



5 ESSENTIALS FOR HR PRACTITIONERS

*A support tool for employees experiencing
domestic abuse in the workplace and during
COVID-19 homebased working*

UNSTEREOTYPE
A L L I A N C E

convened by



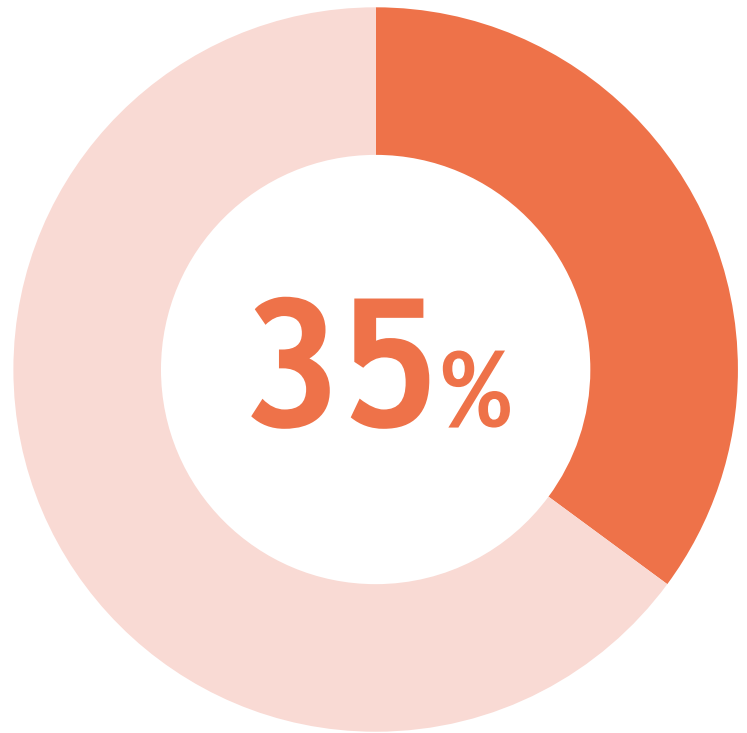
Being unaware of the domestic violence issue is no longer an excuse for employers.

There has been a growing understanding among employers that domestic violence is a workplace issue as demonstrated in their support of its inclusion in the ILO Convention 190 adopted last year.

There, they note that domestic violence can affect employment, productivity and health and safety and that employers' and workers' organizations and labour market institutions can help, as part of other measures, to recognize, respond to and address the impacts of domestic violence².

Stephanie Angelo, founder of the Society for Human Resource Management, suggests that too many people say "It's not happening here. I don't see it." She asserts "Whether you see it or not, it is happening in the lives of your employees. If you wait for something to happen, you've waited too long. Be proactive, be preventive"³.

Now, as cities go into lockdown in response to the COVID-19 crisis, domestic violence is escalating further.



35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or sexual violence by a non-partner (not including sexual harassment) in their lifetime¹.

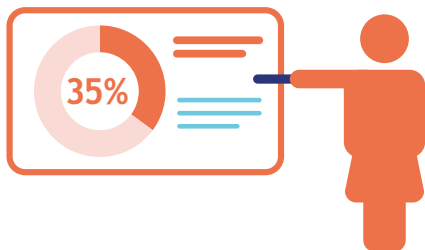
1. CREATE EFFECTIVE WORKPLACE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POLICIES

Workplaces need dedicated approaches to address domestic violence as telecommuting from home is widely adopted, ideally with dedicated focal points to advise and assist domestic violence survivors in the appropriate way. They need to set up protocols, policies and practices to ensure the safety and well-being of survivors. UN Women, in collaboration with the ILO, promotes the incorporation of the following practices of collective agreements and workplace policies to address domestic violence⁴:



- **Establish** specific safety and security measures in the workplace to deal with domestic violence, such as safety planning to prevent assault, harassment or stalking at the workplace and measures to deal with harassing phone calls and e-mails.
- **Train** workplace representatives, safety and health representatives, line managers and colleagues on identifying the warning signs of domestic violence and on facilitating referrals to specialist support agencies.
- **Intervene** as early as possible, before violence escalates and the victims feel the only option to resolve the situation is quitting work.
- **Provide** flexible (paid or unpaid) leave or flexible working hours to enable victims to seek protection, attend court appointments, or seek safe housing for children.
- **Provide** protection from dismissal during a certain period of time, to ensure victims can maintain their source of income, while leaving a violent situation.
- **Designate** trusted, trained contact people in the workplace, to enable victims to confidentially disclose their situation and to seek help.
- **Provide** psychological and practical support for victims, including access to counselling and to discuss options confidentially and non-judgmentally with a trusted person in the workplace. Other practical support can include information about, and signposting to, specialist services.
- **Provide** financial support, such as advance payment of salaries or financial support for moving house.
- **Establish** disciplinary procedures to deal with perpetrators, setting out relevant sanctions, such as dismissal.

