disclosure Policy (2021)



Principle 5: We respect the human rights, dignity and worth of all persons and protect the rights of Palestine refugees.

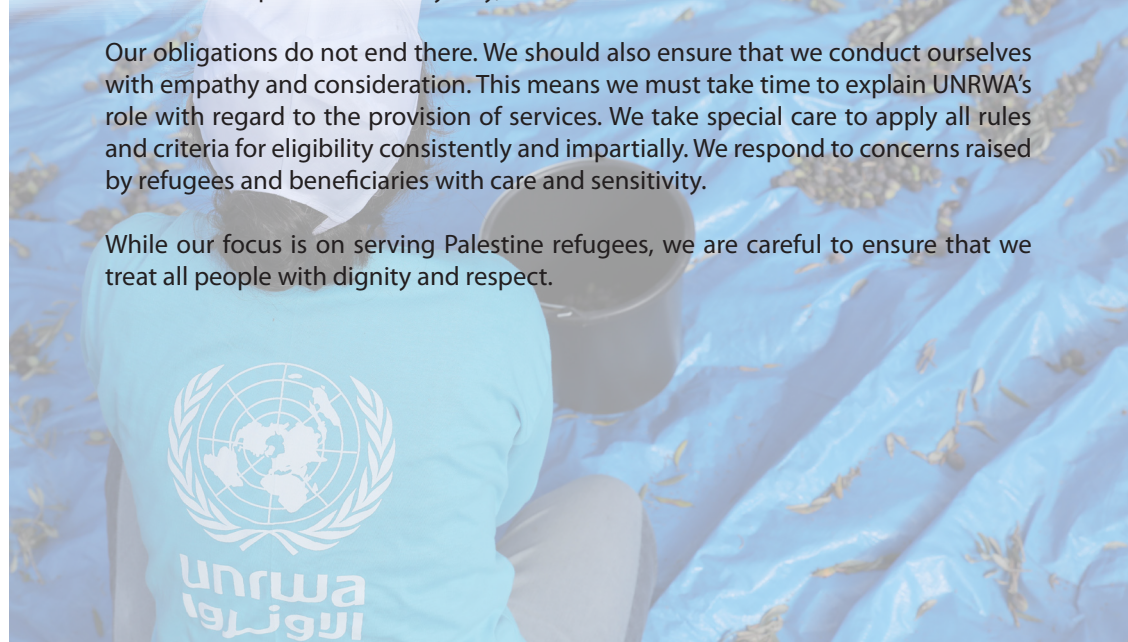
Standard 8: *We do not commit any form of harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, and abuse of power and will report such acts whenever we witness them.*

In carrying out our mission, we must treat Palestine refugees and all beneficiaries fairly and in a manner that ensures their safety and dignity. Our work requires understanding the difficult experiences that refugees and beneficiaries have faced and continue to face, and the disadvantaged position that they have in relation to those who hold power and influence over certain aspects of their lives.

We are proud to serve Palestine refugees. One of the most egregious violations of human dignity is sexual exploitation and abuse by any humanitarian worker against a beneficiary or someone from the local population. Please refer to Principle 1, we take pride in serving Palestine refugees and Standard 1, we respect all beneficiaries and do not exploit them in any way, ever.

Our obligations do not end there. We should also ensure that we conduct ourselves with empathy and consideration. This means we must take time to explain UNRWA's role with regard to the provision of services. We take special care to apply all rules and criteria for eligibility consistently and impartially. We respond to concerns raised by refugees and beneficiaries with care and sensitivity.

While our focus is on serving Palestine refugees, we are careful to ensure that we treat all people with dignity and respect.





Domestic workers – As UNRWA personnel, we should be aware of the position of vulnerability in which most domestic workers find themselves in, whether they are from the beneficiary community or third country nationals. We should ensure that we treat them with dignity, respect and in accordance with the local laws. Respect for human rights, dignity and worth also applies to our relationship with our colleagues. At all times, we must not engage in or tolerate prohibited conduct, including sexual harassment, harassment, discrimination and abuse of power. Prohibited conduct is an affront to human dignity and causes unnecessary suffering. In some instances, it may also amount to a crime and the perpetrator may be held responsible under local criminal laws.

A harmonious working environment benefits everyone. The foundation of such an environment is ethical conduct that displays fairness, tolerance and respect, where everyone is treated with dignity. In line with our commitment to respecting the human rights of all persons, we should not tolerate harassment and discrimination against any person, which also includes personnel, vendor employees or partners.

UNRWA prohibits harassment, including sexual harassment, and discrimination of anyone on any ground whatsoever. Abuse of power, bullying and intimidation are also prohibited.

These behaviours constitute prohibited conduct, they harm people and limit their ability to develop their human potential. At UNRWA, such improper behaviour should always be addressed.

references

- Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service, Paras. 21 and 22, (2013)
- International Staff Regulations 1.6 and 10.2, (2018)
- International Staff Rules (2018)
- General Staff Circular No. 06/2010, Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment – including Sexual Harassment – and abuse of power, (2010)
- General Staff Circular No. 07/2010, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Complaints Procedure, (2010)
- General Staff Circular No.02/2019, Model Code of Conduct to Prevent Harassment, Including Sexual Harassment, at UN System Events (2019)
- UN System Model Policy on Sexual Harassment (2018)
- Chief Executives Board for Coordination, CEB Statement on Addressing Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the UN (2018)



According to the SG bulletin on “Addressing discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority” (ST/SG/2019/8) discrimination is “any unfair treatment or arbitrary distinction based on a person’s race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, disability, age, language, social origin or other similar shared characteristic or trait”.

