

**DRAFT REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
ON STAFF–MANAGEMENT RELATIONS**

Introduction

1. The Standing Committee (SC – see Appendix 1 for participants) held two virtual meetings, elected Andrew Brown (ICAO) Rapporteur and addressed its agenda.

Report on the previous year’s activities

Results of FICSA survey on arrangements for staff associations

2. The Chair provided background information on the survey, which had been launched after the 72nd FICSA Council. Owing to an initially low response rate (eight), the 73rd FICSA Council recommended improving the survey and relaunching it with a message that encouraged all members to respond.

3. The revised survey, launched in April 2020, included questions related to the current pandemic, and 28 responses had been received. Although not ideal, the increase allowed for a [summary](#) of the results. While the survey results showed that hosting agencies/organizations supported staff associations to some extent, further work was needed to ensure that that support was uniform throughout the UN system. As to the time release for staff representatives, keeping statistics would help build a case for some member associations to request more release time, using examples from other organizations.

4. In the ensuing discussion, a speaker proposed that FICSA send a short and concise survey to the membership, in a set form and on a recurring basis, and worded in a way to facilitate the ranking of associations according to the level of support received from management and to cover the most important aspects of staff associations’ positions and conditions of work. That would allow FICSA to monitor staff associations’ relationships with management. SC agreed on the need to set up a working group to prepare a standard form with key questions, elaborating and improving the questions from the previous survey. The following delegates – Jalil Housni (WMO), Kay Miller (WHO/EURO), Susan Murray (FAO/WFP-UGSS), Tracy Tollmann (UNFCCC), and Viera Seben (ICAO) – agreed to comprise the group.

Recommendation

5. SC recommended that the FICSA ExCom send a standard form created by an SC working group to send to member associations for completion on a recurring/annual basis. The form would: provide feedback on the status of a staff association's arrangements within its organization, monitor developments (deterioration, stability or improvement) in staff-management relations, help to identify best practices and provide useful statistics.

Cost-sharing for release of FICSA officers

6. A long-term solution was needed for the cost-sharing of staff representatives elected to serve on the FICSA ExCom as President and General Secretary; both were currently seconded from their organizations for the duration of their term. They were elected on alternate years for terms of two years each. The FICSA President had been elected in February 2020, and nominations had been requested for the FICSA General Secretary, who would be elected in February 2021. The goal of cost-sharing was to ensure that the full-time positions on the FICSA ExCom were not limited to staff representatives from large organizations.

7. The topic had been discussed at a meeting of the HR Network in early 2020. Owing to the pandemic, however, the release of a draft memorandum of understanding, outlining the terms of the cost-sharing scheme, had been delayed; FICSA had only recently received it, and was reviewing it. The following organizations had agreed to the principles of the cost-sharing scheme: AIEA, ICAO, IMO, UNAIDS, WHO (globally, except PAHO) and WIPO. The more organizations that joined the scheme, the lower the costs would be to each. The SC participants could contact FICSA for additional information on the scheme, along with estimates of costs for each organization, and were welcome to bring the proposal to their administrations.

8. The methodology to determine the cost per organization would be proportional, and similar to that used for membership dues to FICSA. The calculation, purely for demonstration purposes, was based on a P-4/step VI level, with one position in Geneva and one in New York, with a weighting methodology applied to reflect the number of G and P staff of each organization.

Recommendation

9. SC recommended that the FICSA ExCom should continue to work with the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) Working Group on sharing the costs of securing the release of the staff serving as FICSA's two full-time officers – President and General Secretary – and encourage members whose organizations were not participating in the discussion on the cost-sharing agreement to contact the FICSA Secretariat for more information on how their organization could become part of that agreement.

Follow-up on issues in staff-management relations

10. As issues in staff-management relations comprised a recurring topic of discussion, participants provided updates on the situation in their organizations. The discussion covered improvements in some organizations, difficulties arising from restructuring at others, and the issue of the number of accrued days of annual leave for which staff could be compensated at separation.

