





# Leaders of Change

Drawing Lessons from  
Case Studies of Organizations with  
Anti- Sexual Harassment Policies

Sadaf Ahmad




This research study highlights the processes through which the work environment can be transformed into a more dignified, professional and productive space, and draws attention to the mechanisms that need to be put in place to address any violations of human dignity.



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# A MESSAGE FROM ILO

The ILO office for Pakistan wishes to express its gratitude for the research done by Alliance Against Sexual Harassment (AASHA) under the ILO's project "Towards Gender Parity in Pakistan".

Promoting opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity is the overarching objective of the International Labour Organization. ILO's decent work agenda provides an overall framework for action in economic and social development. In Pakistan, the Decent Work Country Program (DWCP), signed in 2005 by ILO constituents: the Government and Employers' and Workers' Representatives, spells out a strategy and plan of action to promote the creation of decent work.

As reflected in the DWCP, the formulation of decent employment and gender parity at workplace is a priority agenda. Sexual harassment at the workplace is a form of discrimination that violates the fundamental human rights of citizens. It is one of the most common issues women face and has become the biggest hurdle in their contribution to the economy. In this respect, AASHA has taken a timely initiative by carrying out an assessment of organizations having adopted "Code of Conduct against Sexual Harassment" and developed best practices using different case studies.

It is encouraging on the part of the Government of Pakistan, to have passed a "Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010" and an amendment to Section 509 of the Pakistan Penal Code on the 29th of January 2010, making sexual harassment in any location including the workplace a crime in Pakistan. These efforts clearly define sexual harassment and the different forms it could take and stated that the perpetrator of harassment could be punished by a fine and



imprisonment.

Subsequent to these legislations, now a process has started to sensitize all stakeholders on the adoption of the “Code of Conduct against Sexual Harassment at Workplace”.

The current research would surely help the institutions to know the benefits of having a harassment-free environment and how it can help build the image, productivity and efficiency among men and women workers.

ILO will continue providing technical assistance to the ILO Constituents and other stakeholders to further develop and achieve decent work in the country.

Donglin Li  
Country Director  
International Labour Organization

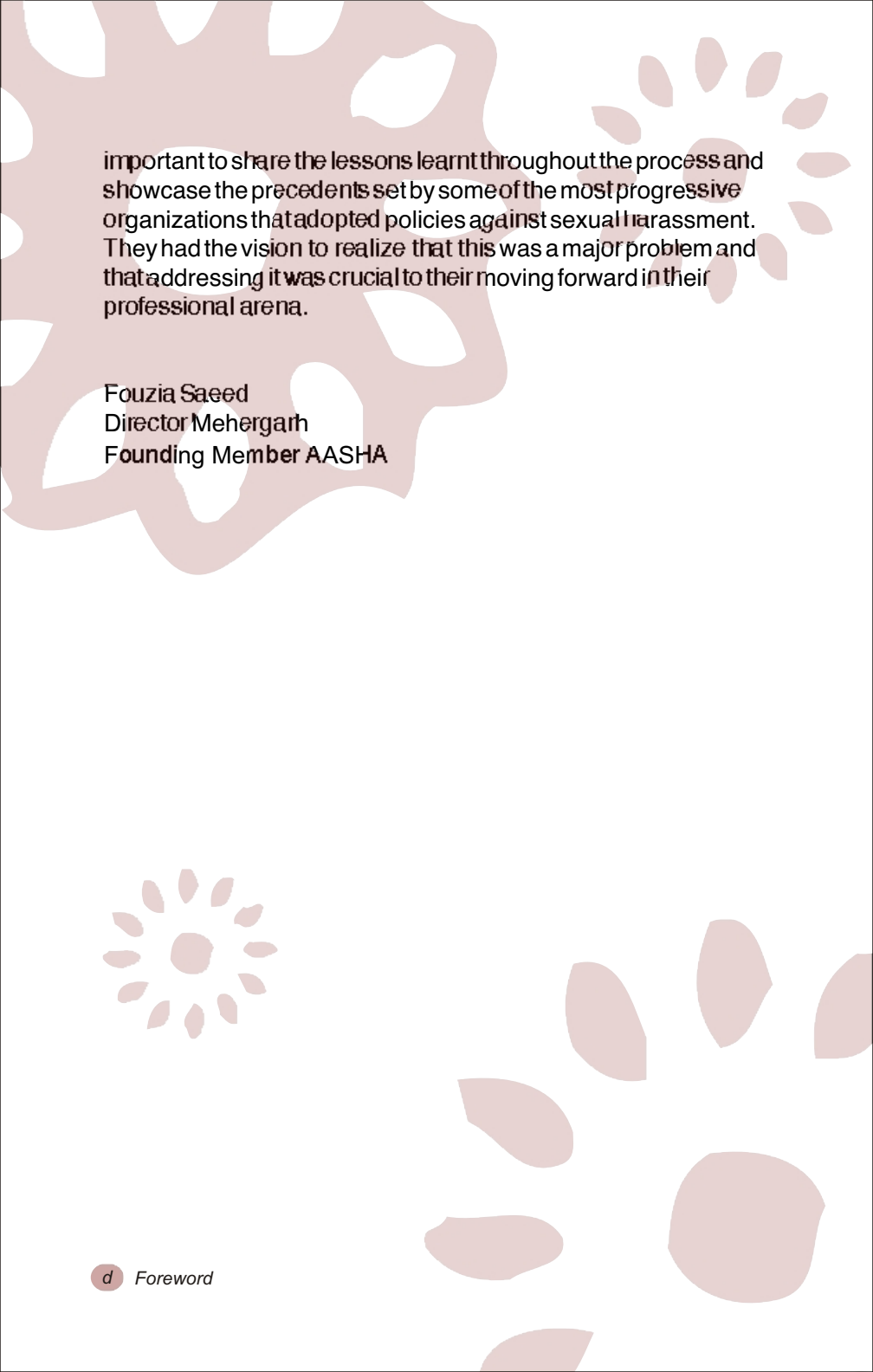


# FOREWORD

AASHA was established as an alliance of organizations interested in dealing with the issue of sexual harassment in 2001. AASHA recognized that the issue of sexual harassment was one of the biggest challenges that women faced, especially in the public area and at the work place. The alliance worked for policy change and the cultural transformation of organizations to make them free of sexual harassment. AASHA's initiatives soon became a movement, mobilizing labour unions, formal and informal groups of working women and networks from the private sector. AASHA also helped the Government and the media to understand their roles in furthering the cause. Over the last ten years, this movement has successfully begun to change the mindset of people and has established a strong support base among major stake holders in its efforts to establish a dignified environment for women at home, and in public and work places. Another major success of this movement has resulted in legislative measures to address the issue.

The current Government has shown its commitment and support by passing critical legislation against sexual harassment, making it a crime for the first time in the history of Pakistan. This is a milestone in Pakistani social history that will not only legitimize access to the public and work spaces for women, but will be a turning point in changing people's mind sets about the relationship of men and women. The full support of all the major political parties and the unanimous vote in favor of the legislation in the National Assembly ensures full political ownership of the legislation, which will be needed during the implementation process.

Currently, AASHA is spearheading the implementation of this legislation in close collaboration with the National Commission on the Status of Women and with the full support of all the relevant Government Ministries. At this critical time it is



important to share the lessons learnt throughout the process and showcase the precedents set by some of the most progressive organizations that adopted policies against sexual harassment. They had the vision to realize that this was a major problem and that addressing it was crucial to their moving forward in their professional arena.


Fouzia Saeed  
Director Mehargarh  
Founding Member AASHA





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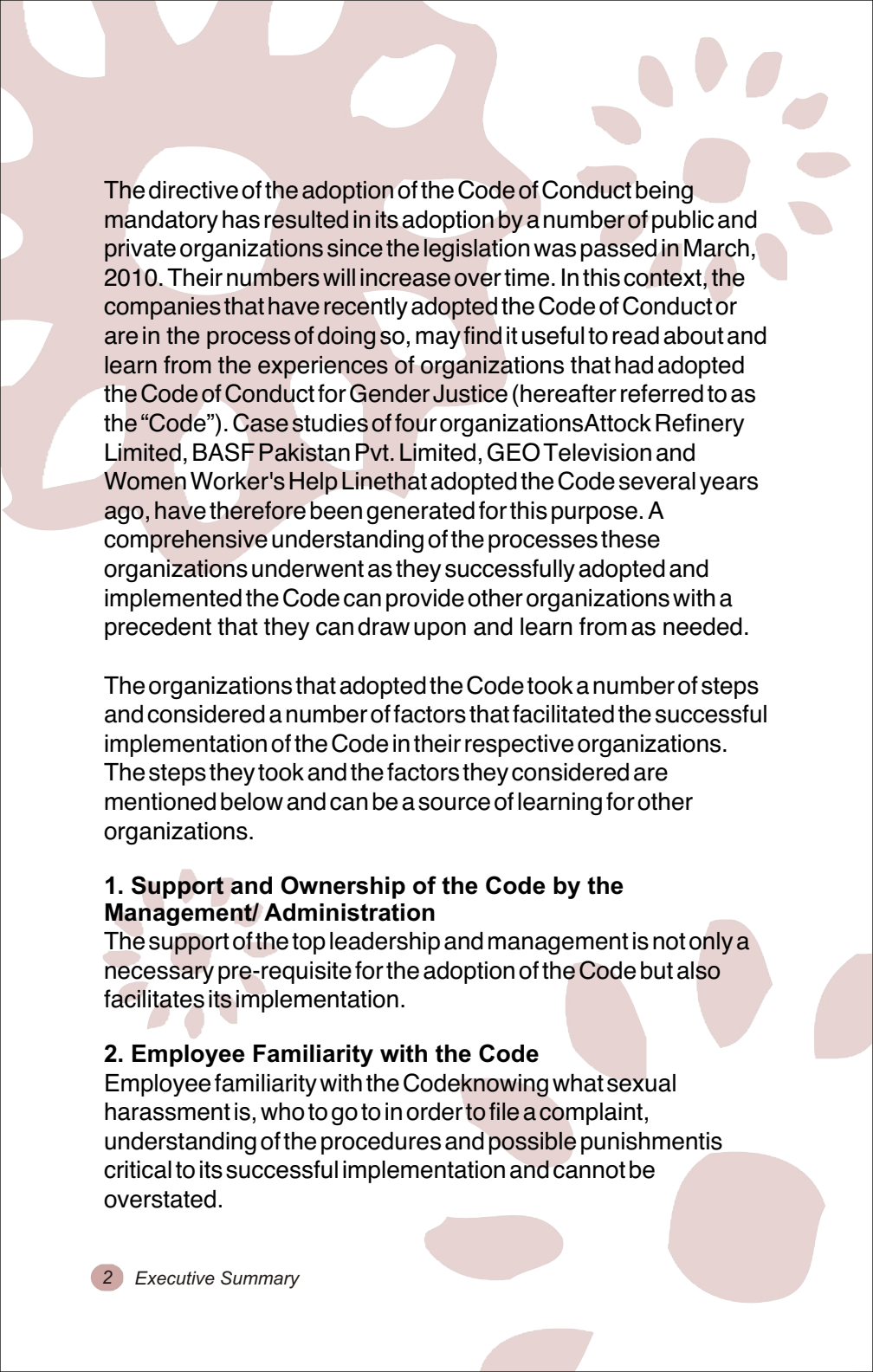




## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sexual harassment at the workplace is a form of discrimination that violates the fundamental human rights of citizens and has been experienced by Pakistani women at places as diverse as factories, farms, fields, offices, hospitals and the parliament, where they have been intimidated, assaulted, abused and manipulated by those who have authority over their conditions of employment.

Although pro-equality and anti-discriminatory provisions are made in a number of International Labour Organization's (ILO) conventions and in the Constitution of Pakistan, there were no laws that specifically defined sexual harassment or took sexual harassment in the workplace into account until the beginning of 2010 when the Government of Pakistan passed an amendment to Section 509 of the Pakistan Penal Code making sexual harassment in any location including the workplace a crime in Pakistan. It also passed a Law called the "Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010," making the development of self regulatory mechanisms to deal with instances of sexual harassment through adopting the Code of Conduct mandatory for all organizations, be they public or private. This Code of Conduct is based on the Code of Conduct for Gender Justice that AASHA (an Alliance Against Sexual Harassment) developed in 2002 and that, as a result of AASHA's endeavours, was adopted by approximately 300 private organizations by 2007.



The directive of the adoption of the Code of Conduct being mandatory has resulted in its adoption by a number of public and private organizations since the legislation was passed in March, 2010. Their numbers will increase over time. In this context, the companies that have recently adopted the Code of Conduct or are in the process of doing so, may find it useful to read about and learn from the experiences of organizations that had adopted the Code of Conduct for Gender Justice (hereafter referred to as the “Code”). Case studies of four organizations Attock Refinery Limited, BASF Pakistan Pvt. Limited, GEO Television and Women Worker’s Help Line that adopted the Code several years ago, have therefore been generated for this purpose. A comprehensive understanding of the processes these organizations underwent as they successfully adopted and implemented the Code can provide other organizations with a precedent that they can draw upon and learn from as needed.

The organizations that adopted the Code took a number of steps and considered a number of factors that facilitated the successful implementation of the Code in their respective organizations. The steps they took and the factors they considered are mentioned below and can be a source of learning for other organizations.

### **1. Support and Ownership of the Code by the Management/ Administration**

The support of the top leadership and management is not only a necessary pre-requisite for the adoption of the Code but also facilitates its implementation.

### **2. Employee Familiarity with the Code**

Employee familiarity with the Code knowing what sexual harassment is, who to go to in order to file a complaint, understanding of the procedures and possible punishment is critical to its successful implementation and cannot be overstated.

### **3. Clarity Regarding who to contact for reporting**

Employees must be informed of whom they could go to in order to discuss an issue or to report a case and be told the names of the people making up the permanent inquiry committee in their organization.

### **4. Having the Right People on the Inquiry Committee**

Having at least one woman on the inquiry committee is compulsory. But thought must also be given to the characteristics of the people making it, who are seen as credible and have a strong commitment towards fair play and justice are good candidates for the position.

### **5. Maintaining Confidentiality**

The inquiry committee's commitment to maintaining confidentiality is critical as it facilitates people's comfort in approaching them. Employees will not report cases if they believe that the members of a committee will not maintain confidentiality or if these members are careless and discuss the case with people who are not directly involved in the process.

### **6. Flexibility in Approach**

The nature of the case (and any other relevant factors) must be considered when determining whether to investigate the case formally or informally and when deciding upon the nature of the disciplinary action taken against the perpetrator. This is better than restricting oneself with any one approach (formal or informal) or meting out any one kind of punishment in all the cases.

### **7. Keeping records**

Records outlining the nature of the harassment and the manner in which the cases were handled can help the concerned departments get a good sense of the prevalence of sexual harassment in the organization and the forms it takes. A

subsequent analysis can then lead to the development of relevant strategies to reduce the problem.

### **8. Dealing with Cases in a Timely Manner**

The guidelines regarding the time frame within which cases must be investigated and resolved must be followed strictly. It was observed that not doing so, often de-motivated the complainant and would open up the complainant to further abuse.

### **9. Development of a Positive Working Environment**

The managements strongly felt that a positive working environment could serve as a deterrent to sexual harassment. However, effort is required for the positive working environment to remain positive or for a working environment to further improve. The following steps can facilitate this improvement:

- ✓ Dissemination of the contents of the Code through multiple mediums immediately after its adoption.
- ✓ Reinforcement of the message of zero tolerance for sexual harassment in the organization through multiple mediums periodically and not be satisfied with only an initial orientation at the time of adoption.
- ✓ Tackling cases of sexual harassment strictly within the time limit and seriously curbing any gossip around the investigation.

All these steps send out a clear message of what kind of behaviour an organization will and will not tolerate and can contribute towards the creation of an environment marked by mutual respect and dignity.

### **10. Employee Selection**

A stricter hiring procedure where careful consideration is given to a variety of factors can bring down the potential for inappropriate situations arising in the future.

### **11. Awareness of the Myths Surrounding Sexual Harassment**

The myths surrounding sexual harassment for instance, a

woman who gets harassed must have done something **to incite** it, must be understood as deep-rooted socialized biases by the members of an organization. Such beliefs, when upheld by an inquiry member who may be quite fair otherwise, can result in a biased inquiry and an unjust decision.

## **12. The Importance of Institutionalizing Structures.**

It is often assumed that there is no need of a structured system if the management is positive and committed to resolving issues. This study shows that not having formal and institutionalized mechanisms to introduce new employees to the Code and to remind all employees of its content on a regular basis results in people **falling in** the cracks. The strategy must always be formal, comprehensive and institutionalized, and must not be solely dependent upon the good will of committed personalities.

The Code also has very specific guidelines regarding how an investigation ought to be carried out. It is the responsibility of every organization to familiarize itself with the Code and the nature and dynamics of sexual harassment in order to ensure they are following it in both letter and spirit. The study shows that this becomes particularly important in those challenging cases where the members of the inquiry committee must make some kind of decision in the face of insufficient or contradictory evidence.

The adoption of the Code in the organizations that were studied resulted in a range of benefits: the development of a system that was subsequently used to combat sexual harassment in a systematic and effective manner; an increase in the confidence level of employees on knowing that certain behaviours were unacceptable in their respective organizations and that their complaints would be taken seriously if they faced any kind of harassment; a heightened awareness of gender issues and a greater gender sensitization in a number of employees; and public recognition. All of these benefits feed into the creation of a workplace environment in which people are able to work with dignity. This is the right of every human being and benefits both the employees and the organization as a whole.

# INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment at the workplace is a form of discrimination that violates the fundamental human rights of citizens. It is one of the most common issues women face and has become the biggest hurdle in their contributing to the economy of their countries. Pakistani women have experienced sexual harassment at places as diverse as factories, farms, fields, offices, hospitals and the parliament, where humiliating and intimidating women or seeing them as sexual objects for entertainment is often acceptable. These women have been intimidated, assaulted, abused and manipulated by those who have authority over their conditions of employment.

A news report in the magazine *Newsline* (2003) drew upon the situational analysis of sexual harassment at the workplace that AASHA, an Alliance Against Sexual Harassment conducted and reported that:

A staggering 58 per cent of the nurses in Pakistan have been victims of sexual harassment by co-workers and patients - and these are just the known cases. An indeterminate number of cases go completely unreported. Shockingly, compared to harassment rates for women in other professions, this figure is actually on the lower end. Take female domestic workers for example, 91 per cent of these women say they have been subjected to sexual harassment abuse at least once on the job. A staggering 93 per cent of women working in both private and public sector organisations claim to have experienced some form of sexual harassment at the hands of their boss, colleagues, even clients. And 92 per cent of women speak of severe sexual harassment while commuting - usually to and from work - by public transport.

The report further states that “in Pakistan, about 76 per cent of women say they do not even report such incidents to their parents, let alone register an official complaint.”

The right to work with dignity is a fundamental human right of both men and women. Violations of this right are not only harmful for the victim of sexual harassment (Brohi 1998; Ahmad 2001; AASHA 2002) but have also been recognized as a labour and management problem. Sexual harassment is problematic for employers who face difficulties when skilled workers leave their job because of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment also becomes a problem when it **effects** the productivity of the employee. The organization may also earn a bad reputation, thus making it difficult for them to engage skilled workers in the future. The vast violation of the right to work with dignity and the multiple repercussions it has, creates an immediate need for work regulations that are based on just laws.

## Background of the Research Study

Guidelines for work regulations are given by the United Nations through the International Labour Organization's (ILO) conventions (especially number 111 and number 100) and by countries through their constitution and labour laws. There are equality and anti-discriminatory provisions made in the Constitution of Pakistan (articles 25, 26, and 27 in particular) and they existed in the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) prior to 2010. The problem with these provisions in the context of sexual harassment was that they were general. Section 509 of the PPC, for instance, stipulated punishing anyone who "insult[ed] the modesty of any woman" with imprisonment up to one year or a fine or both. However, there were no laws that specifically defined sexual harassment or took sexual harassment in the workplace into account. AASHA's activism changed this scenario.

