

عورت بااختيار

PAKISTAN'S FIRST
WOMEN'S DIGITAL MAGAZINE

AURAT BA IKHTIYAR

FEBRUARY TO JUNE, 2020



Women Development Department
Government of The Punjab

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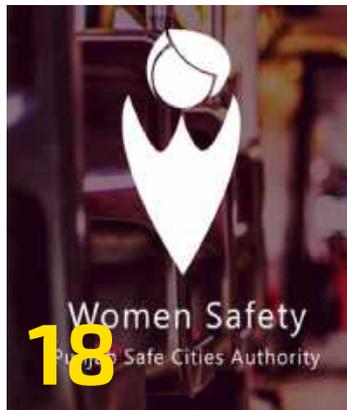
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Message by the Minister for Women Development

“I would like to applaud the Government of Punjab for leading the movement for equal rights of women in the country. Our laws and policies are supporting the socio-economic uplift of women of the province. These laws and policies are in coherence with international best practices and the Government of Pakistan’s international obligations set by CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Research and practice has shown that gender equality must be prioritized by all Government departments, in order for a visible change to be noted. My Department continues to work jointly with other line Departments to remove barriers to women’s empowerment and ensure women’s dignity and safety in all walks of life.”

Ashifa Riaz Fatyana

MINISTER FOR WOMEN DEVELOPMENT

Foreward

“I would like to congratulate my Department for launching the 3rd Digital Magazine. I wish to dedicate this edition of the Digital Magazine to all the hardworking women of my country, who continue to break barriers and fight against stereotypes to improve their lives, while also caring for their families’ welfare amidst these trying times. This novel pandemic has taken a greater toll on women, threatened their safety and well-being, and added to their socio-economic challenges. I have faith, however, that women will emerge stronger and rise in the face of adversity.”

Ambreen Raza

SECRETARY,
WOMEN DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT,
GOVERNMENT OF PUNJAB



Editor's Message

It has been a pleasure to have worked on the Women Development Department's 3rd Digital Magazine. The Department is committed to empowering women of Punjab, improving their socio-economic status and ensuring their prosperity in every walk of life. Through working women hostels and daycare centers in offices, the Department continues to do its part to ensure a greater proportion of women in the formal labor force in Punjab.

This edition of the magazine has been compiled to educate the women of Punjab on Government-run initiatives, especially the Department's toll-free 24/7 helpline aimed to inform women on their rights and privileges. It is hoped that the information herein provided will prove beneficial in addressing women's grievances.

In conclusion, I would like to thank my team for their dedication and hard work in launching this issue of the magazine.



Sajeela Naveed

DIRECTOR,
DIRECTORATE OF WOMEN DEVELOPMENT

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“WOMEN AND GIRLS CAN REACH OUT TO MY DEPARTMENT AND GIVE US THEIR SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVED SERVICE DELIVERY AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN THEIR DISTRICTS.”

Ms. Ashifa Riaz Fatyana, Minister Women Development

”

INSPIRATION



In your opinion, what one thing needs to change for women of Pakistan to be culturally and social empowered?

Women's economic empowerment is crucial. If they can support themselves financially, they have greater value within their households, in decisions related to their children, parents, and most importantly, their health. To achieve economic independence, they must also have quality education.

How can the Government aid economic empowerment for women?

Women's registration as workers is a major hindrance to their empowerment, since they cannot obtain access to Government's safety nets, including financial schemes, if they are not registered. Passage of the Punjab Domestic Workers Act in 2019 was one step towards this end.

What makes you proud of women of Pakistan?

I always feel proud when I think about the contributions of the rural women of my country. They work much harder than men in agricultural households; from planting seeds to picking crops, women and girls are at the frontline. Many work hard despite being in ill health, so that the rest of us have food to eat.

INSPIRATION

What sort of hindrances does the Department face in fulfilling its mandate? Please shed some light on hurdles faced, if any, in light of the fact that the Department does not have district-level offices.

in light of the fact that the Department does not have district-level offices. This department is a referral and policy based department, which needs support and cooperation of other government departments to fulfill its mandate. However, SOPs for referrals are under formulation, to ensure smooth referrals for women in need.

How will the Working Women's Hostel Authority facilitate women?

The Working Women Hostels Authority Act has been finalized and has been approved by the Cabinet. Through the Authority, private sector hostels will be given licenses, and funding for upgradation. They will also be periodically monitored to ensure adherence to SOPs and provision of facilities. We are also working on an online system, so that girls can find and book their housing online.