2. TRAIN ALL STAFF TO BUILD AWARENESS AND PROVIDE TOOLS



Training, guidance and awareness-raising for managers, supervisors and workers and their representatives enable them to build skills to effectively implement workplace policies and procedures, promote gender-responsive actions and contribute to positive and respectful work environments (e.g. through bystander empowerment)⁵.

- There should be domestic violence training for new staff and all personnel, including contractors, interns and volunteers.
- Employers should know their role and boundaries and recognize the role for those professionally trained to help survivors.

They should be able to refer colleagues however to support services, including counselling, victim advocates, shelter/safe space accommodation, legal aid, etc.

3. FACILITATE SUPPORT FOR THE SURVIVORS WHO REPORT CASES

Refer colleagues to support services including:^{6&7}

- Counselling



- Victim advocates



- Shelter/safe space accommodation

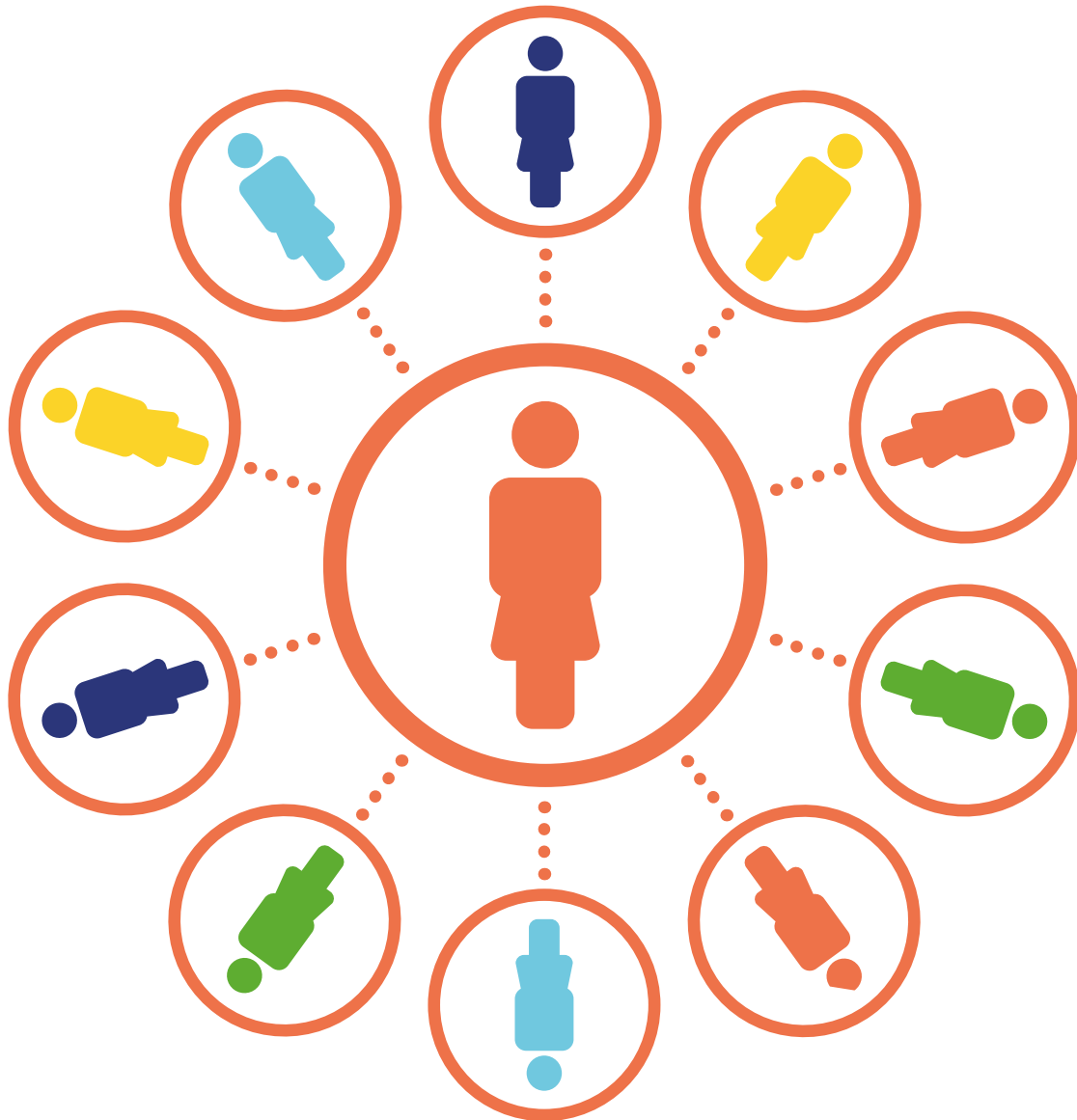


- Legal advice



Keep the lines of communication open by not discriminating or retaliating against victims seeking support⁸. Personnel should not be forced into making decisions. Rather, they should be offered confidential advice and support to develop the best plan for their safety (within or outside of a relationship).

4. KEEP YOUR HELPLINES UPDATED



Workplaces can provide information and support (e.g. peer support groups and referrals to appropriate services in the community) to women experiencing violence and harassment, including assisting victims of domestic violence (e.g. through paid leave, flexible work schedules and job transfers) to safely continue their employment.

5. ADOPT A SURVIVOR-CENTRED APPROACH TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

A survivor-centred approach means a human rights-based approach that puts the survivor's rights and needs at the centre. The survivor has a right to:

