



Pandit Jagat Ram Memorial FORCE Trust Policy on Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) at workplace



Introduction

This policy has been framed in accordance with, but not limited to, the provisions of “The Sexual Exploitation of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013” and rules framed thereunder (hereinafter “the Act”). Accordingly, while the policy covers all the key aspects of the Act, for any further clarification reference shall always be made to the Act and the provisions of the Act shall prevail.

Our success is based on our people. We treat each other with respect and dignity and expect everyone to promote a sense of personal responsibility. We recruit competent and motivated people who respect our values, provide equal opportunities for their development and advancement; protect their privacy and ***do not tolerate any form of Exploitation or discrimination.***

The ‘Policy on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation of women at workplace: Guidelines for FORCE’ intends to provide protection against sexual Exploitation of women at workplace and the prevention and redressal of complaints of sexual Exploitation and matters related to it.

The Policy is valid upto March 31, 2025 unless notified earlier.

Definitions

1. Sexual Exploitation may occur not only where a person uses sexual behaviour to control, influence or affect the career, salary or job of another person, but also between co-workers. It may also occur between a FORCE employee and someone that employee deals within the course of his/her work who is not employed by the NGO.

“Sexual Exploitation” includes any one or more of the following unwelcome acts or behaviour (whether directly or by implication):

- a. Any unwelcome sexually determined behaviour, or pattern of conduct, that would cause discomfort and/or humiliate a person at whom the behaviour or conduct was directed namely:
 - i. Physical contact and advances;
 - ii. Demand or request for sexual favours;
 - iii. Sexually coloured remarks or remarks of a sexual nature about a person's clothing or body;
 - iv. Showing pornography, making or posting sexual pranks, sexual teasing, sexual jokes, sexually demeaning or offensive pictures, cartoons or other materials through email, SMS, MMS etc.;
 - v. Repeatedly asking to socialize during off-duty hours or continued expressions of sexual interest against a person's wishes;
 - vi. Giving gifts or leaving objects that are sexually suggestive;



- vii. Eve teasing, innuendos and taunts, physical confinement against one's will or any such act likely to intrude upon one's privacy;
 - viii. Persistent watching, following, contacting of a person; and
 - ix. Any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature
- b. The following circumstances if it occurs or is present in relation to any sexually determined act or behaviour amount to sexual Exploitation:
- i. Implied or explicit promise of preferential treatment in employment;
 - ii. Implied or explicit threat of detrimental treatment in employment;
 - iii. Implied or explicit threat about the present or future employment status;
 - iv. Interference with the person's work or creating an intimidating or offensive or hostile work environment; or
 - v. Humiliating treatment likely to affect her health or safety.

The reasonable person standard is used to determine whether or not the conduct was offensive and what a reasonable person would have done. Further, it is important to note that whether Exploitation has occurred or not, does not depend on the intention of the people but on the experience of the aggrieved woman.

2. **Aggrieved woman:** In relation to a workplace, a woman, of any age, whether employed or not, who alleges to have been subjected to any act of sexual Exploitation by the respondent and includes contractual, temporary, visitors.
3. **Respondent:** A person against whom a complaint of sexual Exploitation has been made by the aggrieved woman
4. **Employee:** A person employed at the workplace, for any work on regular, temporary, ad-hoc or daily wage basis, either directly or through an agent, including a contractor, with or without the knowledge of the principal employer, whether for remuneration or not, or working on a voluntary basis or otherwise, whether the terms of employment are express or implied and includes a co-worker, a contract worker, probationer, trainee, apprentice or by any other such name.
5. **Workplace:** In addition to the place of work [Head office / Branch offices] it shall also include any place where the aggrieved woman or the respondent visits in connection with his/her work, during the course of and/or arising out of employment/ contract/ engagement with FORCE, including transportation provided for undertaking such a journey.
6. **Employer:** A person responsible for management, supervision and control of the workplace



Roles & Responsibilities

1. **Responsibilities of Individual:** It is the responsibility of all to respect the rights of others and to never encourage Exploitation. It can be done by:
 - a. Refusing to participate in any activity which constitutes Exploitation
 - b. Supporting the person to reject unwelcome behaviour
 - c. Acting as a witness if the person being harassed decides to lodge a complaint

All are encouraged to advise others of behaviour that is unwelcome. Often, some behaviours are not intentional. While this does not make it acceptable, it does give the person behaving inappropriately, the opportunity to modify or stop their offensive behaviour.

