

Workplace Responses to Gender-Based Violence


Addressing gender equality and gender-based violence (GBV) is not only a social and moral imperative, but also an economic need. Roughly **one in three women worldwide** have experienced either non-partner sexual violence or physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence. A recent World Bank Group report estimates the costs of intimate partner violence across five countries to be between **1.2 percent and 3.7 percent of GDP**.

GBV can **impact business operations** through workplace bullying and sexual harassment, employees experiencing domestic and sexual violence, and sexual exploitation and abuse connected to the workplace. These impacts affect employee well-being and can lead to reduced productivity, increased absenteeism, and increased costs associated with employee turnover and security.

IFC has worked with over 30 businesses to address GBV as a workplace issue by building the business case and developing responses. IFC partnered with Business Fights Poverty to produce [How Can Business Tackle Gender Based Violence in the World of Work: A Toolkit for Action](#), developed in collaboration with Anglo American, Primark, and CARE International UK.

A Costly Problem

An IFC study conducted at three companies in Fiji found staff lost 10 workdays per year due to domestic and sexual violence, including four days to presentism, two to absenteeism and four to assisting others experiencing domestic and sexual violence. Fiji is not unique, as other studies have shown.



Respectful workplaces are safe and supportive environments where sexual harassment is not tolerated and where workers affected by other forms of gender-based violence feel comfortable to disclose their experience and seek support.

Photo: Khasar Sandag/IFC



Photo: Iwan Bagus/IFC



Photo: Peter Rae/IFC

Building Respectful Workplaces



IFC has conducted business case research and worked with businesses in Africa, East Asia Pacific, Latin America, Middle East and North Africa, and South Asia to adopt and implement individualized policies that target workplace bullying and sexual harassment.

Supporting Employees Affected by Domestic and Sexual Violence



IFC has conducted business-case research and developed advisory programs to address workplace impacts of domestic and sexual violence in the private sector in [Fiji](#), [Papua New Guinea](#), [Solomon Islands](#), and in the garment sector in other countries by:

- Developing policy guidance to better equip businesses to address the issues.
- Supporting workplace responses through workshops and training, including training staff to respond to disclosures of violence.
- Identifying domestic and sexual violence service providers in local communities that can assist employees facing violence.

Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse



Using a new tool rolled out in 2019 aligned with IFC's Environmental and Social Performance Standards, IFC is screening new investment projects for sexual exploitation and abuse (as well as sexual harassment in the workplace). To date IFC has screened nearly 20 projects and conducted in-depth gender assessments on six projects.

To learn more about this work visit: www.ifc.org/sustainability

Train-the-Trainers Program

IFC, in partnership with the Australia Pacific Training Coalition, is launching a 12-day competency-based [training program](#) that will equip participants to deliver workplace training aimed at addressing GBV and creating gender-equal and safe workplaces. The course has been designed for professionals in the fields of human resources, occupational health and safety, diversity and inclusion, workplace training, and GBV and work, who want to make a significant contribution to addressing GBV and promoting gender equality and social inclusion through workplaces within their country. The course will equip participants with the knowledge and skills to deliver training on workplace responses to GBV and improve confidence and capacity to make reasoned judgments when training, including adapting teaching materials and learning techniques to meet workplace needs. The program will be piloted in Fiji.

List of Publications

[COVID-19 and Gender-Based Violence: Workplace Risks and Responses](#)

[Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Harassment: Emerging Good Practice for the Private Sector](#)

[Respectful Workplaces: Exploring the Costs of Bullying and Sexual Harassment to Businesses in Myanmar](#)

[The Business Case for Workplace Responses to Domestic and Sexual Violence in Fiji](#)

[The Impact of Domestic and Sexual Violence on the Workplace in Solomon Islands](#)

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