AASHA was formed in 2001 to address the issue of sexual harassment. The civil society, particularly women's organizations, had never taken up the issue of sexual harassment as a major cause until that time. They preferred working on more overt but comparatively less widespread issues such as honor killings in order to draw attention to and address the plight of Pakistani women.

AASHA has undertaken ground breaking work on the issue of sexual harassment in the last decade. The Government of Pakistan agreed to AASHA working on developing a policy framework (which could later become an anti-sexual harassment policy for the country) in December 2001. Research, observations and the experiences of member organizations subsequently led to the development of a policy to address sexual harassment. AASHA then worked in close collaboration with the ILO and senior government officials and held national and provincial consultations and finalized a consensus policy to address sexual harassment in organizations in the formal sector. This policy was called the Code of Conduct for Gender Justice.

AASHA's efforts resulted in approximately 300 private organizations adopting this Code in the next five years. Wanting to give the Code a legal cover, AASHA member Dr. Fouzia Saeed drafted legislation which was then improved upon by legal experts in late 2007. AASHA spent the next two years working with the cabinet, parliament and the senate and this resulted in the following in 2010:

The Government of Pakistan passed an amendment to Section 509 of the PPC on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January 2010, making sexual harassment in any location including the workplace a crime in Pakistan. This amendment clearly defined sexual harassment and the different forms it could take and stated that the perpetrator of harassment could be punished by a fine of up to Rupees 500,000, imprisonment of up to 3 years, or both.

The Government of Pakistan also passed a Law called the "Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010" on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2010, making the development of self regulatory mechanisms to deal with instances of sexual harassment through adopting the Code of Conduct mandatory for all organizations, be they public or private. This Code of Conduct is based on the Code of Conduct for Gender Justice that AASHA developed in 2002 and which was discussed with the relevant Ministries and had undergone a broad based



nationwide consultation process at that point. The Law Ministry has put a significant part of this Code of Conduct for Gender Justice in the text of the Act and the rest of it, referred to as the Code of Conduct, can be found in the schedule.

This Code defines sexual harassment, informs employees of the avenues they can take if they face sexual harassment and outlines the responsibilities of the management in following the code, which include but are not limited to displaying the code, spreading awareness about it and establishing a 3 member inquiry committee to deal with instances of sexual harassment by following particular procedures.<sup>1</sup>

The directive of the adoption of the Code being mandatory has resulted in its adoption by a number of public and private organizations. Their numbers will increase over time. In this context, the companies that have recently adopted the Code or are in the process of doing so may find it useful to read about and learn from the experiences of organizations that had adopted the Code of Conduct for Gender Justice (here after referred to as the 'Code') several years ago.

## **Objective of the Study**

The purpose of this research project was to put together case studies of some of the organizations that had adopted the Code and to get information about the process they underwent as they implemented it. The objective is to provide organizations currently adopting it with a precedent that they can draw upon and learn from as needed.

The adoption of the Code does not only provide an organization with a mechanism through which it is able to take and systematically address complaints of sexual harassment. It also

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<sup>1</sup>The Code of Conduct can be downloaded in both Urdu and English at <http://aasha.org.pk/index.php> Adopting this Code results in an organization's compliance with the Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010.

provides an organization with an opportunity to change the attitudes of its employees through raising their awareness of the issue and the consequences of its occurrence in the workplace. The steps an organization takes to disseminate information about the Code and raise awareness among its employees, the system it establishes to deal with cases of sexual harassment and the actual manner in which reported cases are dealt with, all play a critical role in the positive transformation of the work environment. And since such a transformation is dependent upon a number of factors, this study has paid attention to the relevant processes selected organizations have undergone since they made the decision to adopt the Code. It does not merely focus on the number of cases of sexual harassment an organization has dealt with or the manner in which they are dealt with. Lessons gained from this sphere alone are insufficient in aiding the successful transformation of the workplace. Lessons gained from the larger process an organization has undergone in order to curb sexual harassment at the workplace can lead to greater success and are the focus of this study.

The Code of Conduct can be downloaded in both Urdu and English at <http://aasha.org.pk/index.php> Adopting this Code results in an organization's compliance with the Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010.

## **Methodology**

Qualitative research, in the form of case studies, was undertaken in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the processes selected organizations went through after they made the decision to adopt the Code.

### **Nature of the Research**

Qualitative research is best employed when the nature of the research is exploratory and an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon is sought. The purpose of this research was to conduct an in-depth exploration of selected organizations, hence its qualitative nature.

## **Research Method**

The purpose of this study was not to make generalizations or to study trends but to gain a comprehensive understanding of the processes different organizations underwent after deciding that they would adopt the Code. A case study method was utilized for this purpose. A case study can provide an in-depth look into an organization's processes in a manner that quantitative methods cannot.

## **Selection of the Organizations**

Case studies of four organizations were generated. Purposive sampling where the sample is chosen on the basis of pre-selected criteria was utilized to select these organizations. This criteria involved:

- Organizations that were diverse in terms of size, sector and location.
- Organizations that had successfully adopted the Code of Conduct for Gender Justice for at least a few years.

Factors such as the size or nature of an organization often have an impact on the manner in which that organization chooses to implement or disseminate information about the Code and may also determine what kind of challenges that organization may face with reference to it. Looking at organizations that are diverse on grounds such as these and that have also successfully implemented the Code will ensure that the results generated will be of use to a range of organizations.

The four organizations that were chosen were:

1. Attock Refinery Limited, Rawalpindi
2. BASF Pakistan Pvt. Limited, Karachi
3. GEO Television, Karachi
4. Women Worker's Help Line, Lahore

## **Research Tools**

In-depth semi-structured interviews were the primary source of

data generation in this research study. Such interviews made up of a combination of a few closed-ended but largely open-ended questions were beneficial in generating detailed information about themes that had already been identified as important by the researcher.


These themes were:

- The dynamics that were involved in introducing an internal mechanism to address sexual harassment
- The steps taken to curb sexual harassment/disseminate information about the Code after its adoption
- The manner in which real issues were dealt with by the inquiry committee
- The challenges faced and lessons learnt by these organizations at each of the stages mentioned above
- The best/most effective practices of these companies at each of the stages mentioned above

The open-ended nature of the questions was also useful in giving the respondent space to share relevant but unanticipated information. The flexible nature of in-depth interviewing thus made it possible to both probe informants in order to get them to clarify or elaborate upon their responses and to take up and pursue other lines of investigation as they arose.

### **Interview Subjects**

Interviews were conducted with a range of individuals in each organization. Those who were involved in the processes surrounding the Code's adoption in their respective organizations, worked in the human resource department and made up the inquiry committee were especially targeted. Conversations were also held with random employees regarding the extent to which they were familiar with the Code. These individuals also provided additional insights regarding the dynamics surrounding it in their respective organizations. ARL was the only organization in which a complainant was



interviewed. Some of the complainants in the other organizations were unwilling to share their experiences while others had left the organization.



# PROFILES OF THE ORGANIZATIONS

Brief profiles of each of the organizations that were studied are given below. Each profile gives an overview of the nature, size and history of the organization, and pays particular attention to the male-female employee ratios, the nature of the positions occupied by women in the organization and the period when the organizations adopted the Code. The information about the process each organization went through as it adopted and subsequently implemented the Code is not mentioned in these profiles but presented in an integrated fashion in the subsequent sections of this report.



## ATTOCK REFINERY LIMITED

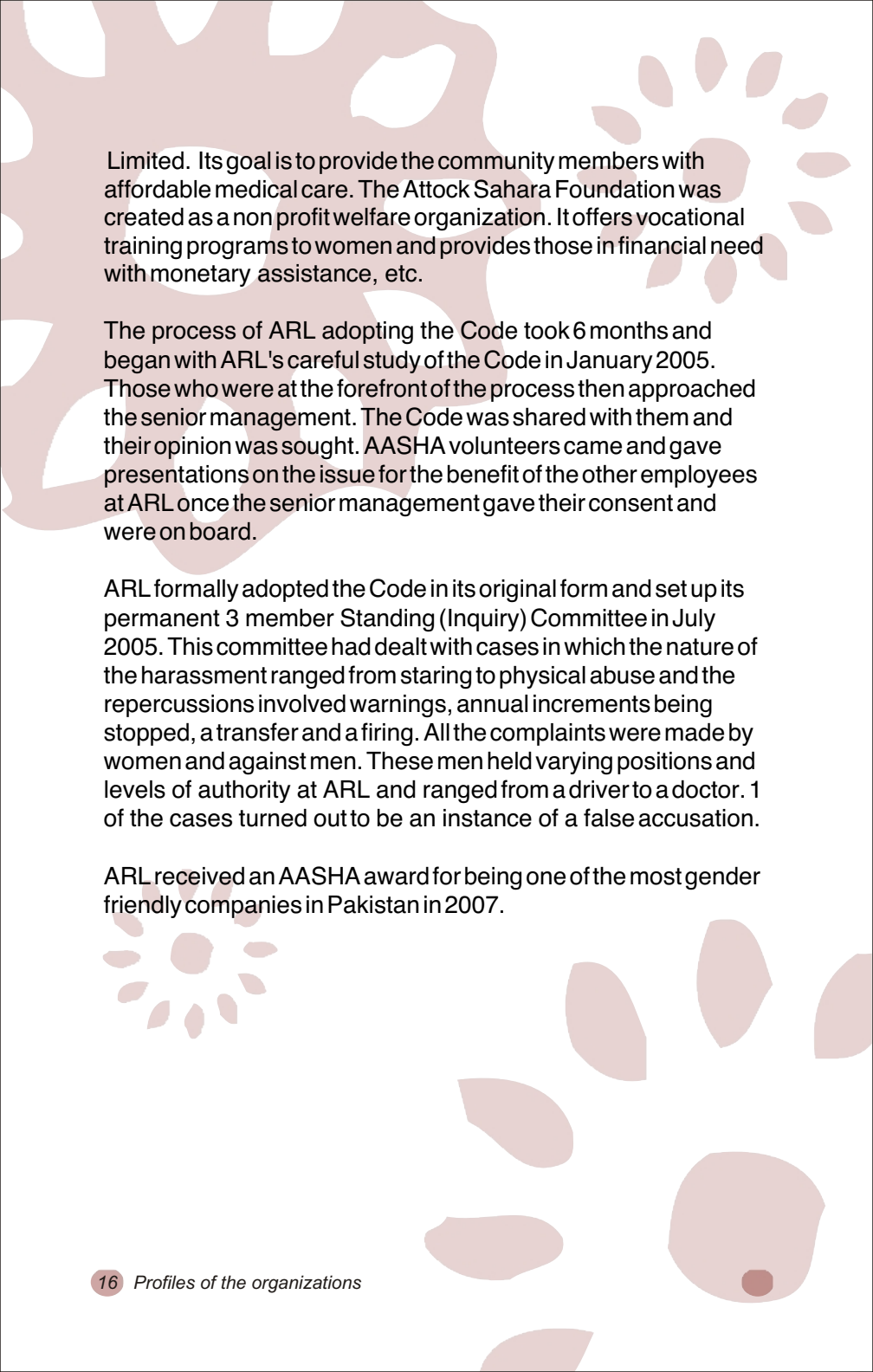
Attock Refinery Limited (ARL) is a member of the Attock Group of Companies and became the first refinery of the region when it was set up in the area of Morgah in Rawalpindi in 1922. This area has become a city within a city with the passage of time and apart from housing its offices and processing plants it also contains a number of facilities for its staff members that include but are not limited to a housing colony, schools, a college, a hospital, parks, bakeries, general stores, etc. These facilities have encouraged a number of employees to remain with ARL for a long period of time and many find themselves to be second or even third generation workers.

