



**Executive Board of the
United Nations Development
Programme, the United Nations
Population Fund and the United
Nations Office for Project Services**

Distr.: General
27 March 2014

Original: English

Annual session 2014

23 to 27 June 2014, Geneva

Item 16 of the provisional agenda

UNFPA – Reports of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS Ethics Offices

UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND

Report of the Ethics Office 2013

Summary

This report is submitted to the Executive Board at its annual session in 2014, pursuant to paragraph 9 of Executive Board decision 2010/17: Reports of the Ethics Offices of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS. The report, in accordance with the Secretary-General's bulletin entitled United Nations system-wide application of ethics: separately administered organs and programmes (ST/SGB/2007/11), was reviewed by the Ethics Panel of the United Nations at its 55th session on 4 February 2014 and was subsequently provided to the UNFPA Executive Director.

The report provides a summary of the activities of the UNFPA Ethics Office during the period 1 January to 31 December 2013, and describes trends in the mandated areas of its work. The report also provides recommendations to management to further strengthen the organizational culture of integrity and compliance.

Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to take note of the present report and comment on the progress of the work of the UNFPA Ethics Office.



Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction.....	3
II. Activities of the UNFPA Ethics Office	3
A. Training, education and outreach.....	5
B. Advice and guidance.....	7
C. Financial disclosure programme	11
D. Protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized fact-finding activities.....	13
E. Standard-setting and policy support.....	14
III. Ethics Panel of the United Nations (EPUN) and the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations (ENMO).....	15
IV. Recommendations to management	16
V. Conclusion	17

Figures

1. Requests for services by category in 2013	4
2. Overview of requests for services by category: Three-year retrospective.....	5
3. Requests for ethics advice and guidance by issue: 2008-2013	8
4. Requests for ethics advice and guidance by geographic locations: Comparison of 2011, 2012 and 2013 data.....	9
5. Requests for ethics advice and guidance: Breakdown of 2013 data.....	9
6. Financial disclosure participation by location and calendar year: 2006-2012.....	11
7. Total field staff required to file financial disclosure statements for the 2012 calendar year by location	12
8. Total staff required to file financial disclosure statements for the 2012 calendar year by grade	12

I. Introduction

1. The present report, the sixth since the establishment of the Ethics Office in January 2008, covers the period 1 January to 31 December 2013. The report, which was prepared in accordance with section 5.4 of the Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2007/11, entitled "United Nations system-wide application of ethics: separately administered organs and programmes", is submitted to the Executive Board at its annual session in 2014, pursuant to paragraph 9 of Executive Board decision 2010/17: Reports of the Ethics Offices of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS.

2. Like other ethics offices in the United Nations system, the UNFPA Ethics Office operates on principles of independence, impartiality and confidentiality. The Ethics Office supports the Executive Director in ensuring that all UNFPA personnel observe and perform their functions consistent with the highest ethical standards required by the Charter of the United Nations and the Standards of Conduct of the International Civil Service. Towards this end, the activities of the Ethics Office are aimed at promoting an organizational culture based on shared values of integrity, accountability, transparency, professionalism and mutual respect.

3. This report describes the key activities undertaken by the Ethics Office in 2013. It also provides an assessment of the actions taken and progress made in addressing the key recommendations that were made to management in the 2012 Annual Report of the Ethics Office (DP/FPA/2013/2), namely (a) managers need to be more directly engaged in providing ethics education for their staff and in monitoring staff compliance with ethical standards, (b) increased managerial accountability for establishing work environments that foster a culture of speaking up without fear of retaliation, and (c) greater investment in skills training on ethical leadership for managers.

4. In reviewing the development of the ethics function in the organization, the report takes into consideration staff interactions with the Ethics Office and the actions taken by management to institutionalize ethics concepts in organization-wide discourses and initiatives. In this context, the report provides further recommendations to management to build on achievements to date to strengthen the ability of UNFPA to maintain the highest ethical standards.

II. Activities of the UNFPA Ethics Office

5. As in previous years, the activities of the Ethics Office were undertaken in the following mandated areas of work:

- (a) Developing standards, training and education on ethics issues, in coordination with the Ethics Panel of the United Nations (EPUN) and other offices in UNFPA as appropriate, and conducting ethics outreach.
 - (b) Providing confidential advice and guidance to staff at their request on ethics- related issues.
 - (c) Administering the financial disclosure programme.
 - (d) Undertaking assigned responsibilities under the policy for the protection of staff against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized audits or investigations.
 - (e) Providing guidance and policy support to management on ethics standard-setting to ensure that the rules, policies, procedures and practices of the organization reinforce and promote the highest standards of ethics and integrity required by the Charter of the United Nations, other applicable staff rules and regulations, and the standards of conduct for the international civil service.
6. The Ethics Office received a total of 285 requests for its services in 2013. Greater awareness of ethics contributed to the increased use of the services provided by the Office in recent years, specifically, the provision of ethics advice and guidance. Of the 285 requests that were received in 2013, the majority (161) related to the services provided under its advisory and guidance function and 54 were related to the financial disclosure programme. Services were also provided in support of system-wide coherence and harmonization of ethics-related policies (28) and with respect to ethics standard-setting within UNFPA (19). A percentage breakdown of service requests by category is provided in Figure 1. Figure 2 relates to the services provided by the Ethics Office over the three-year period, 2011-2013.

