

Safeguarding dignity: Advancing women's safety at workplaces in India



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In recent years, progress on women's safety in India's offices has seen many positive changes. This has been encouraged by new laws aimed at ensuring dignity and respect for women inside their offices.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The POSH Act is very effective in protection of women from sexual offences at the place of their work in India, only requirement being awareness among Women about the law and the protection that it provides.

The POSH Act requires all Employers / Companies with 10 or more employees to form Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) to handle complaints of sexual harassment and punish the culprits. This Act provides complete details regarding procedures for complaint filing, method of investigation, and redressal. By placing the burden on employers to address issues of harassment, the Act empowers women to assert their rights without fear of retaliation or stigma or without the hassles of going to Police and go through lengthy legal procedures.

WHO ALL GET PROTECTED BY THIS ACT?

Any woman who works in

an office having 10 or more persons:

- for any work on regular or even if working on temporary basis, even maids are covered under POSH,
- working for salary or on voluntary basis or otherwise,
- includes a co-worker, a contract worker, probationer, trainee, apprentice or called by any other such name.
- Even visiting women in an office enjoy same

The issue of sexual harassment has been in existence for long but was often ignored. It is now at the forefront with the enactment of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. In short, this Act is known as the POSH Act, (Prevention of Sexual Harassment Act).

ments. Many organizations have embraced the Act's requirements and have established strong ICCs and are conducting regular awareness programs to educate employees about their rights and responsibilities. This

crucial for ensuring inclusive protection.

In conclusion, while significant improvements have been made through legislative reforms and awareness initiatives, the fight against sexual offences at the workplace in



protection under this Act.

CHALLENGES FACED

Despite such a powerful Act being in force, challenges remain in the effective implementation of the POSH Act. Underreporting of incidents due to fear of consequences, inadequate awareness about legal protections, and varying levels of commitment from employers are significant hurdles. Moreover, the diversity of India's workforce and the different ways in which a woman faces harassment, make it necessary to have specific approaches that cater to the specific needs of women from diverse backgrounds.

PROGRESS

However, there have been encouraging develop-

proactive stance not only promotes a culture of zero tolerance towards harassment but also encourages gender equality and organizational integrity.

THE WAY FORWARD: STRENGTHENING PROTECTIONS AND ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY

Likewise, addressing issues such as the vulnerabilities faced by women from marginalized communities, including LG-BTQ+ individuals and women from lower socio-economic backgrounds, is

India requires sustained efforts from all stakeholders. By upholding the principles of dignity, equality and justice, we can create workplaces where every woman can pursue her profession free from the threat of harassment, thereby contributing to a more inclusive and progressive society.

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As India continues to march towards ensuring complete protection for women from sexual offences at the workplace, several areas demand attention. Awareness of the POSH Act is the single most important factor that can create a positive change in the society.