ARL has close to 1500 employees. 20% of these are women and 12% of these women occupy management positions. Tehseen Siddiqui is one of these women. She is the Assistant Manager (Staff Affairs) and has been with ARL for 30 years. Tehseen Siddiqui, with the support of the senior management and her colleagues such as Ejaz Hussain Randhawa, Assistant General Manager (Operations), who has also been at ARL for 30 years and Salman Tariq, Manager (Maintenance), who has been with ARL for 25 years played a key role in ARL formally adopting the Code in 2005.

ARL's adoption of the Code also meant automatic adoption for two of its subsidiaries, the Attock Hospital (Pvt) Limited and the Attock Sahara Foundation<sup>2</sup>. ARL subscribes to a number of core values and social responsibility is one of them. It is within this context that ARL substantially developed the already existing health care centre in 1998 and named it the Attock Hospital (Pvt)

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<sup>2</sup>The figure of total number of employees at ARL include the employees working at the Attock Hospital (Pvt) Limited and the Attock Sahara Foundation.



Limited. Its goal is to provide the community members with affordable medical care. The Attock Sahara Foundation was created as a non profit welfare organization. It offers vocational training programs to women and provides those in financial need with monetary assistance, etc.

The process of ARL adopting the Code took 6 months and began with ARL's careful study of the Code in January 2005. Those who were at the forefront of the process then approached the senior management. The Code was shared with them and their opinion was sought. AASHA volunteers came and gave presentations on the issue for the benefit of the other employees at ARL once the senior management gave their consent and were on board.

ARL formally adopted the Code in its original form and set up its permanent 3 member Standing (Inquiry) Committee in July 2005. This committee had dealt with cases in which the nature of the harassment ranged from staring to physical abuse and the repercussions involved warnings, annual increments being stopped, a transfer and a firing. All the complaints were made by women and against men. These men held varying positions and levels of authority at ARL and ranged from a driver to a doctor. 1 of the cases turned out to be an instance of a false accusation.

ARL received an AASHA award for being one of the most gender friendly companies in Pakistan in 2007.





The Chemical Company

## BASF PAKISTAN PVT. LIMITED

BASF is a chemical company that began in a small town in Germany in 1865 but that now has branches and factories in all the regions of the world. BASF Pakistan was established in 1969. It has its headquarters in Karachi and branch offices in Islamabad, Lahore, Faisalabad, Sialkot and Kasur. Its two factories, one of which was established in 2009, are located on the outskirts of Karachi in Landhi. These factories receive raw material and construct chemicals which are then primarily provided to textile mills.

A number of Germans worked in BASF Pakistan in its initial decades but it is now solely made up of Pakistani employees. This includes the Managing Director of BASF Pakistan. BASF currently employs around 200 people in Karachi and Landhi. Approximately 10% of these employees are women. A small proportion of these women are employed as receptionists or occupy secretarial/assistant positions. A larger proportion occupies decision making/management positions. Two of these women head their own departments (Human Resources and Quality Control). Shahana Kaukab, who heads Human Resources, revealed that apart from a receptionist and the Managing Director's assistant, BASF Pakistan had no women employees when she joined the organization 20 years ago. Highly committed to gender equity, she took the lead in encouraging the hiring of capable women in as many departments as possible and they can now be seen in departments such as Human Resources, Quality Control, Public Relations and Marketing. There have also been a small number

of women textile engineers working at BASF in the past.

Once hired, BASF ensures that women get equal opportunities in training and career development. One of their former purchase managers, for instance, who had joined the organization immediately after completing her education, is now working as a Director in BASF Germany. Apart from ensuring equal opportunity in hiring and training, BASF has also instituted a number of women friendly policies. Women employees at BASF get maternity leave and are dropped home if they have to work late. Shahana Kaukab's interest in gender equity at the workplace has also resulted in her convening a couple of projects that surveyed the state of women employees in industries/the private sector.

While a couple of women in senior positions at BASF have had to deal with some resentment from men because of their being the latter's supervisors and another couple of women have faced some rudeness from factory workers on work related matters, no cases of sexual harassment (where the perpetrator was an employee at BASF) have been reported so far. The few cases of sexual harassment that have come up have involved perpetrators working in other organizations. The woman who faced this harassment (which took the form of inappropriate phone calls) dealt with one case on her own and deferred the other matter to a colleague who she thought would be useful in resolving the issue.

BASF's commitment to gender equity and a positive working environment resulted in their adopting the Code in its original format when they were approached by AASHA in 2002. This initiative was also in line with "mutual respect," one of the core values of their company, and was highly appreciated by BASF Germany, leading to a write up in the annual German report. BASF Pakistan also won the AASHA-WEB COP recognition award for gender sensitive management in 2003 and the AASHA award for being one of the most gender friendly companies in Pakistan in 2007.



## GEO TELEVISION

GEO television was created in 2002. Its headquarters are based in Karachi and it has smaller offices in all the major cities of the country. GEO employs individuals who occupy a range of positions in a variety of departments. Human resources, sales, finance, product development, research, production, news reporting, anchoring, and technical support are just some examples of the diverse components that ultimately come together in one space to make GEO function. Team GEO is made up of 2081 employees. 10% of these employees are women and 40% of these women occupy managerial positions.

According to Syed Zulfiqar Ali, the Head of Human Resources, Mir Ibrahim Rehman, the CEO of GEO, had a vision to create a positive working environment where there would be zero tolerance for sexual harassment. AASHA's Code coincided with their interests and they adopted it in its original format when they were approached by AASHA in 2003. The Code was customized to suit their organization's set up and needs in July 2005.

The inquiry committee at GEO has processed cases in which the nature of the harassment has included behaviours such as inappropriate comments/personal sharing, touching and demands for sexual favours by men. A significant number of cases also revolved around incidences where two people were involved in a personal relationship and there was suspicion surrounding the extent to which the relationship was consensual and whether that relationship had been forged because one of the parties had promised the other some kind of preferential treatment or threatened them with some kind of

negative ramification.

The 3-5 member inquiry committee (that included some permanent and some rotational members) investigated each of these cases and the disciplinary actions ranged from warnings in cases where the violation was comparatively minor or where there was insufficient evidence (but the committee thought the accused was at fault) to employees being fired. Almost all the complaints were made by women and against men except one case where people sitting in a van felt harassed and subsequently made a complaint against two women who were also in the van and were allegedly engaged in inappropriate public displays of affection. A small percentage of the cases have involved women falsely accusing men of harassment in order to get back at the men. An overview of these cases reveals no pattern as far as the profile of the perpetrator is concerned. The latter have held varying positions and levels of authority at GEO that have ranged from a make up artist to someone in a management position.

Team GEO has adopted a very aggressive policy in creating a gender friendly environment and in demonstrating zero tolerance for sexual harassment. A number of individuals at GEO bear testament to this. In the words of one: "they drum [the Code] into our heads." Another individual shared that she had worked with many newspapers and in many television departments in the past but found GEO to be the only organization that had such systems in place. And they were good systems, she added. Team GEO's endeavours in this context have contributed to their getting positive results in an employee perception survey that was conducted for the year 2007. The survey results revealed that 85% of their employees believe that GEO practiced equal opportunity employment and that 71% of the employees were satisfied with the gender sensitivity found at GEO. Team GEO's practices have resulted in their winning the AASHA-WEBCOP recognition award for gender sensitive management in 2003 and the AASHA award for being one of the most gender friendly companies in Pakistan in 2007.