Respect for diversity is one of the core values of the UN and the international civil service and is based on inclusion, acceptance and understanding. It is essential that we respect everyone equally and act without bias. It is never acceptable to make statements or engage in behaviour that incites hatred or any other form of discrimination. Discrimination in the workplace normally manifests itself as harassment or abuse of power.



Harassment is any improper and unwelcome conduct that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another person. Harassment may take the form of words, gestures or actions which tend to annoy, alarm, abuse, demean, intimidate, belittle, humiliate or embarrass another or which create an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

Examples include shouting at someone, ridiculing them, making offensive comments about or to them, intentionally excluding them or undermining their work. Harassment is conduct that has a negative impact on the workplace and can lead to a toxic work environment.

To prevent or stop harassment in the workplace, you should firstly be able to detect and identify it. Due to misinterpretation and, sometimes, cultural differences, what you perceive to be harassment may not seem so to your colleagues. They may interpret it as a firm management style, or a symbol of a strong personality. This makes it difficult to identify harassment.

When trying to identify harassment, you should remember that the act in question does not have to be intentional or deliberate. What matters is whether it could be perceived as offensive to an individual or group. In such a situation, even if the offender claims that what was said or done was not intentional or was merely an expression of free speech, their behaviour needs to be addressed.



Sexual harassment is any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation, when such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

Sexual harassment may occur in the workplace or in connection

with work. While typically involving a pattern of conduct, sexual harassment may take the form of a single incident. In assessing the reasonableness of expectations or perceptions, the perspective of the person who is the target of the conduct shall be considered.

Sexual harassment may occur between persons of the same or different genders, and individuals of any gender can be either the targets or the perpetrators.

The Leaders of UN system organizations have reiterated their firm commitment to uphold a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment, to strengthen a victim-centred prevention and response approach, and to foster a safe and inclusive working environment. Sexual harassment has no place in the UN system.

Sexual harassment can take a variety of forms, from inappropriate comments or gestures to actual or attempted sexual assault. A non-exhaustive list of examples of sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Attempted or actual sexual assault, including rape;
- Sharing or displaying sexually inappropriate images or videos in any format;
- Sending sexually suggestive communications in any format;
- Sharing sexual or lewd anecdotes or jokes;
- Making inappropriate sexual gestures;
- Unwelcome touching, including pinching, patting, rubbing or purposefully brushing up against another person;

- Staring in a sexually suggestive manner;
- Repeatedly asking a person for dates or asking for sex;
- Rating a person's sexuality;
- Making sexual comments about appearance, clothing or body parts;
- Name-calling or using slurs with a gender/sexual connotation;
- Making derogatory or demeaning comments about someone's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Sexual harassment results from a culture of discrimination and privilege, based on unequal gender relations and power dynamics. It creates hostile workplaces, which limit the affected individual's ability to thrive. Power imbalances based on gender, workplace or educational status, racial or ethnic backgrounds, or economic class could impact on sexual harassment and violate the human right of equality.

UNRWA makes every effort to ensure that sexual harassment is never tolerated, personnel feel safe to report incidents, victims are provided with assistance and abusers are held accountable.





RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED BY SEXUAL HARASSMENT

*Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature
that occurs **between UNRWA personnel**.
Both the affected individual and the alleged offender are personnel.*

*Some examples include: unwelcome comments, looks, or gestures;
sharing inappropriate images; and actual or attempted rape or sexual assault*

If you are a victim of sexual harassment your options for resolution are:

FORMAL REPORT



DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL OVERSIGHT SERVICES

to file a formal complaint

INFORMAL RESOLUTION



MANAGER OR SECOND SUPERVISOR

*to facilitate a
conversation or suggest
interim measures*



OMBUDSMAN

*for informal conflict
resolution services*

IN ALL CASES, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO ACCESS SUPPORT SERVICES:



ETHICS OFFICE/ ETHICS FOCAL POINT

*for confidential
information, advice,
and coordination of
support*



EXTERNAL STAFF COUNSELLOR

*for psychosocial
assistance*



LEGAL OFFICE OF STAFF ASSISTANCE

*for confidential
legal advice and
assistance*



DEPARTMENT OF SECURITY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

*for security
support*



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

*for medical
assistance*



RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED BY SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Ethics Focal Points / Ethics Office

Ethics Focal Points (EFP):

- Provide confidential information to staff and management on options available to address the situation, including support services available
- Assist complainants with coordination of support across UNRWA departments, with the consent of the affected individual
- Contact information available here:
<https://unrwaorg.sharepoint.com/sites/Ethics-Office/SitePages/Focal-Points.aspx>

Ethics Office:

- Provides confidential advice to staff and management on options available to address the situation, including support services available
- Receives protection against retaliation requests
- Conducts preliminary assessment to determine if there is evidence of retaliation. If yes, refers complaint to DIOS for full investigation

