



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women



International Women's Day - 8 March 2011

United Nations

Award Ceremony on prevention of sexual harassment in the Workplace

Introduction

Each year around the world, **International Women's Day (IWD)** is celebrated on March 8. This day, originally called "International Working Women's Day", is a major day of global celebration of women. In different regions the focus of this event ranges from general celebration to an acknowledgement of women's economic, political and social achievements. The universal IWD Global Theme for 2011 is: ***Equal access to education, training and science and technology: Pathway to decent work for women.***

It is certain that no decent work for women will be granted if violence in the workplace is not urgently addressed and sexual harassment continues to be a common reality faced by women when accessing the Labour market. Therefore the **United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN WOMEN)**, Southern Africa Office and the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** are collaborating to flag out the topic of **sexual harassment in the workplace (SHWP)** on 2011 International Women's Day.

UN Women promotes women's empowerment and gender equality through financial and technical assistance to innovative programmes and strategies. In Southern Africa, UN WOMEN orients its work around four areas: Governance, Peace and Security, Economic Security and Rights, Gender and HIV&AIDS and ending Violence against Women (VAW). Within its work on VAW, UN WOMEN coordinates the **Africa UNiTE Campaign to end Violence against Women and Girls**, a continent-wide partnership to end all forms of violence against women in order to prevent violence, provide services to survivors and promote justice. The overall objective of the Campaign is to mobilize and support governments in fulfilling their commitments to end violence against women and girls.

The **ILO** is the international organization responsible for drawing up and overseeing international labour standards. It is the only 'tripartite' United Nations agency that brings together representatives of governments, employers and workers to jointly shape policies and programmes to promote Decent Work for all. The main aims of the ILO are to promote rights at work, encourage decent employment opportunities, enhance social protection and strengthen dialogue on work-related issues. ILO has a mandate and clear leadership to ensure that decent employment is a reality for women and men, and that sexual harassment in the workplace is addressed and eradicated. ILO defines, in its Circular no.

534, “sexual harassment at work” as follows: *Any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature in the workplace or in connection with work, which, in the reasonable perception of the person concerned, is: (a) used as a basis for a decision which affects that person’s employment or professional situation; or (b) creates an intimidating, hostile or humiliating work environment for that person.*

Objectives of the event

On the International Women’s Day 2011 UN WOMEN SARO and ILO will convene an **Award Ceremony** with the objective of acknowledging the commitment of South African Companies to prevent and address the problem of sexual harassment in the workplace. The aims are to:

- 1. Identify local companies that have a record of good practices and are committed to address sexual harassment in the workplace.**
- 2. Share lessons learnt and ensure commitment from participating companies to engage in substantive actions to respond to sexual harassment in the work place.**
- 3. Understand the situation in South Africa in regards to sexual harassment in the workplace and what challenges are faced to address the issue.**
- 4. Give a voice to women who want to speak up on the issue from their personal experiences.**
- 5. Collect information for the development of a gender toolkit on prevention and responses to sexual harassment in the workplace.**
- 6. Obtain a list of companies that commit to receive training on sexual harassment in the workplace using the above toolkit.**

The proposed initiative contributes to the implementation of the Africa UNiTE Campaign to End Violence Against Women and Girls in Southern Africa, more specifically in the following:

- *Adoption & implementation of multi-sectoral national plans of action that emphasize prevention of VAW & that are adequately resourced;***
- *Support to National partners with strategies, tools and lessons learned to respond to sexual violence at workplace, schools and public space, and***
- *Adoption & enforcement of national laws to address & punish all forms of violence against women and girls, in line with international human rights standards.***

In a longer term UN WOMEN and the ILO will effectively engage Southern African governments around the issue of Sexual Harassment in the Work place, with a view of campaigning on the legislative gaps in countries’ legal frameworks around Sexual Harassment in the Work place.

Preparations for the event: How to make it happen

At the event three South African local companies will be awarded for their commitment to prevent and address sexual harassment in the work place.

The flow of activities prior to the event will be the following:

An initial list of local Companies in South Africa will be compiled. If possible, these companies will cover a number of different sectors. These will be selected by UN WOMEN and the ILO in communication with key stakeholders.

The selected companies should fulfil at least one of the following criteria:

- a. To have a specific policy, regulation or code of conduct that addresses sexual harassment in the workplace and that has been implemented.
 - b. To have handled at least one case of sexual harassment that has been positively resolved by using internal mechanisms.
 - c. To have held training on sexual harassment in the workplace for employees.
 - d. To have counselling services that offer anonymous and independent support to those suffering sexual harassment in the workplace.
- 2.** The list of criteria will be circulated to employees of the shortlisted Companies who will be requested to rate -using these criteria- their respective companies in relation to their commitment in addressing SHWP . From this rating exercise the five highest rated Companies will be requested to submit complete documentation on the measures put in place on SHWP to UN WOMEN and the ILO.
- 4.** Complete information received from these five companies will be shared with the **seven (7) judges** of the Award Ceremony, prior to the event. This group of judges will come up with the **three (3) best companies** out of the five ones received. The judges panel will be made up of:

- a) one representative from ILO
- b) one representative from UN WOMEN
- c) one representative from the Department of Labour
- d) one representative from the Ministry of Women, Children and People with disabilities
- e) one representative from Women's Trade Union
- f) one representative from Business Women's Association
- g) one representative from the Commission for Gender Equality

5. At the ceremony the three selected Companies will be officially announced and a certificate will be given to each of them as well as to those that have participated as a way to acknowledge their commitment to end sexual harassment in the workplace.

The event will also give a voice to those Companies that have not participated but that want to publicly express their commitment to engage in actions to address sexual harassment in the workplace. . Women who would like to speak up on the issue from their personal experiences will be invited to do so at the event.

Way forward: sustainability of the initiative

The event will be an inception meeting that will serve to collect key and basic information for the participatory development of a gender toolkit to prevent and end sexual harassment at the workplace, to be developed by UN WOMEN SARO and the ILO.

The toolkit is to be finalized by July 2011 following a validation meeting with key stakeholders from Government and Civil Society, alongside the participating Companies.

Subsequently the toolkit will be disseminated through trainings to South Africa local companies and at later stage local companies in other Southern African countries up to 2015, in support to the Africa UNiTE Campaign to end violence against women and girls.

Date and Venue

The Ceremony will take place on the 8th of March in Johannesburg from 7 to 9 pm. Registration will start at 6.30 pm. Information on the venue will be shared upon confirmation.

Please RVSP to Neesha Fakir by 1 March: neesha.fakir@unwomen.org , Tel. 011 517 15 51.

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