



GenderSAFE
ENDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN ACADEMIA

Overcoming resistance in gender-based violence policy-making: Supporting materials for trainers and participants

This document includes five reusable materials that accompany the training script *Overcoming resistance in gender-based violence policy-making*:

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The materials are designed for public use and can be adapted to different higher education and research settings. The scenarios are anonymised and reformulated so they can be used as training examples without referring to a specific institution or individual.

1. Resistance scenarios for World Café discussions

Purpose of the scenarios

These scenarios support group discussion on how resistance to gender-based violence policy work may appear in institutional settings. They are intended for use in a World Café exercise where participants identify the form of resistance, reflect on its effects and co-create strategies to respond before, during and after similar situations.

The scenarios can be printed, placed on posters or added to a Miro board. Trainers may select the most relevant scenarios for the group or invite participants to vote on the scenarios they would most like to discuss.

How to use the scenarios

Each scenario includes:

- a short title
- a situation
- typical statements that may be heard
- suggested forms of resistance
- discussion prompts
- notes for facilitators

Participants do not need to agree with the exact category of resistance. The categories are there to support reflection and can be adapted during the discussion.

Selection of scenarios

Facilitators can prepare seven or more resistance scenarios and invite participants to vote for the three they find most relevant before the World Café starts. The five scenarios with the highest number of votes can be used for discussion.

Scenarios can be adapted to the audience and context. They may cover situations such as:

- management presenting gender-based violence as a lower priority than other institutional issues
- denial that gender-based violence exists in the institution
- resistance to developing a dedicated code of conduct or procedure
- claims that existing structures, such as an ombudsperson or generic ethics procedure, are sufficient
- challenges to survey results or research evidence
- fear that anonymous reporting will lead to false accusations or “witch-hunts”
- legal, GDPR or neutrality arguments used to block protective measures or communication with victims/survivors
- dismissive statements during training, such as “young people are too sensitive” or “this is academia”

Scenario 1: “There are other priorities”

Situation

A team is negotiating with senior management on how to move forward with an institutional policy to address gender-based violence. The team is trying to secure financial and human resources and to design a policy approach based on a comprehensive framework.

Typical statements

- “There are many other issues we have to deal with right now.”
- “We have to deal with this other issue first.”
- “We already have an ombudsperson and it works. We do not need more measures right now.”

Suggested forms of resistance

- Non-prioritisation
- Inaction
- Saturation
- Institutional resistance

Discussion prompts

- What is the immediate effect of this response on the policy process?
- What could the team have prepared before the meeting?
- How could the team respond on the spot without escalating the discussion too quickly?
- What follow-up could keep the issue on the institutional agenda?
- Which allies or evidence could help show that this is a current institutional responsibility?

Notes for facilitators

This scenario is useful for discussing how institutions delay action by framing gender-based violence as less urgent than other issues. Participants can explore how to connect the issue to existing institutional priorities such as duty of care, legal compliance, student and staff wellbeing, quality of research and institutional reputation.

Scenario 2: “We are still investigating the possibilities”

Situation

A team is trying to secure a meeting to discuss the adoption of a dedicated policy or code of conduct on sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence. The institution

currently has a generic code of conduct for ethical issues, but it is mainly used for matters such as plagiarism or research integrity.

Typical statements

- “We are investigating the possibilities for action.”
- “We are uncertain whether we need any action in the current situation.”
- “The Ethics Committee has not indicated that such a problem exists.”
- “Any change to the rules requires a proposal from the Ethics Committee.”

Suggested forms of resistance

- Inaction
- Procedural blocking
- Disavowal of responsibility
- Institutional resistance

Discussion prompts

- How does procedural language delay or block action?
- What information could help make the need for a dedicated policy clearer?
- Who needs to be involved before a formal proposal can move forward?
- How could the team avoid being trapped in an indefinite “waiting” phase?
- What would a realistic follow-up step look like?

Notes for facilitators

This scenario helps participants discuss how procedures can become a barrier to institutional change. The aim is not to dismiss procedure, but to explore how procedural steps can be clarified, sequenced and used to move action forward.

Scenario 3: “This is just academia”

Situation

During a training on safe working environments, some senior participants challenge the need to address gender-based violence. Their comments suggest that harmful behaviour is part of academic culture and that younger people are too sensitive.

Typical statements

- “We are all adults here.”
- “We had to endure such things when we were younger. This is academia.”
- “Young people are too sensitive these days.”
- “You need grit in academia.”

