

# Mercy Hands for Humanitarian Aid

## Sexual Harassment Policy

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### **The Policy Statement**

MERCY HANDS is committed to providing a safe environment for all its employees free from discrimination on any ground and from harassment at work including sexual harassment. MERCY HANDS will operate a zero tolerance policy for any form of sexual harassment in the workplace, treat all incidents seriously and promptly investigate all allegations of sexual harassment. Any person found to have sexually harassed another will face disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from employment.

All complaints of sexual harassment will be taken seriously and treated with respect and in confidence. No one will be victimized for making such a complaint.

### **Definition of sexual harassment**

Sexual harassment is an unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, which makes a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated. It includes situations where a person is asked to engage in sexual activity as a condition of that person's employment, as well as situations that create an environment that is hostile, intimidating or humiliating for the recipient.

Sexual harassment can involve one or more incidents and actions constituting harassment may be physical, verbal and non-verbal. Examples of conduct or behavior which constitute sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

#### **Physical conduct**

- Unwelcome physical contact including patting, pinching, stroking, kissing, hugging, fondling, or inappropriate touching
- Physical violence, including sexual assault
- Physical contact, e.g. touching, pinching
- The use of job-related threats or rewards to solicit sexual favors



**Verbal conduct**

- Comments on a worker's appearance, age, private life, etc.
- Sexual comments, stories and jokes
- Sexual advances
- Repeated and unwanted social invitations for dates or physical intimacy
- Insults based on the sex of the worker
- Condescending or paternalistic remarks
- Sending sexually explicit messages (by phone or by email)

**Non-verbal conduct**

- Display of sexually explicit or suggestive material
- Sexually-suggestive gestures
- Whistling
- Leering

Anyone can be a victim of sexual harassment, regardless of their sex and of the sex of the harasser. MERCY HANDS recognizes that sexual harassment may also occur between people of the same sex. What matters is that the sexual conduct is unwanted and unwelcome by the person against whom the conduct is directed.

MERCY HANDS recognizes that sexual harassment is a manifestation of power relationships and often occurs within unequal relationships in the workplace, for example between manager or supervisor and employee.

Anyone, including employees of MERCY HANDS, donors, beneficiaries, casual workers, contractors or visitors who sexually harasses another will be reprimanded in accordance with this internal policy.

All sexual harassment is prohibited whether it takes place within MERCY HANDS premises or outside, including at sub offices meetings, field visits, workshops, social events, distribution sites, training sessions or conferences sponsored by MERCY HANDS.



## **Complaints procedures**

Anyone who is subject to sexual harassment should, if possible, inform the alleged harasser that the conduct is unwanted and unwelcome. MERCY HANDS recognizes that sexual harassment may occur in unequal relationships (i.e. between a supervisor and his/her employee) and that it may not be possible for the victim to inform the alleged harasser.

If a victim cannot directly approach an alleged harasser, he/she can approach one of the designated staff members responsible for receiving complaints of sexual harassment. This person could be another supervisor, a member of the human resources department, etc.

All members of the Executive Administration are designated staff members responsible for receiving complaints of sexual harassment. If the complaint is against a member of the Executive Administration then the complaint should be submitted to the Executive Director. If the complaint is against the Executive Director or a Board member then the complaint should be submitted to the Board and it is the responsibility of the Board to hire an external reliable and professional consultant to investigate the claim.

When a designated person receives a complaint of sexual harassment, he/she will:

- Immediately record the dates, times and facts of the incident(s)
- Ascertain the views of the victim as to what outcome he/she wants
- Ensure that the victim understands Mercy Hands' procedures for dealing with the complaint
- Discuss and agree the next steps: either informal or formal complaint, on the understanding that choosing to resolve the matter informally does not preclude the victim from pursuing a formal complaint if he/she is not satisfied with the outcome
- Keep a confidential record of all discussions
- Respect the choice of the victim
- Ensure that the victim knows that they can lodge the complaint outside of Mercy Hands through the relevant country/legal framework



Throughout the complaints procedure, a victim is entitled to be helped by a counsellor – internal or external - and MERCY HANDS shall strive to cover the cost of the counseling.