As one of the few women who have been elected to the Punjab Assembly, what message do you have for women and girls who aspire to be in politics?

My message to all women who work outside of their homes is that whenever a woman comes into the field, people trust her and see her as their role model. To ensure positive perception by the public, women must strive to become the kind of representatives that people want to look up to as role models.

What measures do you believe the Government of Punjab should further introduce, to improve women's wellbeing and status in the province?

Every Government implements novel schemes and initiatives for increased opportunity, education and wellbeing. However, the Government can only go to a certain extent – schools can be made, universities established, health facilities provided, and legislation passed. The real change-makers are the men of Pakistan. We must work with our male counterparts to ensure equal opportunity and human rights for women.

Do you see a change in women's status in Pakistan?

I can definitely see a considerable change – more women are taking and excelling in CSS and PPSC examinations, and are posted as “Assistant Commissioners” or “District Police Officers” due to their remarkable potential. The status quo is changing and women's status is improving but efforts towards this end must continue.

Despite Government interventions and legislation in place, Pakistan was ranked 151 of 153 in the Global Gender Gap Index. What do you believe contributes to the deteriorating status of women in Pakistan?

The trickle-down effect of the Government's persistent efforts and initiatives will take time to be seen through global rankings. In Punjab, we have been following guidelines that have been made by the Federal Government, and will continue to do so for the betterment of women across the country.

EVENTS





INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATIONS

7TH MARCH

International Women's Day was celebrated jointly by Women Development Department (WDD), Government of Punjab and UN Women Pakistan in Lahore on the 7th of March, 2020. An esteemed group comprising of MPAs of Punjab Assembly, senior bureaucrats from key departments, government officials, retired Justice High court, women's rights activists, and UN Women representatives participated in panel discussions on women's social empowerment and women's economic empowerment respectively.

In the inaugural session Secretary WDD, Ms. Ambreen Raza, welcomed the guests and spoke about the Women Development Department's role in mainstreaming gender in all walks of life, especially policies and development programmes. She talked about working women hostels and day care centres run by WDD. She also announced the commencement of a Punjab wide legal awareness programme aimed at information about

protection measures by the Government of Punjab to ensure women's safety, security and development.

Ms. Saman Ahsan, Portfolio Manager for Elimination of Violence against Women and Governance, UN Women Pakistan, subsequently spoke about initiatives that UN Women and WDD have jointly taken, including a Law Gap Analysis study that UN Women is currently conducting to identify gaps in legislation, so that appropriate amendments can be recommended.

Minister for Women Development, Ms. Ashifa Riaz Fatyana, paid tribute to Pakistani women who were successful in breaking barriers and working in all fields of life for the development of the country. She said no nation can achieve development until half of its population is working side by side with their male counterparts.

The Event subsequently included a Panel discussion on women's social empowerment, moderated by Nabila Malick (UNWomen). Panelists included Nasira Javaid Iqbal, J (retd) High Court, Ms. Rukhsana Gilani, Provincial Ombudsperson for Protection against Harassment, Mr. Irfan Mufti, Member Mumkin Alliance, Mr. Kamran Khan, Chief Administration Officer Punjab Safe Cities Authority, Mr. Waqar Ahmad, Deputy Secretary, WDD, and Ms. Saman Ahsan, UN Women.

The next panel discussion on Women's Economic Empowerment included a high-powered group of panelists comprising senior women bureaucrats, who inspired the audience with their struggle along the career ladder and in their personal lives. They delivered inspiring messages to encourage the youth to follow in their footsteps, reinforcing that the sky was the only limit. Panelists included Ms. Saima Saeed, Former Principal Secretary to Governor, Ms. Sumaira Samad, Secretary Literacy & Non-Formal Basic Education Department, Ms. Bushra Aman, Chairperson Cooperative Board of Liquidation, Ms. Sarah Aslam, Secretary Labour & Human Resource, Ms. Noorish Imran, Director Directorate of Women Development, Ms. Saba Sattar, SP special branch and Ms. Irum Bukhari, Additional Chief Secretary, Energy.

In conclusion, female Members of Punjab Assembly shared their efforts to champion women's rights by reviewing the existing legislative framework and bridging gaps where necessary, especially as far as Rules of Business for legislation are concerned.