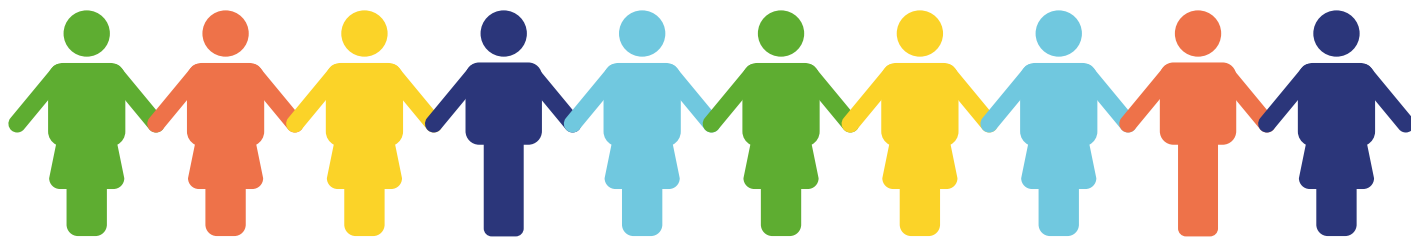
- Be treated with dignity and respect instead of being exposed to victim-blaming attitudes
- Choose the course of action she wants in dealing with the violence instead of feeling powerless
- Have privacy and confidentiality instead of exposure
- Experience non-discrimination instead of discrimination based on gender, age, race / ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, HIV status or any other characteristic
- Receive comprehensive information to help her make her own decision instead of being told what to do.

3 KEY PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER:

01 SAFETY is paramount. Actions or words can jeopardize the survivor's safety. Nothing should be disclosed and no action should be taken without the survivor's consent.

02 CONFIDENTIALITY. Because of safety issues and the stigma, shame and victim-blaming that survivors often face, it is critical that their experiences and identity remain confidential.

03 AUTONOMOUS DECISION-MAKING/ CONSENT. Only survivors know the risks they face with regard to their safety and thus should be driving any decision related to the abuse they are experiencing.



¹ UN Women (2020). [Facts and figures: Ending violence against women, database](#)

² International Labour Organization (2019). [C190 - Violence and Harassment Convention](#)

³ Society for Human Resource Management. [When Domestic Violence Comes to Work](#)

⁴ UN Women and ILO (2019). [Handbook - Addressing violence and harassment against women in the world of work, p. 67](#)

⁵ UN Women and ILO (2019). [Handbook - Addressing violence and harassment against women in the world of work, p. 67](#)

⁶ UN Women (2020). [Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women](#)

⁷ UN Women (2020). [COVID-19 and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls](#)

⁸ HR Daily Advisor (2019). [How to Respond When Employees Experience Domestic Violence](#)