Figure 1
Requests for services by category in 2013

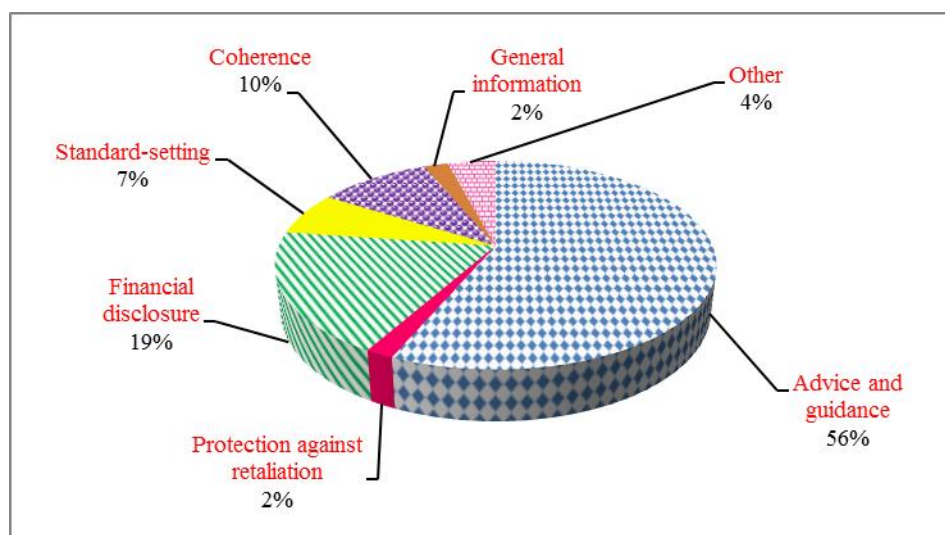
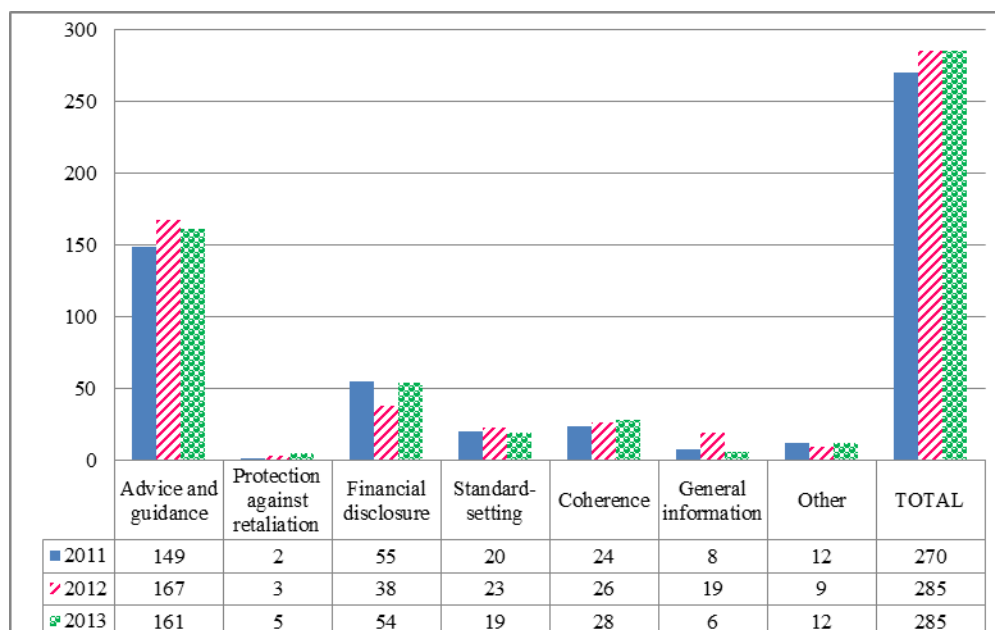


Figure 2
Overview of requests for services by category: Three-year retrospective



A. Training, education and outreach

7. In 2013, the Ethics Office maintained its momentum in training and communication. The training, education and outreach programme of the Ethics Office aims at reinforcing the core values and principles of the United Nations, to increase knowledge of and compliance with UNFPA-specific ethics-related policies, and to encourage staff and management to adhere to the highest ethical standards. The Office concentrated on securing the commitment of managers to partner with the Ethics Office in providing continuous

ethics education for their staff. As mentioned in the 2012 Annual Report of the Ethics Office, although the training, education and outreach programme of the Ethics Office creates awareness of ethical standards, in order to promote adherence to these standards and the inclusion of these standards in daily decision-making, managers must be more directly engaged in providing ethics education for their staff and in monitoring staff compliance with these standards. Specifically, managers had to be especially alert to conflicts of interest that they themselves and their staff could face when dealing with third parties such as vendors and implementing partners. Managers must encourage staff to come forward and surface these conflicts so that they can be addressed.