11. Participants from two organization – AP-in-FAO and IMO – reported improved staff–management relations, largely resulting from collaborative efforts involving new key managers. For example, the new HR director at AP-in-FAO had developed a comprehensive strategy for reform of human resources policies to improve working conditions. At IMO, a new head of administration had overseen collaborative efforts to make and implement improved policy on flexible working arrangements.
12. In contrast, participants from three organizations – WHO/EURO, WMO and UNFCCC – focused on problems created by restructuring. Although the details and timing of the processes varied between organizations, they had included mapping-and-matching exercises that had negatively affected a proportion of staff. Staff associations had worked to provide input, mitigate negative effects and promote transparency and fairness. Their efforts included carrying out or proposing surveys of staff to inform management of their views. Where conducted, surveys had revealed concerns about the fairness and transparency of the restructuring processes, which management had tried to address through such means as establishing a transparency and fairness body and options for staff not matched with positions, including the ability to apply for an upgraded position or have a “privileged” status for future vacancy notices to be issued for a particular period.
13. In the ensuing discussion, a delegate noted that restructuring in any organization was brought to the attention of JIU. It would conduct a study of the organization and seek feedback from members of both the administration and the staff association. A delegate provided links to the latest JIU reports.
14. In addition, a 2020 FICSA survey on restructuring had received only 10 responses. The wording of the survey questions had made it difficult to provide accurate responses, and the survey had not allowed the uploading of files or other related information. As the Standing Committee on Human Resources Management would address the issue, that would be an opportunity to propose that it rework the survey on restructuring as a joint effort with SC. If agreed, a working group would be established for this purpose.
15. A speaker noted that any restructuring gave management an opportunity to change the rules. For example, ICSC had reduced the 60 days of accumulated annual leave for which staff could be paid on leaving an organization, to 30 days, on the justification that other organizations had done so. In fact, WHO had initiated the practice, with other organizations following suit. Staff at UNAIDS, which is administered by WHO, worked with UNAIDS management to retain the 60-day limit, reaching a mutual understanding that it was an integral part of staff’s social security benefits, as unemployment benefits were not available to them. WHO/PAHO had done the same. The FICSA President appealed to delegates to resist any similar change if their organizations considered it, or to renegotiate the issue after the fact.
16. A speaker noted that some Member States did not even consider limiting the payments to 30 days, since that did not provide cost savings. The 30 or 60 days, whether taken as leave or paid for the end of service, had no additional cost to Member States, since annual leave was already a part of staff benefits, and therefore already factored into staff costs.
17. Exploring at an interagency level what the correct practice should be could serve as a guideline of best practice for organizations. While delegates acknowledged the limit of 60 days of accrued leave, staff deserved to have the choice between full

payment or a combination of annual leave and payment. As staff did not have access to elements of social security, such as unemployment benefits, maintaining a minimum of up to 60 days accrued leave to be paid upon separation was indispensable.

Recommendation

18. To maintain the status quo at the upper level and to address the current disparity between organizations, the SC recommended that the FICSA ExCom raise the need to maintain up to 60 days accrued leave to be paid upon separation, with the HLCM.

Staff associations as a bridge between staff and management in relation to remote working arrangements

19. Owing to the pandemic, UN organizations had made arrangements for remote working. SC explored the level of involvement of staff representatives in that process. SC would bring interesting points raised to its joint session with the Standing Committee on Human Resources Management on this issue in January.

20. Speakers acknowledged that management had involved staff associations to various extents throughout the current pandemic and had been more flexible with staff working arrangements. Organizations concentrated on providing staff with tools, resources and infrastructures to work remotely. The location of the duty station influenced those efforts, which included striving to provide mobile connectivity to all staff. In some cases, the policies or guidelines on remote working were presented afterwards, or did not reflect experience with the current situation. Some organizations would not consider remote working, since all staff could not do it.

21. Working remotely could present a danger by establishing new management practices in hiring staff in locations with lower living costs, when the physical presence of staff was not required. In addition, there was a need to distinguish between the rules on remote working that might have been considered before the pandemic and those that had resulted from it; the second scenario entailed certain obligations on and contributions from management. The involvement of staff associations in making policy in this area varied widely.

Recommendation

22. SC recommended that the FICSA ExCom should encourage staff association representatives to be an integral part of their administration's decision-making processes on all alternative/remote working arrangements to ensure the interests of staff are well represented.

Role of staff association/unions in organizations' handling of financial issues

23. The SC Chair noted that the pandemic might result in difficulties for some Member States in honouring their contribution commitments, leading to financial challenges for UN organizations that might result in job cuts, the freezing of posts and other cost-saving measures. As early as possible in organizations' efforts to deal with such problems, staff associations needed to be informed and involved, to the extent possible, through active dialogue with the administration, in order to avert and/or

negotiate any management measures that could be detrimental to staff. The discussion involved the use of several Mentimeter slides (see Appendix 2).

