

Frequently Asked Questions on the Sexual Harassment Electronic Box (SHe-BOX) Portal

What is the purpose of the SHe-Box portal recently launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development?

The new portal is a unique initiative of the Ministry of Women and Child Development to provide a publicly available centralised repository of information related to Internal Committees and Local Committees formed across the country, whether in government or private sector. The portal also provides a common platform to file complaints and track the status of such complaints.

What are the benefits of having a centralized database for sexual harassment complaints?

Benefits of a Centralized Database for Sexual Harassment Complaints

- a) Streamlined Complaint Handling: Centralized systems ensure that complaints are managed efficiently, with all necessary information available in one place.
- b) Improved Accessibility: Complainants can easily access the platform, regardless of their location or the sector they work in, making it easier to report incidents.
- c) Enhanced Transparency and Accountability: Real-time tracking of complaints allows complainants to monitor the status of their cases.
- d) Data Consistency: A centralized database ensures uniformity in data collection and reporting, reducing discrepancies and errors.
- e) Effective Monitoring and Enforcement: Authorities can more easily oversee the implementation of regulations and ensure compliance with the law.
- f) Support and Training: The portal serves as a resource hub, providing access to training materials and information on rights and procedures.

Which provisions of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013 does the SHe-Box portal encompass?

The SHe-Box portal encompasses several key provisions of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013 (SH Act), including:

- a) Establishment & on-boarding of Internal Committees (ICs): It mandates the formation and on-boarding of Internal Committees in every organization with more than 10 employees to handle sexual harassment complaints.
- b) On-boarding of Local Committees (LCs): For organizations with less than 10 employees or where the complaint is against the employer, Local Committees are to be constituted by the district officer. The details of a LC of each district is available on the portal.
- c) Filing and Redressal of Complaints: The portal provides a platform for women to file complaints and track the status of their grievances, ensuring timely and effective redressal.
- d) Data Management and Reporting: It facilitates the collection and maintenance of data on sexual harassment cases, supporting the government's responsibility to monitor the implementation of the Act.
- e) Awareness and Training: The portal serves as a resource hub for information and training materials related to the SH Act, promoting awareness and compliance.

How does the SHe-Box portal facilitate the filing and tracking of sexual harassment complaints?

The SHe-Box portal streamlines the process of filing and tracking sexual harassment complaints through several key features:

- a) Centralized Platform: The portal serves as a unified platform for women across the country to file complaints of sexual harassment, regardless of whether they work in the public or private sector.
- b) Complaint Submission: Users can easily submit their complaints online through the portal. The user-friendly interface ensures that the process is straightforward and accessible.

- c) Multi-lingual support- To enhance the portal's user-friendliness and provide an improved experience for users across the country, a multilingual support feature has been introduced, breaking language barriers and enabling individuals from different linguistic and social backgrounds to interact with the portal seamlessly.
- d) Automatic Forwarding: Once a complaint is submitted, it is automatically forwarded to the relevant Internal Committee (IC) or Local Committee (LC) of the concerned workplace, based on the selection made by the complainant.
- e) Real-Time Tracking: Complainants can track the status of their complaints in real-time, receiving updates on the progress and any actions taken. This transparency helps ensure accountability and prompt resolution.
- f) Nodal Officers: Designated nodal officers are responsible for regularly updating information on the portal and ensuring that the complaints are addressed in a timely manner. This includes maintaining accurate records of ICs and LCs.

Why there is a need to appoint a nodal officer for the portal in each workplace?

Appointing a nodal officer for the portal in every workplace is essential for its effective functioning and management. These designated officers play a critical role in ensuring that the portal operates smoothly and serves its intended purpose. They play a pivotal role as bridge for the employer, the Internal Committee/ Local Committee and the complainant in their respective workplaces by ensuring timely action on the complaints and regular updation of the data and related information on the portal, which are essential from the point of view of ensuring statutory compliance as well as enhancing organization's reputation .

What responsibilities are assigned to the nodal officers designated for each workplace on the SHe-Box portal?

