

Good Practice for Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment

**7. Workplace and Society without Violence**

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The heroine of the movie *Truth*, released in Japan in the summer of 2016 (produced in 2015), had a very intriguing character – a shining star on the frontline of news production who is haunted by the trauma of domestic violence (DV) and abuse suffered in her childhood.

Women's economic empowerment requires a safe and secure working environment where both women and men do not feel threatened by violence. For example, companies are voluntarily addressing the issue of sexual harassment (SH) in the workplace, which poses a major challenge throughout the world. Standard measures include SH consultation services, training on prevention, and actions to prevent recurrence. Some companies financially support local NGOs which provide awareness-raising and consultation on SH and DV, or temporary protection for victims. Around the globe, more extensive efforts are under way to build a workplace and society free from all forms of 'violence against women', not only SH.

Under a DV support policy, one Australian bank provides support to help employees who have suffered DV to recover. Employees who are DV victims may take paid leave for treatment and counselling, as well as for attending court proceedings legally required to obtain a divorce from the abuser, in order to gain economic independence. The bank typically considers the damage caused by DV not only as a personal problem of the employee concerned but also as a loss of its human resources, and seeks to minimise the damage by supporting social and economic empowerment, as well as the physical and mental recovery of the victim.

Meanwhile, a water-supply corporation in Spain has signed an agreement with the regional government to promote the employment of victims of sexual violence. After a probation period, two of the three persons recruited under this scheme have been hired as regular employees. The human resource section of

the company did not know at first how to handle the sensitive personal information involved; eventually, it developed a system that minimises the number of employees allowed to access private information of their colleagues, so that the victims and their supervisors may work with peace of mind.

In the US, a moving company trains its workers to be alert to any sign of DV or sexual abuse at its sites. Working with local shelters under a partnership agreement and with free legal assistance services, the company provides support for any woman who wishes to escape from DV, effectively ensuring safe moving. Thus, women, children, and other family members who are victims of DV can start a new life in security without fear of being pursued by the abuser.

In another case, under an agreement with the government, a mobile phone company in Turkey placed a button on its mobile phones which directly connects with the hotline for DV victims and developed a consultation service. This initiative is intended to eliminate violence through a private business service. Some companies have also introduced measures to prevent their employees from committing sexual or power harassment, and to provide training for DV prevention.

Worldwide, there are 125 countries with a SH prevention law, and 119 countries with a DV prevention law<sup>1</sup>. Efforts to prevent violence against women in all aspects of society create a foundation for promoting the advancement of women. Public-private partnerships in those efforts will help make progress towards eliminating violence in the workplace and society in general.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Affairs, *The World's Women 2015, Trends and Statistics*, 2015.