
Sexual Harassment Elimination Policy

(Version 1, Effective from January 01, 2022)



RISDA-Bangladesh

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1. Policy Statement

RISDA-Bangladesh (“the Organization”) has zero-tolerance for sexual abuse and harassment of all stakeholders. The Organization also recognizes that sexual harassment elimination is everyone’s responsibility and that it has an obligation to put in place reasonable measures to ensure, as far as possible, the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable people with whom we work and those in the communities in which we live.

Sexual harassment is a punishable offense in every sense. Whether it happens in the workplace or elsewhere, it violates human rights. To ensure an employee’s right to a safe workspace, we need to prevent such incidents otherwise it will destroy the work environment and hinders. The Organization is committed to ensuring a safe workplace for its employees, program participants, and partners where no one is affected by anyone’s actions related to sexual exploitation and abuse.

All employees and associate personnel of the Organization are expected to uphold the highest standards of personal and professional conduct at all times and to provide humanitarian assistance and services in a manner that respects and fosters the rights of beneficiaries and other ‘at risk’ members of local communities.

The policy document presents the standard policies and procedures for sexual harassment elimination in the Organization. This is a guiding instruction for all projects/programs, staff, and members of EC which serves the interest of all its stakeholders. Each section of this policy defines the policies and procedures for sexual harassment issues; however, not all events can be incorporated. As such, under special cases management shall try to remain true to the intent of welfare of the stakeholders.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The primary goal of the policy is to protect the well-being of staff and program participants that protect them from sexual abuse and harassment. The specific purpose of the policy is:

- ❑ To ensure a friendly environment where male and female persons, directly and indirectly, are involved with the Organization are protected from any form of sexual harassment.
- ❑ To sensitize all level staff, board members, volunteers, interns, consultants, visitors ,and other individuals/organizations involved with the Organization to the sexual harassment issues
- ❑ To reflect Sexual Harassment Elimination policy to all the policies, strategies, and planning of the organization as well as implemented and monitored.

3. Scope of the Policy

This policy is mandatory for all employees of the Organization. For the purposes of this policy, ‘employee’ is defined as anyone who works for or on behalf of the Organization, either in a paid or unpaid capacity. This, therefore, includes directly employed staff, EC members, suppliers, employees and volunteers, partner agency workers, consultants, volunteers, interns, and all visitors to the programs and offices of the Organization.

4. Conducts Considered as Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that makes a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated. It includes situations where a person is asked to engage in sexual activity as a condition of that person's employment, as well as situations that create an environment that is hostile, intimidating or humiliating for the recipient. Sexual harassment can involve one or more incidents and actions constituting harassment may be physical, verbal and non-verbal. Examples of conduct or behavior which constitute sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

Physical conduct

- Unwelcome physical contact including patting, pinching, stroking, kissing, hugging, fondling, or inappropriate touching
- Physical violence, including sexual assault
- Physical contact, e.g. touching, pinching
- The use of job-related threats or rewards to solicit sexual favors

Verbal conduct

- Comments on a worker's appearance, age, private life, etc.
- Sexual comments, stories and jokes
- Sexual advances
- Repeated and unwanted social invitations for dates or physical intimacy
- Insults based on the sex of the worker
- Condescending or paternalistic remarks
- Sending sexually explicit messages (by phone or by email)

Non-verbal conduct

- Display of sexually explicit or suggestive material
- Sexually-suggestive gestures
- Whistling
- Leering

5. Prevention interventions

5.1. Training on Sexual Harassment Elimination Policy and Procedure

Sexual Harassment Elimination Committee (SHEC) will assess the training need of all members of the General Committee, Executive Committee and Staff Members and arrange orientation/training courses on Sexual Harassment Elimination Policy and Procedure among all level of organizational people of the organization. Refresher training will be organized for all employees after certain intervals.

5.2. Signing Code of Conduct

All levels of Staff of the Organization, GC members, EC members, consultants, volunteers, interns, service providers must sign the code of conduct as soon as the agreement is done with them.

5.3. Observation of National and International Days

Different national and international relevant days will be observed at the local and national level especially International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, International Women Day and International Children Day.

5.4. Campaign from Digital Platform

Sexual Harassment Elimination Committee (SHEC) will create campaigns to support and create awareness on sexual harassment elimination among staff and stakeholders on regular basis with maximum support from digital platforms

5.5. Circulation of the Policy

Sexual Harassment Elimination Committee (SHEC) will circulate/display a short version of sexual harassment policy at all locations within the establishment of the Organization

6. Response to Sexual Harassment Protection

6.1. Reporting the incidence

Anyone who is subject to sexual harassment should, if possible, inform the alleged harasser that the conduct is unwanted and unwelcome. The Organization recognizes that sexual harassment may occur in unequal relationships (i.e. between a supervisor and his/her employee) and that it may not be possible for the victim to inform the alleged harasser. If a victim cannot directly approach an alleged harasser, he/she can approach the chief of Sexual Harassment Elimination Committee (SHEC) of the Organization.

6.2. Investigation

Sexual Harassment Elimination Committee (SHEC) will form an investigation committee to investigate the incidence which was reported by any means. If possible, there is a female member in the committee. For serious issues, investigation will be carried out within six hours and for less serious issues, it will be done within three days of the incidence. The team will submit a report with proper evidence not more than three days after the investigation.

6.3. Action following Investigation:

The Sexual Harassment Elimination Committee (SHEC) will review the report and recommend taking necessary action for the protection and elimination of sexual harassment. For any disciplinary measure, prior approval of the Executive Director will be a must.

7. Implementation of Policy

7.1. The Sexual Harassment Elimination Committee (SHEC)

There will be a Sexual Harassment Elimination Committee (SHEC) comprising of 5 (five) members where at least 2 (two) members will be female. The committee will implement and monitor the policy. The chief of the committee will be the focal person of the organization in this regard.

7.2. Budget Allocation

As per the recommendation of the Sexual Harassment Elimination Committee (SHEC), the management of the organization will make necessary budgetary provisions for undertaking the promotion of protection activities of the Sexual Harassment Policy.

7.3. Monitoring & Evaluation

The Sexual Harassment Elimination Committee (SHEC) will review the progress of sexual harassment situation at the organizational level at quarterly meetings and it will be documented in black and white. The management will publish a circular with the decisions of the meeting to all level of the offices.

Regular monitoring will be arranged with the help of proper specific guidelines and indicators to assess the present sexual harassment issues. In that assessment a format will be developed involving some common issues and indicators. On the basis of the assessment report, SHEC will review and make recommendations. After the recommendation of the committee, the management will take proper initiative and necessary action as per policy. An evaluation will be arranged in each three years by a specialist and the recommendation will be included in the next review.

7.4. Confidentiality

All documents and information of sexual harassment issues will be kept in absolute confidentiality. No person or organization shall communicate any information concerning the alleged event except as necessary to ensure proper and neutral investigation. Limited additional disclosure can be made as an example to protect other vulnerable people from harm in the near future. Any breach of confidentiality shall be cause for utmost punishment as per the policy of the Organization.