



**Standard Operating Procedure for Prevention and Response to
Sexual Harassment in the National Assembly**

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1. Background

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is developed in line with Royal Civil Service Commission's SOP for the Prevention and Response to Sexual Harassment in the Civil Service. The National Assembly Secretariat is committed to fostering a professional, safe, respectful, and inclusive workplace where all employees are treated with dignity and fairness. As an institution entrusted with supporting the legislative functions of the Parliament, the Secretariat recognizes the importance of maintaining the highest standards of professional conduct, mutual respect, and ethical responsibility in all workplace interactions. Sexual harassment and gender-related misconduct undermine individual dignity, workplace harmony, institutional integrity, and overall organizational effectiveness. It is therefore essential to establish a clear, confidential, and effective mechanism to prevent, address, and respond to such incidents.

This SOP establishes clear procedures for reporting, inquiry of sexual harassment within the National Assembly Secretariat. It reaffirms the Secretariat's zero-tolerance stance and its commitment to protecting the dignity, safety, and well-being of all employees while ensuring fairness and accountability and also Bhutan's commitment to international best practices, including its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), to promote a safe, equitable, and respectful workplace.

2. Title

This Standard Operating Procedure shall be known as the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Prevention and Response to Sexual Harassment in the National Assembly.

3. Authority

This SOP is adopted under the authority of the Secretary General, National Assembly Secretariat, in accordance with;

- i.i. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan (Article 9, Section 17);
- ii. The Civil Service Act of Bhutan 2010;
- iii. Bhutan Civil Service Rules and Regulations (BCSR) 2023;
- iv. The Penal Code of Bhutan;
- v. Labour and Employment Act of Bhutan 2007; and
- vi. Relevant directives and Standard Operating Procedures issued by the Royal Civil Service Commission.



4. Objective

The objective of this SOP is to:

- i. Ensure a safe, respectful and gender-responsive working environment;
- ii. Establish a clear institutional mechanism to prevent and respond to sexual harassment;
- iii. Prevent and eliminate all forms of sexual harassment and gender-based misconduct;
- iv. Provide accessible, timely, fair, confidential, and victim-centred grievance redressal mechanisms;
- v. Protect the dignity, safety, privacy, and psychological well-being of aggrieved persons; and
- vi. Establish clear institutional procedures consistent with the Royal Civil Service Commission SOP and relevant laws.

5. Scope and Application

This SOP shall apply to:

- i. Civil servants, contract employees, interns, consultants, and any individual working under or associated with the National Assembly.
- ii. Workplace environments include;
 - a. Secretariat office and premises;
 - b. Committee meetings;
 - c. Constituency visits;
 - d. Workshops, conferences, trainings, and official events;
 - e. Official travel and international engagements; and
 - f. Applies irrespective of the location where official duties are performed.

6. Zero Tolerance Policy

The National Assembly Secretariat adopts a strict zero-tolerance policy toward sexual harassment and gender-based misconduct. Any act of sexual harassment shall be treated as serious misconduct and addressed promptly, fairly, and in accordance with applicable laws and civil service rules. No employee shall face discrimination, or adverse consequences for reporting sexual harassment in good faith

7. Definition of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment includes any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, whether physical, verbal, non-verbal, written, visual, or digital, that directly or indirectly affects the dignity, safety or working environment of an individual.



This includes definitions provided under the Section 205 of Penal Code of Bhutan 2004, section 18 of Labour and Employment Act 2007, and section 3.2.18 of Bhutan Civil Service Rules and Regulations 2023, and also explicitly includes conduct through digital or electronic means such as:

- a. Emails;
- b. Messaging applications (WhatsApp, WeChat, Telegram, SMS, etc.); and
- c. Any digital communication platforms.

Sexual harassment may include, but is not limited to:

i. Physical conduct

- Unwelcome touching, patting, hugging, kissing, or brushing against a person;
- Blocking movement;
- Physical intimidation or assault.

ii. Verbal conduct

- Sexual remarks, jokes, comments, or innuendo;
- Repeated unwanted requests for personal or romantic engagement;
- Derogatory remarks related to gender.

iii. Non-verbal conduct

- Staring or suggestive gestures;
- Following or stalking behaviour;
- Offensive facial expressions.

iv. Visual conduct

- Display or sharing of sexually explicit or offensive images, posters, or videos. Digital harassment shall be treated equally as workplace sexual harassment.

