

Harassment Policy

SSDO's Equal Employment Opportunity policy includes its commitment to prohibit harassment against employees because of sex, gender, race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability or any other class protected by law. This prohibition covers illegal harassment by anyone in the workplace including supervisors, co-workers and even non employees.

Our employees have the right to be free from inappropriate comments, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, or based on a person's protected class, when submission to or rejection of this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance, or when such conduct creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. We expect our employees to treat each other with respect and courtesy. SSDO will not tolerate discrimination or harassment.

The following procedure applies to any harassment complaint.

Education and Training

SSDO believes that offering employees opportunities to increase their awareness of domestic violence helps to prevent and reduce the impact of harassment in the lives of our staff. SSDO provides workplace educational and informational resources to employees whenever feasible and, any Sexual Harassment will be dealt with in accordance with Anti Sexual Harassment Act 2010.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

1. POLICY

Adherence to SSDO Gender Equity policy is incumbent on all employees.

Sexual harassment is an unacceptable conduct in the work place and will not be tolerated. This applies to all employees at all levels and all nationalities. Those who violate this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, which can include dismissal from SSDO employment.

Sexual harassment is not only against SSDO policy but also against the law. It constitutes a prohibited personnel practice, which serves to undermine the integrity of employee relations, debilitates and damages morale, and interferes with productivity of the organisation.

2. DEFINITION

Sexual harassment is the attempt to make advances, requests and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature aimed at securing sexual favours against the will of the opposite or similar sex at the work place. The following facts, conditions and circumstances constitute, but are not limited to sexual harassment.

- o Conduct made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of any individual's employment, and/or any other favour to existing employee associated with SSDO official business.
- o Conduct made implicitly or explicitly as a basis of employment decisions affecting such individual.
- o An SSDO employee found guilty of sexual harassment of a community member where he/she is engaged for the execution of official duties of SSDO.

3. REPORTING OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR will appoint a focal person each year, preferably a female staff member, for reporting of sexual harassment. The focal person after receiving a complaint must inform the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR immediately. Strict confidentiality should be ensured in dealing with and handling of matters pertaining to sexual harassment.

4. PROCEDURE

The following procedures will be adopted when conducting an enquiry into the sexual harassment cases.

4.1 INFORMAL WAY OF DEALING WITH SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT THE WORKPLACE

- a) An informal approach to resolve a complaint of sexual harassment can be through mediation between the parties involved and by providing advice and counselling on a strictly confidential basis.
- b) A staff member can report an incident of sexual harassment informally to the focal person, in which case the focal person can address the issue at his/her discretion in the spirit of this Policy Manual. The request may be made orally or in writing.
- c) If the incident or the case reported does constitute sexual harassment of a higher degree and the officer reviewing the case feels that it needs to be pursued formally for a disciplinary action, with the agreement of the complainant, the case can be taken up formally.

4.2 FORMAL APPROACH

A complainant does not necessarily have to take a complaint of sexual harassment through the informal channel. S/he can launch a formal complaint at any time.

4.3 LAUNCHING THE COMPLAINT

The Complainant can launch a formal complaint to the ED. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR will constitute a three member enquiry committee, where one member must be a female.

4.4 PROCEDURE OF INVESTIGATION

In case a complaint is launched against a member of the senior management, no member of the Enquiry Committee should be in a position where they are directly or indirectly reporting to the accused. Assistance in the inquiry procedure could also be sought from the Board.

4.5 CONDUCIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR INQUIRY

- a) The management should do its best to temporarily make adjustments so that the accused and the complainant do not have to interact intensely for official purposes during the investigation period. This would include temporarily changing the office, in case both sit in one office, or taking away any extra charge (over and above his/her contract), which may give one party excessive powers over the other's job conditions. The management can also decide to send the accused on leave, or suspend the accused in accordance with the applicable laws/procedures for dealing with the cases of misconduct, if required.
- b) Retaliation from either party should be strictly monitored. During the process of the investigation work, evaluations, daily duties, reporting structure and any parallel inquiries initiated should be strictly monitored to avoid any retaliation from either side. In case the senior management has been accused of being a party, it is essential that outside monitoring and control be exercised.

4.6 EVIDENCE

- a) It is acknowledged that sexual harassment usually occurs between colleagues when they are alone; therefore usually it is difficult to produce evidence. It is strongly recommended that staff should report an offensive behaviour immediately to someone they trust, even if they do not wish to launch a formal complaint at the time. Although not reporting immediately should not affect the merits of the case.
- b) Detailed account of the complainant and the accused form a part of the evidence.
- c) Witness statements
- d) Statements of persons with whom the complainant might have discussed the incident, statements of persons from whom advice may have informally been sought, should be considered as evidence.
- e) Any other document, audio or video records can be submitted. Expert technical advice can be sought for such submissions.

4.7 INQUIRY

- a) Upon receiving a formal complaint, the Committee shall ask the complainant to prepare a detailed statement of incidents in case the written complaint is not detailed. A statement of allegations will be drawn by the Committee and sent to the accused
- b) The accused will be asked to prepare a response to the statement of allegations and submit to the Committee within a specified time.
- c) The statements and other evidence acquired in the inquiry process will be considered confidential materials.
- d) An officer in the organization could be designated to provide advice and assistance to each party.
- e) Parties, the complainant and the accused will have the right to be represented or accompanied by a friend or a colleague.
- f) The Committee will organize verbal hearings with the complainant and the accused.
- g) Upon conclusion of the inquiry the report would be submitted to the ED with recommendations for further action.