8. To engage managers, particularly Heads of Offices, to be more proactive in taking the lead in imparting ethics education for their staff, the Ethics Office developed new guidance notes and training materials on conflicts of interest. The Office issued a guide titled “Leading a Dialogue on Integrity”, which includes case studies on conflicts of interest and instructions for facilitation. This initiative underscores why Heads of Offices should regularly dialogue with their staff on the ethical challenges that they could face in their daily work. The guide was launched through the UNFPA in-house communication web platform “Voices” and featured an interview with the Ethics Adviser on ethical leadership.

9. Given the fact that an organization’s ethical culture is influenced to a great extent by its management’s demonstrated adherence to the highest ethical standards, the Ethics Office briefed members of the UNFPA Executive Committee on the responsibility of each and every member to lead by example. The briefing drew attention to the collective responsibility of the Executive Committee to exercise ethical leadership and the obligation of individual members to ensure integrity and transparency in their own decision-making. The Office alerted the Executive Committee to emerging ethical dilemmas stemming from staff engagement in social media and increased organizational collaboration with the private sector. The Ethics Office also focused on concerns raised by staff about intimidating and abrasive managerial styles and the obligation of individual Committee members to take prompt and corrective action when these types of behaviour were brought to their attention. The Executive Committee noted the reputational risks that arise when leaders fail to address workplace intimidation and the impact that this can have on staff morale and motivation.

10. The UNFPA Learning and Career Management Branch (LCMB) continued to be a key partner of the Ethics Office in providing ethics education for staff. Through the performance appraisal system, LCMB monitors individual staff compliance with the mandatory online course “Ethics, Integrity and Anti-Fraud: Setting the Standards at UNFPA.” In 2013, ethics training sessions were included in induction training workshops organized by LCMB for newly recruited national and international staff who had been recently deployed to country/regional/subregional offices and various headquarters units. Incorporating ethics training in induction workshops served to introduce the Ethics Office and its services to these new staff members and, furthermore, underscored the organization’s expectations for ethical conduct. The Ethics Office also worked with LCMB

to include ethical leadership concepts in the curricula of the ongoing managerial skills training for mid-level and senior managers.

11. At the regional level, ethics training was conducted in conjunction with the Human Resources Management workshop attended by Operations Managers and Admin./Finance staff from the Asia and the Pacific Region, held in Bangkok, Thailand and with the Leadership Development Programme (LEAD) workshop for senior and mid-level managers from the Arab States Region, held in Casablanca, Morocco. Dedicated ethics training workshops were also conducted for staff in the Thailand, Nepal and Pakistan country offices and the Asia and the Pacific Regional Office. Ethics briefing sessions were also conducted for staff in the Technical Division, the Division for Management Services (DMS), the Information and External Relations Division (IERD), the Office of Security Coordinator (OSC), the Office of the Executive Director (OED) and the ICPD Beyond 2014 Secretariat. These sessions drew attention to interrelations between ethical practices and behaviours, enhanced staff morale and motivation, and effective team performance. They also underscored UNFPA expectations of ethical leadership and managers' obligations to create work environments in which staff can express constructive dissent and speak up without fear of reprisal. All the training and briefing sessions referred to above were conducted with the support of the Directors/Heads of Offices concerned, who themselves participated in the discussions.

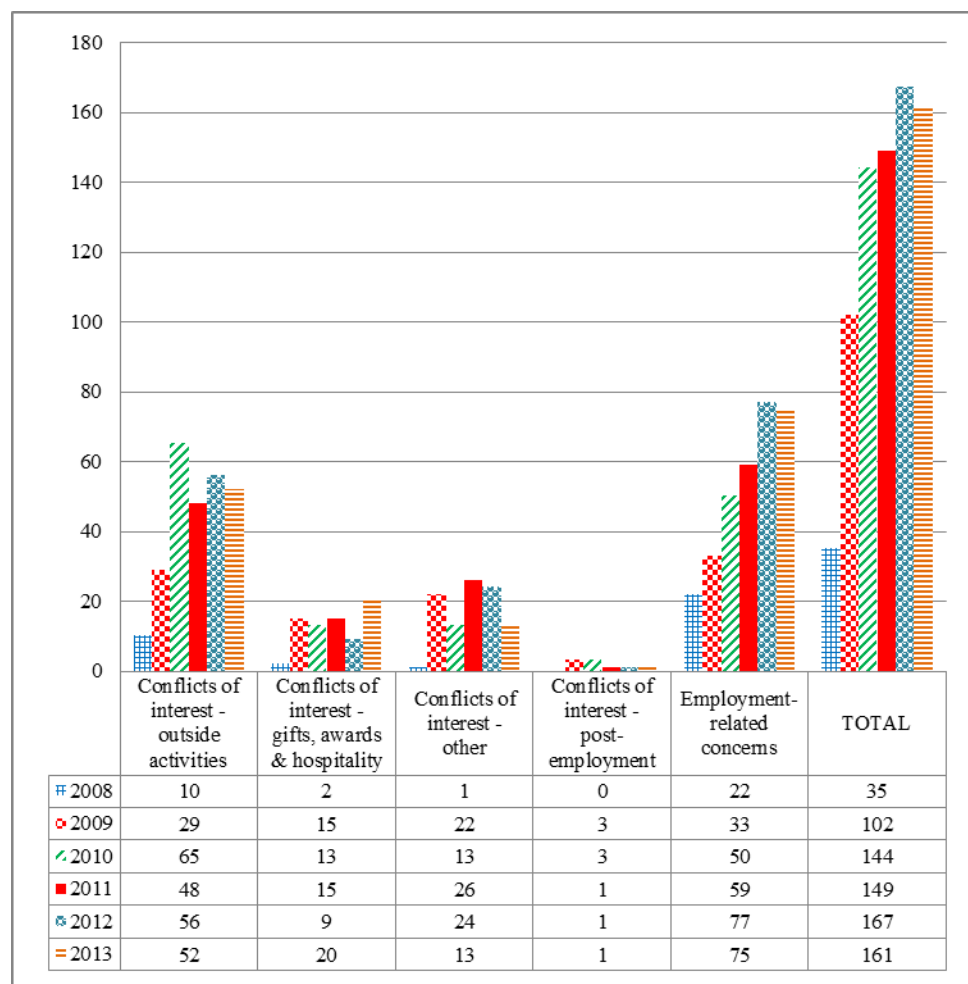
12. As may be seen from above, in 2013, the Ethics Office used multiple forums to conduct face-to-face ethics training and briefing sessions. Approximately 525 staff attended these sessions, the highest number recorded since the establishment of the Ethics Office. These sessions encouraged frank discussions on a variety of conflicts of interest situations and on behaviours that undermined staff morale and motivation and hindered effective team performance. They were platforms to raise awareness on the protection against retaliation policy, to promote staff confidence in this policy and to encourage staff to report misconduct without fear of reprisal. The sessions also served as catalysts for staff to seek confidential ethics advice; immediately after these sessions, there was a sharp increase in the number of individual requests for advice and guidance. This serves to reinforce the observation that the Ethics Office plays an important preventive role.

