

# **‘I SAY NO TO SEXISM’ CAMPAIGN**

GUIDE FOR CHAMPIONS AND FOCAL POINTS



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Each Gender Champion has signed up to a Gender-based Violence Pledge, to speak up and stand up for zero tolerance of gender-based violence, and the sexist attitudes and beliefs that underpin them. Engaging everyone, including men and boys, in conversations to understand harmful and unequal gendered norms, is critical to change beliefs and behaviours and foster safe and respectful workplaces.

This short toolkit is designed to help you start to take actions to support the campaign and have conversations within your organisation. There are also suggestions for ways to 'go deeper' and address some of the intersectional power imbalances within organisations which can result in institutionalised discrimination. This involves both structural and cultural actions.

### WHAT IS SEXISM AND HOW DOES IT MANIFEST ITSELF?

**"The term casual sexism denotes behaviours and attitudes that foster stereotypes based on sex and perpetuate unequal treatment, often towards women. Casual sexism feeds into a culture and a mindset in which de facto discrimination becomes part of everyday life and opens the door to harassment and abuse."**

Sexist behaviours and statements manifest frequently with sexist jokes, stereotypical remarks and, in the gravest instances, sexual harassment. While these abuses are widespread in every sphere of women's lives, the workplace represents a particularly sensitive environment. Some of the most common examples include unpleasant, derogatory or inappropriate comments about dress and physical appearance or objectification of women's bodies. They can leave those affected offended, humiliated and discouraged and impact an individual's health, career and personal life.

### EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

- "X always uses pet names such as darling, sweetie or my dear and when I tell X that I don't like it he says that it doesn't bother him".
- "He bombarded me with text messages in the evening when I was at home. Even though I never replied to his messages. I didn't feel comfortable at work".
- "Oh, but she's a woman, she'll get pregnant again soon".
- "She's busy with her children, she doesn't have time for that sort of thing".
- "X isn't here to program – she's here to give the programmers a reason to come to work".
- "I've noticed that some colleagues systematically contradict me in an arrogant way which male managers do not experience".

*(Adapted from UNIGE "Don't Turn a Blind Eye. Sexual harassment: learn, prevent, protect".)*

Sexism can also appear to be **benevolent** whereby women are rewarded for being attractive, providing acts of care work in the office (remembering birthdays, bringing food, having a first aid kit, buying gifts, organising lunch), being deferential to supervisors or rewarded for not having children. It can help women to access power and privilege as well as men who do not challenge such norms, but ultimately reinforces the power imbalance.

## ACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT THE I SAY NO TO SEXISM CAMPAIGN

1. Display Campaign **slogans** in every public space, including cafeterias, toilets, entrance ways, and receptions, with the logo and same visual identity. **“I Say No to Sexism. What do you Say?”**
2. Hold an event/townhall to **launch the campaign** I Say No to Sexism Campaign and:
  - Explain the information and tools provided to staff in the organisation
  - Explain the consequences of casual sexism in the workplace and solutions to call it out
3. Hold an event to **empower staff members** on the topic at hand by implementing activities such as:
  - Host a Barbershop Conference/Roundtable: Changing the Discourse Among Men on GBV or initiate a series of conversations.
  - Include the issue of sexism in the orientation programme for new staff. See the IGC Resource: Free Online Courses on Gender-Based Violence



## WHY HAVE CONVERSATIONS?

Engaging women and men together are crucial to comprehend and tackle the root causes of patriarchal gender norms and gender-related inequalities. In particular, “the ways in which boys and young men are socialised holds profound implications for the health, well-being and security of men and boys, and for women and girls” (Promundo’s Program HMD toolkit). It is important for everyone to reflect on the socio-cultural practices shaping attitudes and beliefs towards women and their roles within society. Hegemonic masculinity, rigid ideals of manhood, and flawed socialisation processes can be unpacked and challenged through the fruitful involvement of men.

## HOW TO START THE CONVERSATIONS?

All conversations start with self-reflection, inviting participants to question unequal gender norms and their repercussions on women and broader society. The stimulation of critical self-reflection has meaningful implications for changing the harmful attitudes and beliefs at the heart of gender inequality. A particular emphasis should be placed on the concept of “power” and how this may be exercised by men and women in an unbalanced fashion in the workplace for example, between senior male staff and junior female staff within an organisation. Encouraging men to reflect on their use and misuse of power and how it affects women has proven very impactful in curbing dangerous behaviours and stereotypes.

- A. Start with the *HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF GENDER EQUALITY*. What does it look like in the city where you live? How do experiences differ according to colleagues with different upbringings and backgrounds? Are there norms around gendered roles?

- B. Engage in role-play to *RAISE AWARENESS ON THE NATURE OF SEXISM AND WHERE IT ORIGINATED*. A practical activity can include giving participants quotes from people who have experienced sexism and discussing the impact on the person and what an appropriate response could look like.
- C. Reflect with the participants on the instances where someone has told them to “*ACT LIKE A WOMAN/MAN*”. Drawing from their responses, ask them how, in their opinion, men and women are affected by respecting/violating the way society prescribes them to behave based on their gender.
- D. Discuss how *POWER DYNAMICS* within an organisation impact on a *PERSON’S ABILITY TO ‘SPEAK UP’* when a sexist comment is made, and what steps could be taken to make that person feel safe and provide effective feedback and accountability for those engaging in sexist behaviour.
- E. Discuss how *INDIVIDUAL’S SOCIAL PRIVILEGE* has enabled them to advance within the organisation and career and factors which may present *BARRIERS*.

## GOING DEEPER

To be truly effective, a multifaceted approach to create and maintain an inclusive and fit-for-purpose organisational culture is required throughout every level of the organisation. Actions can include:

- Promote *ROLE MODELS* to normalise women and men in every role based on skills, knowledge, competence and character.
- Institutionalise *BYSTANDER INTERVENTION* training to build the capacity of staff to contribute to organisational culture based on trust, cooperation and social cohesion.
- Ensure *ROBUST POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT MECHANISMS* (non-discrimination policy, harassment/ bullying complaints mechanism, employee climate surveys).
- Develop *PUBLIC RELATIONS MATERIAL, SOCIAL MEDIA AND RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES* that avoid tokenism, valorise character, skills, knowledge and competence of people of diverse backgrounds for different roles.
- *DIVERSIFY AND EXPAND ACCESS TO DECISION MAKING*, and celebrate diversity of leadership styles and perspectives, whether in traditional positions of leadership or by expanding nodes of power.
- Change the way we *VALUE AND INVEST IN CARE AND CARE WORK*, including providing significant funding for accessible, affordable and quality childcare, long-term supports and services, paid leave, flexible and predictable work, and good quality care jobs.
- *ELIMINATE GENDER AND RACIAL PAY DISPARITIES*, including ensuring fair pay

For further information, please contact the IGC Secretariat [admin@genderchampions.com](mailto:admin@genderchampions.com)