

Sexual Harassment

at workplace

UNDERSTAND PREVENT RESPOND



An overview of WISE work
towards Awareness & Implementation of
Anti-Harassment Laws & Safeguarding in Pakistan



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Foreword

The term sexual harassment may be new to many in Pakistan but unwanted and unwelcome acts of a sexual nature, also known as “eve-teasing”, are not a new phenomenon here as in other parts of the world. It is a reality for many women in Pakistan. While the majority of cases of sexual harassment in the workplace are perpetuated by men against women, no woman or man should have to tolerate such conduct as it violates the respect and dignity of the victim, and has negative effects on individuals and society.

Sexual harassment can be affected against both; women and men. However, the majority of cases of sexual harassment in the workplace are perpetuated by men against women as women often do not have equal status as men, lack power, and are in more vulnerable and insecure positions. While it is difficult to quantify the prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace due to the varying definitions and perceptions of sexual harassment and reluctance of the harassed to report their experiences. which discourages women to join labor market.

The booklet in hand is an overview of our efforts towards harassment-free workplaces through implementation of Anti-Harassment laws in Pakistan and awareness on safeguarding.

Bushra Khaliq
Executive Director
February, 2023

■ Why addressing sexual harassment at workplace?

Sexual harassment is a serious form of sex discrimination and it should not be tolerated as it undermines equality at work by calling into question the integrity, dignity and well-being of workers. All workers, both women and men, have the right to a workplace that is protected, secure, free from discrimination and violence, and conducive to fulfilling one's roles and responsibilities as it is an arena where they spend a major percentage of their day time.

When sexual harassment occurs, there is a long lasting negative and traumatic impact on individuals including psychological and physical suffering and professional losses. It has a ripple and multiplier effect on the rest of the workers in the organization, impacting the workplace and bringing negative consequences such as compromised team work, economic loss, impaired productivity, and hindered development. Many enterprises and organizations may consider that there is no need to set up mechanisms to deal with cases of sexual harassment, as no employees have reported such cases. However, lack of reported cases of sexual harassment in no way implies that there have been no such incidents.

Numerous cases of violence against women are reported in the media on a daily basis. Workplaces in Pakistan are no exception. If we say that organizations are the microcosms of society and reflect what actually happens in a society, it is reasonable to consider that the incidences of sexual harassment and violence against women in society, may also be taking place within organizations.

In the absence of a mechanism to redress cases of sexual harassment, individuals suffering from sexual harassment are at a loss as to with whom they should speak. Not having a mechanism at work place, points to the fact that the organization does not recognize, or give priority to these issues, which leads to implicitly overlook such discrimination and violence. It is now coming to the fore, that in the absence of formal structures, women often hold back from sharing incidents about sexual harassment due to various reasons.

Thus addressing workplace sexual harassment is key to promote gender inclusivity and equality and encourage women to join labor market.





■ Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2010

Sexual harassment, abuse and discrimination in Pakistan's workplaces is pervasive, mostly unreported and ignored. It has been difficult for women in Pakistan to join labor market and fully contribute to country's development on account of non-conducive work environment. Regardless of the economic and social compulsions to earn income, women have to face multiple hurdles while moving outside their homes. They feel insecure on streets, at public places, in transport and at the workplaces. Staring, passing remarks, abuse of authority for sexual favors, asking out and flirting etc. by male colleagues at workplace is not an alien thing, which discourages women to join labor market.

Recognizing this important need to suppress such conduct, the government of Pakistan passed two laws in the beginning of 2010 to address sexual harassment; one of them is a special law, specifically for the formal work sector, "The Protection of Women from Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act, 2010".

The Act provides protection against sexual harassment of women at work and for the prevention and redressal of complaints of sexual harassment at workplace.

This Act requires all public and private organizations to adopt an internal Code of Conduct and a complain/appeals mechanism aimed at establishing a safe working environment, free of intimidation and abuse, for all working women. The law makes it mandatory for all organizations in the country to institutionalize the mechanism provided in the law, to help create zero tolerance for sexual harassment in the workplaces.





■ **WISE contribution towards awareness & compliance of Anti-Harassment laws**

WISE has been in the forefront for the implementation of anti-sexual harassment laws for the last 10 years. It provides full support to those organizations who ask for guidance, be it answering their questions on how to go about it, to providing orientation or conceptual clarity on the issue, not only comply in letter, but in spirit as well, so that their employees can actually benefit from it.