Myriam Baele, Chief Ethics Office

Natalie Tabar, Coord. for UNRWA's Sexual Misconduct Task Force

Amr Dababneh, Senior Ethics Officer

ethicsoffice@unrwa.org

+962 6 5808 171

External Staff Counselor

- Provides confidential psycho-social support to personnel through individual counselling

International personnel (all categories):

Abdalla Mansour Amer, UNDSS Regional Counselor (MENA)

mansouramer@un.org

Rome Institute (covered through available private health insurance)

petra.miczaika@romeinstitute.org

Area personnel (all categories)

- Elise Bitar: e.bitar@unrwa.org +961 03002491
- Maria El Khazen: m.elkhazen@unrwa.org +961 76930040
- Ebtesam Khasawneh: e.khasawneh@unrwa.org +962 790332640
- Sabah Saliba: s.saliba@unrwa.org +961 81477367
- Kim Ward: k.ward@unrwa.org +961 76999512

Legal Office of Staff Assistance (LOSA)

- Provides confidential legal advice and assistance to UNRWA personnel about administrative review processes

Amer Abu Khalaf, Senior Legal Officer (Staff Assistance)

l.assistance@unrwa.org

+972 54 216 8308

Department of Security and Risk Management (DSRM)

- Provides advice and support on personal security measures to personnel who have experienced or are facing security threats
- Refers personnel to UNDSS to access to an emergency medical Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) kit

Yara Dababneh, Senior Security and Training Officer

y.dababneh@unrwa.org

+962 79 1300 859

Health Department

- Provides medical care or referral to medical services for individuals affected by sexual violence

Mai Ogawa, Public Health Specialist

m.ogawa@unrwa.org

+962 77 0367 147

Manager / Second Supervisor

- Listens to the affected individual and informs that further information on options and services available may be obtained from the Ethics Office or Ethics Focal Points
- With the affected individual's consent, may facilitate discussion with relevant colleague(s) about the conduct in question
- With consent, may ask Ethics Focal Point, Ombudsman Office, or Human Resources Department for support
- Submits a formal report to DIOS if the conduct may amount to serious misconduct, taking consent to share name of individual

Following an informal or formal complaint

- Considers interim or protective measures including physical separation of the affected individual from the alleged offender; reassignment (with consent); flexible work arrangements; granting unplanned annual leave; consideration of special leave; change in reporting lines; other measures, such as training
- Considers accommodations for potential work performance issues relating to the incident, including new work plan for the affected individual; providing leave and/or other working arrangements

Contact: ask or send an email to set up a meeting

Ombudsman Office

- Provides confidential information and advice on options to address the incident
- Provides informal conflict resolution through shuttle diplomacy or mediation, with the individual's consent

Ombudsman Office

ombudsman@unrwa.org

Online booking:

<https://outlook.office365.com/owa/calendar/RegionalOmbudsmanUNRWA@unrwa.org/bookings/> (if you face difficulties, please send them an email)

Department of Internal Oversight Services (DIOS)

- Determines if complaint should be investigated
- If yes, conducts fact-finding investigation to determine if misconduct occurred
- Issues an investigation report to management with findings

hotline@unrwa.org

Jordan: 06 580 8686;

Gaza: 08 288 7127;

Jerusalem and West Bank: 02 589 0772;

Syria: 01 16 11 67 17;

Lebanon: 01 830 441

Online form: <https://www.unrwa.org/online-complaint-form>



Abuse of power is the improper use of a position of influence, power or authority against another person. This is particularly serious when a person uses his/her influence, power or authority to improperly influence the career or employment conditions of another, including appointment, assignment, contract renewal, performance evaluation or promotion.

Abuse of power may also include conduct that creates a hostile or offensive work environment, such as the use of intimidation, threats, blackmail or coercion. Discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment, are particularly serious when accompanied by abuse of power.

What may seem to be harmless words can be hurtful and offensive to another person. If you are in doubt about whether something you want to say or do will be harmful to others, do not say or do it. Find a different way to express yourself. It is better to tread carefully if it means others feel more respected.

avenues to resolve prohibited conduct (discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, and abuse of power)

If you feel someone has been disrespectful in their words or behaviour towards you, you may want to inform that person that their behaviour is inappropriate. You are not required to speak with them directly.

However, it can help your colleague to gain a better understanding of how their actions affected you. It will also give them an opportunity to correct their behaviour without the need for escalation. If this does not resolve the situation, or if you do not feel comfortable to speak with them, you may always report the behaviour. You have the option either to resolve the issue informally or to report it formally.

Informal resolution involves having a discussion with your first or second supervisor about the incident or raising the issue with the Ombudsman. Supervisors who are approached about possible discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment or abuse of power are encouraged to contact the Ethics Office or the Ombudsman for advice and guidance.

In case informal resolution is not desired or is unsuccessful, you can lodge a formal complaint with DIOS or your Field Director who may undertake due investigations.

Information on how to report misconduct is available at the end of this Code of Ethics.

Administrative or disciplinary actions may be initiated where such acts by a member of personnel are substantiated.

Any member of UNRWA personnel who witnesses prohibited conduct may consult with the Ethics Office or the Ombudsman for confidential guidance and advice.

