WISE+

Work Improvement in Small Enterprises

Action Manual
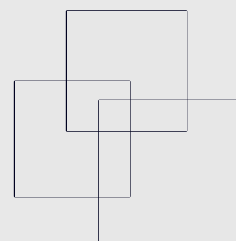
International
Labour
Office

WISE +

WISE + Action Manual

Foreword

Work Improvement in Small Enterprises (*WISE*) is an innovative approach to improving working conditions and productivity in small and medium-sized enterprises around the world. It is not simply a training package, but a process in which entrepreneurs and managers are empowered and supported to address working conditions issues through the identification, sharing and implementation of local and affordable good practices. In the long term, the improvements in working conditions achieved are sustained through the development of supportive networks of local entrepreneurs and trainers who continue to share ideas and practices, motivated by the measurable improvements in productivity that participants experience.

A series of training modules and guides, first published in 1988, form the heart of WISE. Until now, these have provided guidance on nine technical areas of working conditions, all of which address the physical organization of the workplace and work processes and simple ways to alter these, so as to improve safety and health and increase productivity. These manuals have been used, adapted and translated into more than ten countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, evidencing the flexibility and effectiveness of the WISE approach.

WISE-R (*More* Work Improvement in Small Enterprises) builds upon this success and is designed to meet the needs identified by *WISE* trainers and entrepreneurs around the world to expand the *WISE* package to include other key dimensions of working conditions. *WISE-R* consists of six new modules and training guides that address not only the physical work environment, but also the more complex day-to-day challenges that entrepreneurs face when handling employee recruitment, management and motivation.

WISE–R is a natural extension of the original *WISE* manuals. It reflects the global recognition that the employees of a business are not only often a significant investment, but that their performance holds the key to the success of the business. *WISE-R* reflects this reality and takes on the issues that are central both to workers' recruitment, retention and motivation, and to maximizing individual productivity in a safe and healthy way: wages, working time, maternity protection, work-family balance, management and motivation, and workplace relations.

As with *WISE*, the suggestions made in *WISE-R* are both practical and low-cost. The focus of these ideas is, in fact, to introduce simple working practices and measures that can make a huge difference to the motivation and the ability of employees to perform their job and, consequently, to the productivity of the business.

The concept of combining *WISE* and *WISE-R* into a *WISE+* package arose in the course of a six-month period of pilot testing carried out in Mozambique and the United Republic of Tanzania in 2009. Following the development of the *WISE-R* modules, a decision was taken to pilot the *WISE* and *WISE-R* training modules in tandem. The implementation phase was carried out with the cooperation and participation of a range of local and national actors, including local entrepreneurs, employers' and workers' organizations, labour inspectorates, ministries of labour, training institutions and others. The feedback received following this exercise has suggested that combining *WISE* and *WISE-R* is an efficient and effective approach.

This *WISE+* binder brings together the *WISE Action Manual (1997)* with the new *WISE-R Training Manual* to create a complete *WISE+ Action Manual*. We have also created a second binder, which contains the *WISE* and new *WISE-R Trainers' Guides*. In the longer term, further work will need to be undertaken to fully integrate the *WISE* and *WISE-R* modules, and their respective guides. This WISE+ package is thus presented as a prototype, which is ready to provide a solid starting point for future work. The ILO would welcome the feedback of entrepreneurs and practitioners who will use and adapt the methodology to the multiple realities of workplaces around the world.

WISE-R
More
Work Improvement in Small Enterprises

Module 6

Create
a Respectful Workplace

Introduction

As a business owner, you will be used to thinking about safety and health in the workplace, looking for issues that can cause accidents or diseases, and taking action to remove or avoid them. You do this for many good reasons:

➢ because the law requires it;

➢ because accidents cost time and money;

➢ because you want to protect your workers.

Workplace harassment may not be covered by a law in your country but, just like safety and health problems, it can damage your business and your workers.

Harassment at work is very common everywhere in the world but often hidden. Employees who are harassed or bullied suffer in many ways including feeling worried, stressed, or frightened about what will happen to them. They often also suffer a loss of concentration and personal and professional confidence, so that they feel uncomfortable and don't dare to use initiative or share ideas.

When you realize how badly victims of harassment feel, it is easy to see how this could affect their health and their productivity. This module will help you to spot it and to deal with it, so your workplace is happier and your staff can concentrate on doing their best for your business.