Suggested forms of resistance

- Denial
- Normalisation of harm
- Refusal to use concepts and definitions
- Active or passive group resistance

Discussion prompts

- What effect can these comments have on people in the room?
- How can the facilitator respond without centring the resistant participant for the rest of the session?
- What can be done before a training to prepare for this type of comment?
- How can the discussion be brought back to institutional responsibility?
- What follow-up may be needed after the session?

Notes for facilitators

This scenario is useful for discussing how harmful academic norms are normalised. It can also help participants practise responses that validate the seriousness of the issue while keeping the training focused and safe for others.

Scenario 4: “I do not believe the evidence”

Situation

In a meeting where institutional survey results on gender-based violence or harassment are presented, some participants challenge the findings, question the methodology or dismiss the evidence.

Typical statements

- “I know there is evidence for this, but I still do not believe it.”
- “The methodology is very questionable.”
- “I have never encountered anything like this.”
- “This is not representative of our institution.”

Suggested forms of resistance

- Denial
- Backlash
- De-legitimisation of evidence
- Group or institutional resistance

Discussion prompts

- What happens when evidence is challenged in this way?
- How can the presenter prepare for methodological objections?
- What can be done on the spot to acknowledge questions without letting them derail the meeting?
- What other forms of evidence could support the message?
- How can survivor experience be respected without exposing individuals?

Notes for facilitators

This scenario allows participants to distinguish between legitimate methodological questions and resistance that uses methodology to avoid action. It can also support discussion on how to communicate data clearly and how to combine survey findings with legal duties, qualitative evidence and institutional values.

Scenario 5: “Anonymous reporting will create a witch-hunt”

Situation

An ombudsperson, gender equality officer or policy team proposes an anonymous reporting procedure for cases of gender-based violence. Some stakeholders strongly oppose the idea.

Typical statements

- “This will be a witch-hunt.”
- “Students who are resentful of a bad grade will falsely accuse professors.”
- “Anonymous reports are useless because you cannot investigate or impose sanctions.”
- “This will destroy people’s lives and reputations.”

Suggested forms of resistance

- Backlash
- Fear-based resistance
- Disavowal of responsibility
- Legal or procedural blocking

Discussion prompts

- What fears or assumptions are behind these statements?
- What clarification is needed about the purpose of anonymous reporting?
- How can the team explain the difference between disclosure, reporting, investigation and sanctioning?
- What safeguards can be built into an anonymous reporting procedure?

- What follow-up could reduce fear and improve understanding?

Notes for facilitators

This scenario is useful for discussing how to respond when a policy tool is misunderstood or framed as a threat. Participants can explore how anonymous reporting can be used to identify patterns, guide prevention and create entry points for support, while respecting due process.

Scenario 6: “We cannot take protective measures”

Situation

A trusted person or institutional support actor negotiates with a dean or manager to introduce precautionary measures to protect a victim/survivor. The manager is concerned about appearing biased or exposing the institution to legal risk.

Typical statements

- “We cannot impose precautionary measures against the accused party. They will come with their lawyer and sue the institution.”
- “You cannot side with the victim. You have to remain neutral.”
- “We have to wait until the investigation is finished.”

Suggested forms of resistance

- Legalistic resistance
- Disavowal of responsibility
- Inaction
- Misinterpretation of neutrality

Discussion prompts

- How can institutions distinguish protective measures from sanctions?
- What does neutrality mean in a victim-centred and fair process?
- What risks arise if no protective measures are taken?
- What could be prepared before such a negotiation?
- Which internal or external expertise could support the decision?

Notes for facilitators

This scenario helps participants discuss the difference between taking sides and taking responsibility for safety. It is also useful for exploring how legal concerns can be addressed without leaving the victim/survivor unsupported.

Scenario 7: “We cannot share information because of GDPR”

Situation

An investigation committee has completed its work and recommendations have been made. A decision on sanctions has been taken. The case manager wants to inform the victim/survivor about the outcome, but the responsible decision-maker refuses.

Typical statements

- “We cannot let the victim know about the sanctions. It is personal data of the responding party.”
- “Sharing this information would breach GDPR.”
- “The case is closed. There is nothing more to communicate.”