8. Guiding Principles

All cases shall be handled based on the following principles:

- a. Principal of Natural justice;
- b. Confidentiality;
- c. Timeliness and prompt response; and
- d. Protection of victim dignity and safety.



9. Committee

The Human Resource Committee (HRC) shall be responsible for receiving and responding to complaints regarding sexual harassment in the National Assembly Secretariat, if the alleged is a Secretariat staff, referred to it by the Go-To-Person with the consent of the victim.

In case, the alleged is any other person other than National Assembly Secretariat staff, the complaint shall be dealt as per their existing laws governing that particular person.

10. Responsibility of Committee

The Committee shall:

- i. Support the “Go-To Person” to implement interventions to prevent sexual harassment within the respective agencies including training and sensitization on sexual harassment, redressal mechanisms and relevant policies
- ii. Respond to sexual harassment complaints through a fair, confidential, and timely process, and provide appropriate support services.
- iii. Take appropriate actions against sexual harassment incidents reported to the committee.
- iv. Review agencies’ intervention to address sexual harassment and make appropriate recommendations.

11. Responsibility of the Go-to-Person

The National Assembly shall appoint Go-To-Person and alternate Go-To-Person for the National Assembly. Go-To-Person will serve as a focal point to spearhead initiatives to prevent and or address sexual harassment in the National Assembly. Go-To-Person shall:

- i. Coordinate and support functioning of the Committee
- ii. Create awareness on prevention of sexual harassment including dissemination of this SOP to all employees within the agencies.
- iii. The Go To Person may seek support from the gender focal person
- iv. Support the victims with appropriate services including facilitating reporting of incidents with informed consent.
- v. Maintain data on reported incidents of sexual harassment and measures taken.

- vi. Prepare an annual Certification and Action Taken (CAT) report for review and certification by the Head of Agency (*Annexures attached*)
- vii. Prepare updates on reported sexual harassment incidents, implementation progress of the SOP and all other relevant information update and ensure proper hand over in the event he/she leaves the agency.
- viii. Follow up on status and action taken on cases referred to the relevant service providers.

12. Responsibility of alternate Go-To-Person

The alternate Go-To-Person shall:

- i. Support the Go-To Person in fulfilling the responsibilities as outlined in section 11 of this SOP.
- ii. Spearhead initiatives to address sexual harassment in absence of the Go-to Person.

13. Procedure for Reporting and Responding to Sexual Harassment Incidents

13.1 Filing of Complaint

An aggrieved employee can report the incident of sexual harassment in any form of communication to:

- i. Go-To-Person/alternate Go-To-Person;
- ii. Head of Agency;
- iii. Head of Division; or
- iv. HRC

13.2 A complaint may be submitted:

- i. In writing;
- ii. Verbally;
- iii. Electronically;
- iv. Through a trusted representative with the consent of the victim; or



v. Anonymously

13.3 The complaint shall include:

- i. Description of incident;
- ii. Name of alleged;
- iii. Date, time, location; and
- iv. Any supporting evidence

- 13.4 If the complaint is filed directly to the Head of Agency, HRC or Head of Division, the Go-To-Person shall be informed of the incident with the consent of the victim.
- 13.5 The Go-To-Person shall immediately provide Psychological First Aid (PFA) and facilitate provision of immediate assistance to the victim in collaboration with relevant service providers, if required.
- 13.6 If the complaint is filed against the Head of Agency, the Go-To-Person shall inform the HRC which will be officiated by the Senior most officer of the Secretariat, with the consent of the victim.
- 13.8 If the complaint is directly filed to the Go-To-Person, then Go-To-Person shall inform the Secretary General with the consent of the victim.
- 13.9 If the complaint is against the Go-To-Person, then the incident shall be referred to alternate Go-To-Person
- 13.10 The Go-To-Person shall forward the case to relevant case management service providers like the PEMA Secretariat, RENEW or Royal Bhutan Police in consultation and with consent from the victim. At the same time, the Go-To Person shall notify the HRC without Personal Identifying Information.
- 13.11 If the complaint is of intrusive sexual nature, within the last five days, the Go-To Person shall forward the incident to the Royal Bhutan Police and share information with the HRC.
- 13.12 If the victim prefers the incident not to be referred to service providers and wishes to address the complaint within the agency, and is not of an intrusive sexual nature, the Go-To Person shall collect required information and submit it to the HRC or relevant agencies/committees for necessary action.
- 13.13 Upon receipt of the complaint, HRC shall:
- i. Establish an Inquiry Committee within two working days from the date of receipt of complaint.
 - ii. Submit the Complaint to the Inquiry Committee upon its establishment.