WISE has no role in handling cases of sexual harassment, which are to be reported either to Standing Inquiry Committees within organizations or to the Ombudsperson, but when someone approaches us with a case, we always answer their questions, guide them on their next steps and support them in the process. Making people aware on the issue of sexual harassment and the law and encouraging them to speak out when harassed is another important work, WISE undertakes.

When implementing laws that address social issues, conceptual clarity of the issue is as important as understanding of the law. Every training we conduct, irrespective of its duration, has modules on making personal connections with the issue of sexual harassment and breaking prevailing myths in the Pakistani society, along with the details of the law.



During the last 10 years WISE has provided awareness and trainings to the managements of around 630 organizations/institutions/bodies; including banks, hospitals, universities, factories and facilitated them on how to establish mechanism for compliance with the law at work places. Around 12,000 people; including students, development professionals, private sector managers, govt. officials, police officers, women cricketers, lawyers, nurses, working women and Standing Inquiry Committee members benefited from these awareness sessions and trainings. Also provided legal help & counselling to 23 complainants of sexual harassment so far.



These trainings are mostly conducted by Ms. Bushra Khaliq- Executive Director WISE. She is a gender expert with a special focus on “Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010” and actively engaged in the implementation of this law. She is member Sexual Harassment Provincial

Implementation Watch Committee in Punjab. She led the Harassment Awareness Volunteer Program (HAVP) from 2014-17 for the implementation of the law in 18 districts of Punjab in collaboration with Govt. of Punjab, Women Development Department (WDD) and the Office of the Ombudsperson Punjab.



■ Harassment Awareness Volunteer Program (HAVP) 2014-2017

The Harassment Awareness Volunteer Program (HAVP) was envisaged in 2014 by the Ombudsperson, Punjab, aiming at awareness raising among masses especially women at workplaces in public and private sectors about the legal protection mechanism available for the redressal of grievances. 'Women in Struggle for Empowerment' (WISE) was selected to deliver this program in 36 districts of the province. The program continued till 2017 and a total 18 districts were covered with various activities; seminars, training of volunteers, outreach to working women at their workplaces through volunteers who acted as a resource person in the district, synchronizing the activity with a comprehensive print and electronic media/publicity campaign. The main objective of HAVP was to make working women and men aware about the law and facilitate institutions, including govt. as well as private entities to implement the law in their institutions.

Seminars: Under this program, WISE run the awareness campaign in 18 districts of Punjab; Layya, Muzaffar Garh, Okara, Sahiwal, Multan, Vehari, Rajan Pur, Dera Ghazi Khan, Lahore, Kasur, Nankana Sahib, Sheikhpura, Mandi Bahauddin, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar and Rahim Yar Khan. Over 5000 persons (male & female) attended these public awareness seminars.

Besides HAVP program, WISE has provided awareness on its own to more than 7000 people, so far through seminars and training to more than 40 organizations and still counting.



Trainings: under training component 321 volunteers (160 females, 161 male) were trained on the issue of sexual harassment at work place, the law and the steps for the compliance at workplace. These volunteers provided further orientation to the 489 work establishments including 95 educational institutions, 103 hospitals, 135 banks and 156 factories/mills and industrial units in said districts of Punjab.

Besides HAVP program, WISE has provided training to about 450 students and faculty members of different universities on the issue and the mandatory steps for the institutions for the compliance of the law.

Orientation sessions: Beyond HAVP program, WISE has been providing orientation to the managements of various institutions to establish mechanism for total compliance of the law at the work place. In this regard, it extended services to Pakistan Cricket Board to provide training to their staff, coaches, and young women cricketers to make them aware of the law and code of conduct. Similarly, FC College University, Lahore and Mayfair Group of

Industries hired WISE training services for its inquiry committee members, academic and administrative staff.

Counseling: Some of the female victims of harassment who approached us were also provided counselling and legal support. Besides; developed IEC material for awareness on the issue. For the large-scale awareness social, WISE has been using electronic and print media widely promote awareness on the issue.



■ Essential Life Skills & Safeguarding

Under Women's Voice and Leadership (WVL) Pakistan, Program, in collaboration with Oxfam, WISE undertook capacity building training workshops of young girls on “Essential Life Skills and Safeguarding”. A training module was developed for this purpose. Various training workshops were organized involving 136 participants including 72 female teachers and 64 young girls from the districts of Lahore, Sheikhpura and Nankana Sahib.