Suggested forms of resistance

- Legalistic resistance
- Procedural blocking
- Inaction
- Institutional self-protection

Discussion prompts

- What information does a victim/survivor need to understand the outcome and feel that the process has been taken seriously?
- How can institutions communicate outcomes while respecting data protection rules?
- What are the risks of silence or unclear communication?
- What could be prepared in the policy or procedure before such cases arise?
- Which offices or experts should be involved in clarifying communication rules?

Notes for facilitators

This scenario is useful for discussing how data protection can be invoked as a reason not to communicate. Participants can explore the need for clear procedures, pre-agreed communication templates and legal guidance that balances privacy with accountability and victim/survivor trust.

Scenario 8: “If it was serious, they would have reported it to the police”

Situation

During a meeting or training, a participant argues that the institution has no responsibility unless the case has been reported to the police or formally recognised as a crime.

Typical statements

- “If it was a crime, it should have been reported to the police.”
- “This is not for the institution to handle.”
- “We cannot do anything unless there is a criminal case.”

Suggested forms of resistance

- Disavowal of responsibility
- Narrow legal framing
- Denial of institutional duty of care

Discussion prompts

- What responsibilities do institutions have beyond criminal law?
- How can internal procedures complement criminal justice processes?
- What support and protection may be needed even when no police report is made?
- How can the institution avoid forcing victims/survivors into one reporting path?
- What policy language could clarify this issue in advance?

Notes for facilitators

This scenario supports discussion on institutional responsibility, internal procedures and the limits of a purely criminal justice framing. It is important to recognise that victims/survivors may have many reasons for not reporting to the police and may still need support, protection and institutional action.

2. Facilitator and rapporteur guidance

Purpose of this guidance

This guidance supports facilitators and rapporteurs who are involved in the World Café exercise of the training *Overcoming resistance in gender-based violence policy-making*. It explains the purpose of the exercise, the roles of facilitators and rapporteurs and the suggested flow of each discussion round.

The World Café format

The World Café format is used to support small-group discussions around different resistance scenarios. The aim is to:

- share experiences of resistance in a safe and structured way
- identify how resistance appears in institutional settings
- discuss strategies to prepare for, respond to and follow up on resistance
- strengthen the understanding that resistance can be part of institutional change work
- support participants to leave with practical strategies and a stronger sense of agency

Room arrangement

For in-person delivery, the room can be arranged in small table groups. Each table should have:

- one resistance scenario
- one World Café poster or worksheet
- markers and pens
- post-it notes
- one facilitator
- one rapporteur
- space for around five participants

For online delivery, each scenario can be placed in a separate Miro frame. Breakout rooms can be used for group work. Each breakout room should include a facilitator and a rapporteur.

How the rotation works

The World Café can include three rounds of 20 minutes. Each table works with one resistance scenario. Facilitators and rapporteurs stay at their table. Participants move to a new table after each round.

At the start of each round, the facilitator briefly introduces the scenario. For the second and third round, the facilitator also summarises the main points already discussed and invites the new group to build on them rather than repeat them.

What facilitators do

Facilitators guide the discussion. Their role is to:

- introduce the scenario clearly
- make sure all participants understand the situation
- invite participants to share similar examples or variants
- guide the group through the poster questions
- keep the discussion focused on strategies
- encourage everyone to contribute
- manage time
- support a respectful and safe discussion
- work with the rapporteur to synthesise the main points

Facilitators do not need to provide all the answers. Their role is to help the group generate, compare and refine strategies.

What rapporteurs do

Rapporteurs capture the discussion and present a short summary in plenary. Their role is to:

- listen actively
- make sure key points are written on the poster or Miro board
- capture concrete strategies and examples
- help the facilitator synthesise the discussion
- prepare a short plenary report
- avoid reporting every detail
- build on what previous rapporteurs have already said

During the plenary report, rapporteurs can focus on:

- the form of resistance discussed
- the immediate effects of the resistance
- strategies that could be prepared before the situation
- strategies that could be used on the spot
- follow-up strategies
- main challenges to applying the strategies

Suggested flow for each World Café round

1. Introduce the scenario

The facilitator briefly presents the scenario and checks that everyone understands it.

Suggested prompt:

“This scenario shows a form of resistance that may appear when institutions are asked to take action on gender-based violence. Before we move to strategies, let us make sure we all understand what is happening.”

2. Ask whether it resonates

Invite participants to share similar experiences or variants of the situation.

Suggested prompts:

- “Does this situation feel familiar?”
- “Have you heard similar statements?”
- “How might this resistance appear in your context?”

