Ten Ways to Create an Enabling Environment during COVID-19

UN Women created the Enabling Environment Guidelines in support of the Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity. The Enabling Environment Guidelines can and should especially be applied as the UN adapts to the COVID-19 crisis. Adapted from the recommendations in the Guidelines, here are ten ways to create an enabling environment for all personnel during this extraordinary time:

1) Senior management promote the benefits of workplace flexibility as a way to be more effective and deliver better results, not only as a way to balance work and life. Research shows that workplace flexibility benefits organizations through improving staff well-being and enabling business continuity.

2) Managers recognize results-based good performance and productivity, not time spent in the office or online. All personnel promote an environment of trust and accountability.

3) Efforts are made to arrange team meeting times that work for everyone including colleagues in different time zones and those with care responsibilities.

4) The ‘right to disconnect’ is recognized. All colleagues are encouraged to be offline when not working.

5) Maximum flexibility is urged for colleagues to carry out care commitments which may be exacerbated during this crisis: flexibility to support personnel addressing family care issues, including eldercare and care for family members with disabilities, including temporary disabilities or illness.

6) Managers and colleagues do not make assumptions about colleagues’ family structures and how domestic responsibilities are shared.

7) All personnel should contribute to and support a culture of respect, zero tolerance and accountability for discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment and abuse of authority which can all take place online.

8) Efforts are made to create diverse and gender balanced panels during webinars and other online meetings.

9) Online mentoring networks and informal support systems are harnessed.

10) Career development training and learning opportunities are promoted for everyone. These can be beneficial to support colleagues through the crisis as well as in the future.