13. The Ethics Office also continued to maintain a robust website that provides a variety of informational materials and guidance notes on the prevention and mitigation of conflicts of interest, respectful workplace conduct, requirements of the financial disclosure programme, and the nature and scope of whistle-blower protection. It also provides easy access to all ethics-related guidelines, policies and procedures and to the mandatory online ethics course (English, French and Spanish versions). The website was regularly updated with case studies and quizzes on various situations that staff could face in their daily work and noting the "right thing to do" when faced with these situations. The website continued to serve as a point of introduction to ethics and the services provided by the Office and as a resource for continuous ethics education.

B. Advice and guidance

14. The provision of advice and guidance is a critical risk-management function of the Ethics Office and is the cornerstone of its preventive work. As noted above, a key consequence of the extensive training and outreach activities of the Ethics Office has been an increase in requests for the services provided by the Ethics Office in all areas of its mandate and, particularly, in relation to confidential advice. As can be seen in Figure 3, the number of requests for its advisory services has increased since the establishment of the Office in 2008. This increase demonstrates strong staff and management confidence in the Ethics Office and recognition of its ability to serve as a secure, reliable and confidential provider of high-quality ethics advice.

Figure 3
Requests for ethics advice and guidance by issue: 2008-2013



15. To handle the increasing volume and complexity of the confidential advice caseload, the Ethics Office set up a case-management database system in 2011. The database allows for ease of tracking according to various parameters and is a valuable tool for ensuring consistency in the advice provided by the Ethics Office. By introducing new functionalities to this database, the Ethics Office can now conduct a more detailed analysis of the types of inquiries received (Figures 4 and 5). As a result, the Ethics Office can alert the Executive Committee to common ethics-related issues and concerns (paragraph 9 above) and, without breaching confidentiality, collaborate with individual Regional Directors and Headquarters Division Directors in addressing specific ethics issues arising in their respective regions and divisions. This improved system of recording inquiries also facilitated a targeted approach to the training that was provided to the offices, identified in paragraph 11 above.

Figure 4
**Requests for ethics advice and guidance by geographic locations:
 Comparison of 2011, 2012 and 2013 data**



Figure 5
Requests for ethics advice and guidance: Breakdown of 2013 data

<i>No.</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Total cases</i>	<i>Field</i>	<i>HQ</i>
A.	Conflicts of interest – outside activities	52	28	24
B.	Conflicts of interest – gifts, awards and hospitality	20	11	9
C.	Conflicts of interest – other	13	7	6
D.	Conflicts of interest – post-employment	1	1	-
<i>Sub-total</i>		86	47	39
E.	Employment-related concerns:			
	- Respectful workplace conduct issues	44	25	19
	- Clarification of personnel-related policies	24	17	7
	- Protection against retaliation	5	4	1
	- Allegation of fraud	2	2	-
<i>Sub-total</i>		75	48	27
GRAND TOTAL		161	95	66

16. The Ethics Office served as a resource for identifying and managing actual, potential and perceived conflicts of interest; clarifying ethical norms and standards; and providing guidance on organizational mechanisms and processes that are available to address staff concerns about unethical actions and behaviours. In 2013, out of a total of 161 inquiries that were received, 86 inquiries were on conflicts of interest issues and 75 inquiries were

on employment-related concerns. Of these inquiries, 95 were received from field staff and 66 from headquarters-based staff.