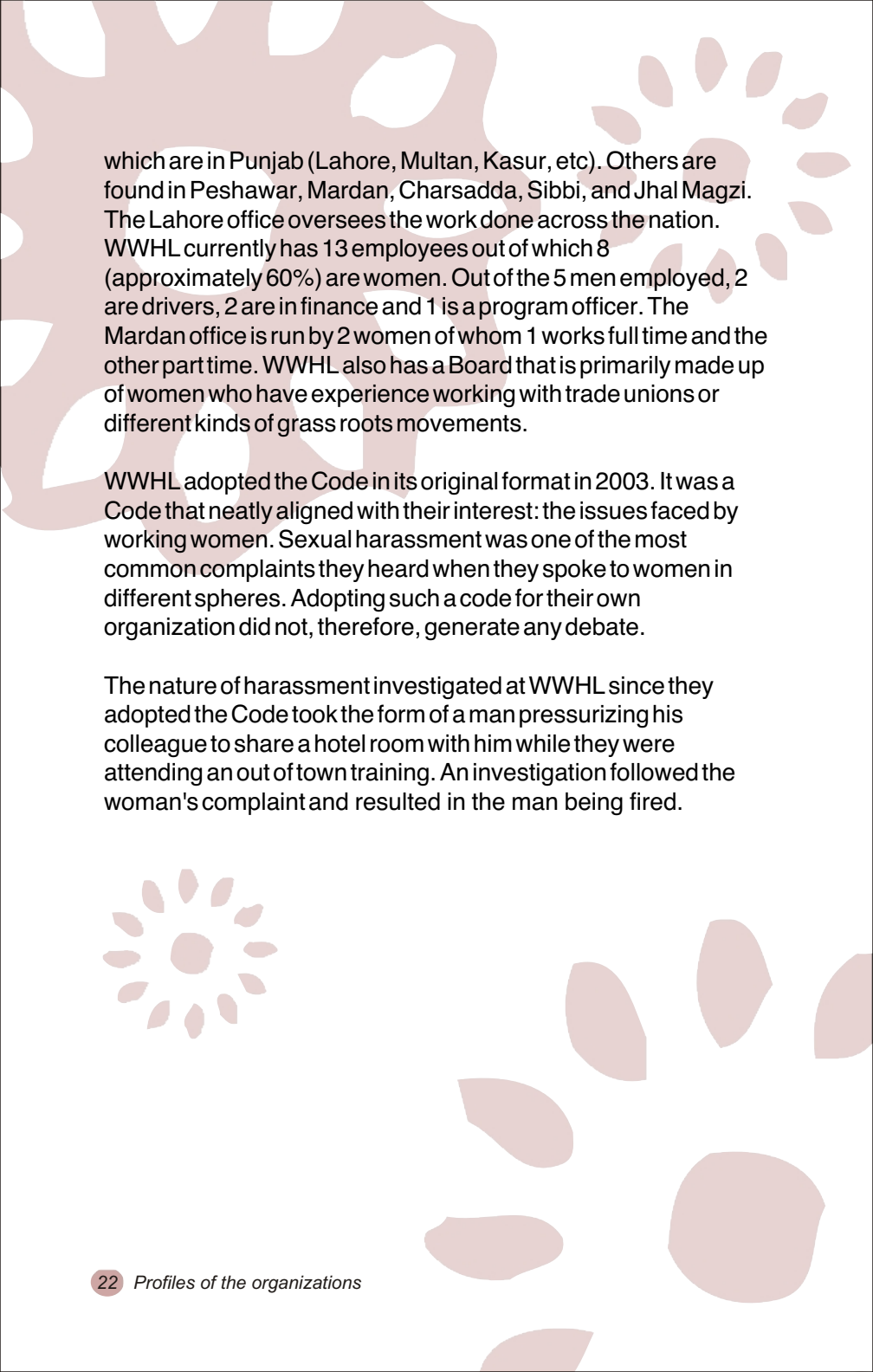


## WOMEN WORKER'S HELP LINE

The Women Worker's Help Line (WWHL) is a woman headed non governmental organization that was established in Lahore in the year 2000 by the current chairperson, Azra Shad, to create “a socially just, economically equitable, politically aware and gender-sensitive society.” It aims to take care of the social and economic issues of working women, particularly those who work in factories, brick kilns or as domestic workers and whose economic conditions add to their vulnerabilities and marginalization in society. The WWHL's General secretary, Bushra Khaliq, shares that the class issue is a core issue for them and draws parallels between their work and that of socialist feminists.

It is within this larger context that WWHL engages in a range of activities that include but are not limited to: pushing for appropriate legislation for the protection of the rights of home based workers, facilitating women's political education, encouraging their political participation, increasing their awareness of their legal rights and introducing different kinds of community development programs based on the needs that the community members identify. Literacy centres are an example of the kinds of programs they initiate in the different communities or units that they work in.

WWHL has its head office in Lahore and a smaller office in Mardan. It currently works in 28 units across the country, most of



which are in Punjab (Lahore, Multan, Kasur, etc). Others are found in Peshawar, Mardan, Charsadda, Sibbi, and Jhal Magzi. The Lahore office oversees the work done across the nation. WWHL currently has 13 employees out of which 8 (approximately 60%) are women. Out of the 5 men employed, 2 are drivers, 2 are in finance and 1 is a program officer. The Mardan office is run by 2 women of whom 1 works full time and the other part time. WWHL also has a Board that is primarily made up of women who have experience working with trade unions or different kinds of grass roots movements.

WWHL adopted the Code in its original format in 2003. It was a Code that neatly aligned with their interest: the issues faced by working women. Sexual harassment was one of the most common complaints they heard when they spoke to women in different spheres. Adopting such a code for their own organization did not, therefore, generate any debate.

The nature of harassment investigated at WWHL since they adopted the Code took the form of a man pressurizing his colleague to share a hotel room with him while they were attending an out of town training. An investigation followed the woman's complaint and resulted in the man being fired.

# LESSONS DRAWN FROM THE CASE STUDIES

The organizations that adopted the Code took a number of steps and considered a number of factors that facilitated the successful implementation of the Code in their respective organizations. The steps they took and the factors they considered are mentioned below and can be a source of learning for other organizations.

## **1. Support and Ownership of the Code by the Management/Administration**

The support of the top leadership is not only a necessary prerequisite for the adoption of the Code but also facilitates its implementation. The top management in each of the four companies supported the Code.

The Code was directly adopted by the WWHL management. But in the cases of those organizations where the initiative was taken by the personnel in human resources department, the senior management was taken into confidence and the work continued only when they were on board.

Ensuring that the management owns the Code is a very important step. Letting employees know that the management supports the Code and is intolerant of harassment is another important step. Managers or CEOs can share their commitment towards having a safe and harassment free environment and tell their employees that they have an active policy in a variety of ways. Syed Zulfiqar Ali at GEO sent this message across by attending a new employee sexual harassment awareness session (details of the nature of this session given below). The mere presence of those in leading positions at events such as

these sends a very clear message across. Verbal articulation further reinforces it. Yet another strategy to show employees that the management backed the Code and that various individuals shared was the management letting the employees know without naming names that a case of sexual harassment had been reported and the perpetrator had been punished. That too, they claimed, sent out a very strong message, i.e., that the management was committed towards creating a healthy, harassment free environment where people could work with dignity.

The worst thing the management or the inquiry committee could do, they claimed, was not take cases of sexual harassment seriously. Ignoring or mismanaging a case or letting a single perpetrator walk free would set a very bad precedent, immediately lead to the employees losing confidence in the organization's commitment to the issue and significantly decrease the probability of their reporting incidences of harassment in the future.

## **2. Familiarity with the Code**

Employee familiarity with the Code, knowing what sexual harassment is, who to go to in order to file a complaint, etc. is critical to its successful implementation and cannot be overstated. Most of the organizations that were studied adopted a combination of mechanisms to ensure their employees familiarity with the Code. These included:

- Including the Code in new employee welcome packs. Team GEO developed a brochure that defined sexual harassment and highlighted the forms it could take. The brochure also explained what people could do if they faced sexual harassment and mentioned the names of the members of their inquiry committee so that everyone knew who to approach if the need arose.
- Presentations for employees. Presentations on the issue of sexual harassment were held at various times



and for various purposes in the organizations. Initial presentations were held when the Code was adopted. Many of these presentations were made jointly with AASHA. The purpose of these presentations was to raise awareness about the issue of sexual harassment in general and to inform employees that they had adopted the Code, what the Code entailed and what choices employees had if they ever faced sexual harassment in the organization. These presentations became a means to inform employees about the Code and also conveyed the management's intolerance for sexual harassment in the organization.

Team GEO chose to institute presentations and continue using them as an awareness raising tool. They hold compulsory awareness sessions for new employees 3-4 times a year. The participants are first told what sexual harassment is and the different forms it may take and are then informed of the existence of the Code in their organization, what they can do if they face harassment and whom they should speak to in order to discuss or report the matter. The sessions are designed to be interactive. Role plays take place, employees who have worked there for a while and who may be attending the sessions are encouraged to share any incidents of harassment that they might have faced in the organization and the new employees are encouraged to ask questions and air their concerns. Such sessions are not only important for the role they play in raising people's awareness about the issue and how to deal with harassment if the need arises, but are also important in the role they play in lessening the sense of the issue being taboo. An increased comfort in talking about the issue will increase the probability of their reporting harassment if they face it.

ARL also relied upon presentations to remind all their employees of the values they stand for. They held a values induction month a few years ago and used that as an opportunity to invite a guest speaker from AASHA who then spoke about sexual harassment

and the Code. This served as a refresher to the employees who had already been provided with a copy of the Code in their welcome packs when they had joined the organization.

- Posters, Banners: Organizations have relied upon visible tools such as posters and banners to remind their employees that there is zero tolerance for sexual harassment in their organization. Team GEO is in the habit of putting up posters in different locations of their premises. These posters define sexual harassment and tell employees what to do if they face such harassment. Similarly, ARL has put up banners condemning sexual harassment and promoting a healthy work environment when they held their values induction month.
- Use of LAN/Blackboard: It is extremely important that all employees have access to the Code at all times. It is in this context that most of these organizations made the Code accessible by uploading it on their respective internal systems. The names of the members of the inquiry committee were also put in the system.
- Emails: BASF used the email as one of the means through which employees were informed about the adoption of the Code. Team GEO also uses the email to periodically remind people about the existence of the Code.
- Individual meetings: The human resource manager or the head of an organization in a couple of the organizations briefly mentioned the Code when they had one-on-one meetings with new employees. All the relevant policies of the organization were brought up in this meeting and the Code got mentioned in that context.

The importance of employee familiarity with the existence of the Code and its content cannot be overstated. Reliance upon a *combination* of formal techniques to introduce new employees to the contents of the Code and to periodically remind all employees

about it is a better strategy than relying upon any one technique, particularly if it is an informal one like a human resource manager verbally mentioning it during a meeting with a new employee. The manager may not remember to do so every time or a new manager may not think of mentioning it at all. The benefit of having multiple strategies, especially if they are formally instituted, is that they minimize the risk of any employee missing out on learning about the existence and contents of the Code.