The objective of this module

1) To uncover the nature of harassment at work

2) To provide cost-free measures to prevent harassment

3) To help you to contribute to a respectful environment in your company

This Module is divided into the following sections:

1) Harassment and how to deal with it

2) Develop an HIV/AIDS workplace policy

3) Involve your workers in maintaining a respectful work environment

4) Be a positive model

Harassment
and How to Tackle it

A 'respectful workplace' is a productive workplace and this is what all businesses aim to be. In a respectful workplace workers and managers treat each other fairly and equally and with respect. Harassment and bullying are the opposite of these things so need to be dealt with.

These workers are arriving at work, happy to have a healthy and respectful workplace.

The advantages for your business

No matter where it occurs, harassment is costly and unproductive. It reduces motivation and productivity, and has a bad effect on collaboration between workers, as well as making the work environment unpleasant.

So it is in the interest of all business to tackle harassment problems and to take steps to avoid them in the future. The good news is that this is not hard to do and costs nothing: you just have to use good management techniques.

What you should know

1. What is harassment?

Harassment refers to a wide spectrum of offensive or upsetting behaviour. It is a behaviour (normally repeated) that causes someone distress and has no legitimate purpose.

There are lots of other words that are used instead of harassment and which describe a similar idea, such as bullying, tormenting, bothering, or pestering.

2. Who harasses whom, and why?

Harassment normally happens when there is a difference in power or strength between one person and another. This means that bosses or supervisors can certainly harass workers. But, workers can also harass or bully each other.

The person doing the harassing (the perpetrator) acts in this way because he or she believes that they will win something. The gain could be money, or getting someone else to do tasks for them. But it could also just be the feeling of power or control that they enjoy.

It could happen that the perpetrator is not aware that he/she is disturbing or upsetting the victim (the upset is unintended). Even so, the perpetrator needs to be informed about the undesired effects his/her behaviour has on a colleague. This gives the perpetrator the chance to change this behaviour quickly.

3. What sort of actions can be harassment?

Harassment comes in many forms. It is present in all parts of the world, in poor and rich countries, and in small, medium and large enterprises. Some common types of harassment are shown in the box below.

A supervisor shouts at a worker.

An angry boss pushes two workers.

This entrepreneur acts inappropriately by putting his arm around his assistant.

4. Who is most at risk?

> Harassment is normally a build up of actions rather than a single event. It often includes one or more of the actions below:
>
> - Name-calling.
> - Yelling/Shouting.
> - Physical abuse – slapping or pushing.
> - Criticizing/correcting the employee in front of others
> - Assigning a large amount of work to be completed in an impossibly short time and then criticizing the employee for not finishing the work.
> - Hovering over the employee while he/she is working.
> - Abusing the employee mentally.
> - Making fun of someone.
> - Sexual harassment – where a worker of the opposite sex treats a colleague in a way that suggests or threatens a demand for a sexual relationship
> - Threatening to give poor performance rating or fire the employee if the employee makes a complaint to the owner/manager.
> - Making threats of violence
> - Workers refuse to eat with, or use the same toilet as, a worker known to have HIV.
> - Workers demand protective clothing because of their fear of catching an HIV infection from another worker.
> - Management proposes to move a worker known to be HIV+ from a post where she/he meets the public.

Anyone can be harassed. You, for example, could be harassed by a competitor or by a corrupt official.

But commonly victims of workplace harassment are:

Different: this can be a physical difference such as colour, race, gender, disability, illness, or a difference of personality (being quiet or shy). HIV/AIDS discrimination is common – sometimes provoked by the fact that the person is absent for a long period or is losing a lot of weight.

Isolated: they have no close workplace friends, or they work out of sight of others.

Controlled by a manager or supervisor: they have to do what the bully says if they want to keep their job.

Have no way of complaining: if there are no workplace procedures or policies for dealing with harassment, there are likely to be more victims.

What you can do

Step one: identify harassment risks and problems

Take a good look at your workplace and try to identify the risks of harassment happening and, of course, try to spot any on-going harassment.

Be aware of all types of harassment. Note that sexual harassment is one of the most common forms found in the workplace.

Examples of Sexual Harassment

Unwelcome physical contact

- Rubbing or brushing against one's breast or behind.
- Repeatedly squeezing a worker's shoulder and putting a hand around her waist.
- Exposing body parts.
- Excess attention.
- Forcing sexual interaction – physical assault and rape.

Non-physical

- Written or verbal remarks, profanity, obscenities, or sexual jokes.
- Sexual or offensive posters, graffiti or pictures, magazines or cartoons.
- Whistles or verbal comments.
- Making excessive comments on a person's appearance.
- Sexist remarks.
- Asking questions about sexual conduct.
- Invading personal privacy inside or outside the workplace (e.g. harassing telephone calls).
- Written or verbal abuse of a sexual nature.
- Harassment constantly targeted at one sex even if the content of the verbal abuse is not sexual.