24. First, most participants said that staff associations had no involvement in such discussions. Despite some debate as to whether a staff association's remit included financial challenges faced by organizations, SC agreed that staff associations' representatives should be involved in case of any potential financial limitation of their organizations and any subsequent change to contractual relationships, to ensure that the issue could be negotiated with management.

25. The participants listed a number of best practices to ensure that staff associations were informed of their organizations' financial concerns. For example, maintaining constant dialogue with management on the financial situation was important; such dialogue could be secured through an open-door policy, periodic meetings or discussions as the need arose. When management initiated a discussion on cutting costs, the staff association needed to ensure that other measures had been considered before any job cuts were considered. Managers and staff associations had sometimes worked together on arguments for their governing bodies, to demonstrate the rationale for not cutting staff.

26. While most delegates reported not having been involved in financial decisions, they had had access to documents related to Member States' discussions on the programme and their finance committees, and some had been able to make statements to their governing bodies.

27. Second, delegates identified factors that hindered their involvement in addressing their organizations' financial situation. Those factors ranged from believing the issue to be outside of staff association's remit, or never having approached management on the issue, to management's not providing access to the information and a lack of time to devote to this issue. In further discussion, participants agreed both that staff associations should not be directly involved in organizations' financial and budget discussions and that an increase in constructive dialogue between management and staff representatives on an organization's financial concerns could lead to an increase of information shared, reduce staff concerns and improve the chance that the decisions made would consider the interests of staff and ensure they would result from a fair and equitable process.

28. Third, delegates suggested ways to increase their participation in the handling of their organizations' financial concerns, including regular and more frequent meetings, open and continuing dialogue, a proactive approach and working together on financial issues. The FICSA President pointed out that all issues effecting staff and staff's wellbeing fall under the staff associations' mandates, and encouraged staff representatives to be part of any discussions involving staff's conditions of employment.

Conclusion

29. Staff association representatives needed to ensure that they are proactively informed of the financial status of their organizations by exploring options to improve their dialogue with senior management and increase the exchange of information. Upon learning of any financial shortages and possible cost-cutting initiatives by management, staff representatives need to play an active role in the evaluation and establishment of corresponding measures, bearing in mind the interests of staff, and

keep FICSA updated on their efforts and any serious concerns that may arise. Upon learning of any financial shortages and possible cost-cutting initiatives by management, staff representatives should play an active role in the evaluation and establishment of corresponding measures, bearing in mind the interests of staff and further encourage Staff Representatives to keep FICSA updated on their efforts and any serious concerns that may arise

Recommendation

30. SC strongly recommended that the FICSA Secretariat should alert the membership on the need for all staff association representatives to ensure they proactively seek information on the financial status within their organizations, in order to play an active role and be part of any potential solutions.

Collaboration with management on policies dealing with whistle-blowing, bullying, abuse of authority and fear of retaliation

31. SC started the discussion of this topic with an example from UNFCCC, where a survey of staff satisfaction in 2018–2019 had showed that staff had either not refrained from reporting bullying or abuse of authority from fear or retaliation, tried to report them but received no results, or reported cases and had to leave the organization while the person accused of misconduct stayed. The poor results surprised management, which had expressed a desire to work collaboratively on a solution to address this situation. An earlier large campaign against bullying or harassment in the organization had helped at the time.

32. While the JIU *Review of whistle-blower policies and practices in UN system organizations* ([JIU/REP/2018/4](#)) provided recommendations, they appeared not to be applied in practice. As staff remained hesitant to report incidents, SC brainstormed on the membership's approaches to the problem, to identify best practices.

33. The participants determined that the extent of bullying in most of their organizations was moderate (see slides in Appendix 2). Making that determination was difficult, however, as management did not inform staff representatives of the number or nature of cases.

34. The FICSA President pointed out that the various definitions of bullying posed a challenge that could affect the ability to quantify its extent. The definitions and forms of misconduct covered by the staff rules and regulations could help staff to obtain a better understanding. Staff representatives could insist on receiving regular (e.g. annual) reports from their organization's ombudsperson, and encourage management to provide regular, anonymized updates to staff on disciplinary measures taken in response to reports of fraud, misconduct and harassment. The latter would ensure that staff knew that the policy of zero tolerance was being enforced. Organizations also needed to have proper internal justice systems that functioned in favour of staff. Regular staff training on acceptable and unacceptable behaviour at all levels could also help to improve the work environment.