### **3. Clarity Regarding who to Contact for Reporting**

A number of individuals in the studied organizations stated the importance of ensuring that the channel of communication be clear for all the employees in an organization so that they knew exactly whom to go to in order to discuss an issue or to report a case. These organizations used the mechanisms described above to inform their employees of who the members of the inquiry committee were.

In addition to this, some of the human resource managers/heads of the organizations also mentioned that they encouraged an open door policy and repeatedly told their employees that they could share their problems with whomever they felt comfortable speaking with: their immediate supervisor or anyone in the human resource department or in the senior management.

### **4. Having the Right People on the Inquiry Committee**

Deciding who to have on the 3 member inquiry committee requires some thought. The inquiry committee members in these organizations were consciously chosen on the basis of a number of criteria. These members had a reputation for being neutral (they would not automatically take any one side or show any bias towards people of any sex, economic group, education level, etc), fair and non controversial. They would practice what they preached, have the ability to maintain confidentiality and possess a strong commitment towards fair play and justice. Furthermore, all the employees interviewed mentioned that they found the members of their inquiry committee to be very

approachable. Some members were also chosen because in addition to the characteristics mentioned above, they had also been with the organization for many years and knew how it worked or they had worked in different departments within the same organization.

The Code requires at least 1 committee member to be a woman. WWHL and GEO had more than one woman as a committee member. The latter had one senior level woman and one middle level woman in their committee. The common opinion was that the complainant might find the middle level woman to be less intimidating.

Apart from its permanent members, GEO also had 1-2 rotational and if the need arose, short term situational members. For instance, if the case involved employees working in another town, the human resource person, manager or any other person with a comprehensive understanding of the workings of that office could be asked to be a part of the committee while the case was being investigated by the head office in Karachi. Rotational members, on the other hand, involved individuals who were asked to be a part of the committee for a year or two. Team GEO believes that people working in different departments of the larger organization can have different perspectives and different insights to offer and that is one of the main reasons why their committee is usually made up of both permanent and rotational members. The latter are also chosen on the basis of their possessing the desirable characteristics mentioned above.

## **5. Maintaining Confidentiality**

The inquiry committee's commitment to maintaining confidentiality is critical as it facilitates people's comfort in approaching them. Employees will not report cases if they believe that the members of a committee will not maintain confidentiality or if these members are careless and discuss the case with people who are not directly involved in the process.

The members of the inquiry committee shared that they did their best to ensure that they were not responsible for feeding the gossip mill. They only shared the details of the case with each other. In instances where they had to involve other employees in order to get specific or additional information about the accused, the complainant and/or the incident under question, they only shared minimal information, that which they had to in order to get relevant information in return. They also told everyone they had contact with to keep whatever information they had to themselves and not to share it with their colleagues.

It is also important to note that some of interviews took place without the interviewees being told why they were being asked for certain information. While this may not be possible in all cases or with all interviewees, members of the inquiry committee must consciously think about *how* to extract relevant information so that the maximum level of confidentiality can be ensured.

## **6. Flexibility in Approach**

The Code states that sexual harassment can be dealt with informally or formally. An informal manner involves the complainant sharing an issue verbally or in writing and the issue being resolved through mediation or counselling. The complaint can be made directly to the immediate supervisor or the inquiry committee and can be resolved by either party. However, a serious case should result in the matter being forwarded to the inquiry committee and lead to a formal investigation.

Different organizations have adopted different approaches when dealing with cases of sexual harassment. One of the organizations, for instance, strongly leans towards using an informal approach. They have a permanent inquiry committee, but those making the complaints are not required to put down the complaint in writing and there are no formal sessions where the complainant, the accused, and the employees who may provide relevant additional information are interviewed one after the other by all the committee members. There is no formal

showdown. Information is primarily sought through indirect means and a formal record of the incident is not always kept. Another organization feels strongly about handling all reported cases in a formal manner. The complaint is taken in writing, a formal investigation takes place and there is a written record of each and every step of the process, including the prescribed disciplinary action.

A difference in approach is also witnessed when it comes to determining the repercussions of sexual harassment. One organization, for instance, shows a preference for rehabilitation and giving people second chances regardless of the nature or extent of the harassment. They do not believe that terminating people from their job is a solution as that person will likely go and create problems elsewhere. The punishment many perpetrators were given in this organization were accompanied by warnings that they would be fired if another complaint was made against them. In some cases the perpetrator was asked to write a letter in which he admitted to the sexual harassment and stated that he ought to be fired if he misbehaved again. Another organization strongly believes that anyone found guilty of sexual harassment ought to be fired regardless of the nature of the harassment.

A look at the approach different organizations have used to deal with reported cases and the form the disciplinary action has taken illustrates that the standard Code has been interpreted in a particular way in a few of these organizations. Some of them showed a clear preference to take one route over the other in the majority of the cases they dealt with.

The lesson for organizations currently adopting the Code is to become aware that cases can be handled and punishments can be meted out in a range of ways and that leaning only one way in each and every case can set a precedent, and subsequently create a tradition, that may not be the best one for each and every case. A flexibility in one's approach where the manner in which a case is approached/investigated and the nature of the

disciplinary action taken depends upon the nature of the case and other pertinent factors is better than rigidity.

### **7. Keeping Records**

Records outlining the nature of the harassment and the manner in which the cases were handled were kept in most of these organizations. Records can help the concerned departments get a good sense of the prevalence of sexual harassment in the organization and the forms it takes. A subsequent analysis can then lead to the development of relevant strategies to reduce the problem. Bushra Khaliq at WWHL rightly pointed out that formal records provide the grounds for change.

### **8. Dealing with Cases in a Timely Manner**

The Code contains specific guidelines regarding the time frame within which the complainant should submit a detailed statement to the inquiry committee (2 weeks), the time within which the accused should respond to it (another 2 weeks), and the maximum amount of time the committee should take to investigate the matter (3 months). The inquiry committees in these organizations did their best to resolve reported cases in a timely manner. They said that doing so was often a challenge because some cases required an investigation that was very time consuming and they found it difficult to make out the time while also fulfilling their daily obligations at work. However, they all emphasized the importance of resolving cases as quickly as possible as delays on their part de-motivated the complainant. In some cases, delays can also leave space for the person facing sexual harassment to begin being harassed by senior officials if they are friends with the accused. A gender sensitive committee that resolves the matter after a thorough investigation but within a prescribed amount of time can prevent or reduce the potential for further abuse.

### **9. Development of a Positive Working Environment**

A couple of the organizations revealed that the presence of a positive working environment, one where all the employees have

respect for one another regardless of their sex, has served as a deterrent to sexual harassment in their organization. Employees at ARL and BASF claim that they are currently enjoying the fruit of the efforts put in by their managements in the past. Those making up the management, they claim, were not only strong role models themselves thereby indirectly sending a message out regarding how people ought to behave and interact with one another but also groomed the staff members to meet a particular standard. Shahana Kaukab related that the Managing Director working at BASF at the time she joined the organization kept reinforcing the idea that disrespect was the only thing that would not be tolerated within the organization.

Iffat Zahra, the Quality Management Executive at BASF, commented on the continuance of a positive working environment and shared that when an organization has a strong organizational culture, new employees are more likely to change themselves to fit in rather than disrupt it. They will know that not adopting it will lead to repercussions. However, effort is required for the positive working environment to remain positive or for a working environment to further improve:

- The adoption of the Code and the dissemination of its content through multiple mediums can facilitate the development/reinforcement of a positive working environment. This initial step will result in the employees knowing what kind of behaviour is unacceptable in their organization.
- Reinforcing the message of zero tolerance for sexual harassment in the organization after the Code has been adopted is a very necessary second step and can be done through emails, posters, awareness sessions for the staff, statements by the management, etc.
- The seriousness with which an inquiry committee takes up a case also sends out a clear message of what kind of behaviour an organization will and will not tolerate.

## **10. Employee Selection**



Human resource personnel in both BASF and GEO commented upon the importance of being alert when hiring people. The personnel at GEO, for instance, mentioned that a number of problems had been created when their decision to hire someone had been influenced by the recommendation of a staff member. In many cases, the staff member had been in a relationship or had been desirous of one with the newly hired person. The staff member whose recommendation was taken up subsequently felt that since he had done the other person a favour in getting her a job, he was in a position to demand sexual favours from her. The personnel at GEO shared that a stricter hiring process or being conscious of this factor when determining whether someone should be hired or not is one way of avoiding potential complications.

Shahana Kaukab at BASF also highlighted the importance of careful hiring. While people who may sexually harass others fit no social profile, Shahana Kaukab strongly believed that if anyone in the hiring committee got an inkling of a job candidate having the potential to misbehave in the future, that factor had to be taken into consideration very seriously as it was often difficult to fire people once they had been hired.

### **11. Awareness of the Myths Surrounding Sexual Harassment**

The myths surrounding sexual harassment, for instance, a woman who gets harassed must have done something to incite it, have been internalized as “truths” by many simply by virtue of growing up in a patrilineal society. It is critical that the members of an organization, some of whom may end up being a part of the inquiry committee, are aware of these myths and understand them as such.

Some of the employees at the organizations that were studied did make comments such as “when something happens it is partially the girls fault” and “fashionable and modern girls are likely to be harassed, whereas those who dress decently

(gesture made towards own headscarf) never have a problem.” Listening to the stories of how sexual harassment cases were dealt with by the various inquiry committees also revealed that a small proportion of the members of these committees gave weightage to a complainant's background in terms of her relationships with men when trying to determine whether or not she had been harassed, the idea being that a woman who has had relationships with men in the past is less likely to feel harassed or may have done something to invite the behaviour.

A clear understanding of what sexual harassment is and what the myths surrounding it are, that include but are not limited to understanding that all women are vulnerable to harassment regardless of how they dress and that a woman who is facing unwanted sexual attention is being harassed no matter how many relationships she has had is essential for the inquiry committee and will help them reach fair conclusions. Given the strength and pervasiveness of these myths, it is very important that they be discredited in any sexual harassment awareness raising sessions that are (ideally periodically) held in the organization.