17. Of the 86 conflicts of interest inquiries, the majority (52) related to participation in outside activities, such as undertaking teaching assignments, serving on expert panels and boards of a variety of non-governmental entities and publications. There were also 20 inquiries related to the processes to be followed in relation to the receipt of unanticipated gifts from implementing partners and hospitality/promotional materials from vendors, 13 inquiries related to perceptions of conflicts of interest arising from the personal affiliations that staff members had with third parties and 1 inquiry on post-employment. With respect to the inquiries on conflicts of interest, while the majority of these inquiries were made by individual staff members acting on their own initiative, in some matters a staff member sought guidance from the Ethics Office upon the specific instructions of his/her supervisor.

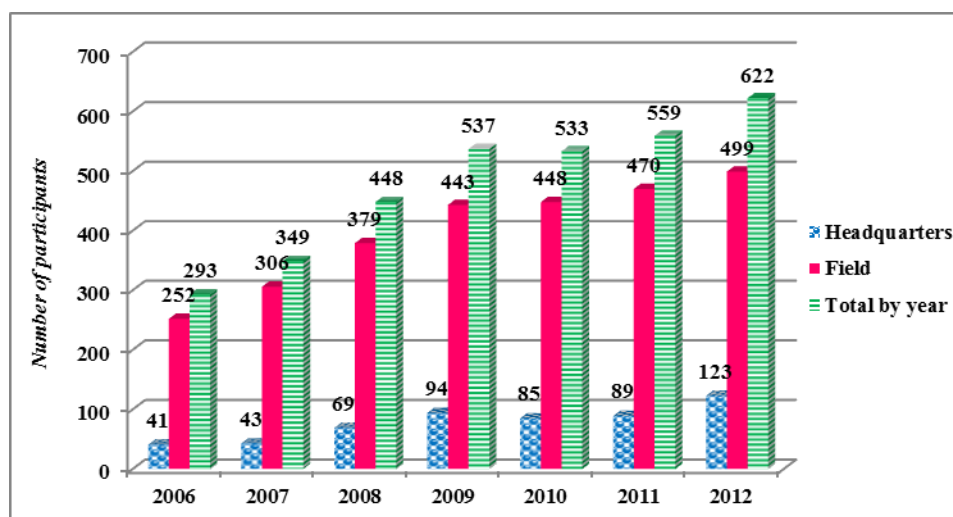
18. Of the 75 employment-related inquiries, the majority (44) related to concerns about behaviours that undermined the respect and dignity of staff. Some who approached the Ethics Office in this regard expressed concerns about abrasive and bullying managerial styles that were, in some specific cases, considered to border on harassment and abuse of authority and, hence, amounting to misconduct. Others complained about working norms and communication styles that they perceived as undermining their capability and dignity. The reasons attributed for these behaviours ranged from expressing dissent and voicing divergent opinions from supervisors to drawing the attention of supervisors to the misuse of organizational assets and/or non-compliance with organizational rules by the supervisors themselves or others under the latter's direct supervision. Those who raised these issues also said that these behaviours had created hostile work environments that impeded effective team performance within the individual unit/office concerned. In this category, there were also 24 inquiries that concerned the fair administration of personnel-related policies/processes including, among others, those associated with staff well-being, the performance appraisal system and recruitment; 5 inquiries concerned whistle-blower protection and 2 inquiries were allegations of fraud.

19. Because the Ethics Office does not have the mandate to directly engage in the resolution of individual staff member grievances, the guidance provided by the Ethics Office was limited to drawing attention to the applicable policies and providing information/referrals to existing mechanisms for redress. At the same time, the Ethics Office strongly encouraged complaining staff to speak up and make use of these resources. The Office noted that most of those who raised employment-related concerns with the Ethics Office were aware of these mechanisms but were reluctant to use them. The Ethics Office also noted that the contractual status of the individual concerned influenced his/her decision to speak up; it would appear that new hires and those on service contracts were reluctant to do so because of fears of reprisal (e.g., non-extensions of contracts and/or adverse performance appraisals/letters of recommendation that could jeopardize career prospects). Among those who had been with the organization for a longer duration, perceptions of futility and impunity appeared to hold them back from speaking up.

C. Financial disclosure programme

20. A total of 622 staff members submitted financial disclosure statements in the 2013 filing cycle covering the 2012 calendar year (Figure 6). Statements were filed by staff at the D1 level and above and by all other staff who had finance and procurement functions and/or had direct access to procurement-related information and/or were engaged in the investment of the assets of UNFPA or of any accounts for which UNFPA had fiduciary or custodial responsibility. These categories of staff are listed according to their functional titles in the UNFPA financial disclosure policy. Collaboration with the Division for Human Resources (DHR) and Heads of Offices in identifying those staff members who were required to file statements in accordance with the categories identified in the UNFPA financial disclosure policy, regular follow-up by the Ethics Office with the filing population and a stable information-technology platform contributed to timely submissions and the achievement of a 100 per cent compliance rate.