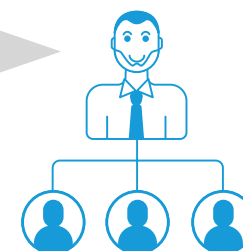
scenario

What if I witness a colleague making a racist remark about another colleague based on his nationality?

You have options, but most importantly, do something! As a bystander who witnessed inappropriate behaviour, you should take action. If you feel you can intervene, consider doing so. Simply asking the personnel who was targeted, "Is everything alright? How can I help?" can de-escalate the situation. You also can offer to let the affected individual know that you are available to talk or help him/her report what happened. If you feel comfortable doing so, you can also speak with the offender, and tell him/her that you found his/her behaviour to be inappropriate. You also can formally report what you saw to the DIOS investigation hotline or your Field Director through the channels listed at the end of this Code of Ethics.

as a manager what is my obligation?

You have special obligations to monitor the workplace and intervene when you see or are made aware of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment or abuse of power. In addition, you must avoid any behaviour that could give the perception that you are abusing your power.



Principle 5: We respect the human rights, dignity and worth of all persons and protect the rights of Palestine refugees.

Standard 9: We do not commit any gender-based violence and domestic abuse and will report such acts whenever we witness them.

Even in our personal and private lives, we must take care to uphold and respect universal human rights and dignity of all persons. For this reason, UNRWA personnel should not engage in any form of violence, including gender-based violence, against beneficiaries, family members and the local population.

Domestic abuse and intimate partner violence are forms of gender-based violence that occur between family or household members, or between people involved in a personal relationship. UNRWA considers domestic abuse and intimate partner violence to strongly conflict with the UN Charter and with UNRWA standards of conduct.

Such behaviour constitutes misconduct under the UNRWA regulatory framework. Examples of such behaviour include:

- Acts of physical violence, such as slapping, hitting, kicking and beating;
- Sexual violence, including forced sexual intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion;
- Emotional (psychological) abuse, such as insults, belittling, constant humiliation, intimidation (e.g. destroying things), threats of harm, threats to take away children;

and

- Controlling behaviours, including isolating a person from family and friends, monitoring their movements and restricting access to financial resources, employment, education or medical care.

If UNRWA receives information about the possible involvement of a member of personnel in such abuse, the Agency may open an investigation. Administrative or disciplinary action may be initiated where such acts by a member of personnel are substantiated.

UNRWA will also support personnel or beneficiaries impacted by gender-based violence to access support through available channels, including referrals to gender-based violence case management services.



Any staff member who is affected by a gender-based security incident, including domestic violence, can contact the UNRWA Security and Risk Management team in the Field Office or at Headquarters to get immediate personal security support and referrals. Members of personnel may also access some of the support services listed in the 'Resources available to individuals affected by sexual harassment' information sheet.

references

- International Staff Regulations, Regulation 1.6 and 1.9., (2018)
- Area Staff Regulations, Regulation 1.4, (2018)
- UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, Articles 1 and 2
- UN Women FAQs, (1993)
- WHO, Violence Against Women, (2021)
- UN Covid-19 Response 'Know Your Legal Rights: UN Policies/ Consequences of Domestic Abuse'



Principle 6: We respect local culture whilst being faithful to UN values

Standard 10: We always seek advice about gifts, hospitality, awards and honours.

Given our mission, we operate with an international outlook but in local contexts. Often, it is easy to carry out our duties in a way that aligns both with UN values and local cultural norms. However, sometimes tensions may arise.

references

- Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service, Paras. 14 and 40, (2013)
- International Staff Regulations, Regulation 1.6, (2018)



As part of our ethical conduct, we must never solicit or offer gifts or favours in connection with our official duties, to avoid the appearance that we are trying to influence the recipient's official actions or create the expectation of a favour in return.

Such actions could have a negative impact on our independence and impartiality, and on UNRWA's reputation.

Exchanging gifts and hospitality, and bestowing awards and honours on others for good deeds are accepted in many local cultures as appropriate courtesies. However, as officials who prioritise impartiality and independence, we must be careful that such courtesies never create, or even suggest the appearance of, any conflict of interest.

In the course of our work, someone may try to offer us a gift, pay for a meal or bestow an award or honour on us. How we should respond depends on the context.

- For gifts, awards and honours presented by government officials, these should be refused. However, if such a refusal would be embarrassing to UNRWA and the government, we may accept it on behalf of UNRWA and immediately turn the gifts/gifts over to our supervisors.
- For awards and honours presented by non-governmental entities, we need prior authorisation to accept them. Gifts from non-governmental entities may be accepted if they are of nominal value, such as a pen or an agenda. If we are offered a gift beyond nominal value, we also have to obtain approval.
- We must never accept a gift or favour from a person or entity doing business with UNRWA or seeking to have any sort of contractual relationship with the UN (e.g. an UNRWA vendor, bidder, or implementing partner), regardless of the value of the gift. Even participating in a business lunch, dinner or Iftar offered by a potential or existing supplier would be inappropriate.

On the other hand, receiving gifts and hospitality is usually acceptable when exchanged between family, close friends or personnel. However, there must never be an expectation of reciprocity, such as a promotion, position or access to valuable contacts. Teachers, health care workers and anyone else working directly with beneficiaries must be mindful of the possible appearance of exploitation that can arise, even if it is a small gesture such as being offered lunch or accepting a year-end gift from a student. However, accepting tea or coffee is permissible.