## **12. The Importance of Institutionalizing Structures**

Some of the organizations that were studied did not have a high number of reported cases. The reasons for this that were highlighted by them included their being a woman headed organization (WWHL), their having more women employees than men (WWHL), the presence of a family like atmosphere at work (BASF) where most people knew everyone else as most resided in the same colony and the role this played in preventing people from misbehaving (ARL), the presence of women in decision making positions (BASF), and the presence of confident and vocal women in an organization (BASF). The argument presented to explain the very last point was that men would think twice before harassing confident and vocal women and that even if such women were harassed, they would be able to handle the matter on their own and would not feel the need

to report it.

Some of the factors mentioned above, along with others, such as and there being a strong social network of information sharing among women in an organization where those who had been there longer guided those who had joined the organization more recently, were also drawn upon by some employees of the organizations in order to explain why they did not do more than what they did in order to disseminate information about the Code among their staff members.

Factors such as a higher proportion of women in comparison to men, the organization being headed by a woman, confident women employees, employees sharing policies with each other on an informal level and so forth must not prevent organizations from developing a systematic and multi thronged strategy of sharing information about the Code with their employees. The factors mentioned above do not guarantee sexual harassment not occurring:

- Sexual harassment can take place in women headed organizations, as seen in WWHL
- Sexual harassment can take place in organizations where the women outnumber the men, as seen in WWHL
- The presence of a family like atmosphere does not prevent sexual harassment from occurring, as seen in ARL
- Rather than impeding misconduct, a family like atmosphere can, hypothetically, prevent women from reporting sexual harassment if it does occur. Fears of not being taken seriously and of family relationships being damaged can crop up when the harasser is someone the person and his/her family knows at a social level.
- Evidence from Pakistan and from other parts of the world makes it clear that women in management or decision making positions can be harassed by men in their

organization.

- Evidence from Pakistan and from other parts of the world makes it clear that confident and vocal women in good positions in an organization can be harassed by men in their organization.

While the strategies an organization chooses to deploy in order to disseminate information about the Code will be and ought to be shaped by the structure of the organization for instance, the number of staff the strategy must always be formal and comprehensive. Not having formal and institutionalized mechanisms to introduce new employees to the Code and to remind all employees of its content on a regular basis results in people falling in the cracks; not everyone will end up learning about the content. Instituting formal mechanisms means that the system will continue working even when the committed Human Resource manager upon whose goodwill the system is informally working retires or changes jobs. To sum it up:

- formal systems must exist that lead to a new employee becoming familiar with the Code
- all employees must be periodically reminded of the presence of the Code
- the Code must be displayed in public and be accessible to all employees at all times
- a permanent inquiry committee must be set up and all employees must be aware of who the members of this committee are

The Code has very specific guidelines regarding how an investigation ought to be carried out and so forth. It is the responsibility of every organization to familiarize itself with the Code in order to ensure they are following it in both letter and spirit.

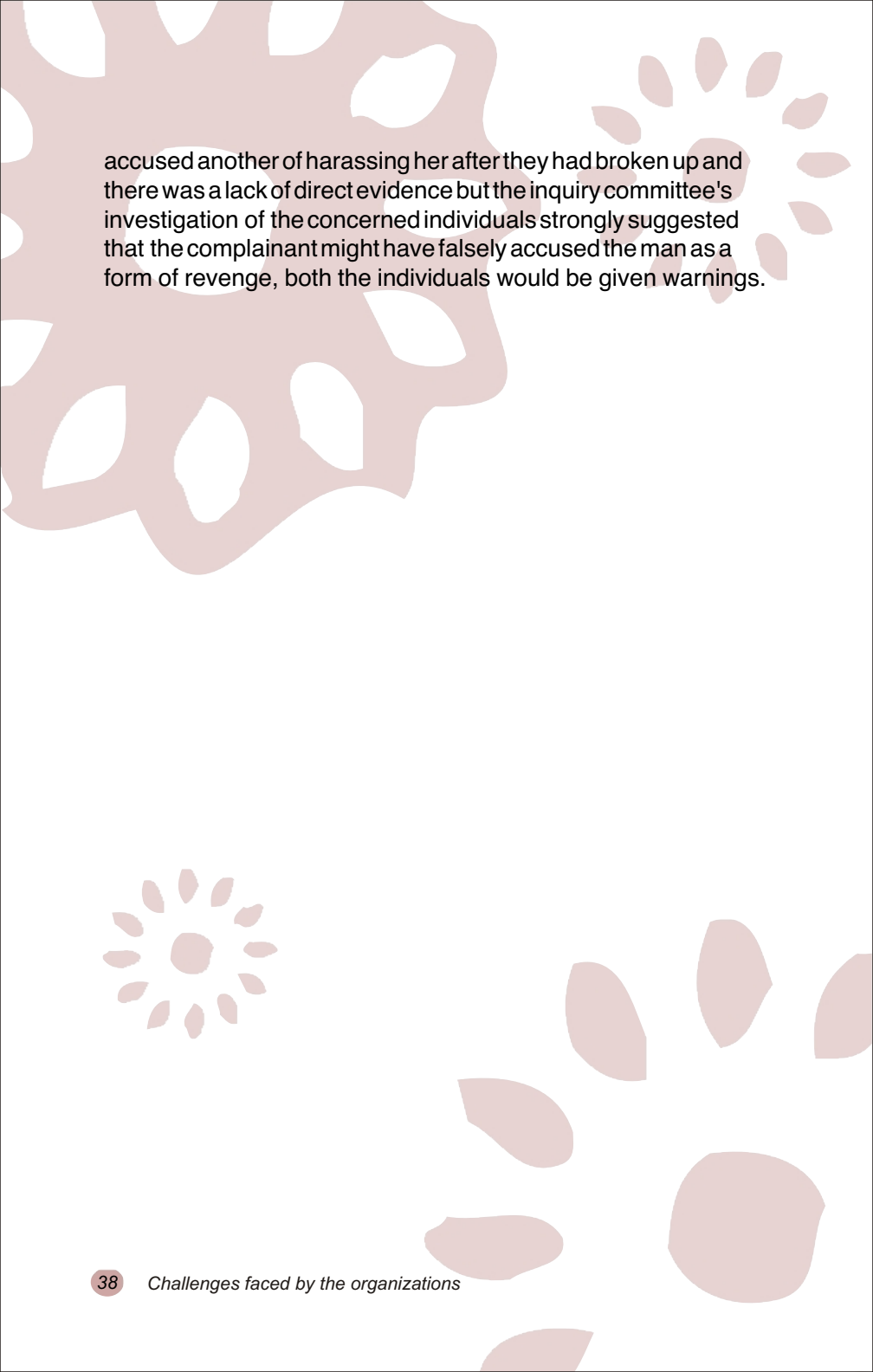
# CHALLENGES FACED BY THE ORGANIZATIONS

The biggest challenge faced by organizations concerned the inquiry process and the difficulty the members of the inquiry committee faced in making a decision in the presence of insufficient and contradictory information. Most inquiry committee members had dealt with cases that were not clear cut and where they ended up using their judgement based on the information they were able to gather through various sources. Cases such as these were highlighted as their sole challenge in the entire process.

Some of the cases that came to the inquiry committee were straight forward. The case WWHL dealt with, where a man made attempts to get a colleague to share a room with him when they were both attending a training out of town, illustrates this. The manager of the hotel, whom the man had also spoken to in attempt to get them one room, corroborated the story and the man himself admitted to doing so in the formal inquiry. Corroboration was more difficult in other cases.

Some of the cases took the form of “he said-she said.” It was a matter of one person's claim against another's with no evidence of any kind. The inquiry committee would then attempt to shed light on the matter in other ways, by gathering information about both the employees, their performance, personalities, and so forth in order to determine the likelihood of the incident occurring. A complete lack of evidence and corroboration often resulted in the accused being given a warning and being clearly told that the organization had no tolerance for such and such behaviours, and that he or she needed to be very careful in the future.

Some cases were particularly complicated because the concerned individuals had been in a relationship. If one person



accused another of harassing her after they had broken up and there was a lack of direct evidence but the inquiry committee's investigation of the concerned individuals strongly suggested that the complainant might have falsely accused the man as a form of revenge, both the individuals would be given warnings.

# IMPACT REPORTED BY THE ORGANIZATIONS

## **1. The presence of a system to deal with complaints in a logical manner**

Interviews conducted with various members of the inquiry committee revealed that they appreciated the Code for the role it played in helping them set up systems that they now use to combat sexual harassment in their respective organizations. The Code, many claim, has prevented them from handling cases in an ad hoc manner. They have set up committees made up of appropriate people and they have concrete guidelines regarding the process of conducting investigations. In the words of one member of an inquiry committee: "I know exactly what steps to take if someone comes to me with a complaint."

## **2. Builds confidence of employees**

The interviews revealed that the presence of the Code gave women a feeling of protection. Knowing that certain behaviours were unacceptable and that the organization would take their complaints seriously if they faced any kind of harassment increased their confidence level. Learning about what they could do if they faced sexual harassment and whom they could go to in order to discuss the matter or file a complaint also gave their confidence a boost and increased the probability of their actually complaining if they faced such behaviour in their respective organizations.

## **3. Gender sensitization and awareness**

Tehseen Siddiqui and Ejaz Hussain Randhawa both claim that the induction of women at ARL has gone up since the adoption of the Code. They share that the reason for this is that the presentations the staff members have sat through since the Code's adoption have sensitized them. They gave an example of one manager who never hired women on non-secretarial positions but who went through an attitude shift after the adoption of the Code and became significantly more gender sensitive and open to hiring women in a variety of departments such as finance, procurement, engineering, etc.



Attock Refinery Limited, a progressive employer, takes concrete measures to ensure a healthy work environment



Employees of ARL working in small groups on the issue of sexual harassment. The more people have an understanding of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, the more conscious they will be about maintaining a healthy work environment.

Although a cause and effect relationship cannot be established, stories shared by the employees of the four organizations strongly suggest that the adoption of the Code and the multiple



mechanisms different organizations have adopted to disseminate its content among its employees have played a role in increasing their gender sensitization/awareness of gender issues. The manager whose story Tehseen Siddiqui and Ejaz Hussain Randhawa share illustrates this, as do the stories below.

