

# Sexual Harassment Policy



*An Initiative to establish Human Rights through Good Governance*

## Agrogoti Sangstha

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## **Introduction:**

Agrogoti Sangshta is a regional organization working in the southwest part of Bangladesh. Since 1996 Agrogoti Sangshta has been working in development issues like human rights, child protection, protecting freedom, good governance and climate change adaptation. The organization is committed to provide an environment where all employees are free from any types of discrimination and harassment.

## **The Policy Statement:**

Agrogoti Sangshta is committed to providing a safe environment for all its employees free from discrimination on any ground and from harassment at work including sexual harassment. Agrogoti Sangshta will operate a zero tolerance policy for any form of sexual harassment in the workplace, treat all incidents seriously and promptly investigate all allegations of sexual harassment. Any person found to have sexually harassed another will face disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from employment.

All complaints of sexual harassment will be taken seriously and treated with respect and in confidence. No one will be victimized for making such a complaint.

## **Definition of sexual harassment:**

Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which 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 which create an environment which 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 favours

### **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

Anyone can be a victim of sexual harassment, regardless of their sex and of the sex of the harasser. Agrogoti Sangstha recognizes that sexual harassment may also occur between people of the same sex. What matters is that the sexual conduct is unwanted and unwelcome by the person against whom the conduct is directed.

Agrogoti Sangstha recognizes that sexual harassment is a manifestation of power relationships and often occurs within unequal relationships in the workplace, for example between manager or supervisor and employee.

Anyone, including employees of Agrogoti Sangstha, beneficiaries, stakeholder, casual workers, vendor or visitors who sexually harasses another will be reprimanded in accordance with this internal policy.

All sexual harassment is prohibited whether it takes place within Agrogoti Sangstha premises or outside, including at social events, business trips, training sessions or conferences sponsored by Agrogoti Sangstha or other parties.

### **Complaints procedures**

Anyone who is subject to sexual harassment should, if possible, inform the alleged harasser that the conduct is unwanted and unwelcome. Agrogoti Sangstha 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 one of the designated staff members responsible for receiving complaints of sexual harassment. This person must be the member of Gender Committee.

#### **When a designated person receives a complaint of sexual harassment, he/she will:**

- Immediately record the dates, times and facts of the incident(s)
- Ascertain the views of the victim as to what outcome he/she wants
- Ensure that the victim understands the company's procedures for dealing with the complaint.
- Discuss and agree the next steps: either informal or formal complaint, on the understanding that choosing to resolve the matter informally does not preclude the victim from pursuing a formal complaint if he/she is not satisfied with the outcome.
- Keep a confidential record of all discussions
- Respect the choice of the victim.
- Ensure that the victim knows that they can lodge the complaint outside of the organization through the relevant country/legal framework.

If anyone makes a false complaint intentionally against another person, then the organization will take action against complainer according to the Whistleblowing policy of the organization.

Throughout the complaints procedure, a victim is entitled to be helped by a counselor within the organization. Agrogoti Sangstha will nominate a number of counselors and provide them with special training to enable them to assist victims of sexual harassment. Agrogoti Sangstha recognizes that because sexual harassment often occurs in unequal relationships within the workplace, victims often feel that they cannot come forward. Agrogoti Sangstha understands the need to support victims in making complaints.

## **Informal complaints mechanism:**

If the victim wishes to deal with the matter informally, the designated person will:

- Give an opportunity to the alleged harasser to respond to the complaint.
- Ensure that the alleged harasser understands the complaints mechanism.
- Facilitate discussion between both parties to achieve an informal resolution which is acceptable to the complainant, or refer the matter to a designated mediator within the organization to resolve the matter.
- Ensure that a confidential record is kept of what happens
- Follow up after the outcome of the complaints mechanism to ensure that the behavior has stopped.
- Ensure that the above is done speedily and within 14 working days of the complaint being made.

## **Formal complaints mechanism:**

If the victim wants to make a formal complaint or if the informal complaint mechanism has not led to a satisfactory outcome for the victim, the formal complaint mechanism should be used to resolve the matter.

The designated person who initially received the complaint will refer the matter to the Gender Committee to instigate a formal investigation. The Gender Committee may deal with the matter to an internal or external investigator or refer it to a committee of three others in accordance with this policy.

## **The Committee carrying out the investigation will:**

- Interview the victim and the alleged harasser separately.
- Interview other relevant third parties separately
- Decide whether or not the incident(s) of sexual harassment took place.
- Prepare a report detailing the investigations, findings and any recommendations.
- If the harassment took place, decide what the appropriate remedy for the victim is, in consultation with the victim (i.e.- an apology, a change to working arrangements, a promotion if the victim was demoted as a result of the harassment, training for the harasser, discipline, suspension, dismissal)
- Follow up to ensure that the recommendations are implemented, that the behavior has stopped and that the victim is satisfied with the outcome
- If it cannot determine that the harassment took place, he/she may still make recommendations to ensure proper functioning of the workplace
- Keep a record of all actions taken
- Ensure that the all records concerning the matter are kept confidential.
- Ensure that the process is done as quickly as possible and in any event within 14 working days of the complaint being made.

## **Outside complaints mechanisms:**

A person who has been subject to sexual harassment can also make a complaint outside of the organization. They can do so under the law of Bangladesh govt.

### Sanctions and disciplinary measures:

Anyone who has been found to have sexually harassed another person under the terms of this policy is liable to any of the following sanctions:

- verbal or written warning
- adverse performance evaluation
- reduction in wages
- transfer
- demotion
- suspension
- dismissal

The nature of the sanctions will depend on the gravity and extent of the harassment. Suitable deterrent sanctions will be applied to ensure that incidents of sexual harassment are not treated as trivial. Certain serious cases, including physical violence, will result in the immediate dismissal of the harasser.

### Implementation of this policy:

Agrogoti Sangstha will ensure that this policy is widely disseminated to all relevant persons. It will be included in the staff handbook. All new employees must be trained on the content of this policy as part of their induction into the organization.

Every year, Agrogoti Sangstha will require all employees to attend a refresher training course on the content of this policy.

It is the responsibility of every manager to ensure that all his/her employees are aware of the policy.

### Monitoring and evaluation:

Agrogoti Sangstha recognises the importance of monitoring this sexual harassment policy and will ensure that it anonymously collects statistics and data as to how it is used and whether or not it is effective.

Gender Committee is responsible for dealing with sexual harassment cases will report on compliance with this policy, including the number of incidents, how they were dealt with, and any recommendations made. This will be done on a yearly basis. As a result of this report, the organization will evaluate the effectiveness of this policy and make any changes needed.

### Sample Reporting Format:

SL	Types of Cases	Types of Complaint	Date of Complaint	Investigation procedure	Recommendation	Action	Remarks