2. **Responsibilities of Managers:** All managers at FORCE must ensure that nobody is subject to Exploitation and there is equal treatment. They must also ensure that all employees understand that Exploitation will not be tolerated; that complaints will be taken seriously; and that the complainant, respondent/s, or witnesses are not victimized in any way.
3. **Responsibility of Human Resource Personnel** – HR Personnel will be responsible for ensuring adherence to PSEA guidelines during recruitment and sensitization of employees to PSEA issues. The Guidelines they may follow are:
 - a. Recruitment process to include an investigation of PSEA history of the candidate through referral forms shared with past employers and/or through self-declarations. *Checklist for PSEA sensitive recruitment has been provided.*
 - b. Proven SEA offenders are not to be recruited. In case of doubt or exceptional circumstances the applicant details may be referred to the FORCE board for evaluation and decision.
 - c. Self-Declaration of no history of SEA violation to be taken from all employees.
 - d. Details of PSEA Committee members to be accessible to all employees.
 - e. Conduct regular PSEA trainings. Calendar to be shared with all employees at the beginning of the year. At least 2 trainings of 90 minutes each to be conducted for all employees every year.
 - f. Training to include sensitization about the issue, Acts that may be considered SEA, FORCE PSEA policy, PSEA committee members and their roles, Complaint filing process, Investigation process and Redressal mechanisms.
 - g. Training to be conducted by PSEA Committee member and/or relevant HR personnel.

Redressal Mechanism – Formal Intervention



In compliance with the Act, if the complainant's warrants formal intervention, the complainant needs to lodge a written complaint, which shall be followed by a formal redressal mechanism as described in this Policy. In case of a verbal complaint, the complaint will be reduced in writing by the receiver of the complaint and signatures of the complainant will be obtained.

Internal Complaints Committee (Henceforth known as 'committee')

To prevent instances of sexual Exploitation and to receive and effectively deal with complaints pertaining to the same, an "**Internal Complaints Committee**" is constituted at the Head Office. The detail of the committee is notified to all covered persons at all locations (workplace).

The committee comprises of:

- **Presiding Officer:** A woman employed at a senior level in the organization or workplace
- At least 2 members from amongst employees, committed to the cause of women and or having legal knowledge
- One external member, familiar with the issues relating to sexual Exploitation
- At least one half of the total members is women

The **committee** is responsible for:

- Receiving complaints of sexual Exploitation at the workplace
- Initiating and conducting inquiry as per the established procedure
- Submitting findings and recommendations of inquiries
- Coordinating with the employer in implementing appropriate action
- Maintaining strict confidentiality throughout the process as per established guidelines
- Submitting annual reports in the prescribed format

Current nominated members of the committees are given in **Annexure A**.

Lodging a Complaint

The complainant needs to submit a detailed complaint, along with any documentary evidence available or names of witnesses, to any of the committee members at the workplace.

The complaint must be lodged within **3 months** from the date of incident/ last incident. The Committee can extend the timeline by **another 3 months** for reasons recorded in writing, if satisfied that these reasons prevented the lodging of the complaint.



Provided that where such a complaint cannot be made in writing, the Presiding Officer or any Member of the Internal Complaint Committee shall render all reasonable assistance to the women for making the complaint in writing.

If the aggrieved woman is unable to lodge the complaint in account of her incapacity, the following may do so on her behalf, **with her written consent**.

- Legal heir, relative or friend
- Co-worker
- Any person having the knowledge of the incident

If the initial complaint is made to a person other than a committee member, upon receiving such a complaint, it will be the responsibility of the complaint receiver to report the same to the committee immediately.

Wherever possible FORCE ensures that all the complaints of Exploitation are dealt with speedily, discreetly and as close as possible to the point of origin.

[Receiving a Complaint \(guidelines\)](#)

Dealing with incidents of Exploitation is not like any other type of dispute. Complainants may be embarrassed and distressed and it requires tact and discretion while receiving the complaint.

