

WEE-NORTH



CREATING A GENDER-SENSITIVE WORKPLACE FOR WEE-NORTH TRAINEES FOR INDUSTRY PARTNERS



Ministry of Education
REPUBLIC OF GHANA

The Women's Economic Empowerment in Northern Ghana (WEE-North) is a five-year project that seeks to increase access to decent work for women, while improving the environment that allows women to participate in the industrial trades.

An enabling and empowering workplace is essential for young women because they are working in male-dominated trades and work settings where few, if any, women have worked before.

This booklet prepares industry employers to make decisions about how to deal with gender issues in the workplace. Gender issues are issues of inequity – in this case, unfair conditions for women.

By being gender-sensitive, you will make your workplace one in which women can succeed and meet their potential in the trades. A gender-sensitive workplace is one in which:

- Work culture is inclusive of both men and women in all jobs
- Prevents all forms of abuse, violence, harassment
- Promotes good health and sanitation, safety policies, grievance mechanisms, and rules and regulation that are understood and observed by all employees
- Women are proud to be part of the team, courageous, confident and willing to achieve their dreams, while at the same time breaking gender stereotypes.

This is a go-to guide for understanding, designing, practicing, and promoting a gender-sensitive workplace and environment.

It presents ten points that describe why employers should adopt ways to eliminate gender-specific barriers to women's economic participation and create better pathways for women in high growth, industrial trades.



WEE-North young women are placed in industries in Northern Ghana for four weeks of Workplace Experience Learning.

A better understanding of these trainees will enable small, medium and large-scale industry employers, leaders, supervisors, managers and male co-workers to:

- Know the background of WEE-North trainees
- Appreciate their strengths and challenges
- Prepare a plan to effectively supervise, mentor and coach them without bias.

Who are the WEE-North Trainees?

- Pioneers, Pathfinders, Trailblazers in the industrial trades
- Brave, Courageous, Confident, Committed and Passionate about their work
- Driven to achieve results
- From poor communities where most have not had advantages of training opportunities and work experience
- From families who love them, but who often underestimate their potential.

The on-boarding orientation for trainees should focus on best practices, work ethics, time management, setting clear workshop rules, and codes of conduct for how supervisors and workers should relate and interact with trainees.

As Industry Partners, Supervisors, Managers, we recommend that you:

- Understand the importance of a gender-sensitive workplace environment
- Show respect for women trainees
- Encourage women trainees to always do their best
- Be willing to employ equal numbers of male and female employees
- Treat female and male employees equally by allowing women to perform same tasks as their male co-workers
- Recognize tradeswomen's innovation and creativity.



Industry partners, leaders, employers, managers, and supervisors should adopt innovative techniques to effectively manage women trainees and other employees in order to bring about a healthy work culture.

Effective management skills can make a difference for WEE-North trainees' success, so supervisors should:

- Become aware, understand and manage the different types of emotions of trainees, i.e., emotional intelligence
- Improve your interpersonal relationships, both personal and professional
- Understand non-verbal cues, adjust your behavior, make good decisions
- Encourage teamwork, create a better workplace environment, and make easy adjustments for greater self-awareness and self-control

How can industry partners and leaders manage WEE-North trainees effectively?

- Communicate with trainees in a professional manner that shows respect
- Allow time for questions and let trainees know that you are there to help at any time
- Make trainees accountable by assigning work with clear instructions and expected outputs
- Show trust by allowing trainees to own their work and assignments
- Motivate good behavior by giving praise and credit where credit is due
- Recognize your own emotions and maintain patience even in frustrating situations
- Encourage positive behavior when trainees are facing new challenges and tasks.

Once employers, managers, supervisors, and male-co-workers understand the need to promote a gender-sensitive workplace, they will appreciate the benefits of a gender-inclusive work environment. The following factors promote an inclusive workplace for all:

- Men and women work together in a friendly, collaborative manner
- Leadership roles/jobs are equally shared between women and men to avoid gender specific roles
- Gender-sensitive language is used (avoid gender biased language, example: “this work is for men only, or this work is too difficult for women”)
- There is zero tolerance for all forms of harassment
- Recognize and reward everyone based on merit, not gender
- Communicate goals, relate success stories, and measure progress equally between male and female workers.