35. The discussion showed that a lack of faith in the HR unit, ombudsperson and/or the ethics officer in some organizations had prevented staff from coming forward. The staff who had been the most vocal on misconduct issues were often among the first whose posts had been cut when restructuring or cost-cutting measures were initiated, which could be perceived as retaliation.

36. In addition, participants questioned the reliability of surveys to assess the working environment. Staff who were worried about anonymity and confidentiality hesitated to respond truthfully. Management at one organization had even instructed staff to raise concerns or ask question publicly. While management had sometimes pushed back against surveys launched by staff associations, staff associations' mandates certainly included using surveys to help to improve the workplace environment.

37. Experience at one organization with annual staff association surveys, with responses kept anonymous and confidential to promote participation, had been positive. The use of a basic framework of questions allowed the monitoring of progress on any subject. Proper processing and management of the survey results were also important. The latter included presenting the results at town-hall meetings, to which the management was invited, and sending the results of surveys over the previous eight years to JIU.

38. To change a culture of bullying for the better, the JIU report recommended setting up an independent external review body to reassure staff no internal influence or conflicts of interest would be involved, conducting surveys, yearly reporting from the ombudsperson and HR unit, and 360-degree evaluation (see Appendix 2). SC delegates also suggested training, raising awareness, knowing how to report any misconduct and having proper policy in place as tools to improve the workplace atmosphere.

39. The FICSA President pointed out that efforts to raise awareness resulted in increases in reporting, and a coordinated multidisciplinary approach that involved various offices (staff association, ombudsperson and HR unit) was needed to align the results of the complaints received. While management, not staff representatives, was responsible for resolving any type of misconduct, the staff association could push management in the right direction and work with managers to change the organizational culture towards zero tolerance.

40. Training would help develop the competency, soft skills and emotional intelligence required by staff to foster an improved work environment. Some organizations lacked training of this nature (counselling and coaching approach).

41. Supervisors were not usually evaluated for their supervisory skills. While implementing 360-degree evaluation (the evaluation of supervisors as well as supervisees) would not be easy, it would benefit managers who might not know how their behaviour negatively affected colleagues. Without commitment from the highest levels of the administration to making genuine change through tangible action, however, such evaluations could be viewed as a mere formality and lead to retaliation by managers who receive unfavourable evaluations. Using a third party to administer a survey, and aggregate comments and evaluations could achieve the necessary transparency, confidentiality and anonymity, but that could be harder to do in small organizations.

42. In closing, the delegates agreed that, to help staff representatives continue to fight all types of misconduct, FICSA members needed to share their experience, best practices, and their organizations' policies and processes. A small working group needed to be set up to prepare a very short survey, whose results could be used to reach a better understanding of what could be done. The following delegates

volunteered to serve in that group: Tracy Tollmann (UNFCCC), Paula Franceschelli (FAO/WFP-UGSS) and Andrea Palazzi (UNAIDS).

Conclusion

43. SC needed to set up working group of staff representatives with experience with the subject of misconduct, to create a survey whose results could be used to take practical action. The results would include bullet points of best practices that staff representatives could use to address incidents of bullying. SC would use the results of the survey to recommend best practices that staff could use to help address incidents of misconduct. SC would share the recommendation with the FICSA ExCom, to ensure it is kept informed of developments and to help with dissemination.

Recommendation

44. SC recommended that the FICSA ExCom collect good practices via a survey developed by the working group on bullying, misconduct, and unethical behaviour.

45. SC recommended that FICSA members take advantage of all available training related to bullying and harassment, including that offered through FICSA.

