

Office of the Mediator

Staff experiences with informal conflict resolution

User comments are edited to protect confidentiality.

“I had an extremely satisfying experience with the Mediator and her efforts at conflict resolution.

I was confronted by a situation where I felt I was not being afforded my rights as an ILO staff member. I felt that HRD was being unfair and capricious in its interpretation of ILO staff regulations. So I contacted the Mediator in order to learn the procedure for filing a grievance.

The Mediator explained the grievance procedure. However, she also pointed out that prior to lodging an official grievance there could be mediation, and she volunteered to discuss my complaint with HRD as part of a mediations stage if I wished. The Mediator subsequently held discussions with HRD and the matter was resolved amicably.

This means that my case was resolved without a grievance being filed or any litigation taking place, thereby saving me (as well as ILO) considerable time, expense and heartache.”

“There were differences of approach and attitude to work assignment and understanding of performance management, between two colleagues. One colleague decided that an important step in seeking to improve this situation was to develop skills of self-assertion and taking a more objective and analytical approach. A facilitator was chosen to work with the incumbent, through a series of role-playing and mentoring regarding the developing work relationship.

It became progressively apparent that the incumbent was growing in self-assurance and ability to confront constructively differences of approach to work assignments and performance management.

In my discussions with the Office of the Mediator, other issues relating to broader work planning were raised, which proved useful to the work unit.

I would like to place on record my appreciation of the work of the Office of the Mediator, and in particular of the constructive approach taken by the colleague who assumed the role of facilitator. This person was highly professional, objective and constructive and is to be commended.”

“I went to meet with the Mediator to particularly support my colleague who was in a very fragile state as she was being harassed (psychologically) by our Chief. The atmosphere in our office was terrible. The Mediator was very understanding and supportive. She gave

us the “tools” to “work” with our chief in different forms and “coached” us on how to get our point of view over.

We decided that the best way for us to tackle this problem was initially to discuss with our Chief. We met with our Chief, both of us together and then my colleague on her own and we were able to tell our Chief how we felt. This would not have been possible without the support/assistance of the Mediator.

Office of the Mediator

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I am pleased to report that since this meeting the atmosphere and personal relations in our office are much improved. Without the service of the Office of the Mediator, I think that both my colleague and I would have looked for other employment.”

“As a manager, I had always believed that the services of the Mediator were directed towards more junior staff. I was confronted with conflict between two of my staff and the conflictual situation was impacting negatively on the rest of the Department. Staff were getting polarized and productivity was low. I was not sure of how to deal with the situation and was not convinced that I had the needed objectivity.

A colleague suggested I speak with the Mediator. I did so and, having been assured of total confidentiality, explained the situation. The Mediator gave me extremely practical and useful strategies to defuse the conflict. She also offered to facilitate team-building exercise for the staff – an offer I accepted.

I am pleased to say that the communication among staff and between staff and myself improved and conflict, when it occurs, is better managed.”

“I found my meetings with my facilitators (I had two) extremely helpful and productive. Not having been through such a process before, I was struck by the focus on negotiating skills and strategies. These are issues to which I (and I would guess many others) have given relatively little thought in the past, and the things I learned will, I am sure, be very helpful to me in future negotiations as well.

I was also impressed by the availability of the facilitators and their generosity in terms of time. We had four quite lengthy meetings on short notice, in spite of the facilitators' numerous other responsibilities for the ILO. It is reassuring to know that there are such people at the ILO who have the skills to prepare one for negotiation but also that such a structure is in place to assist parties who feel they have a grievance (in the generic sense of the word). This makes one feel that their concerns are being taken seriously, which, for me, was very important, particularly given the specific circumstances of the case.”

“I felt that I was being victimized and harassed because of the person I am under the guise of poor performance. The Mediator was the only neutral body available, as the

official managerial cadres were either uninterested or partial in the crisis. I was not interested in lodging a formal complaint but I did expect fair treatment. For me the Mediator is the only such process in the ILO today.”

“There was a difference of opinion between two colleagues in my Programme. I was glad both of them approached the Mediator’s office. One benefited from participating in a training. The other person was provided support in terms of coaching to address the conflictual situation. I was called upon separately to provide feedback and ideas. In combination with work on one side in the Programme, the work of the Mediator has been most salutary in improving the situation.”

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“I greatly appreciated the support provided by the Mediator, in assessing the way to deal with a potential harassment case. The advice given was helpful and relevant.”

“I have had difficulty maintaining a positive relationship with a colleague. Another staff member asked me if I could do anything to resolve the situation because the conflict between my colleague and myself was affecting others. I agreed and thought of the Mediator’s office, as I had tried all the ways I knew of to address the situation. I made an appointment with the Mediator and talked the situation over. She suggested a number of ways her office could help. I found it somewhat difficult to talk about the situation but it was useful to hear my difficulty was not uncommon between colleagues.”