Based on the learning of Training and Material provided to them, training participants conducted Replica Sessions with students/girls in their surroundings to share the learnings. As a result, the trainees conducted 23 replica sessions with students and 25 session with young girls, in which they shared learnings of the said trainings with 474 students and 435 young girls.





“The training session, on “life skills and safeguarding”, organized by WISE, in collaboration with Oxfam Pakistan, was highly informative and an eye opener for me”, told Aysha Kiran who replicated the knowledge with 25 young students and kids of her area so, that they could protect themselves from any abuse.

“Although I faced lot of queries from students who viewed sexual harassment not an issue and against the moral values to discuss such things openly. But at the end majority of the students and participants felt their perception changed. others appreciated and requested me to conduct more sessions like this”, told Aynish, one of the trainees, who held a replica session.



“The training on Safeguarding was so useful that I immediately decided to plan a similar session for young students in my locality. But Some of the parents expressed their reservations regarding talk on sensitive issue like child abuse to their children. However, I convinced them about the seriousness of the issue and managed to get their permission and then finally organized a session with 12 students. I taught them about the basic life skills and how they can protect their selves, why do they need protection and from whom do they need to be protected”. Explained Maham, who replicated the learning after attending training workshop on Safeguarding.



Facilitating Socialization & Implementation of Safeguarding Policies

Under this initiative WISE and Mehergarh jointly facilitated twenty-three (23) partner organizations of Oxfam GB in Pakistan, and provided training to the senior management, staff members and inquiry committee members for the better understanding of the law and its compliance within their organizations, revise or formulate safeguarding policies and ensure that they are practiced as well.

Training workshops were conducted with the senior management and staff members of these partner organizations for socializing Oxfam Safeguarding Policy, Conceptual Clarity of Sexual Harassment & Requirements of Compliance with anti-sexual harassment law. The comprehensive training process was followed by assessment of Partner Organizations' Safeguarding Policies.

■ Around 1100 staff members of partner organizations get socialized with Oxfam Safeguarding Policy and Practice, anti-sexual harassment legislation and mechanisms of implementation within organizations.

■ Policy documents of 23 Partner Organizations' were reviewed, revised and made in line with Oxfam's Safeguard Policy.

■ Standing Inquiry Committees were formed in all the 23 partner organizations

■ About 90 members of Standing Inquiry Committees and Investigators were trained to handle and investigate cases of sexual harassment.

Media Coverage

Curbing harassment

'Reactivate harassment monitoring committee'

Speakers say the committee had gone dormant after just two meetings

A OUR CORRESPONDENT
LAHORE

The provincial government should reactivate the Punjab Implementation Watch Committee constituted to facilitate and monitor the implementation of workplace harassment legislation, speakers at a meeting said on Friday.

They said the committee had been constituted following the announcement of the Women Empowerment Package by Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif in 2012. The speakers said the committee had gone dormant after just two meetings. They said similar committees in Sindh and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) had been doing a much better job. They said that the Punjab Commission on Status

of Women and the Women Development Department could play a pivotal role in this regard.

Mehergarh executive director Maliha Hussain urged PSCW Chairperson Fauzia Vigar to revitalise the committee. She said it was encouraging to see senior public functionaries, educationists and civil society activists congregate to exchange experiences regarding the implementation of the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010.

She said it was heartening to note that prominent organisations and institutions including Habib Bank Limited, Meezan Bank, Coca-Cola, the Punjab University, the Lahore University of Management

efforts to implement the legislation seriously.

Vigar of the PSCW spoke about the commission's performance. She also shed light on how the PSCW's official helpline was helping women overcome the challenges confronting them. Vigar said women who had been sexually abused also contacted the commission but were referred to the pertinent ombudsperson.

Women in Struggle for Empowerment (WISE) executive director Bushra Khaliq said over 300 organisations had strived to realise the objectives of the law even before its passage.

Shedding light on efforts on part of the Wise to facilitate the implementation of the legislation at the district-

level, she said the organisation had trained nearly 155 volunteers across eight districts in the Punjab during a campaign against sexual harassment.

