

Respect for diversity



Principle:

Workers are protected from any discrimination that would constitute a violation of their human rights; working practices are established that safeguard against any unlawful or unethical discrimination; and migrant workers are treated no less favourably than other workers performing similar tasks.



Key message:

Respecting diversity is about valuing the differences between people.

Definition of workplace diversity

“... the inclusion of different types of people ... in a group or organization”.¹

What is workplace diversity?

- Workplace diversity is the range and variety of different workers within a company.
- These differences are not just physical, but also include the differences in what people think and believe.
- Diversity includes gender, race, nationality, ethnic origin, caste, religion or belief, sexual orientation, disability or health, union membership, employment status, political affiliation, marital status and many other areas.

What does respecting diversity mean?

- Respecting diversity means treating people equally, based only on characteristic that relate to how they do their job.
- This means treating people equally during recruitment, in the role, and once they have left.
- Respecting diversity also means recognising and valuing the differences between people.

What is expected at sites?

- Non-discrimination policies that ensure that hiring, employment and termination decisions are only based on workers ability, and prohibits discrimination.
- Policies should highlight non-discrimination in wages, working hours,

Facts

- The ILO recognises freedom from discrimination as a fundamental human right.²
- Women earn up to 25% less than men for the same work, across some developing countries.³
- It is estimated that in developing countries around 80% of people with disabilities are living in poverty.⁴
- However, a range of studies show that companies with more diverse workforces are more successful.



Having a mix of different people in all levels of an organisation can indicate respect for diversity

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job roles and maternity leave. Workers should not be discriminated against based on their employment status.

- Workers are trained in understanding the companies non-discrimination policy and identify if they have suffered discrimination.
- The non-discrimination policy is implemented - workers that believe they or others are subject to discrimination have access to grievance mechanisms and remedy.
- The company has a training programme in place that provides the opportunity for all workers to attain any position within a company, determined only by their working ability.
- The company makes reasonable provisions to provide work opportunities to disabled individuals.

Some indicators of discrimination and what to do?

- Discrimination can be challenging to identify for victims and companies.
- Indicators of discrimination can include:
 - Not hiring the most suitable candidate could be the result of discrimination: ranking candidates against a list of objective indicators of working ability.
 - Individuals being paid less than others who are equally qualified and doing the same work: used payment scales that ensure that all individuals earn equal wage for the same job roles.
 - Abusive behaviour or harassment against individuals: give warning or terminate employment of those that are committing the abuse or harassment, and provide training on non-discrimination.
 - Low moral, increased levels of sick-leave, or termination of employment may indicate discrimination: sensitively discuss the potential issue with employees, provide training in the non-discrimination policy, issues penalties or termination of contract if appropriate.
- There are many other indicators of discrimination, many of which are challenging to identify.
- If there is a suspicion of discrimination, sites should talk with workers and their representatives to understand and resolve the issues.

Why is respecting diversity important?

- Many countries have laws against discrimination in the workplace - companies breaking these laws may face legal challenges.
- Discrimination against individuals, based on things that are not related to their job, is widely considered a breach of human rights.
- Respecting diversity can also have many benefits for a company:
 - Increasing the moral of existing and new workers
 - Increasing the range of candidates available for employment, therefore allowing the best to be employed
 - Providing new and innovative ways of thinking and doing things, which can increase productivity.



Workers on short term contracts have the same labour rights as those in long term employment

Additional information and resources

- [ILO Discrimination \(Employment and Occupation\) Convention](#)
- [Sample - non-discrimination policy](#)
- [Sample - employment policy](#)

1. Merriam-Webster, 2015. Diversity. www.merriam-webster.com

2. International Labour Organization, 2015. Discrimination and equality. www.ilo.org

3. International Labour Organization, 2014. Breaking through the glass ceiling: women in management. www.ilo.org

4. International Labour Organization, 2011. Equality at work: the continuing challenge. www.ilo.org