8TH MARCH

In honor of International Women's Day, the Women Development Department, Government of Punjab, and United Nations Population Fund hosted an event on Sunday, 8th March, 2020. The Event was attended by Dr. Firdous Ashiq Awan (Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Information and Broadcasting), Ms. Ashifa Riaz Fatyana (Provincial Minister for Women Development, Government of Punjab), Ms. Rukhsana Gillani (Provincial Ombudsperson for Protection against Harassment), Ms. Ambreen Raza (Secretary, Women Development Department, Government of Punjab), Ms. Irum Bokhari (Additional Chief Secretary Energy, Government of Punjab), notable Members of Punjab Assembly, Government of Punjab, representatives of UN bodies, civil society organizations, organizations working for persons with disabilities, female doctors, students, Punjab Police, Traffic Police, and media persons.

At the Event, Ms. Ambreen Raza, Secretary Women Development Department spoke about Government of Punjab's goal of advancing women's interest and addressing gender based violence. She stressed that limited access to nutrition, early age marriages, child bearing, gender based violence and harassment deteriorate women's life expectancy and empowerment. She talked about the Department's programs for social reconstruction, development of women's capacity as leaders, and increased representation of women in decision making positions.

Dr. Firdous Ashiq Awan, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Information and Broadcasting, graced the Event as Chief Guest. She stated that the Government is committed to achieving women's esteemed status in society through promotion of nondiscriminatory policies and practices, passing of legislation to advance women's rights, and ensuring practical empowerment.

Next, Ms. Saleha Ramay, Program Analyst (Gender) UNFPA shared that UNFPA and the Women Development Department, Government of Punjab had partnered to support interventions that expand possibilities for women and girls to lead healthy and productive lives. Speaking on behalf of UNFPA Country Representative Ms. Lina Mousa, she said that UNFPA and the Women Development Department seek to strengthen prevention and response mechanisms for women and girls who experience violence.

Subsequently, Ms. Rukhsana Gillani, Provincial Ombudsperson for Protection against Harassment, shared that her office plays a huge part in creating safe spaces for working women and securing employees' wellbeing at workplaces, irrespective of gender, status and position.



Ms. Rukhsana Gillani, Provincial Ombudsperson for Protection against Harassment



Mr. Shoab Ahmed Shehzad shares a few words with the audience

Dr. Firdous Ashiq Awan (Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Information and Broadcasting), addresses the audience at the event.

Next, Additional Secretary for Women Development, Government of Punjab, shared key achievements of the Department over the last 8 years.

The Additional Secretary's Speech was followed by a panel discussion with Dr. Asghar Zaidi (Vice Chancellor, Government College University), Ms. Shamsa Ali (MPA, Punjab), Mr. Akbar Nasir (Chief Operating Officer, Punjab Safe Cities Authority), and Ms. Afshan Afridi (National Coordinator, National Forum for Women with Disabilities). The panel was chaired by Ms. Irum Bokhari (Additional Chief Secretary, Energy).





Mr. Akbar Nasir talked about the women safety smart phone application developed by Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA), so that women can raise their voices against harassment, including at their workplaces. The App provides emergency assistance, marks women friendly places on a map, and plans safe journeys for women.

Next, Dr. Asghar Zaidi, Vice Chancellor, Government College University (GCU), shared that GCU's female faculty plays a major role in sexual harassment cases; they defend the girls and represent them on a female-majority Committee.

Lastly, Ms. Afshan Afridi (National Coordinator, National Forum for Women with Disabilities) remarked that women with disabilities are “triple” marginalized; underrepresentation on forums, neglected health and education, and an absence of effective policy measures. She said it was crucial to engage persons with disabilities in the digital ecosystem and empower them economically.

In conclusion, Ms. Ashifa Riaz Fatyana, honorable Minister for Women Development, lauded women of Pakistan for their remarkable achievements across all fields, including science and technology, Government service, agriculture, research, corporate leadership positions, armed forces, police, politics, and social sciences.





**INSTITUTIONAL
MECHANISMS TO
SUPPORT SURVIVORS
OF GENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE.**





Punjab Women's helpline (1043), currently managed by the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women and the Women Development Department, Government of Punjab, is a 24/7 government-run helpline for complaint redress and provision of information regarding legal rights to women across Punjab. The helpline provides information and referrals to women callers, for complaints related to inter alia gender based discrimination, women hostels, daycare centers, employment in the public sector, inheritance rights, family law matters, criminal offences against women (rape, kidnapping, fraud, abduction, assault and murder), property matters, harassment at workplaces and public places, and domestic violence.