Provincial Ombudsperson for the Punjab Farkhanda Waseem Afzal revealed that the number of cases received at her office had been increasing over the years. She said this was a positive development. She also spoke about the legislation and the legal framework of its implementation.

Coca-Cola officials said the corporation had established eight standing inquiry committees across seven of its plants and its head office to guarantee that no employee was harassed. They said their workers' union had also been

NEARLY

155

Volunteers were trained by WISE under a campaign against sexual harassment

Sciences (LUMS), the Lahore College for Women University (LCWU), the Pakistan Cricket Board, The Lahore Electric Supply Corporation (LESCO), the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and Lok Sujag were taking great interest in making workplaces more women-friendly. Hussain said progressive managers cared about employees' welfare and made

" It is encouraging to see debate on implementation of the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010

Mehargarh executive director
Maliha Hussain

working in tandem with the management on cases. The officials said this was praiseworthy.

They said the corporation had also been felicitated on the National Working Women's Day by Mehergarh on December 22.

The meeting was organised by Mehergarh, the Wise and the War Against Rape (WAR).



Women's right to a harassment-free workplace stressed

LAHORE: No country can progress without empowering its women and giving them due rights and space to play their crucial role, say speakers at a seminar here on Thursday.

The seminar was jointly organised by Women in Struggle for Empowerment (WISE) and Punjab Ombudsperson under the Harassment Awareness Volunteer Programme (HAVP) at Punjabi Complex, Qadhafi Stadium.

A large number of representatives of local administration, various government departments, civil society organisations attended the seminar.

The speakers said it had been difficult for women in Pakistan to unlock their potential and fully contribute to the country's development due to multiple reasons, including non-conducive work environment for them. But the law against sexual harassment passed in 2010 provide legal protection to working women against sexual harassment at workplace.

Now the women had the right to approach mandatory inquiry committees in their respective organisations or directly the Women Ombudsperson in case of violation of their right to a harassment-free work place.

Population Welfare Minister

Zakia Shahnawaz said regardless of the economic and social compulsions to earn income, women faced many hurdles while moving outside their homes. They faced harassment and felt insecure on the streets, at public places, in the buses and at workplaces, she added.

She said practices like staring, passing remarks, abuse of authority for sexual favours were common in our society, which discouraged women to join the labour market. The Punjab government was committed to remove all barriers to women development, she added.

Women Development Minister Hameeda Waheed-ud-Din lauded various efforts of the Punjab government to empower women and make them feel secure at workplace.

Ms Bushra Tariq of WISE elaborated on the Harassment Awareness Volunteer Programme (HAVP).

Punjab Ombudsperson Parkhanda Wasim Afzal said her office launched HAVP in November 2014 in 36 districts of Punjab with the aim to educate masses, especially women, on protection against sexual harassment at workplace. PCSW chairperson Ms Fauzia Viqar, Mehargarh Director Ms Maliha Hussain, and Aurat Foundation Resident Director Ms Mumtaz Mughal also spoke. — Staff Reporter

WISE organises an orientation session with male journalists

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: Women in Struggle for Empowerment (WISE) in collaboration with Oxfam in Pakistan and Global Affairs Canada (GAC) organized an orientation session with male journalists on Safeguarding and Media Ethics' while Reporting Crime against Women.

On the occasion, male journalists described their personal experiences while covering Crime against women.

They stressed that journalists must be unbiased during coverage as journalists are ears, eyes and tongue of the society. They create impact when they write for newspapers or air stories for electronic media.

On the occasion, Shahid Iqbal Program Manager WISE briefed about the law and shared that how journalists could be protected from harassment and exploitations at their media houses too. He shared that journalists covering the story related to

crime, the journalist should not focus on an individual rather they must focus on crime. He also appreciated contribution of journalists and said that it is not easy for journalist to work freely in Pakistan. He added that journalists are increasingly becoming targets of attacks, harassment, and intimidation across the world. He said that the Journalists who had showed independence and courage in the past had often been threatened, and we have seen just this year how media houses are forced into making the difficult choice of informing the public and keeping their staffers safe physically as well as financially. A journalist Sher Ali shared that journalists are intimidated from aggrieved parties. Journalists should be very careful in vocabulary while drafting or preparing news, he shared with journalist. Identification of women must be protected while covering rape cases, he said in a session on "Ethical Jour-

nalism". On the eve, other journalist suggested that a journalist cannot trust on single source while drafting story. He must quote and talk to many sources. They said that journalist should be gender sensitised while covering the issues of vulnerable groups including female, transgenders and minority community. The word of victim be repalced by survivor during reporting, said the journalists in conversation during the event. On the occasion, male journalists agreed that there must be establishment of sexual harassment standing committees in every media house, union of offices and press clubs under the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace 2010 Act for the protection of their colleagues / female journalists. They further demanded that media houses, press clubs, union of journalists should form inquiry committee and display of