The following points are kept in mind by the receiver of the complaint:

- Complaint are listened to and the complainant informed that the NGO takes the concerns seriously. Complainant is informed that these concerns will be reported to the appropriate committee and follow up will be done speedily
- Situation are not be pre-judged. Written notes are taken while listening to the person. Complainant is allowed to bring another person to the meeting if they wish. When taking accurate notes, complainants' own words, where possible, is used. Clear description of the incident in simple and direct terms is prepared and details are confirmed with the complainant.
- All notes are kept strictly confidential. Complainant's agreement is taken to allow proceeding with the matter, which involves a formal investigation.
- The complainant is advised that although the process is confidential, the respondent needs to be informed and any witnesses and persons directly involved in the complaint process will also learn of the complainant's identity

Care is taken to prevent any disadvantage to or victimization of either the complainant or the respondent



Resolution procedure through conciliation

Once the complaint is received, before initiating the inquiry the committee may take steps to conciliate the complaint between the complainant and the respondent. **This is only if requested by the aggrieved woman.**

It is made clear to all parties that conciliation in itself doesn't necessarily mean acceptance of complaint by the respondent. It is a practical mechanism through which issues are resolved or misunderstandings cleared.

In case a settlement is arrived at, the committee records & reports the same to the employer for taking appropriate action. Resolution through conciliation happens within **2 weeks** of receipt of complaint.

The committee provides copies of the settlement to complainant & respondent. Once the action is implemented, no further inquiry is conducted

Resolution procedure through formal inquiry

Conducting Inquiry

The committee initiates inquiry in the following cases:

- No conciliation is requested by aggrieved woman
- Conciliation has not resulted in any settlement
- Complainant informs the committee that any term or condition of the settlement arrived through conciliation, has not been complied with by respondent

The Committee proceeds to make an inquiry into the complaint within a period of **1 week** of its receipt of the original complaint/closure of conciliation/repeat complaint.

Manner of inquiry into complaint:

- Complainant should submit the complaint along with supporting documents and the names of the witnesses
- Upon receipt of the complaint, the committee sends 1 copy of the complaint to respondent within 7 working days
- Respondent replies with all supporting documents within 10 working days of receiving the copy of the complaint
- No legal practitioner can represent any party at any stage of the inquiry procedure
- The Complaints Committee makes inquiry into the complaint in accordance with the principles of natural justice
- In conducting the inquiry, a minimum of three committee members including the Presiding Officer is present



Interim relief

During pendency of the inquiry, on a written request made by the complainant, the committee may recommend to the employer to -

- Transfer the complainant or the respondent to any other workplace
- Grant leave to the aggrieved woman of maximum 3 months, in addition to the leave she would be otherwise entitled
- Prevent the respondent from assessing complainant's work performance
- Grant such other relief as may be appropriate

Once the recommendations of interim relief are implemented, the employer will inform the committee regarding the same

Termination of Inquiry

Committee at FORCE may terminate the inquiry or give ex-parte decision, if complainant or respondent respectively is absent for 3 consecutive hearings, without reason. 15 day written notice to be given to the party, before termination or ex-parte order

Inquiry procedure

All proceedings of the inquiry are documented. The Committee interviews the respondent separately and impartially. Committee states exactly what the allegation is and who has made the allegation. The respondent is given full opportunity to respond and provide any evidence etc. Detailed notes of the meetings are prepared which may be shared with the respondent and complainant upon request. Any witnesses produced by the respondent are also interviewed & statements are taken.

If the complainant or respondent desires to cross examine any witnesses, the Committee facilitates the same and records the statements.

In case complainant or respondent seeks to ask questions to the other party, they may give them to the Committee which asks them and records the statement of the other party.

Any such inquiry is completed, including the submission of the Inquiry Report, within **90 days** from the date on which the inquiry is commenced. The inquiry procedure ensures absolute fairness to all parties.

Considerations while preparing inquiry report

While preparing the findings/recommendations, following are considered:



- Whether the language used (written or spoken), visual material or physical behaviour was of sexual or derogatory nature
- Whether the allegations or events follow logically and reasonably from the evidence
- Credibility of complainant, respondent, witnesses and evidence
- Other similar facts, evidence, for e.g. if there have been any previous accounts of Exploitation pertaining to the respondent
- Both parties have been given an opportunity of being heard
- A copy of the proceedings was made available to both parties enabling them to make representation against the findings

A copy of the final findings is shared with the complainant and the respondent to give them an opportunity to make a representation on the findings to the committee

Action to be taken after inquiry

Post the inquiry the committee submits its report containing the findings and recommendations to the employer, within **10 days** of completion of the inquiry.

The findings and recommendations are reached from the facts established and is recorded accurately.