In January 2020, 25% of calls received by the helpline concerned domestic violence. 23% of all calls received in February concerned violence perpetrated against women, while a similar trend of 28% was seen in March.

COVID-19 SUPPORT FOR WOMEN- PUNJAB WOMEN'S HELPLINE (1043)

However, upon imposition of a provincial shut-down on the 24th of March, 42% of complaints received by Punjab Women's helpline concerned violence against women, including domestic violence. This sharp increase in the proportion of calls relating to violence received in April could be attributed to the shutdown imposed to tackle COVID-19.

Before the shutdown was imposed by the Government, protocols followed by helpline agents included referring callers who complained of violence to their nearest police station or where available, a women police station. Agents encouraged callers to report and lodge a complaint, if they were willing to do so. Corresponding to the call received, call center agents would also inform the relevant police station about the complainant's report and request them to provide gender-sensitive assistance. Generally, complainants are not always willing to report incidents of domestic violence, due to social taboos and fear of the perpetrator, who may be their spouse, male sibling, parent or other male relative residing in the same premises. In some situations, complainants and their perpetrators were called in to the PCSW office, where helpline lawyers would attempt reconciliation between the parties.

The immediate impact of COVID-19 on Punjab Women’s Helpline response services was due to the Government’s restrictions on gatherings within offices. Previously, complainants would visit the PCSW office and relate their story to helpline staff. However, staff has now resorted to dealing with complaints online, calling complainants for follow-up on their situation, calling accused perpetrators, and involving the police to lodge complaints through official correspondence. Through one phone call by helpline call center agents, the entire police machinery comes into action to respond effectively to a female victim of violence. This prompt and efficient mode of response has proved effective for some complainants, who have reported lesser incidence of violence following intervention by helpline staff.

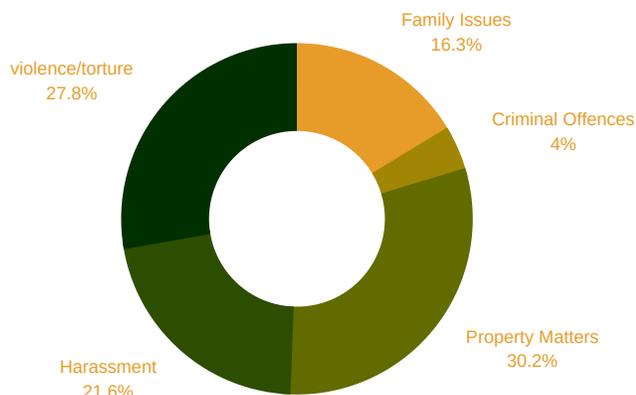
In other cases, helpline call center agents and lawyers have been communicating with concerned line departments for prompt action. In this regard, it is pertinent to mention that letters written to concerned officials, such as the District Police Officer or the District Commissioner, relating the complainants matter have also proved effective to resolve complaints. To ensure resolution, helpline staff keeps matters “open” until complainants report resolution themselves when complaints are followed up by staff.

Currently, the Women Development Department, in partnership with UNFPA, has accelerated the helpline’s potential for COVID-19 response, by establishing telepsychosocial and specialized GBV support services, through trainings to specifically deal with women in distress.

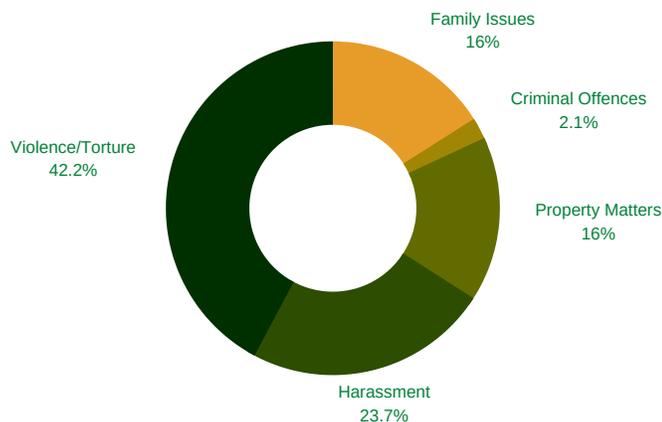
Regardless of the pandemic, Punjab Women’s helpline has proven effective in providing recourse to female survivors of violence and as such, remains unaffected by the COVID-19 pandemic.



1899 CALLS IN MARCH



2070 CALLS IN APRIL



TALKS

Criminal Justice Support for Women – the Gender based Violence Court

Chaudhry Amjad Ali, Prosecutor in the Gender based Violence Court, Lahore, talks about his experience prosecuting rape cases.