Nomination of SC officers and core group members

46. The following delegates were nominated as Standing Committee officers:

- Viera Seben (ICAO) as Chair
- Tracy Tollmann (UNFCCC) as Vice-Chair

47. The following participants in the SC were nominated as members of the core group:

- Paola Franceschelli (FAO/WFP-UGSS)
- Silvia Mariangeloni (FAO/WFP-UGSS)
- Jakob Skoet (AP-in-FAO)

Appendix 1. Participants

Chair	Viera Seben (ICAO)
Vice Chair	Tracy Tollmann (UNFCCC)
Rapporteur	Andrew Brown (ICAO)
FICSA President	Tanya Quinn-Maguire
FICSA General Secretary	Evelyn Kortum
FICSA ExCom members	Veronique Allain (SCBD), Kay Miller (WHO/EURO), Pilar Vidal Estevez (WHO/PAHO)
Regional Representative	Anthony Ndinguri (ICAO)
Staff Association/Union	
AP-in-FAO	Jakob Skoet, Florence Tartanac
FAO/WFP-UGSS	Susan Murray, Paola Franceschelli, Dina Franchi, Silvia Mariangeloni
IAEA	Anthony Alozie, Irena Chatzis, Hussein Ramadan, Anjarika Strohal
IFAD	Leynara Fundukova
IMO	Shereen Barry, Newsheen Bhatti, Fola Odulana
OSCE	Nizar Zaher
SCBD	Lisa Pedicelli
UNAIDS	Andrea Palazzi
UNFCCC	Mary Jean Abrazado, Ambretta Perrino
UNGSC	Cosimo Melpignano, Vito Musa
UNIDO	Osadolor Akpata, Steve Eales, Hassan Malik, Fernando Russo
UPU	Birahim Fall, Stéphane Vuillemin
UNWTO	Juliana Contreras, Hanane Louzari
WHO/AFRO	Hamidou Bague
WHO/EURO	Caroline Brown, Nathalie Germain Julskov, Shahin Huseynov
WHO/GSC	Khalid Aizat
WHO/SEARO	Ritesh Singh
WHO/WPRO	Huajing Liang, Chan Po Lin, Robert Kezaala
WMO	Jalil Housni
Member with associate status	
CTBTO	Michelle Delinde, Grace Sseruwagi, Glenda Wolstenholme

Association with consultative status

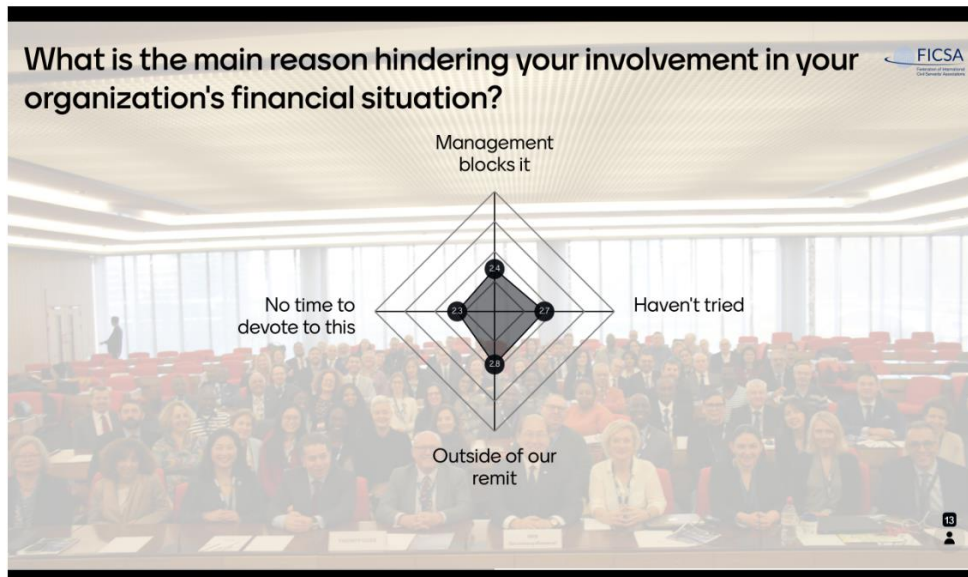
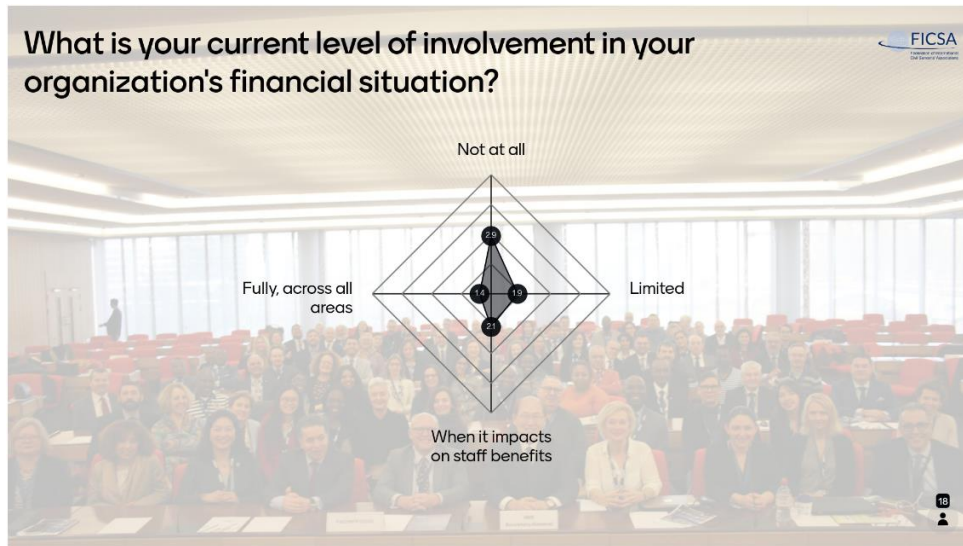
EMBL Sybilla Corbett

