

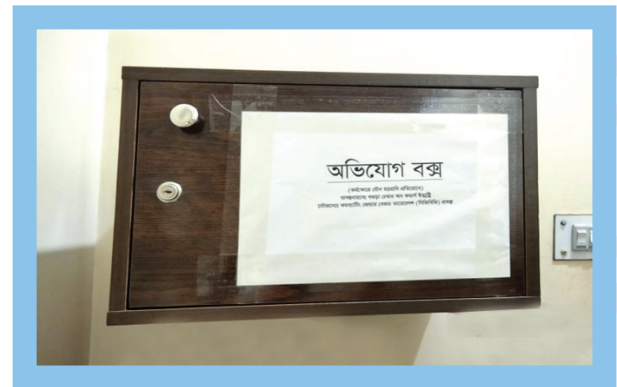
Launch of Zero Tolerance to Sexual Harassment Policy at Bogra Chamber of Commerce and Industry



On 09 March 2022, the launching of the Zero Tolerance to Sexual Harassment Policy of Bogra Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) was held under UN Women's Combatting Gender-based Violence (CGBV) project in Bangladesh, with the aim of ensuring all women have the right to a conducive workplace free from all forms of violence.

Participants and stakeholders from different government and private sectors and the factories under BCCI received a briefing the High Court Directive on Sexual Harassment 2009 and suggested several ways to implement the directive. Participants discussed how different organizations and departments can coordinate to enable survivors to receive swift services and support. Participants were also informed of UN Women's support to ensure the sexual harassment prevention committees (SHPCs) in factories can function effectively. Khurshid Jahan Kona, Inspector of Police, SP Office was the special guest while Prodip Kumar, editor of Daily Karatoa and Alhaj Enamul Haque Dulal, Vice-President of Bogra Chamber, presided over the event. Md. Tarekuzzaman, CGBV Coordinator, Christian Aid discussed the policy dimensions which was formed with technical assistance of Christian Aid and UN Women, with overall support from Gram Bikash Sangstha.

The anti-sexual harassment policy is guided by a 'whole-of-office' approach to support those who disclose, report, or witness sexual harassment, and to ensure delivery of services using a survivor-



Complaint boxes provide anonymity when reporting cases of sexual harassment. Photo credit: GBS/Shohelia Akhter

centric and a non-judgemental approach. The policy implementation also seeks to minimize traumatization associated with the reporting and complaint process, while ensuring confidentiality and protection of staff who disclose or formally report sexual harassment.

Md. Ahsan Habib of BRAC said that Bogra Chamber deserves praise for formulating the policy. If similar policies on sexual harassment are implemented in all institutions of Bogura, a gender friendly and safe working environment can be created. Sarodi Shabnom Mithun advocate of Bogura Judge Court expressed the need to formulate policies with committees to prevent all forms of violence at the workplace. She further added that managers and leaders of organizations should take a proactive role in implementing the policy and spreading awareness.

Advocate Ashrafun Nahar Sapna, BLAST Coordinator, Bogura noted that while people talk about sexual harassment, nothing actually happens to address it at the workplace. She added that the policy should define minor offenses, punishment and time taken for action against false allegations. She recommended that the policy stipulate steps for reporting cases of harassment occurring outside the organization.

According to Mr. Prodip Kumar from Daily Karatoa, while there are sexual harassment issues at the factory level, people do not speak up because of the fear of losing jobs. Therefore, it is important to have a complaint box which could be a handy tool to report anonymously. Mr. Kumar added that sexual harassment can reduce to some extent with initiatives like the one taken by BCCI. He expressed hope of formulating a similar policy in his organization and helping to form a complaint committee.

Police Inspector Khurshid Jahan Kona emphasised that it is everyone's duty to protect the privacy of survivors and also of those against whom the complaint is filed. She sought the support of the District Commissioner to formulate anti-sexual harassment policies in all government departments of Bogura district. SI Rozina from Kahalu, a Woman and Child Help Desk officer, said there is a need to raise awareness against sexual harassment in all factories. The factories should organize a meeting and invite relevant police personnel in this regard.

BCCI director Md. Sairul Islam committed to sharing the anti-sexual harassment policy among all stakeholders so that affiliated organizations



Md Alhaz Enamul Haque Dulal, Vice President, BCCI launched the policy. Photo credit: GBS/Shohelia Akhter

under BCCI can play a role in implementing it. Mr. Islam also noted that anti- sexual harassment policies should incorporate a provision to punish those making false allegations and that all involved parties should have an opportunity to defend themselves. He further assured to take steps to display all government hotline contacts in every factory.

In his concluding remarks, Md. Alhaz Enamul Haque Dulal, Vice President, BCCI, stated that letters have been issued to all factories under BCCI to form SHPCs. He added that the Bogura Sadar police and Bogura Police SP Office are working to prevent sexual harassment and committed to help build the ownership of this policy across the organization. Mr. Dulal also agreed to develop complaint hotline number for BCCI and follow up to track the progress of the implementation.

The launching of the Zero Tolerance Policy towards Sexual Harassment was reported and highlighted in the major district print media and local newspaper.

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