3. Discuss the immediate effect

Explore what happens when this resistance appears.

Suggested prompts:

- “What is the effect on the person trying to move the work forward?”
- “What is the effect on the room or group dynamic?”
- “What is the effect on the policy objective?”
- “Does it delay, silence, derail, confuse or polarise the discussion?”

4. Discuss what could be prepared before

Explore preparation and anticipation.

Suggested prompts:

- “What could be prepared before this meeting or training?”
- “Which allies could be contacted in advance?”
- “Which evidence, examples or institutional arguments could help?”
- “What would help the person facing resistance feel more prepared?”

5. Discuss what can be done on the spot

Identify possible immediate responses.

Suggested prompts:

- “What could be said in the moment?”
- “What questions could help clarify the concern?”
- “How can the facilitator or change agent respond without being pulled into a defensive position?”
- “How can the discussion be brought back to institutional responsibility?”

6. Discuss follow-up

Explore what happens after the difficult moment.

Suggested prompts:

- “What follow-up is needed after the meeting or training?”
- “Who should be informed or involved?”
- “How can the impact of the resistance be reduced?”
- “How can this situation be used to prepare better next time?”

7. Identify challenges

Reflect on the difficulties of applying strategies.

Suggested prompts:

- “What makes these strategies difficult to apply?”
- “Which challenges are personal, institutional or political?”
- “What support would be needed to apply them?”

8. Close the round

Before the group moves on, ask if anything important has not yet been said.

Suggested prompt:

“Before we close this round, is there anything important that has not yet been captured?”

Tips for facilitators

- Keep the focus on strategies, not on proving whether resistance exists.
- Encourage participants to build on each other’s ideas.
- Notice who is speaking and who is silent.
- Invite concrete examples while protecting confidentiality.
- Acknowledge emotions without letting the discussion stay only at the level of frustration.
- Help the group move from reaction to preparation, response and follow-up.
- Remind participants that they are not responsible for managing the emotions of resistant stakeholders.

Tips for rapporteurs

- Capture short, clear points.
- Use participants’ words where helpful, without naming people or institutions.
- Mark especially useful strategies clearly.
- Avoid writing too much text on the poster.
- During the plenary report, share only the most important points.

- Avoid repeating what previous rapporteurs have already shared.

3. Strategic approaches to resistance

The training can introduce a few simple principles that participants can use when dealing with resistance:

- recognise and name resistance without escalating too quickly
- ask clarifying questions before responding with arguments
- mirror back what was said and make the underlying assumption visible
- prepare for predictable forms of resistance before important meetings or trainings
- identify allies before engaging with resistant actors
- use evidence, institutional values and concrete examples
- follow up after difficult moments instead of letting resistance define the outcome
- protect the wellbeing of the people doing the change work

Participants can also be introduced to the idea of anticipating, preparing and rehearsing responses. This does not mean that they are responsible for the emotions of resistant stakeholders. It means they can prepare strategically and avoid being isolated when resistance appears.

4. World Café poster and Miro template instructions

Purpose of the template

The World Café poster or Miro template helps participants structure their discussion of resistance scenarios. It supports a progression from understanding the situation to identifying strategies before, during and after resistance appears.

Option A: Printable poster template

Create one poster per scenario. Each poster can include the following sections:

Title of scenario

Write the short title of the scenario.

1. Summary of the scenario

Briefly describe the situation.

2. Variants of this situation

Invite participants to add similar statements, examples or contexts.

3. How did the situation unfold?

Capture how the resistance appeared and how the discussion developed.

4. Immediate effect

Capture the effect on:

- the person or team facing resistance
- the room or group dynamic
- the policy objective
- the wider institutional process

5. What could have been prepared before?

Capture strategies related to preparation, anticipation, evidence, allies, role division and self-preparation.

6. What could be done on the spot?

Capture possible responses, questions, reframing strategies and ways to keep the discussion focused.

7. What could the follow-up look like?

Capture actions after the meeting or training, including documentation, follow-up communication, alliance building, escalation or further consultation.

8. Challenges to applying these strategies

Capture personal, organisational, legal, political or resource-related barriers.

9. Anything else to add

Leave space for points that do not fit elsewhere.