Between colleagues, exchanges of gifts should be exercised with caution and should always be of small value, as they may create an expectation of promotion, appointment or an enhanced performance evaluation.

references

- Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service, Paras. 50 and 51, (2013)
- International Staff Regulations 1.14 and 1.15, (2018)
- International Staff Rules Rule 1.2 (l)-(m), (2018)
- UNRWA, Organization Directive No. 10: Procurement (Nov 2021), Para. 5.2
- General Staff Circular No. 03/2008, Standard of Conduct for UNRWA staff members regarding acceptance of favours, gifts or remuneration (2008)



Principle 7: We build strong relationships

Standard 11: *We contribute to building a harmonious workplace based on team spirit, mutual respect, understanding and accountability.*

When we operate with integrity, we build trust with each other, with those we serve and with our partners. That trust is the foundation of strong, positive relationships. We cannot carry out our mission as individuals only. Our work is a collective effort.

Thus, we must build and maintain strong, trusting and respectful relationships with governments, partners, donors, our colleagues and beneficiaries. It also requires that we avoid disrespectful and harmful behaviours.

UNRWA's ability to pursue our mandate of assisting and protecting Palestine refugees is not possible without the generous contributions of our donors. We also must engage external partners to assist with the implementation of projects and tasks. All interactions with donors and partners require that we be independent, yet collaborative. We must be impartial, yet seek the very best from those who operate under the UN flag and in UNRWA's name. In order to avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest, we must always make clear our role as UNRWA officials when dealing with external partners.

Building strong relationships means that we deeply respect each other, Palestine refugees and all people. At UNRWA, we aim to build a culture of teamwork and collaboration.

This means:

- We give all colleagues space to be heard.
- We communicate openly and share relevant information (with respect for confidentiality and data protection requirements) with each other.
- We contribute to constructive dialogue between management and

- staff representatives, guided by mutual respect.
- We respect each other's privacy, and we avoid spreading rumours and misinformation.
- We try to resolve differences when they arise.

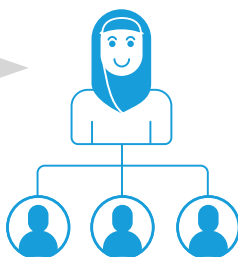
We are all required to uphold the highest standards of efficiency, competency and integrity in discharging our functions. Supervisors are particularly accountable for delivering results and for supporting personnel in their office or team to reach their full potential.

as a manager what are my obligations?

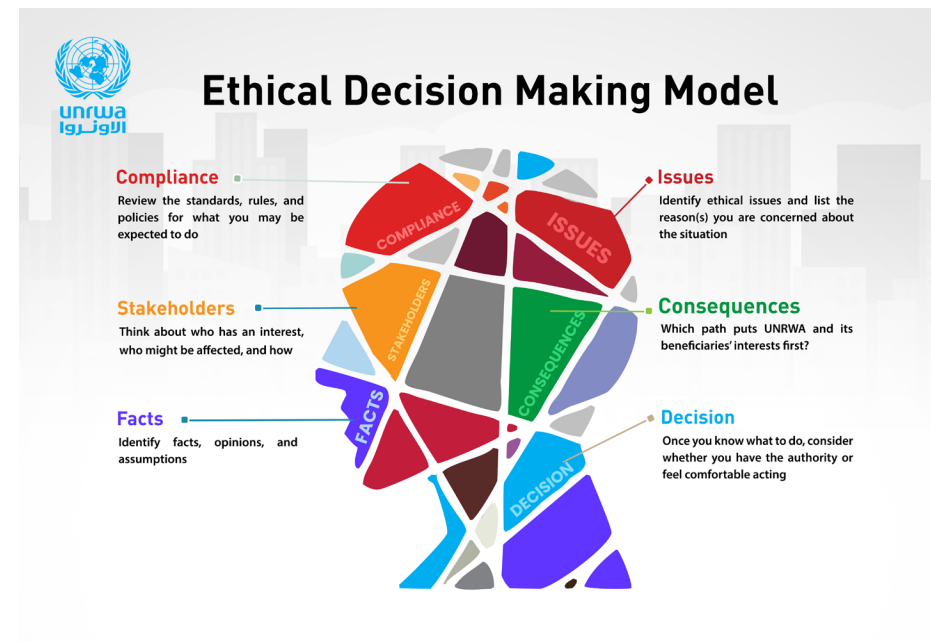
Managers have special obligations to help build a harmonious working environment.

Managers should:

- Foster harmony and unity in the workplace.
- Be a positive role model for the rest of your team.
- Work to protect the health, safety and security of your personnel.
- Consider positive methods of motivating your team by seeking the advice and input of all team members.
- Share information on organizational policies, directives and guidance.
- Promote an environment in which personnel can express their views without fear of reprisal.
- Monitor and evaluate performance and give timely feedback to each team member.
- Take prompt action to respond to problems as they arise.



4.2. making ethical decisions



Even after you have read this Code of Ethics and UNRWA's policies, you are not expected to know how all of the rules apply to every situation. Each of us may face situations where applying the rules may be difficult or unpopular. Each of us has faced a situation where the right course of action was hard to determine.