Step two: Take action!

Keep a clear record of all incidents, taking notes of dates and times, potential witnesses and details of what took place.

Doing nothing is not an option. It leaves the victim to suffer and sends a message that the behaviour is acceptable. Both of these will cause reduced performance and production.

This supervisor is politely giving instructions to workers.

This manager signals to workers to follow him

This entrepreneur is talking respectfully with his assistant.

1.   Make changes in the workplace to reduce the risk of harassment

Harassment usually takes place in secret so you can reduce the risk by reducing isolation:

➢   Ensure that women are not working alone in remote areas of the enterprise.

➢   Add lighting to poorly lit areas and open up spaces where people may be isolated.

To avoid harassment by supervisors, train supervisors and managers in respectful management practices (see below).

2.   Develop a policy for maintaining a respectful work environment including fair procedures for dealing with complaints

A policy may just be a piece of paper, but it sends a strong message about the working environment you want to create. A good policy on harassment should:

● Clearly define different types of behaviour that will be considered harassment.

● State that every worker is entitled to a respectful workplace.

● Make it clear that harassment will not be tolerated.

● Set out a procedure for helping the victims of harassment.

● Be the subject of consultation with workers.

This manager has spotted three workers bullying a colleague, so he tells them to stop and points to a poster that says, "Harassment Will Not Be Tolerated."

Harassment, especially sexual harassment, is often hidden and considered shameful. It may continue for a long time, damaging business performance, unless people know that it will not be tolerated. A written policy gives employees the confidence to act against harassment and ensures that the rules are clear and known by all.

Checkpoint 52: Develop (in consultation with your staff) a written policy for promoting a respectful workplace, including a fair procedure to resolve complaints of harassment.

Fair and independent procedures to resolve complaints

Complaint procedures should be realistic and not too complicated.

Some complaints may be resolved **informally**:

- The procedure should provide that, if the victim agrees, the supervisor can speak to the 'harasser' informally – on a private basis without assessing the merits of the case – and agree a resolution.
- Sometimes establishing trusted workers/colleagues as the focal point for harassment complaints makes it easier for problems to be resolved informally. Where sexual harassment is a risk, a female focal point will make it easier for victims, who are most often (but not always) women, to talk about what has happened. Consider more than one focal point, so workers have a choice of a few people they could turn to for help.

Some complaints need to be dealt with **formally**:

- Perhaps because the victim or the harasser does not want it to be dealt with informally, the allegation is too serious or because the harassment is continuing despite an informal resolution.
- The formal procedure should provide that the complaint will be investigated objectively and confidentially (as it is important to minimize rumour and blame).

- The procedure should also ensure that the persons involved can, if needed, be accompanied by a person of their choice to help them feel comfortable when explaining the circumstances of the situation.

This young worker has been harassed, and is relieved to have a trusted colleague to talk to.

> **Checkpoint 53:** Designate a person or persons trusted by you and your workers to be a focal point for harassment complaints.

3.   Share and explain your harassment policy with staff

Once the policy is developed, it is important that your workers and managers understand it so they know what the expectations are and what will happen if they do not respect the policy:

- All workers need to know that it is okay to file a complaint and that they will be safe and not suffer because of it.
- Managers and supervisors need to be taught to recognize improper conduct among colleagues and employees.
- Consider giving special training to supervisors, managers and focal points on how to prevent and deal with harassment, especially sexual harassment. These are people in power positions and they need to understand their roles and responsibilities.
- The policy, and some training on it, should be given to each new employee when starting his/her job.

In this workplace, productivity has increased because harassment problems have been tackled.

Develop an HIV/AIDS Workplace Policy

HIV/AIDS hits the world of work in numerous ways.

Large numbers of workers have the infection, including many experienced and skilled workers, managers, and vital producers of food. In badly affected countries, it cuts the supply of labour as well as reducing the income for many workers. Projections made by the ILO for eight African countries with the highest prevalence rates indicate that the labour force could be up to one third (32 %) smaller by 2020 as a result of HIV/AIDS.

The effects of HIV/AIDS are likely to be felt in 3 main ways in your enterprise:

- Loss of productive staff and lower availability of trained workers
- Increased need for workers to have working time arrangements that allow them to care for sick relatives
- Incidents of discrimination and harassment against infected workers leading to less motivated staff

Having a good workplace policy on HIV/AIDS can greatly help workers to handle their condition and their work.

