

24 October, 2016

Members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee

Dear colleagues,

Through this letter, the Humanitarian Women's network (HWN) wishes to draw your attention to the results of a recently conducted survey among female aid workers regarding sexual discrimination and abuse in the workplace.

The HWN launched a survey which records gender based discrimination and abuse in the humanitarian field and measures the effectiveness of the reporting mechanisms that exist for women to seek accountability and support. Over 1,000 women responded from over 70 humanitarian agencies globally, mainly from NGOs and UN agencies.

Topline results:

- 48% of humanitarian female workers have been touched in an unwanted way by a male colleague and 4% have been forced to have sexual relations by a male colleague.
- 26% of women report that the experience of discrimination, harassment or sexual assault had a medium to strong impact on the course of their career – 16% quit, 7% left humanitarian field.
- 69% of women who experienced sexual harassment did not report it officially.
- 51% of women feel their organization does not do everything in its power to make them feel safe as a woman.

The HWN encourages IASC members to take action in the following 5 ways:

1. **Acknowledging that there is a problem worth addressing:** by appointing a high level champion to pursue the issue and tasking a secretariat with follow-up.
2. **Ensure that staff know their rights and responsibilities:** prioritize the issue in your offices, by designating a (preferably external) focal point. This focal point should be charged with (1) ensuring that staff understand the existing rules governing harassment, and abuse; (2) that they know the reporting mechanisms; and (3) that they are aware of staff care and support options.

3. **Establish a system wide review:** as this is a system-wide problem, the IASC and UNDG should take up this issue and conduct a system-wide review.
4. **Issue a Report Card:** commission an annual reporting of the problem across IASC institutions, outlining best and worst practices and ranking performance across organizations.
5. **Establish a Monitoring Tool:** commission an on-online platform to encourage anonymous reporting that is geo-located to be able to target hotspots and understand trends regarding discrimination, harassment, and abuse.
6. **Reform workplace cultural:** by re-committing to gender parity in hiring practices and ensuring staff training in gender sensitivity pre and during field deployments.

We would like to propose a specific session at the IASC members meeting to present the survey results and discuss follow up actions.

Yours Sincerely

Humanitarian Women's Network

(Please see full survey results attached and available at [www.humanitarianwomensnetwork.org](http://www.humanitarianwomensnetwork.org))