An ethical dilemma is a conflict between alternatives where, no matter what a person does or decides, some ethical principle will be compromised. Ethical dilemmas are complicated challenges where a solution is not easily determined.

Sometimes, you have an ethical dilemma where an answer seems obvious but not appropriate, or you have multiple options but none seem absolutely right.

When facing an ethical dilemma or question about appropriate conduct, answering these questions in order can help you make an ethical decision:

- **FACTS:** What are the facts? Do I need more information?
- **STAKEHOLDERS:** Who are the stakeholders who have an interest in what happens?
- **ETHICAL ISSUES:** What are the ethical issues?

references

- See references under Principles 1 and 4
- Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service, para. 16, (2013)



- **COMPLIANCE WITH RELEVANT RULES AND REGULATIONS:** What rules apply here? Does someone else besides me have the authority to take this decision?
- **OPTIONS AND CONSEQUENCES:** What are the various options available, and their consequences?
- **THE BEST DECISION:** Finally, you can decide on the best action, and take it. The best decision is one that reflects UNRWA's values and principles, and is fair to UNRWA, our beneficiaries and other stakeholders.



*When in doubt, apply the newspaper test.
How would this situation look if it were published on the front page of the newspaper?*

ethical decision-making exercise

Let's apply the ethical decision-making model to analyse the following situation and decide what you should do.

scenario

What if I am a Camp Services Officer and a Palestine refugee living in my camp asks me for assistance. She is the head of a large household with five children under the age of 10 and a mother who has a disability. The assistance that UNRWA provides her with is insufficient, and her son is in need of an urgent life-saving operation which she cannot afford. Health care will only cover a percentage of the costs. She asks me for money to cover the costs.

Facts: A vulnerable Palestine refugee is in need of funds for a lifesaving operation. UNRWA assistance does not cover all costs. The Camp Services Officer is aware that UNRWA cannot provide further assistance. He feels that he must help this refugee as he identifies with her situation.

Stakeholders: The beneficiary and her family especially her son, all of the other beneficiaries, UNRWA, partners and donors.

Ethical issues: Does the situation present a conflict of interest? Could payment of money to this beneficiary cause me to be, or appear to be, biased?

Does it give rise to a conflict between humanitarian principles e.g. impartiality and humanity? Is there a conflict between our core values as international civil servants and local religious traditions of sharing, solidarity and giving charity?

Compliance with relevant rules and regulations: This Code of Ethics states that you must be independent and impartial, which means that you do not give gifts to beneficiaries so as to avoid any perception of discrimination or favouritism. If there is a clash of UN principles and local norms, you are required to give preference to the UN principles.

Options and Consequences: You could decide to give her the money, which would support the beneficiary in financing the medical needs, however, this could be perceived by the other beneficiaries as favouritism and discriminatory. Secondly, there could be a perception of exploitation, in which there is an expectation of reciprocity from the beneficiary. This could also affect the image of the UN personnel who should remain impartial, upholding and applying the rules of the Agency. It could also affect the image of the Agency, as personnel are expected to apply the rules equally, without distinction of any kind. Ultimately, it could be a reputational risk, which could compromise donor funds.

On the other hand, you could decide to politely decline the request, which could possibly result in the death of the child or it could cause the mother or the family to resort to negative coping mechanisms, such as child labour. However, you could raise the case to your manager or to the head of Health in the Field to find potential referral pathways for this emergency case.

The newspaper test: Outsiders would likely see you paying for the services as empathetic and humane. However, it would raise serious questions about whether there were other options for covering the costs. As a result, it could also be seen as unprofessional and discriminatory against other refugees who may be in a similar situation, or even potentially exploitative, given your position with UNRWA. If you do not give her the money, it could cast you in a negative light with your community and could be perceived as selfish and uncaring. It could also potentially harm UNRWA's reputation with donors and beneficiaries if no other solution could be found.

The best decision is to avoid giving her the money and explain to her that this could be perceived as unfair or exploitative. However, you should explain to her that you will highlight her case to a senior manager to see if exceptional options could be considered for assisting with her son's operation including external referral pathways.

If you have any doubt, or questions, you can always discuss the situation with the UNRWA Ethics Office prior to taking a decision.

4.3. seeking ethics advice

Sometimes, even after going through the ethical decision-making model, you still need more information.

You may need an interpretation of the applicable rule or help with brainstorming about options and alternatives. You may consult a manager or a trusted peer. If you need a confidential resource for advice, the Ethics Office is available to you. As a first point of contact, you may also contact the ethics focal point in your Field.

The Ethics Office will never disclose the name of anyone seeking advice, unless you give consent to do so. You may contact the Ethics Office on any issue relating to the ethical standards referred to in this Code of Ethics. The Ethics Office will communicate with you in confidence to review your situation and will make recommendations on how best to resolve your concern or situation.

The Ethics Office is an impartial, independent and confidential resource for all UNRWA personnel.

How to contact the Ethics Office:



UNRWA HQ Amman
Bayader Wadi Seer
PO Box 140157, Amman 11814

Email: ethicsoffice@unrwa.org

Phone: +962 6 5808 171

You can also contact your Ethics Focal Point in the Field for general ethics information.

scenario

What if I make a mistake?