A woman working in a human resource department and who was a part of an inquiry committee at the time she was interviewed shared that a young woman once came to her (before their organization adopted the Code) to tell her that she had been sexually harassed. She told the young girl that she should not create a fuss as everyone would blame her. Adopting the Code and sitting through the initial presentations sensitized her and increased her own awareness of the issue so that she now deals with reported cases in a very different way. .



An awareness session on anti sexual harassment legislation with the staff of WW

The story of one young member of Team GEO also illustrates the role information dissemination mechanisms can play in heightening people's understanding of gender issues. Attending the new employee awareness session on sexual harassment resulted in her being able to give a name to a behaviour that had been directed to her in the past and led her to use her subsequent understanding of the dynamics of the issue to spread awareness about it in both her personal and professional spheres.

# IS YOUR BOSS GIVING YOU MORE THAN A 'PAT ON THE SHOULDER'?

**SAFE**  
Safe and Fair Environment

**GEO**  
Green Earth Organisation

EVERYONE, MALE OR FEMALE, has the right to a safe and healthy work environment. It is important that you raise any harassment as soon as possible to protect yourself and your colleagues. Your guarantees that there will be no reprisals, no victimization as a result of the reporting of sexual harassment.

**WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?**

- Unwelcome and unwelcome demands or requests for sexual favors or sexual intercourse
- Receipt of suggestive remarks
- The display of pornography
- The circulation of abusive material
- Inappropriate touching
- Any conduct that creates a hostile, intimidating, hostile, or humiliating working environment for you on the grounds of your sex

**WHAT HAS GEO DONE TO ADDRESS HARASSMENT?**

- Adopted a code of conduct for the workplace
- Implemented a policy prohibiting harassment, sexual or otherwise, in the workplace
- Established an committee to receive and investigate claims of harassment
- Specifically organized workshops on how employees should report their sexual harassment and sexual offenses

**WHAT IS IT? IS YOUR BOSS GIVING YOU MORE THAN A 'PAT ON THE SHOULDER'?**

- Report it to a member of the committee
  - Head Office HR
  - HRD/HRM/HR
  - HRD/HRM/HR
  - HRD/HRM/HR
- Do not retaliate!
- Ask the harasser to stop

**WHAT WILL GEO DO FOR YOU?**

- Take your complaint seriously
- Treat the complainant as confidentially as possible
- Launch an investigation
- Take disciplinary action, up to and including termination, as deemed necessary for the seriousness of the violation of discipline

GEO TV has creatively produced a number of pieces of information to keep their employees informed

#### 4. Awards/recognition

ARL, Team GEO and BASF have received awards from AASHA for being gender friendly companies and having a gender friendly management. BASF has also received formal recognition by their head office in Germany for being the first BASF company to take the initiative of creating a gender sensitive environment.

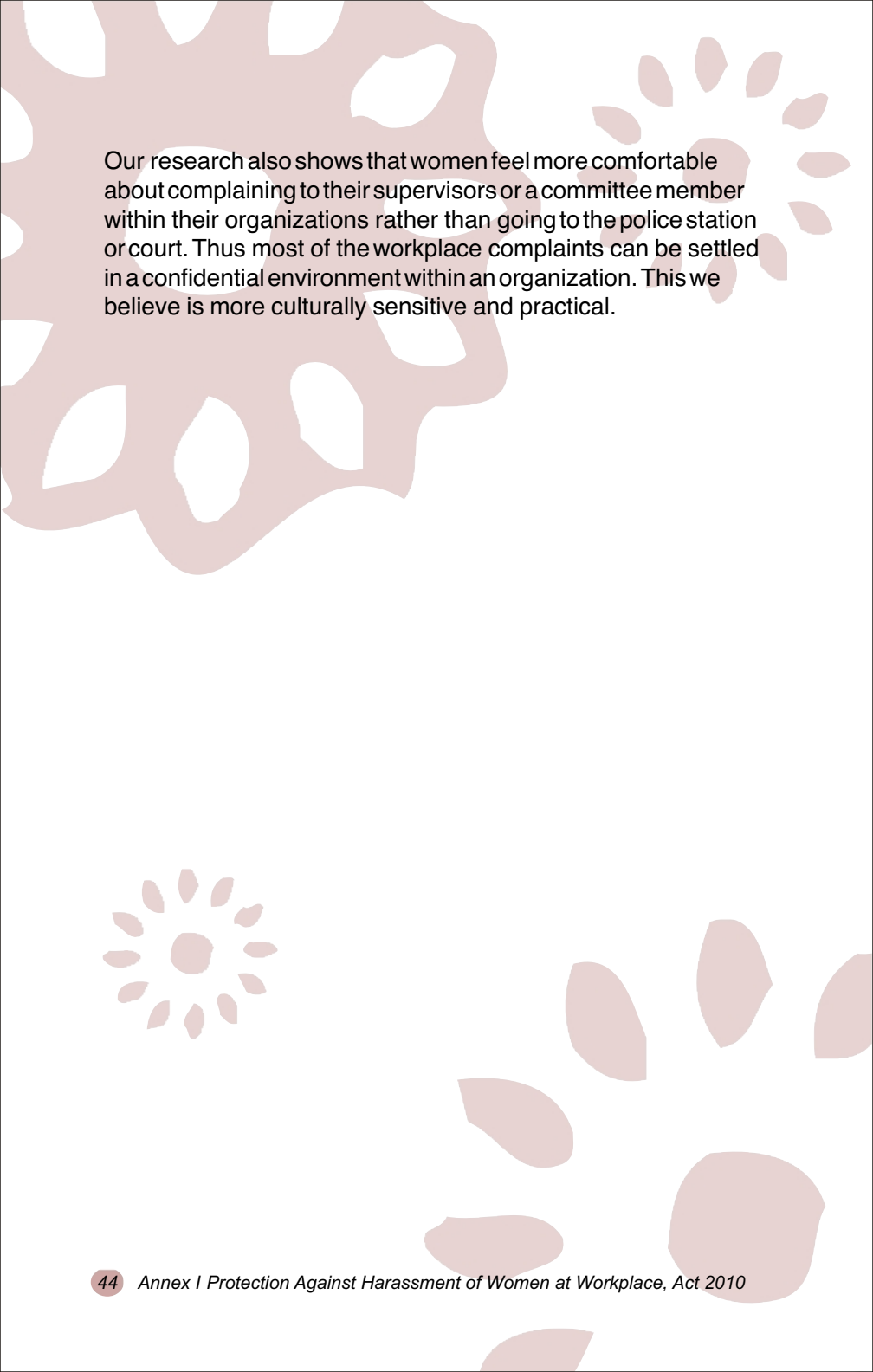
## Annex I

### **Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace, Act 2010**

#### **Salient Features**

- “Protection Against Harassment of women at Workplace Act 2010” is focused on dealing with sexual harassment at workplace in the formal sector.
- It requires every institution, may it be government, private or civil society, to adopt a 'Code of Conduct' prohibiting behavior constituting sexual harassment by employees, both men and women.
- It also instructs organizations to institute a three member Inquiry Committee to address complaints regarding sexual harassment with at least one member being a woman, thus facilitating a self regulatory mechanism within each organization to make their work environment more dignified.
- The Act has a provision for setting up an ombudsperson to take up such complaints, in case an employee feels that the harasser is too senior and the internal committee will not be able to hold him or her accountable.
- If an organization fails to abide by the law, the management can be fined up to Rs. 100,000 and not less than Rs 25,000. The purpose here is not to punish organizations but to motivate them to make their work environment dignified.

Over the last five years AASHA facilitated over 300 private sector organizations to adopt this Code of Conduct and set up internal committees to address the issue. Research results show that it has proved to be quite effective. Several organizations have reported a major positive change in the work environment and an increase in the number of women employees because of it.



Our research also shows that women feel more comfortable about complaining to their supervisors or a committee member within their organizations rather than going to the police station or court. Thus most of the workplace complaints can be settled in a confidential environment within an organization. This we believe is more culturally sensitive and practical.

## Annex II

### Step by Step Instructions on How to Comply with the Law

Now that it is necessary for every organization to comply with the law against sexual harassment, following are the steps that need to be taken immediately. A Code of Conduct has already been prepared in simple language ensuring 100% compliance to the law. This document is far easier to understand and follow than the text of the law itself. The document is ready to be incorporated in your HR policies as it is.

**STEP 1:** Download Code of Conduct from AASHA's website [www.aasha.org.pk](http://www.aasha.org.pk)

**STEP 2:** In a meeting of your senior management take a decision to officially incorporate the Code in your HR policies.

**STEP 3:** Management will appoint a three-member standing Inquiry Committee to handle any complaints of sexual harassment. At least one member should be a woman. It is good to have a representation of CBA (if applicable).

**STEP 4:** Management should also identify a Competent Authority in their organization if not already identified (in most cases it is the CEO or who ever has the hiring/ firing authority).

**STEP 5 :** Management will notify all employees of incorporating of the Code of Conduct in their HR policies, the names, contact information of the three committee members, instructions of approaching any of the committee members in case of a sexual harassment complaint.

**STEP 6:** Management will also post this notification and the full text of the Code on a notice board or any common area in a language understandable by the employees.

(AASHA has printed a set of two posters with full text of the code in English and Urdu. You may request them from AASHA's office. It is quite convenient to frame them and put them up in the office.)

**ONCE YOU HAVE COMPLETED THESE SIX STEPS, YOU HAVE SUCCESSFULLY ADOPTED THE CODE AS PRESCRIBED BY THE LAW.**

The objective of adopting the code is to make the work environment more professional and dignified, which will make the organization more efficient and productive; therefore it is necessary for the management to undertake steps to institutionalize the Code in letter and spirit.

### **The Management should also:**

1. Educate employees regarding the issue of sexual harassment and how to create Zero tolerance for it.
2. Train Inquiry Committee members to conduct their inquiries in a just and sensitive manner.
3. Ensure that due process is undertaken in a fair and just manner. It should intervene if there is any retaliation or black mailing by any party.
4. The Management and the Inquiry Committee should be proactive in taking steps to make the work environment more professional and free of sexual harassment. Issues of sexual harassment are not unusual in organizations as people bring them to work place as a part of their upbringing. It is the responsibility of Managements to have a mechanism in place to handle these cases appropriately.

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