Special desk demanded to deal with online harassment

Our correspondent

LAHORE: Women in Struggle for Empowerment (WISE) and Punjab Union of Journalists have jointly organised a one-day training workshop for female journalists on anti-harassment law and harassment reporting.

In the workshop titled 'Let's make the workplace more dignified' held Saturday here at a local hotel, women journalists talked about their personal experiences and shared that they face sexual harassment at workplace.

The participants said women journalists expose social evils like honour killings, child marriages and marriages in which poor are forced by their circumstances to give the hand of their daughters to older men, and innumerable other bad practices.

They believe the environment for female journalists would improve with increase in number of women in the field and call for induction of 3:3pc women in all media groups.

Another demand they made was establishment of a special desk in the Federal Investigation

Agency Cyber Crime Cell to deal with online harassment of women journalists.

On the occasion, Bushra Khaliq, Executive Director WISE, demanded establishment of committees in every media house, union offices and press clubs under the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010.

Bushra Khaliq said female journalists who had displayed independence and courage in the past had often been threatened, and 'we have seen just this year how media houses are forced into making the difficult choice of informing the public and keeping their staffers safe physically as well as financially'.

She demanded that media houses, press clubs and union of journalists should form inquiry committees and display code of conduct within office premises.

WISE programme manager Shahid Iqbal shared how female journalists could be protected from harassment and exploitations.

Certificates distributed to the participants.

Women urged to speak out against rights violation

By Our Correspondent

LAHORE

MAJORITY of working women are involved in labour intensive jobs in the informal sector at home and in the agriculture sector.

However, even today their path is considered uphill and their battle to pave their own way are challenging. Many earn half the wages as compared to men for the same work and face more problems in terms of gender discrimination, intimidation and most of all sexual harassment.

These views were expressed by speakers at a seminar jointly organised by an NGO and Office of Ombudsperson, Punjab in connection with commemoration of National Working Women Day, here Tuesday, at auditorium of Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI). Besides large number of working women, several women representatives of civil society organisations, labour unions and government departments, including police department, traffic police, Rescue 1122 and media joined the occasion.

Speaking on this occasion, Women Ombudsperson, Farichanda Waseem Afzal said it was misleading to call women housewives, in fact they were the house makers and without their contribution real development was not possible. Talking about the law on sexual harassment at workplace, she said that her office was working to ensure harassment-free work environment for women. She urged the working women to speak against the violation of their rights and if they face sexual harassment at workplace, feel free to contact her office.

Bashra Khalid, Executive Director of an NGO, said that working women were an asset of Pakistan, whether they were working in the formal or infor-

mal sector. The state must acknowledge their contribution and resolve the issues they face in their relevant sectors. There are several pro-women laws and policies but there is rare evidence of positive actions on the part of the government to implement these policies. The budget priorities for the women empowerment are real indicator of government sincerity towards women. The government should increase budgetary allocations and must stop cuts on this budget, she added.

Mumtaz Mughal highlighted the issue of limited role of women in decision-making fora and process, which must be increased. The working women still face huge problem during mobility to their workplaces, she pointed out. She said that 25 universities had given grants and important thing about this grant was that universities had been asked to place in measures and mechanisms ensuring students and women protection from sexual harassment.

Sadia Sohail, PTI MPA said, women are the best economic managers, good PIOs and good politicians. Their role in reducing corruption is crucial. Women must encourage women to come forward and claim their due space in various sectors.

Salman Abid, Regional head SPO said, development without women participation is impossible. Many women want to come out of the home and work, but the real problem is provision of conducive and harassment-free work environment to women. State must provide social protection to working classes and particularly the women.

Syeda Ghulam Fatima highlighted the plight of the working classes women, particularly those working at kilns and agriculture sector. She stressed the need to do more struggle for the reclamation of rights of these women.



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