There are different approaches to making health and safety protocols more gender-sensitive at workplaces. A gender-sensitive workplace is an environment that supports high productivity. A gender-sensitive Health and Safety Environment includes:

- Both men and women in designing Health and Safety rules and protocols at work
- Appropriate and comfortable sized PPEs for each worker
- Floors and foot traffic routes are free of objects (nails, wood, wire)
- Good lighting and ventilation systems
- Separate washrooms and changing room facilities for female and male workers
- Water, soap, and sink for handwashing, bin for disposal of sanitary items
- A drinking water station and dedicated eating area with appropriate wastebaskets
- A “go to” place for reporting harassment and hostile behavior
- Special work times and arrangements for pregnant women and nursing mothers.





Identify winning strategies and support systems that encourage and empower young women's participation in industrial trades.

- Create equal opportunities at the workplace by giving men and women roles and tasks that challenge gender stereotypes
- Give women the same work as men
- Empower the trainees to be good examples to others, both men and women
- Supervise by guiding, coaching, and advising on good trades practices.

7. Making Heavy Equipment User-Friendly for Women

Industry partners, employers, managers, and supervisors should identify ways to make the use of heavy equipment less intimidating for women:

- Use images/videos to show how other women operate heavy equipment and machines
- Encourage and motivate trainees to take on the challenge of operating heavy equipment
- Start with the components of heavy equipment, safety instructions, and daily checks
- Provide practical training on operations and use of heavy equipment
- Use positive reinforcement – such as “great!” “wonderful!” “excellent!” or say to the trainees that they can do anything that men can do – including operating or carrying heavy tools and machines.



Harassment in the workplace is unwelcome, unwanted, or threatening behavior or conduct that affects the dignity, rights, or well-being of an individual or a group of workers.

Sexual harassment consists of words, signs, jokes, pranks, intimidation, or touching which are of a sexual nature and directed at an individual because of their sex.

Different types of sexual harassment include:

- **Verbal** – Making offensive jokes about someone’s body or clothing, threats, insults, name-calling, yelling, spreading malicious rumors, gossiping, lies, etc.
- **Non-Verbal** – Giving someone a look that makes them uncomfortable, displaying sexual content on print/computer/phone at the workplace
- **Physical** – Touching, rubbing, stroking, hugging, kissing, brushing against someone, pinching, etc.

Consequences to Victims of Harassment

- **Stress, anxiety, sleep disturbances, depression, severe tiredness**
- **Headaches, backaches, stomach cramps, and pain attacks**
- **Unable to work, loss of self-esteem and self confidence**
- **Reduced output and performance**

Some proposed measures to prevent a hostile workplace environment:

- **Develop, endorse and communicate a clear code of conduct and enforce it**
- **Be aware of the sources of workplace harassment and misconduct and stop them**
- **Promote a positive and gender sensitive-workplace culture by treating everyone equally**
- **Enforce sanctions to anyone who does not obey the rules.**

Employers, managers, and supervisors should put in place grievance mechanisms and reporting procedures for harassment:

- Guarantee safety of employees who report on inappropriate treatment at the workplace
- Provide an anonymous hotline or suggestion box for bystanders to report misconduct - “if you see something, say something”
- Ensure that grievance mechanisms are known to everyone, taking into account employees with lower literacy levels
- Provide continuous education and training on gender-sensitive policies, including sanctions
- Hold independent investigations to address violations
- Include women on committees because dispute resolution processes may be gender biased
- Monitor the grievance mechanism to ensure that outcomes are fair to both women and men.



Develop a good relationship with trainees' families and communities. This will put the families minds at ease about their young women working in a male-dominated workplace. Keep the lines of communication open between employers and trainees' families.

- Encourage family members to be supportive of their young women who have decided to make careers in male-dominated trades
- Communicate the benefits of the trades and importance of job security for young women
- Be open to answering questions from family members and help them feel more confident in the choices that their young women have made
- Check in regularly with trainees' families to give positive and constructive feedback on the young women and their job performance.

Thank you for supervising and mentoring WEE-North trainees and enhancing their job prospects through Workplace Experience Learning.



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