

The United Church of Canada

Summary of Policies for Working in a Global Context: Prevention of Harassment and Abuse, including Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Theological Basis

The United Church of Canada believes all people are created in God's image and that all people deserve the same human rights and freedoms. God desires for all human beings mutual respect, care, protection, and empowerment and freedom from abuse and injustice.

The United Church of Canada understands God calls us to resist injustice. We are required to acknowledge, confess, and lament times we have turned away from God's call to love and serve others and from our particular responsibility to protect the vulnerable, the weak, and those whose voices are often not heard.

As church we understand that harassment, including sexual harassment, misconduct, exploitation, and abuse, happen when power is used to take advantage of the vulnerability of another. Sexual misconduct, exploitation, and abuse are destructive to God's people, violating the love we know in Jesus and negating people's ability to develop and use their gifts freely. We believe God continues to call God's people to love, and where there is abuse to seek restorative justice and healing. God calls the church to be in right relationship with all creation.

United Church of Canada policies, practices, and procedures embody our beliefs. We are committed to work toward environments of mutual respect, care, protection, and empowerment, free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, violence, and abuse.

Key United Church of Canada policies on prevention of harassment, discrimination, and violence, and the prevention of sexual misconduct, can be found on the [Safe Spaces for Worship and Work](#) webpage of united-church.ca.

Intent of Policy

The United Church of Canada is committed to the creation of safe environments for work, witness, and worship free from discrimination, harassment, violence, abuse, and exploitation. The United Church will not tolerate any behaviour by any person—including its members, adherents, lay employees and ministry personnel, and elected members or volunteers—that constitutes discrimination, harassment, violence, or abuse.

The United Church will not tolerate any behaviour by its members, Order of Ministry, adherents, employees, elected members, or volunteers that constitutes sexual misconduct, sexual abuse, or child abuse.

All complaints of discrimination, harassment, violence, and abuse toward anyone within the church—including lay employees or ministry personnel, elected members, or volunteers—will be taken seriously and dealt with in a spirit of compassion and justice. Every person with a concern or complaint has the right to bring it forward without reprisal or threat of reprisal.

Global Partnership Work

The United Church of Canada works globally in collaboration with partners through established relationships of mutuality, respect, trust, and accountability. The United Church is committed to working with global partners to ensure our global collaborative work is free from discrimination, harassment, abuse, and exploitation, including sexual abuse and exploitation.

There are three main elements in a policy of prevention of harassment, abuse, and exploitation:

1. Complaints processes that are easy to access
2. Arms-length investigative processes that work to determine the facts of each case
3. Resolution processes that determine the appropriate outcomes of the investigation

The United Church understands it may have a role to play in each of these three processes depending on the circumstances.

1. If a complaint involves a United Church of Canada employee, volunteer, delegate, or elected member (as complainant or respondent), the United Church understands itself to have a lead role in all three processes (receiving complaint, investigation, and resolution), collaborating with global partners on the ground.
2. If a complaint involves a non-United Church employee, volunteer, or delegate in a United Church–funded program or project, The United Church of Canada will support global partner processes. At minimum, The United Church of Canada would expect to be informed of any complaints concerning a United Church–funded project, and the steps taken to resolve the complaint.
3. The United Church of Canada is prepared to consider participating in processes of investigation or resolution of complaints related to global partner work not funded by the United Church if requested and as capacity allows.

For more information about United Church policies on preventing and responding to harassment and abuse please contact Travene Smallwood (Ministry and Employment Policy Coordinator) at tsmallwood@united-church.ca.