The process of ethical decision-making is designed to help you maximise the chance that you will make good, ethical decisions. However, mistakes happen. When they do, seek advice from your manager or contact the Ethics Office.



references

- Organization Directive No. 30 on 'Terms of Reference of the UNRWA Ethics Office', (2020)





5. raising concerns when things go wrong

5.1. respectful dissent and speaking up

Our work is complex, difficult and often stressful. In this context, disagreements are natural. Speaking up to voice concerns, and even to respectfully dissent from a position taken by another colleague, is sometimes necessary. While it may be hard to speak up, and sometimes even harder to listen, it is an important first step to resolving problems.

Speaking up can be as simple as asking a manager for more information or requesting that a colleague clarify what was meant by a comment you found offensive. Respectfully challenging or dissenting from an instruction or request that you believe violates UNRWA's rules allows you to go on the record about your position. If you truly believe an instruction or request is inappropriate, you should escalate your concern to a supervisor, or report the matter via the established channels.

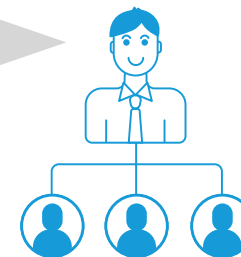
scenario

What if I am afraid of speaking up? Even if I am not reporting misconduct formally, I may still experience a reprisal.

If another member of UNRWA personnel tries to harm you because you raised a concern, this could amount to abuse of authority or harassment. We all have to prioritise UNRWA's interests and conduct ourselves at the highest level of efficiency.

as a manager what are my obligations?

You must work hard to hear concerns, and even dissent, with an open mind. When a member of personnel voices a concern, this should be seen as an act of integrity and not an inappropriate challenge.





Sometimes personnel have disputes. Interpersonal conflicts can be minor or major. If we are to show respect, tolerance and understanding, we should try to address such conflicts with each other. The Ombudsman can assist personnel in working through their conflicts and reaching a positive solution that works for everyone.

5.2. informally addressing concerns and formally reporting

Some cases of prohibited conduct may be resolved informally. Prohibited conduct includes discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority. Informal resolution offers the opportunity to resolve a complaint in a non-contentious manner.

As a complainant, we may choose to notify the offender of the complaint and ask him/her to stop, as in some cases the alleged offender may not be aware that his/her behaviour is offensive. However, disparity in power, status or other issues may make confrontation difficult.

If direct confrontation is difficult, we may choose to ask either a first or second supervisor or the Ombudsman for assistance in approaching the individual directly. With our informed consent, a supervisor or the Ombudsman may meet with the alleged offender to discuss how the situation might be resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned, or act as a mediator. Supervisors can seek confidential guidance on managing the grievance from the Ombudsman or the Ethics Office.

If an informal resolution is not appropriate or does not provide our desired outcome, personnel may always lodge a formal complaint at any time.

It is everyone's duty to report suspicions or concerns of misconduct when they become aware of it. While you should have a reasonable basis for your suspicion or concern, you must not conduct your own investigation. All reports should be made in good faith through the official reporting channels found at the end of this Code of Ethics. Knowingly and wilfully reporting false or malicious information constitutes misconduct, for which disciplinary measures may be imposed.

What is misconduct? Misconduct is any violation of UNRWA's rules, regulations policies, or administrative issuances. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Fraud, corruption, theft and misappropriation.
- Breaches of neutrality.
- Unauthorized outside and/ or political activities.
- Harassment (including sexual harassment), discrimination and abuse of power.
- Bullying and intimidation.
- Sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Retaliation.

Reports can be made to the DIOS investigations hotline, Field Director or HQ Department Director, Field Investigations Office and PSEA Focal Point (for reports of sexual exploitation and abuse).

[More information on Where to Seek Help and Reporting Misconduct is available at the end of this Code of Ethics.](#)

While it is preferred that you identify yourself, you may report suspected misconduct anonymously. However, anonymous reports are often more difficult to investigate.

When allegations of interpersonal misconduct or sexual exploitation and abuse are made, UNRWA will consider the victim's safety, concerns and needs in its response. This may include taking additional measures to ensure the health and safety of the alleged victim before, during or after the investigation.

UNRWA takes seriously all allegations of misconduct. You have the right to be protected from retaliation.



*You are **not** required to consult, inform or go through your immediate supervisor when raising concerns about misconduct.*

scenario

What if I do not want to report misconduct because I fear retaliation?

You have the right to be protected from retaliation for formally reporting misconduct in good faith or on reasonable grounds. Retaliation is any detrimental action affecting your work position or environment that is recommended, threatened or taken because you formally reported misconduct or participated in an official audit or investigation. Retaliation can include threats of termination, negative changes to job duties or an unjustified performance evaluation because someone has reported misconduct or participated in an audit or investigation. The Ethics Office is authorised to receive all complaints of retaliation.