BRIEF OVERVIEW OF MR. AMJAD'S EXPERIENCE OF PROSECUTING RAPE CASES IN THE GBV COURT.

Cases that come to the GBV Court are those of rape, under section 376 of the Pakistan Penal Code. Our workload is quite high and we attempt to prosecute as many cases as possible. In 2020, we have disposed of up to 25 cases so far, including cases in which trial has been completed and the accused person is awarded a punishment, and cases that have not reached trial due to resiling witnesses or otherwise insufficient evidence. In some cases, we have faced situations where the accused person offers the victim and her family a monetary settlement for dropping of all charges. Although this is not as per law, we try to make the best of the situation. If the victim admits that an incident of rape took place but she does not want to pursue the case, we can still prosecute on the basis of her statement and ensure conviction for the accused person.

The gender based violence (GBV) Court was set up in 2017 by the Lahore High Court, within the premises of the District and Sessions Courts, Lahore. This Special Court is essentially a trial court dedicated to crimes committed against women, and aims to prioritize GBV cases. One Additional Sessions Judge and Special Public Prosecutor are dedicated to this Court. Along with setting up the Court, the Lahore High Court also formulated a set of Guidelines and a Practice Note for Judges, to be strictly adhered to for all cases.

These Guidelines include inter alia, gender sensitive protocols such as recording the victim's statement and cross-examining her on the same date (to avoid multiple trips to the Court), facility of e-court room and recording of testimony through videolink, protocols for officers of the Court in case victims report harassment or hostility by perpetrators, exclusion of unnecessary people from the courtroom to ensure maximum privacy for victims, conducting proceedings in camera, availability of screens so that the victim doesn't have to face her abuser, gender sensitive questioning by lawyers (including inter alia, not questioning victim's character), and facility of "female support person" to aid victim once she reaches the court.

1. What issues do you encounter in prosecuting cases of rape?

Out of court settlements are very common, and one of the major issues I have encountered. Although the Penal Code does not permit compromise or “out of court settlement” under section 376 (rape), we are faced with situations where the victim claims that it was a misunderstanding, or that she suddenly says she isn’t sure of the facts when we cross-examine her. Such occurrences inevitably weaken the prosecution’s case because the standard of evidence required is not met. Normally, we rely on oral evidence in the form of victim statements, witness accounts or complainant’s statement. However, there is no better evidence than DNA, which is considered highly significant by the Court and guarantees conviction. But in most cases, DNA is not available, so we are forced to prosecute on the basis of the evidence we have.

2. Which evidence is more significant, DNA or eye-witness accounts?

To be honest, DNA is not available in most cases. After an incident takes place, the victim’s first instinct is to wash her body and clothes, thus washing away any trace of DNA evidence that could be used for a successful trial and eventual conviction. I recently dealt with a case where the complainant compromised with the accused person and told the Court that the police forcibly took her statement and fingerprints, and that since she was under pressure, the statement is not factually correct. If DNA had been available in this case, the prosecution would not have had to rely on the victim’s statement and would have aimed for conviction on the basis of DNA. In another case, however, even though the victim claimed that the rape took place, she said she did not want to pursue the case. Resultantly, we pursued the case on the basis of her statement that the “occurrence did take place”. The case was concluded with a conviction for the accused person, even though he had entered into a compromise with the victims’ family.

3. Are the special protocols for GBV Court being implemented?

All SOPs are currently being followed by prosecutors, lawyers, the Judge and court staff. The Judge ensures that the victim is comfortable giving her testimony in open court, otherwise offers use of a screen (partition) between the victim and the accused person. Furthermore, facility of video link for recording of testimony is also available for victims or witnesses. All information regarding cases is kept strictly confidential and parties are reminded time and again of the importance of keeping case facts confidential.

4. Advice to women: what sort of evidence should be kept/preserved to ensure conviction?

Women who have experienced an unfortunate incident of rape must ensure preservation of DNA evidence from their body, clothes, and/or other materials in their possession. Although it is instinctive to desire a bath, women must ensure that their medical examination is conducted within 72 hours and that all evidence from their body is extracted and preserved. This is also very helpful in cases where witnesses are not available or willing to testify.