### **Informal complaints mechanism**

If the victim wishes to deal with the matter informally, the designated person will:

- give an opportunity to the alleged harasser to respond to the complaint
- ensure that the alleged harasser understands the complaints mechanism
- facilitate discussion between both parties to achieve an informal resolution which is acceptable to the complainant.
- ensure that a confidential record is kept of what happens
- follow up after the outcome of the complaints mechanism to ensure that the behavior has stopped
- ensure that the above is done speedily and within 14 days of the complaint being made

### **Formal complaints mechanism**

If the victim wants to make a formal complaint or if the informal complaint mechanism has not led to a satisfactory outcome for the victim, the formal complaint mechanism should be used to resolve the matter.

The designated person who initially received the complaint will refer the matter to the Executive Director to instigate a formal investigation. The Executive Director may deal with the matter himself, refer the matter to an internal or external investigator or refer it to a committee of three others in accordance with this policy.

The person carrying out the investigation will:

- interview the victim and the alleged harasser separately
- interview other relevant third parties separately
- decide whether or not the incident(s) of sexual harassment took place
- produce a report detailing the investigations, findings and any recommendations



- if the harassment took place, decide what the appropriate remedy for the victim is, in consultation with the victim (i.e.- an apology, a change to working arrangements, a promotion if the victim was demoted as a result of the harassment, training for the harasser, discipline, suspension, dismissal)
- follow up to ensure that the recommendations are implemented, that the behavior has stopped and that the victim is satisfied with the outcome
- if it cannot determine that the harassment took place, he/she may still make recommendations to ensure proper functioning of the workplace
- keep a record of all actions taken
- ensure that the all records concerning the matter are kept confidential
- ensure that the process is done as quickly as possible and in any event within 21 days of the complaint being made

### **Outside complaints mechanisms**

A person who has been subject to sexual harassment can also make a complaint outside MERCY HANDS.

### **Sanctions and disciplinary measures**

Anyone who has been found to have sexually harassed another person under the terms of this policy is liable to any of the following sanctions:

- verbal or written warning
- adverse performance evaluation
- reduction in salary
- transfer
- demotion
- suspension
- dismissal



The nature of the sanctions will depend on the gravity and extent of the harassment. Suitable deterrent sanctions will be applied to ensure that incidents of sexual harassment are not treated as trivial. Certain serious cases, including physical violence, will result in the immediate dismissal of the harasser.

### **Implementation of this policy**

MERCY HANDS will ensure that this policy is widely disseminated to all relevant persons. It will be included in the staff handbook (collection of staff rules, code of conduct, policies, and other relevant documents). All new employees must be trained on the content of this policy as part of their induction into the organization.

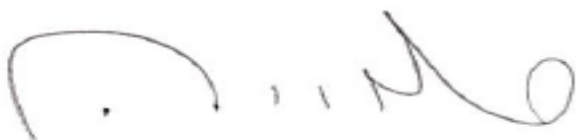
Every year, MERCY HANDS will require all employees to attend a refresher training course on the content of this policy.

It is the responsibility of every manager to ensure that all his/her employees are aware of the policy.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

MERCY HANDS recognizes the importance of monitoring this sexual harassment policy and will ensure that it anonymously collects statistics and data as to how it is used and whether or not it is effective.

Supervisors, managers and those responsible for dealing with sexual harassment cases will report on compliance with this policy, including the number of incidents, how they were dealt with, and any recommendations made. This will be done on a yearly basis. As a result of this report, MERCY HANDS will evaluate the effectiveness of this policy and make any changes needed.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Khaldoon Al-Moosawi', is written over a faint, light-colored circular stamp or watermark.

Reviewed by: Khaldoon Al-Moosawi

Date of last review: October 2018