Figure 6
**Financial disclosure participation by location and calendar year:
 2006-2012**



21. Since its establishment, the UNFPA Ethics Office has completed seven rounds of financial disclosure. The total number of staff required to file disclosure statements increased since the inception of the first filing cycle from 293 in 2006 to 622 in 2013, an increase of 112 per cent. Changes in organizational structure, revisions in functional responsibilities and greater emphasis on individual accountability have all contributed to annual increases in the number of staff required to file. Of the 123 headquarters staff members who were required to file, 54 were from the UNFPA Procurement Services Branch (PSB) and encompassed all those in this Branch who were engaged in any procurement action and/or decision, irrespective of grade level.

22. Of the total number who filed statements in the 2013 filing cycle, 501 had submitted statements in the 2012 filing cycle as well. Also, as in previous years, the majority (over 80 per cent) of those who submitted statements were based in the field – 462 in country offices and 37 in the regional/subregional offices (Figure 7). Furthermore, as Figure 8 shows, the filing population was almost equally divided between staff in managerial positions and support staff – 307 in managerial positions and 315 support staff, of whom 237 (75 per cent) were Finance/Administration Assistants based in field offices.

Figure 7
Total field staff required to file financial disclosure statements for the 2012 calendar year by location

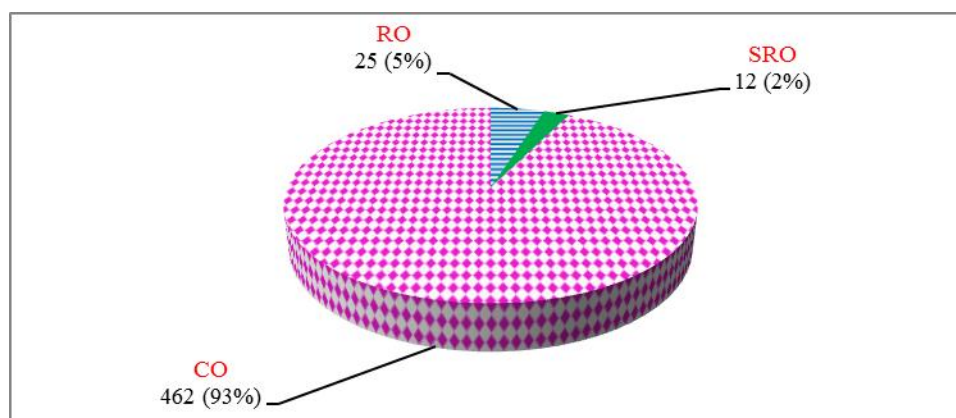
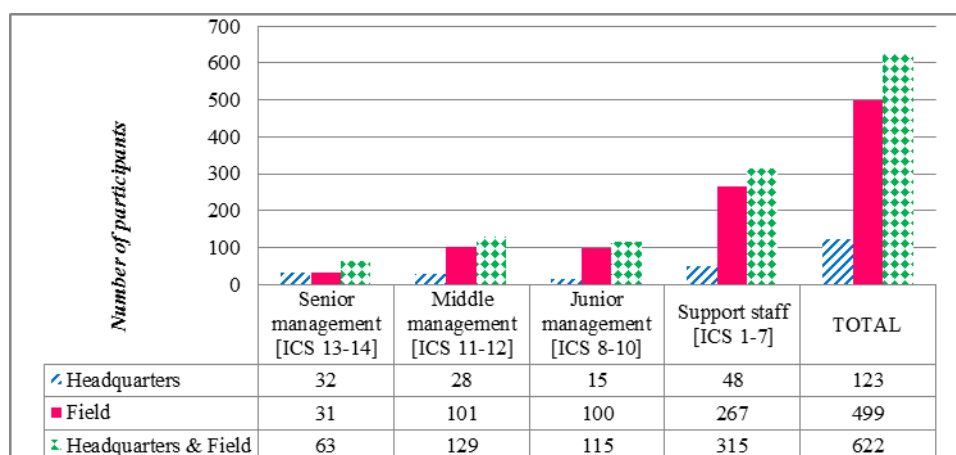


Figure 8
Total staff required to file financial disclosure statements for the 2012 calendar year by grade



23. There were very few requests for assistance during the filing exercise and this can be attributed to the increased awareness of the requirements of the programme and the nature

and scope of the information that was required to be disclosed. All statements were reviewed to ensure that the filer had provided complete information in accordance with the requirements of the programme and to detect if there were any conflicts of interest arising from disclosed assets, liabilities and/or outside activities or associations of the staff member or his/her immediate family. Additional information was requested from 42 staff members. Upon further review, two situations that could create perceptions of conflicts of interest were detected – one in relation to the acceptance of an award and one in relation to an outside activity. The resolutions proposed to address these perceptions of conflict were accepted and acted upon by the staff members concerned.

24. A random sample of 8 per cent (49 statements) of the filing population, diversified by location, grade, and functions, was selected for verification by external reviewers. The purpose of the verification exercise, which was conducted for the first time in 2013 and will henceforth be repeated annually, is to ensure that staff members are giving due diligence to the completion of their financial disclosure statements. Those selected for verification provided third-party documentation (e.g., bank statements, brokerage statements, documents pertaining to ownership of real estate) in respect of all items that had been disclosed in their statements. The external reviewers reported that all those participating in the 2013 verification exercise provided the required third-party documents. All 49 statements received an “unqualified” rating at the conclusion of the exercise.