5. What contributes to low prosecution and low convictions of rape cases?

Resiling witnesses and complainants are the main reason behind low convictions in cases of rape. Families of victims want their trauma to end as soon as possible and wish for their daughter’s life to go on as though the rape never took place. They want their daughters to get married and never mention the incident again, since it would taint their family’s honor. Some families also consider their daughter’s misfortune the “will of God” and wish to forget about it. This also has to do with our society’s mindset and our culture.

“

This is an excellent forum for prosecution of rape cases, and awareness as well. We always inform complainants of a separate court for rape cases, and they are encouraged to pursue their case just for this reason too. We enlighten them about the protocols in place, and this makes them feel safe and protected from accused persons.”



Tackling harassment in public places – Women Safety Smart Phone Application

The Women Safety App is a smartphone application developed by the Punjab Safe Cities Authority and includes a special feature for women's safety that provides access to

- 15 to get emergency police services through the App.
- PSCA to report their complaints directly through the whatsapp button.
- Punjab Women's helpline 1043.
- Emergency contacts included in the App, to alert the authorities.

For COVID-19 response, Punjab Safe Cities Authority in partnership with UNFPA will be enhancing the features of the existing application to ensure that women have an effective platform/service to report incidents of violence including harassment at public places during COVID-19 pandemic.

INSTALL PSCA-WOMEN SAFETY APP 

FEELING AFRAID TO WALK ALONE?

DON'T BE, WE ARE THERE FOR YOU



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This will allow real time reporting of GBV cases, referral, interagency collaboration and intuitional capacity building. UNFPA will be providing technical support to PSCA through capacity building of its staff on psychosocial support skills to effectively respond to complainants through the Women Safety App. UNFPA will also support PSCA in dissemination of information (through awareness raising initiatives) with regards to the Women Safety App in order to increase the outreach of Women Safety App.

Women Safety App data will be used to allow identification of hotspots of GBV in the province of Punjab. After identification of GBV hotspots, closest hospitals, police stations and social services will be mobilized to respond to the complainant as per women's safety needs.

Through the whatsapp option in the Women Safety App, women will be able to notify Police Integrated Command, Control and Communication (PPIC3) officials regarding the kind of violence and exact location of the complainant. Law enforcement agencies will dispatch a team of first responders to immediately respond to the situation upon receiving the notification.

The app has been designed to allow women to report any experience that makes them feel unsafe.



Confronting harassment at workplaces

The Ombudsperson for Protection against Harassment

The Office of the Ombudsperson was set up in 2013, as per the provisions of the Punjab Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2012, to provide redress to women who have been harassed at the workplace. The Act defines harassment, mandates Inquiry Committees in each government office, procedure to be followed by the Inquiry Committee or Ombudsperson (in case there is no Inquiry Committee, or if the complainant prefers to lodge her complaint with the Ombudsperson directly), and outlines punishments that can be awarded by the Committee or Ombudsperson. Furthermore, the Act mandates display of the Harassment Code of Conduct in every public office across Punjab, and penalizes offices that have not done so.

Procedure for Complaint Redress

The procedure outlined in the Act requires complaints to be submitted in writing to the Inquiry Committee or Ombudsperson. Following submission, accused persons are informed of the charges against them and given one week to submit a response to the charges leveled. Then, oral and written evidence is examined by the Committee/Ombudsperson and witnesses invited to give their statements in support of the complainant or the accused person. Once all evidence is examined, the Committee gives their decision in the matter, and applies an appropriate penalty as per the law. Penalties can be minor or major, depending on the severity of harassment, and include censure, withholding promotions, monetary compensation, reduction of scale (for Government officials), removal or dismissal from service, or fine. Appeals of decisions made by the Inquiry Committee can be submitted to the Ombudsperson's office, while Ombudsperson's decisions can be appealed through submission of a representation to the Governor. The Governor's decision in the matter shall be final.

Ombudsperson's Office

Effectiveness of the Ombudsperson's Office can be gauged from the fact that from March 2018 to date, 4500 complaints of harassment were received, of which 353 were considered relevant to harassment. Of these, 306 were admitted for hearing by the Ombudsperson. To date, 232 cases have been decided by the Ombudsperson.

Accused persons were convicted with minor/major penalties in 136 complaints, while 37 accused persons were exonerated of all charges. 45 complaints were withdrawn by complainants, while 74 of these complaints are currently being processed.



“Harassment” means any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favors or other verbal or written communication or physical conduct of a sexual nature or sexually demeaning attitudes, causing interference with work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment, or attempt to punish the complainant for refusal to comply to such a request or is made a condition for employment



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