If the situation so requires, or upon request of the complainant, respondent or witness, Management at FORCE may decide to take interim measures such as transfer, changing of shift, grant of leave etc. to protect against victimization or distress during or subsequent to the course of inquiry, pending the final outcome.

Complaint unsubstantiated

Where the committee arrives at the conclusion that the allegation against the respondent has not been proved, it recommends to the employer that no action is required to be taken in this matter.

Further, the committee ensures that both parties understand that the matter has been fully investigated, that the matter is now concluded, and neither will be disadvantaged within the NGO.

Complaint substantiated

Where the committee arrives at the conclusion that the allegation against the respondent has been proved, it recommends to the employer to take necessary action for sexual Exploitation as misconduct, in accordance with the applicable service rules and policies, and this may include:

- I. Counselling
- II. Censure or reprimand



- III. Apology to be tendered by respondent
- IV. Written warning
- V. Withholding promotion and/or increments
- VI. Suspension
- VII. Termination
- VIII. Or any other action that the Management may deem fit.

The employer at FORCE acts upon the recommendations within **60 days** and confirm to the committee.

Post implementation of the actions follow up with the complainant occurs to ascertain whether the behaviour has in fact stopped, the solution is working satisfactorily and if no victimization of either party is occurring. This follow up is undertaken by the complainant's Line Manager supported by HR.

Support for Survivors

The employer is also responsible for helping the survivor access support required to cope with and mitigate the mental and physical effects of the exploitation. Please refer to the guidelines for PSEA Survivor assistance for the process to be followed. PSEA Survivor referral form must be shared immediately with the survivor who must be encouraged to fill it with details of the type of support desired. If the survivor needs assistance in filling the same, it should be provided. A list of support providing organisations is appended along with this document. This list may be referred to for identifying the right support organisation. The committee must also keep updating the list with new support organisations and processes that may be useful to the survivors.

Malicious Allegations

Where the committee arrives at the conclusion that the allegation against the respondent is malicious or the aggrieved woman or any other person making the complaint has made the complaint knowing it to be false or the aggrieved woman or any other person making the complaint has produced any forged or misleading document, it may recommend to the employer to take action against the woman or the person making the complaint.

The action recommended should be similar to the ones proposed for the respondent in case of substantiated complaints.

While deciding malicious intent, the committee should consider that mere inability to substantiate a complaint need not mean malicious intent. Malicious intent must be clearly established through a separate inquiry.

Confidentiality



The identity of the complainant, respondent, witnesses, statements and other evidence obtained in the course of inquiry process, recommendations of the committees, action taken by the employer is considered as confidential materials, and not published or made known to public or media.

Any person contravening the confidentiality clauses is subject to disciplinary action as prescribed in the act.

Appeal

Any party not satisfied or further aggrieved by the implementation or non-implementation of recommendations made, may appeal to the appellate authority in accordance with the Act and rules, within **90 days** of the recommendations being communicated.



Annexure A

Internal Complaints Committee at Head Office FORCE

Presiding Officer	- Ms. Jyoti Sharma
Member	- Ms. Preeti Prabhakar
Member	- Ms. Jaswinder Kaur
Member	- Mr. Pitam Jain
External Member	-
Employer	- Mr. Sanjeev Sharma



REFERRAL FORM FOR PAST EMPLOYER(S)

(To be filled by relevant HR Personnel or Functional Heads of past employers of candidate)

REFERENCE REQUEST FOR: ___ (Name of Candidate) _____

REQUEST BY : ___ (Name of FORCE HR) _____

PAST EMPLOYER NAME : ___ (Name of Company) _____

ADDRESS : ___ (Where Candidate Worked) _____

RESPONDENT NAME : _____

RELATIONSHIP WITH CANDIDATE: _____

CANDIDATE EMPLOYED FROM: _____ TO _____

LAST HELD JOB TITLE: _____

REASON FOR LEAVING: _____

OVERALL RATING OF PERFORMANCE ON A SCALE OF 0 to 5 with 5 being excellent _____

2 STRENGTHS AND 2 WEAKNESSES OF CANDIDATE

ARE YOU AWARE OF ANY POLICY INVESTIGATIONS OR DISCIPLINARY ACTION AGAINST THE CANDIDATE IN YOUR COMPANY. IF YES, PLEASE SHARE DETAILS

ARE YOU AWARE OF ANY SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OR ABUSE COMPLAINT, INVESTIGATION OR ACTION AGAINST THE CANDIDATE? IF YES, PLEASE SHARE DETAILS