25. The primary purpose of the financial disclosure programme is to promote transparency and public confidence in UNFPA and its staff. It is, therefore, critical that the financial disclosure programme continues to be a robust tool for risk management. Given the above, throughout 2013, the UNFPA Ethics Office engaged with EPUN members in sharing experiences on the administration of the 2013 filing cycle and refining the methodologies for the review of statements so that the programme itself functions as an effective tool in managing personal conflicts of interest.

D. Protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized fact-finding activities

26. The policy on protection against retaliation is intended to reinforce the organization’s commitment to address misconduct and to safeguard those who report misconduct from any actual or threatened detrimental action that they could face as a consequence of having engaged in a “protected” activity, i.e., reporting misconduct or participating in a duly authorized fact-finding activity. A staff member who seeks whistle-blower protection has the option of seeking an informal resolution to redress the alleged detrimental action or file a formal complaint with the Ethics Office. Upon receipt of a formal complaint, the Ethics Office is required to undertake a preliminary assessment to determine whether the complainant did engage in a protected activity and, if so, whether the protected activity was a contributing factor to the retaliation. If the Ethics Office determines that a *prima facie* case of retaliation has been established, the matter is referred to the Division for Oversight Services (DOS) for investigation. Thereafter and upon receipt of the investigation report

from DOS, the Ethics Office would make a final determination subsequent to the review of the investigation report.

27. In 2013, the Ethics Office received four inquiries seeking clarification of the provisions of the UNFPA whistle-blower protection policy. In addition, the Office received one formal complaint of retaliation. Upon conducting a preliminary assessment of this formal complaint, the Ethics Office concluded that a *prima facie* case had been established that one of the five detrimental actions alleged by the complainant amounted to retaliation and referred this specific matter to DOS for investigation. At the time of writing this report, the DOS investigation report had not been submitted to the Ethics Office.

28. An effective whistle-blower policy is critical for promoting transparency in UNFPA operations and for ensuring organizational accountability for financial and human resources management. However, as described in paragraph 26 above, the policy becomes operational only after a staff member engages in a “protected activity” and this, in turn, particularly with reference to the reporting of misconduct, is premised on the willingness of staff to speak up. At the same time, it would appear from communications with individual staff who had raised specific employment-related concerns with the Ethics Office (see paragraph 19) and, furthermore, the views expressed in the 2012 Global Staff Survey, the fears of retaliation and the lack of confidence that those who do report misconduct will be protected from retaliation could hold staff back from speaking up and reporting misconduct in the first place. While the Ethics Office can continue to raise awareness of the duty of staff to report misconduct, encourage staff members to speak up without fear and inform them of the protections offered to those who do so, these assurances must be regularly reinforced by management.

E. Standard-setting and policy support

29. A key function of the Ethics Office is to provide guidance to management on ethics standards-setting so that the policies, rules and practices of the organization reflect and promote the expectations of integrity, impartiality and fairness required of the United Nations and its staff. The guidance envisaged includes the regular review of current organizational policies, rules and practices that relate to ethics and ethical conduct and advice to management on mechanisms to strengthen staff compliance.

30. During the reporting period, the Ethics Office worked closely with the various units in UNFPA – DOS, DHR, Legal Unit, PSB and IERD – that were responsible for overseeing the implementation of organizational policies, rules and practices associated with staff welfare, staff conduct and the organization’s business practices. The Ethics Office viewed this collaboration as critical for ensuring consistency in the advice that it provided to staff in the context of its advisory and guidance function.

31. Collaboration with DHR focused on identifying mechanisms and systems that could be introduced to address the employment-related concerns that were brought to the

attention of the Ethics Office (paragraphs 18 and 19). In this regard and in the context of the initiatives undertaken by DHR as a follow-up to the 2012 Global Staff Survey, the Ethics Office advocated with DHR for (a) managerial skills assessment tests for those applying for senior manager positions in the organization, (b) skills-building in ethical leadership for all managers and, if appropriate, individual managerial skills coaching, and (c) increased oversight to ensure fairness and transparency in the application of personnel-related guidelines.

32. Collaboration with DHR was also critical for ensuring consistency in the advice provided to staff by DHR and the Ethics Office on the UNFPA policy on outside activities, specifically, the appropriateness of the outside activity request modality for purposes of securing approval for Special Leave Without Pay (SLWOP). Consultations with DHR on this issue highlighted the need for improved clarity on the circumstances/situations in which SLWOP would be allowable and the process to secure authorization. Doing so would allow for the outside activities policy to be used for the purpose it was intended for, i.e., management of conflicts of interest while a staff member was in full-time employment with UNFPA or while on SLWOP and not as a means to secure approval for SLWOP in the first place. The Ethics Office also provided inputs to DHR in respect of the revised UNFPA Competency Framework and the new Human Resources Strategy.