Suggested poster layout

Section	Space for notes
Scenario title	
Summary of the scenario	
Variants of this situation	
How did the situation unfold?	
Immediate effect	
What could have been prepared before?	
What could be done on the spot?	
What could the follow-up look like?	
Challenges to applying these strategies	
Anything else to add	

Option B: Miro template instructions

A reusable Miro board can be created for online or hybrid delivery. Trainers are encouraged to copy the board before each training and adapt the scenarios to their context.

Suggested Miro board structure

Frame 1: Welcome and instructions

Include:

- title of the exercise
- purpose of the World Café
- timing of each round
- reminder on confidentiality and respectful discussion
- instruction to build on previous groups' inputs

Frame 2: Scenario selection

Optional. Include all available scenario titles and ask participants to vote for the scenarios they most want to discuss.

Suggested instruction:

Please vote for the three scenarios that feel most relevant to your context. The scenarios with the most votes will be used for the World Café discussions.

Frames 3–10: Scenario discussion frames

Create one frame per scenario. Each frame should include:

- the scenario title
- the short situation
- typical statements
- the World Café discussion template
- space for sticky notes

Use the same template for each scenario so participants can easily move between frames.

Frame 11: Plenary synthesis

Create a frame where rapporteurs can add key points from each scenario.

Suggested columns:

- Form of resistance
- Main effects
- Before: preparation strategies
- During: on-the-spot strategies
- After: follow-up strategies
- Main challenges

Frame 12: Self-care and team care

Include prompts for the self-care discussion:

- What actions help me sustain myself and prevent burnout?
- What actions help us as a team when working on gender-based violence?
- What support do we need from our institution or allies?

Frame 13: Action planning

Include individual reflection prompts:

- What situation of resistance am I taking away from this training?
- What new argument or framing can I use?
- What new strategy can I try?
- Who can support me?
- What is one realistic next step?

Frame 14: Evaluation and resources

Include the evaluation link and further resources.

Miro facilitation tips

- Use clear frame titles and numbering.
- Lock the background elements so participants do not move the template by accident.
- Use one colour for participant sticky notes and another colour for facilitator comments, if needed.
- Add short instructions inside each frame.
- Create enough space for each round so later groups can build on earlier inputs.
- Keep a clean copy of the board as a template and duplicate it before each training.

Suggested instruction for trainers using the Miro board

Please make a copy of the Miro board before using it. Clean up any previous session content and adapt the scenarios to your audience. The copied board can then be used as a reusable template for the training.

5. Participant reflection and action-planning worksheet

Purpose of the worksheet

This worksheet supports participants to connect the training to their own institutional context. It can be used at the beginning of the training for personal reflection and again at the end for action planning.

Participants can complete it individually. They do not need to share personal or sensitive information. They can write in general terms and choose what they want to discuss with others.

Part 1: Personal reflection before the World Café

1. A situation of resistance I face or may face

Think of one stakeholder, group or institutional situation where resistance appears or may appear in relation to gender equality or gender-based violence policy work.

My situation:

2. What form does the resistance take?

Tick any that apply.

Denial of the problem

Non-prioritisation

Inaction or delay

Refusal to take responsibility

Legal or procedural blocking

Dismissive comments

Questioning evidence or methodology

Fear of false accusations

Backlash or hostility

Other: _____

3. Who is involved?

Key stakeholder(s):

Their role or influence:

Possible allies:

4. What is the main challenge for me?

Write or draw the main challenge you experience when facing this resistance.

5. What happens to me in the moment?

Tick any that apply or add your own.

I freeze

I become angry

I start over-explaining

I feel isolated

I lose confidence

I avoid the conflict

I feel pressure to solve everything immediately

Other: _____

Part 2: Notes during the World Café

Useful strategies I heard

Before the situation:

During the situation:

After the situation:

Useful phrases or questions I could use

Allies, evidence or resources that could help me

Part 3: Self-care and team care

What helps me sustain myself in this work?

What helps us as a team?

What support do I need?

From colleagues or allies:

From my institution:

From external networks or peers:

Part 4: Action planning

Returning to my initial situation

Look again at the situation you wrote down at the beginning.

What do I see differently now?

One argument or framing I want to use

One strategy I want to try before the situation

One strategy I want to try during the situation

One follow-up action I want to take afterwards

One person or group I can reach out to

One realistic next step

In the next two weeks, I will:

Optional: Letter to myself

Write a short letter to yourself about what you want to remember when you next face resistance.

Dear me,

Signed:

Date:

How to cite this document?

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