Responsibilities of Nodal Officers on the SHe-Box Portal-

- a) Regular updates: Nodal officers are responsible for entering and regularly updating the details of Internal Committees (ICs) and Local Committees (LCs) on the portal.
- b) Complaint Management: Nodal officers track the status of complaints to ensure they are being addressed in a timely manner and in compliance with the Sexual Harassment Act.

- c) Annual Reports: To ensure compliance under the SH Act, NO is required to update Annual reports on the portal w.r.t number of cases filed, actions taken, and the current status of complaints, maintaining transparency and accountability. The Portal has a feature to digitally submit the report directly to the respective District Officer.
- d) Awareness and Training: Nodal officer have to update information on sensitization workshops and training sessions organized for employees and IC members to promote awareness about the Sexual Harassment Act and the portal.

What is the role of Internal Committees (ICs) and Local Committees (LCs) in the SHe-Box portal?
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Roles of Internal Committees (ICs) and Local Committees (LCs) in the SHe-Box Portal

- a) Complaint Handling:
 - i. Internal Committees (ICs): Handle complaints in organizations with more than 10 employees.
 - ii. Local Committees (LCs): Manage complaints in smaller organizations or when the complaint is against the employer.
- b) Data Maintenance: Both ICs and LCs update the SHe-Box portal with complaint details and actions taken.
- c) Regular Updates: Designated nodal officers keep the portal updated with ICs and LCs information.
- d) Transparency and Accountability: The portal allows complainants to track complaint status and ensures timely resolution.

How does the portal assist the women workers in unorganized sector and the domestic workers for filing the complaint?
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Women workers in the unorganized sector and domestic workers can easily file complaints through the SHe-Box portal, providing a centralized and accessible platform to report instances of sexual harassment directed to the appropriate Local Committee (LC) based on the location of workplace, if the organization where she works, does not have IC. Additionally, the portal includes a multilingual feature to enhance accessibility.

What is the legal assistance available for an aggrieved woman to file a complaint or obtain advice?

Any aggrieved woman who is not in a position to access the Internal Committee or the Local Committee could seek advice or file her complaint through the modes mentioned below. If any aggrieved woman approaches any of the legal services institutions, the personnel at those institutions would assist such an aggrieved woman to file the complaint either before the Internal Committee or before the Local Committee, as the case may be, and in cases where necessary, will also assist such an aggrieved woman to approach the local police station.

The three ways in which an aggrieved woman can approach the Legal Services Institutions for the purpose of making her complaint or to seek advice in such matters are:

- i. through Legal Services Clinics and para Legal Volunteers (PLVs);
- ii. Legal helpline (15100 – NALSA helpline number); and
- iii. through the Legal Services Management System, the details of which are available on National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)'s web-site.

Is it mandatory for all private entities to on-board the portal?

It is mandatory for all workplaces including private entities/ bodies to onboard the portal. The portal, developed in alignment with the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, ensures effective implementation of its provisions. As per Section 4 of the Act, employer of every workplace shall establish an Internal Committee (IC). The Hon'ble Supreme Court has emphasized strict compliance with the Act's provisions in the case of *Aureliano Fernandes Vs. State of Goa & Ors.* The portal is structured in such a way that, unless the concerned workplace/ office or authority uploads information about their IC, complainants will be unable to file complaints through the portal to the respective IC of their workplace. Therefore, it is imperative for all workplaces including public and private organizations and workplaces within their jurisdictions to submit the required details, as mandated by the SH Act, 2013.

Empanelment of Experts/ Organizations on SHe-Box Portal for the purpose of training and awareness

(This is indicative and is only for Guidance purpose)

What is the purpose for maintaining the empanelment data on the She- Box portal?

The Ministry of Women and Child Development (M/o WCD) has launched the SHe-Box portal, which includes a feature for the easy registration of organizations and individuals with significant experience or expertise in the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013, for the purpose of empanelment. This publicly accessible facility has been developed by the Ministry to create a comprehensive database for convenient access to empanelled organizations and individuals familiar with the issues relating to sexual harassment at the workplace. This initiative aims to facilitate training to the staff and Internal Committee (IC) members of various organizations, thereby promoting awareness and sensitization across all workplaces.