33. All new policies and amendments to existing policies that were presented to the Executive Committee in 2013 for approval were also shared with the Ethics Office. This enabled the Ethics Office to provide inputs to the policy owner concerned and also escalate to the Executive Committee specific ethics-related concerns requiring the Committee's attention. The Ethics Office also held its annual meeting with the UNFPA Audit Advisory Committee and briefed the Committee on its 2013 work programme and the progression of the ethics function in UNFPA. The Ethics Office also met with the Ombudsman for the United Nations Funds and Programmes.

III. Ethics Panel of the United Nations (EPUN) and the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations (ENMO)

34. The UNFPA Ethics Office participated in all nine meetings of EPUN and the annual meetings of ENMO. EPUN and ENMO continued to be excellent forums for developing best practices, exchanging materials and developing internal benchmarks for purposes of developing criteria to measure the success of an organization's ethics programme. Whether it be identifying core ethical standards and concepts for inclusion in organization-specific ethics training or participating in discussions and initiatives to ensure ethics policy harmonization in respect of financial disclosure or whistle-blower protection, engagement with the Panel has been very useful. Interactions within EPUN have provided opportunities to discuss, in confidence, requests for information, policy interpretation and ethics advice on emerging ethical issues associated with increased staff engagement in social media and negotiating private-sector partnerships. Further information on the work of EPUN is

provided in the Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Ethics Office (A/68/348), presented at the 68th session of the General Assembly.

IV. Recommendations to management

35. While it is the responsibility of all those who are employed in UNFPA to adhere to the highest ethical standards, managers and management have additional responsibilities. The recommendations made in the 2012 Annual Report of the Ethics Office (summarized in paragraph 3 above) were aimed at securing the express commitment of managers and management in discharging these obligations. The following recommendations recognize the progress made in 2013 and provide suggestions to build on this progress to further strengthen the culture of integrity and compliance in UNFPA.

36. From the feedback received by the Ethics Office, it would appear that in 2013, Heads of Offices and line managers were actively encouraging and monitoring the timely compliance of the online ethics course by new recruits. LCMB has referenced this course in the online introductory package that is made available to all new recruits. This, together with the certification of completion that staff members provide in their year-end performance appraisals and follow-up by LCMB with those who have not complied, has served to entrench introductory ethics learning in UNFPA.

37. With reference to awareness of conflicts of interest, as previously mentioned, the guide “Leading a Dialogue on Integrity” was designed specifically to alert Heads of Offices to conflicts of interest that they themselves and their staff could face when dealing with third parties. The Ethics Office is of the view that these learning materials have heightened the awareness of Heads of Offices concerning this issue. As mentioned, some Heads of Offices did refer their staff to the Ethics Office to seek guidance on specific conflicts of interest. Furthermore, there were others who informed the Ethics Office of the processes that they themselves and those whom they supervised had followed up concerning the receipt of awards, gifts, etc., from third parties.

38. The provision of continuous ethics education calls for Heads of Offices to broaden the discussion of ethics in the workplace beyond conflicts of interest to behaviours and working norms associated with respectful workplace conduct. From feedback received by the Ethics Office, it would appear that the “learning afternoons” that all Heads of Offices were required to conduct for their staff on the results of the 2012 Global Staff Survey (and with specific reference to the findings related to their respective offices) did generate discussions on respectful workplace conduct. To demonstrate their commitment to this integral component of ethical conduct, Heads of Offices should continue to provide their staff with the space and opportunity for regular discussions on this issue. As mentioned below, a more proactive role taken by Heads of Offices in this regard would also contribute to fostering a “speak-up” culture.

39. The responsibility of managers to create a workplace that promotes a culture of speaking up is a prerequisite for promoting staff confidence in the safeguards provided under the protection policy. If staff refrain from expressing points of view that differ from those of their supervisors because they feel intimidated and/or keep silent about abrasive and bullying managerial styles because of fears of retaliation, the chances are that they will not report fraud, waste, abuse and corruption, which is the very *raison d'être* of the protection policy. It is, therefore, critical that management should continue to use the opportunity of town hall meetings and other forums to expressly articulate its zero tolerance of any form of reprisal for speaking up and assure staff that such reprisals, if they occur, will be promptly and effectively addressed.

40. The new Human Resources Strategy requires supervisors to be more engaged in human resources management. This, in turn, calls for increased accountability on their part for compliance with personnel-related guidelines, ensuring the observance of ethics in daily decision-making and creating work environments that foster a “speak-up culture”. It also places ethical leadership at the centre of supervisors’ accountability for human resources management. Increased investment in ethical leadership training will enable the inclusion of ethical leadership components into all managerial skills training programmes offered by LCMB.

V. Conclusion

41. During 2013, the Ethics Office strengthened the services that it provided under its mandated areas of work. Through new high-quality training and learning programmes, increased advocacy for ethical leadership, the successful administration of the annual financial disclosure cycle and the provision of timely ethics advice to both staff and management, the Ethics Office reinforced its preventive function and its contribution to organizational risk management.

42. The Ethics Office continued to receive strong support from management throughout 2013. The Ethics Office was included in senior managers’ meetings. Individual meetings with the Executive Director and other Executive Committee members were opportunities to strategize on how best to incorporate ethics into the daily work and business processes of the organization. The Ethics Office will continue to work with staff and management to foster a culture of ethics within the organization and to integrate ethics into the mainstream of UNFPA operations.