

WE HAVE A PROBLEM...

Women working in humanitarian assistance are reporting serious allegations of endemic discrimination, harassment, and abuse related to their gender in the workplace.

These acts are reportedly committed by their male colleagues: both peers and supervisors.

The widespread nature of these acts is contributing to a culture of impunity that is part and parcel to a culture facilitating tantamount violations against our beneficiaries.

A movement of humanitarian women - both UN and NGO- has worked together to assess the scale of this problem. This Humanitarian Women's Network conducted the only survey of its kind, looking to capture the experience of their peers vis-à-vis harassment, discrimination and abuse. The result: 1,005 female humanitarian aid workers from 70 different organizations responded to the survey in 50 days, with findings that confirm many of our suspicions.

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM...

The Boys' Club

- 51% of women feel that their organization does not do everything in its power to make them feel safe as a woman in their workplace.

- 69% of humanitarian female workers have heard male colleagues commenting about their physical appearance; 6% of women reported that this is occurring almost every day.

- 60% of humanitarian female workers have experienced their male colleagues looking to conform them to a gender stereotype (i.e. serving everyone in the room coffee, taking notes during the meeting, not being good at driving, not being able to play sports, etc); 7% of women reported this is occurring happening almost every day.

Imminent Physical Danger

- 48% of humanitarian female workers have experienced being touched in an unwanted way (i.e. touched hair, massaged shoulders, embraced) by a male colleague; 27% of women report having had this experience several times.

- 55% of humanitarian female workers were subjected to persistent romantic or sexual advances from a male colleague; 33% of women report having had this experience several times with an average of 3.5 times.

- 22% of humanitarian female workers experienced being touched on breasts, butt, thighs by a male colleague; 7% of women report having had this experience several times.

- 4% of humanitarian female workers report having been forced to have sexual relations (i.e. oral, vaginal, anal, and/or penetration with hands or objects) by a male colleague.

Culture of Impunity/Culture of Silence

- 69% of women who declare having experienced these acts did not report it officially. The main reasons given to explain this, by order of importance, are: (1) being worried about professional consequences, (2) not knowing how to qualify these acts, (3) not trusting anyone, (4) the absence of mechanisms in place to denounce these acts, (5) being worried about reprisals from the aggressor or other colleagues.

- Out of the women who reported these acts, 47% declare that nothing happened after their claim.

- The level of satisfaction reported about the way the organization handled the incident is 3.7 out of 10, with 36% of women being "not at all" satisfied.

Women Dropping Out

- 38% of women report that these experiences of discrimination, harassment, or sexual assault had a medium to strong negative impact on their psychological wellbeing.

- 26% of women report that these experiences of discrimination, harassment, or sexual assault had a medium to strong impact on the course of their career. Out of those reporting that it had an impact on the course of their career, 23% changed missions, 16% quit, 7% left the humanitarian field.