Any organization or individual seeking empanelment on the SHe-Box portal has to go through process of mandatory approval from the concerned State Nodal Officer (SNO). This approval will be granted only after verification of the submitted credentials, which must demonstrate expertise in the field of the POSH Act. *Ministry of Women & Child Development has no role in verification/ authentication of the information provided by the applicants.*

What are the qualifications for Empanelment on SHe-Box Portal?

Considering the sensitivity of matters related to sexual harassment, individuals committed to the advancement of women's rights or possessing expertise in addressing such issues may be considered, specifically who dealt with violence against women (VAW). Preference shall be accorded to candidates with a professional background in law or social work or psychology.

Preference will be given to Candidates who demonstrate familiarity with handling workplace sexual harassment concerns, as specified under:

- Clause (c) of sub-section (2) of Section 4,
- Clause (c) of sub-section (1) of Section 7 of the POSH Act, and

- Rule 4 of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Rules, 2013.

What level of experience is required for empanelment as a POSH Expert ?

Prospective candidates must possess demonstrated expertise in handling issues related to prevention of sexual harassment of women at workplace, evidenced through:

- **Social Work** – A minimum of five years of experience in women's empowerment or addressing sexual harassment at the workplace;
- **Legal Proficiency** – Adequate knowledge of labour, service, civil, or criminal laws governing workplace protections and employee rights;
- **Training & Awareness Initiatives** – Prior experience in conducting workshops or awareness sessions on women's rights, particularly the POSH Act, shall be preferred.

What key competencies are expected from a POSH Expert?

- Ability to understand types, nature and indicators of sexual harassment and analyse the case to address workplace sexual harassment concerns effectively.
- Comprehensive understanding of social, legal and psychological implications of Sexual harassment at workplace.

What are the minimum eligibility criteria for NGOs or Civil Service Organizations (CSOs) seeking empanelment under the POSH framework?

Organizations seeking empanelment must fulfil the following criteria:

- A demonstrable commitment to women's rights specifically works on violence against women (VAW), workplace safety, and empowerment;
- Prior experience in conducting training sessions, workshops, or awareness programs focused on women's laws, preferably the POSH Act;
- Registration under the **DARPAN Portal** or **NITI Aayog**, in compliance with applicable government norms;
- Documented initiatives aimed at implementing workplace safety measures in accordance with the POSH Act.

Are above criteria applicable to Societies and Companies as well?

The same criteria shall apply, with additional requirements as follows:

- Societies must be registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860;
- Companies must be incorporated under the Companies Act, 2013;
- Both must demonstrate operational mechanisms that actively combat sexual harassment and promote inclusivity at the workplace.

What eligibility criteria shall be adopted for nomination of a member from amongst non-governmental organisations or associations (External Member) for IC/LC, under the Act?

As per the SH Act, 2013, **Section 4(2)(c)**, provides that the Internal Committee shall include one member from amongst non-governmental organisations or associations committed to the cause of women or a person familiar with the issues relating to sexual harassment.

Similarly, **Section 7(1)(c)** states that two Members, of whom at least one shall be a woman, to be nominated from amongst such non-governmental organisations or associations committed to the cause of women or a person familiar with the issues relating to sexual harassment,

Rule 4 of the SH Rules, 2013, defines 'person familiar with the issues relating to sexual harassment' shall be a person, who has expertise on issues relating to sexual harassment and may include any of the following-

- a) a social worker with atleast five years' of experience in the field of social work which leads to creation of societal conditions favourable towards empowerment of women and in particular in addressing workplace sexual harassment;
- b) a person who is familiar with labour, service, civil, or criminal laws.

What is the role of an external member appointed in a IC or LC Committee?

The external member is appointed to ensure impartiality and fairness in handling complaints, bringing an independent perspective to the committee's proceedings. While the Act does not explicitly define the qualifications for an external member, it broadly requires familiarity with workplace harassment issues or experience in social work, legal matters, or women's rights.