The Ethics Office can also advise you on the best way to raise concerns of misconduct or retaliation.

ethics office
code of ethics



6. resources

references

- General Staff Circular No. 05/2007, Allegations and complaints procedures and protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct and cooperating with audits or investigations (2007)
- Area Personnel Directive A/10/Rev.3, Disciplinary measures and procedures (2017)



6.1. contacting the ethics office



the ethics office

The UNRWA Ethics Office is an independent, confidential, neutral, impartial, and professional resource for all UNRWA employees, everywhere. It offers six lines of service:



The Ethics Office does not:

- receive reports of misconduct
- resolve grievances
- deal with administrative decisions regarding employment

Do you have any questions? Please feel free to reach out.

email: ethicsoffice@unrwa.org telephone: +9626 5808 171

UNRWA HQ Amman, Jordan, Bayader Wadi Seer, PO Box 140157, Amman 11814

6.2. reporting misconduct

REPORT >>> MISCONDUCT

examples

- sexual harassment, exploitation, or abuse
- discrimination, harassment, and abuse of power
- violence, including against children
- fraud, corruption, theft, and misappropriation
- breaches of neutrality
- unauthorized outside and/or political activities

who can report

Anyone with information can report

Personnel have a duty to report

Anonymous reports may limit the potential for an investigation

where to report

- ✉ hotline@unrwa.org
- 👤 field director / investigations office

📞	Jordan	06 580 8686
	Lebanon	03 900 145
	Syria	01 1611 6717
	Gaza	08 288 7127
	West Bank	02 589 0772

protection against retaliation

Personnel who formally report misconduct can request protection against retaliation



united nations relief and works agency
for palestine refugees in the near east

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6.3. sexual misconduct



unrwa
الأونروا



TOGETHER
WE SAY
NO

SEXUAL HARASSMENT, EXPLOITATION, OR ABUSE
IS ALWAYS WRONG

IF UN PERSONNEL KNOW ABOUT IT,
THEY MUST REPORT IT:

hotline@unrwa.org

Jordan 06 580 8686
Lebanon 03 900 145
Syria 01 1611 6717
Gaza 08 288 7127
West Bank 02 589 0772



 united nations relief and works agency
for palestinian refugees in the near east

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6.4. the difference between sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment



zero tolerance for sexual misconduct by UNRWA personnel



sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA)		sexual harassment (SH)									
perpetrator  UN personnel/aid worker	survivor  local community	perpetrator  UNRWA personnel	survivor  UNRWA personnel								
examples - sexual relationships or activities in exchange for money, employment, preferential treatment, goods, or services - sexual relationships or activities with anyone under the age of 18 - sexual relationships or activities with beneficiaries based on improper use of rank or position		examples - unwelcome comments, jokes, gestures or actions about someone's physical appearance or sexual identity - request for sexual favours to obtain a promotion or favourable treatment - attempted or actual sexual assault or rape									
UNRWA response <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>perpetrator</th> <th>survivor</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> - complaint/report - investigation or record for information - disciplinary action or managerial action - referral to national authorities (with informed consent) </td> <td> - prioritize the safety, dignity, and wishes of the survivor - reporting the incident is mandatory, take informed consent to share personal information - refer to specialized staff for information and referral to GBV or child protection services </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		perpetrator	survivor	- complaint/report - investigation or record for information - disciplinary action or managerial action - referral to national authorities (with informed consent)	- prioritize the safety, dignity, and wishes of the survivor - reporting the incident is mandatory, take informed consent to share personal information - refer to specialized staff for information and referral to GBV or child protection services	UNRWA response <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>perpetrator</th> <th>survivor</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> - informal resolution and/or - formal complaint - investigation - disciplinary action or managerial action (possibly) referral to national authorities </td> <td> - prioritize the safety, dignity, and wishes of the survivor - refer for confidential advice (ethics office or ombudsman) - provide options for workplace protective measures or accommodation - refer for support services </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		perpetrator	survivor	- informal resolution and/or - formal complaint - investigation - disciplinary action or managerial action (possibly) referral to national authorities	- prioritize the safety, dignity, and wishes of the survivor - refer for confidential advice (ethics office or ombudsman) - provide options for workplace protective measures or accommodation - refer for support services
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false and malicious complaints may result in disciplinary action your duty as UNRWA personnel - inform all beneficiaries of their rights and assist them in accessing complaint and referral mechanisms - be aware that it is mandatory to report any concern or suspicion regarding sexual exploitation or abuse - create and maintain a respectful workplace environment that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse		false and malicious complaints may result in disciplinary action your duty as UNRWA personnel - inform personnel of their rights and assist them in accessing complaint and referral mechanisms - report conduct of a sexual nature that causes offense, humiliation, or contributes to a toxic work environment - create and maintain a respectful workplace environment that prevents sexual harassment									
refer to: department of internal oversight services (DIOS) email: hotline@unrwa.org phone: Jordan: 06 580 8686 Lebanon: 01 830 441 Syria: 01 1611 6717 Gaza: 08 288 7127 West Bank: 02 589 0772 field director/ field investigations office or PSEA focal points		refer to: Ethics office or ombudsman (for information and advice) email: ethicsoffice@unrwa.org ombudsman@unrwa.org department of internal oversight services (DIOS) email: hotline@unrwa.org phone: Jordan: 06 580 8686 Lebanon: 01 830 441 Syria: 01 1611 6717 Gaza: 08 288 7127 West Bank: 02 589 0772									



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united nations relief and works agency
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وكالة الأمم المتحدة غائة وتشغيل
اللاجئين الفلسطينيين في الشرق الأدنى