The advantages for your business

Developing concrete actions in your workplace related to HIV/AIDS will not only contribute to a possible decrease of the number of infections, but it will also create a work environment that is conducive to higher productivity.

Having an active policy on HIV/AIDS (and helping to lift the stigma from it) will be much appreciated by your employees, some of whom might be affected by the epidemic, either by being infected or having someone in their family who is infected. It will reduce the stress on the workers, who will feel more able to talk about this problem and also reduce discrimination against HIV/AIDS infected employees.
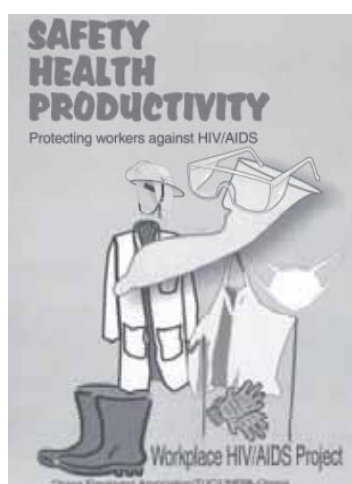
What you can do

In many countries there are recognized business organizations that support enterprises (mostly without charge) to develop HIV/AIDS workplace policies.

For help with implementing the policy, you can establish partnerships with NGOs or care institutions (as discussed in the module on Family-Friendly Measures). You could, for example, establish partnerships to ensure free testing and the provision of medicines.

Consider HIV/AIDS as an integral part of the daily reality in your company, as shown on this company poster: think about how you can protect your workers.

And give special attention in the policy to combating HIV/AIDS discrimination / harassment at your workplace.

Checkpoint 54: Avoid HIV/AIDS discrimination by workers and management, by developing and implementing an HIV/AIDS policy for the workplace.

Involve your Workers
in Maintaining a Respectful
Work Environment

If you want a policy to be supported and applied by workers and managers, it is important that they are involved in creating it. All workers should be represented in the consultations - women as well as men – so all perspectives are understood and taken into account. When it comes to discussing sexual harassment, women are the most frequent targets and their input will help their male co-workers to understand the impact of unwanted sexual attention.

What you can do:

- Set up a "Comments box" where employees can post their opinions and ideas confidentially.
- When discussing harassment, encourage them to describe all forms of harassment and give examples of what it is and what it is not. This type of activity reinforces the topic and helps motivate them to take positive action to be respectful to one another.

Checkpoint 55: Remove all suggestive or provocative photos, posters, and other items from display in the workplace.

- Ensure that workers and managers do not put on display or pass around any pictures, posters or jokes that are offensive or include sexual innuendo.

6.4
Be a Positive Model

It is vital that you act the way you want your employees to act. Treat all your employees with dignity and respect if you want to sustain a respectful work environment. Your managers and supervisors need to act this way too.

Speak to workers and managers respectfully, avoiding shouting or being rude.

This business owner greets his employees in a respectful way.

Be aware of the difference in power between you and your employees and how they might feel forced to say yes to the boss, when they really want to say no!

> **Always be objective, but supportive, if complaints are made,**
> **and make it clear that you take them seriously.**

Summary: Rules for creating a respectful work environment

- Be aware of all types of harassment
- Make changes in the workplace to reduce the risk of harassment
- Develop a policy for maintaining a respectful work environment including fair procedures for dealing with complaints
- Develop an HIV/AIDS policy for your workplace
- Share and explain your harassment policy with staff
- Involve your workers in sustaining a respectful work environment
- Be a positive model

Checkpoints for WISE-R Module 6 Create a Respectful Work Environment

Checkpoint 52: Develop (in consultation with your staff) a written policy for promoting a respectful workplace, including a fair procedure to resolve complaints of harassment.

Checkpoint 53: Designate a person or persons trusted by you and your workers to be a focal point for harassment complaints.

Checkpoint 54: Avoid HIV/AIDS discrimination by workers and management by developing and implementing an HIV/AIDS policy for the workplace.

Checkpoint 55: Remove all suggestive or provocative photos, posters, and other items from display in the workplace.

WISE-R Module 6: Create a respectful workplace

Checkpoint 52: Develop (in consultation with your staff) a written policy for promoting a respectful workplace, including a fair procedure to resolve complaints of harassment.		
Do you propose action?		
❏ No	❏ Yes	❏ Priority
If yes, what action?		

Checkpoint 53: Designate a person or persons trusted by you and your workers to be a focal point for harassment complaints.		
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Checkpoint 54: Avoid HIV/AIDS discrimination by workers and management, by developing and implementing an HIV/AIDS policy for the workplace.		
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