14. Inquiry Committee

- i. The Inquiry Committee shall be constituted to review the complaint when the alleged is a Secretariat staff.
- ii. The Inquiry Committee shall be constituted with not less than five members, ensuring representation from both genders, and shall be presided over by the Chief Legislative Officer.
- iii. If the inquiry is against the Chief Legislative Officer, the senior most Legislative or Legal officer in the agency shall be the presiding officer.
- iv. The inquiry committee shall have the following powers but not limited to;
 - a. Interview parties and witness;
 - b. Review Evidence;
 - c. Summoning any relevant person;
 - d. Requiring the discovery and production of documents; and
 - e. And any other matter which may be prescribed
- v. The inquiry shall be completed and the report thereof shall be presented by the presiding officer to the HRC within three working days upon the assignment of the case.

15. Decision and Action

- i. The HRC shall notify the alleged in writing of the inquiry committee's findings and direct him/her to submit further response to the case.
- ii. The HRC shall deliberate on the findings and recommendations as well as additional responses of the alleged, and give a decision within three working days after the receipt of additional responses from the alleged.
- iii. Based on inquiry findings, the HRC may:
 - a. Dismiss complaint if unsubstantiated;
 - b. Issue warning;
 - c. Recommend disciplinary action under BCSR and RoP
 - d. Refer to RCSC/relevant agencies; or
 - e. Refer to law enforcement if required.
- iv. The decision of the HRC shall be communicated to both the parties in writing.

16. Appeal

- i. The relevant parties may appeal against the decision of HRC within 10 working days from the receipt of the decision to the Committee for reconsideration.



- ii. The parties also have the option to appeal to the RCSC or relevant agencies.

17. Post incident follow up

The Go-To-Person shall work with the Head of Agency, relevant officials and the victim to implement the Committee's decision/recommendation. This may include:

- i. Necessary adjustments to the workplace such as changes in reporting lines
- ii. Temporary relocation within Secretariat;
- iii. Adjustment of reporting date;
- iv. Grant of leave.

18. Protection against Retaliation

Retaliation refers to any direct or indirect detrimental action recommended, threatened or taken because an individual reported sexual harassment in good faith or cooperated with an authorized fact-finding activity.

- i. All employees have responsibility to report sexual harassment and to cooperate fully with any authorized fact-finding activity.
- ii. If anyone experience retaliation for reporting Sexual harassment/ taking part in enquiry process etc, he/she shall report to the Go-to Person or alternate Go-To Person.
- iii. The Go-To Person shall collect necessary information and submit the complaint to the HRC.
- iv. The HRC shall review the case and provide an appropriate recommendation/decision within two working days after receiving the complaint.

19. Consent based Inquiry Approach

No formal inquiry, police referral shall be initiated without the informed consent of the aggrieved person, unless:

- i. There is risk of immediate danger;
- ii. There is serious threat to workplace safety;
- iii. Required by law.

20. Preventive measures and monitoring

The Secretariat shall:

- i. Conduct awareness programs;



- ii. Provide gender sensitization training;
- iii. Promote respectful workplace culture.
- iv. HRD shall monitor implementation of this SOP.
- v. This SOP shall be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary.

21. Confidentiality

All information related to complaint, investigation, and outcome shall remain strictly confidential. Unauthorized disclosure shall be treated as misconduct.

22. Effective Date

This SOP shall be effective on the date of endorsement by the Secretary General, National Assembly Secretariat.

Endorsed by:

(Rinchen Dorji)

Secretary General
National Assembly Secretariat



Date: 8/04/2026