Guests

UNICTF Maria Del Rocio Martin Vargas, Begona Tebar
Lafuente

Appendix 2. Mentimeter slides on staff associations' role in their organizations' financial situation and in working with management against bullying

Involvement, oversight and observation role of staff association/unions on the financial situation of the organizations

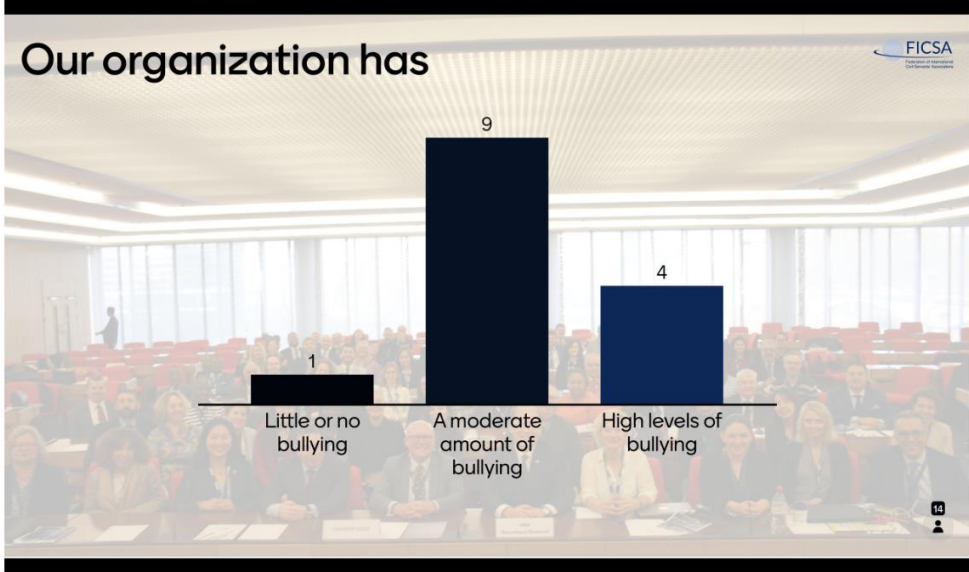


How can we increase our participation in this area



Collaboration with management on addressing bullying

Our organization has



Suggestions on how to improve a bullying culture

Education and communication

Independent and empowered internal instances that deal with harassment/bullying effectively

360 degree evaluation

By Action Taken... If you don't see any action from organization... whatever you will try to put in place is not going to work

Surveys, campaigns, training to management but also awareness for everybody

By Smokey Detector: When you have the same issue in different duty station where you have the same person... it is not a coincidence!!

Global staff survey, dedicated policy, publish yearly reports from ombudsperson, investigation, and HR, put a limit to ombudsperson and Inspector General mandates, post monthly bulletins

Zero tolerance means zero tolerance

Identify hot spots through connecting the dots (i.e., communication betw medical service, SA, OMB, Ethics Officer, etc...)

We have reduced the level of bullying by:

Word cloud containing the following terms:

- concrete action taken
- take people accountable
- awareness raising
- campaigns
- workshops
- regular reporting
- training
- policy
- appointing ethics officer
- live by example
- evaluation
- surveys
- mandatory training
- policy review
- let ppl know how 2 report
- messageing
- i don't know