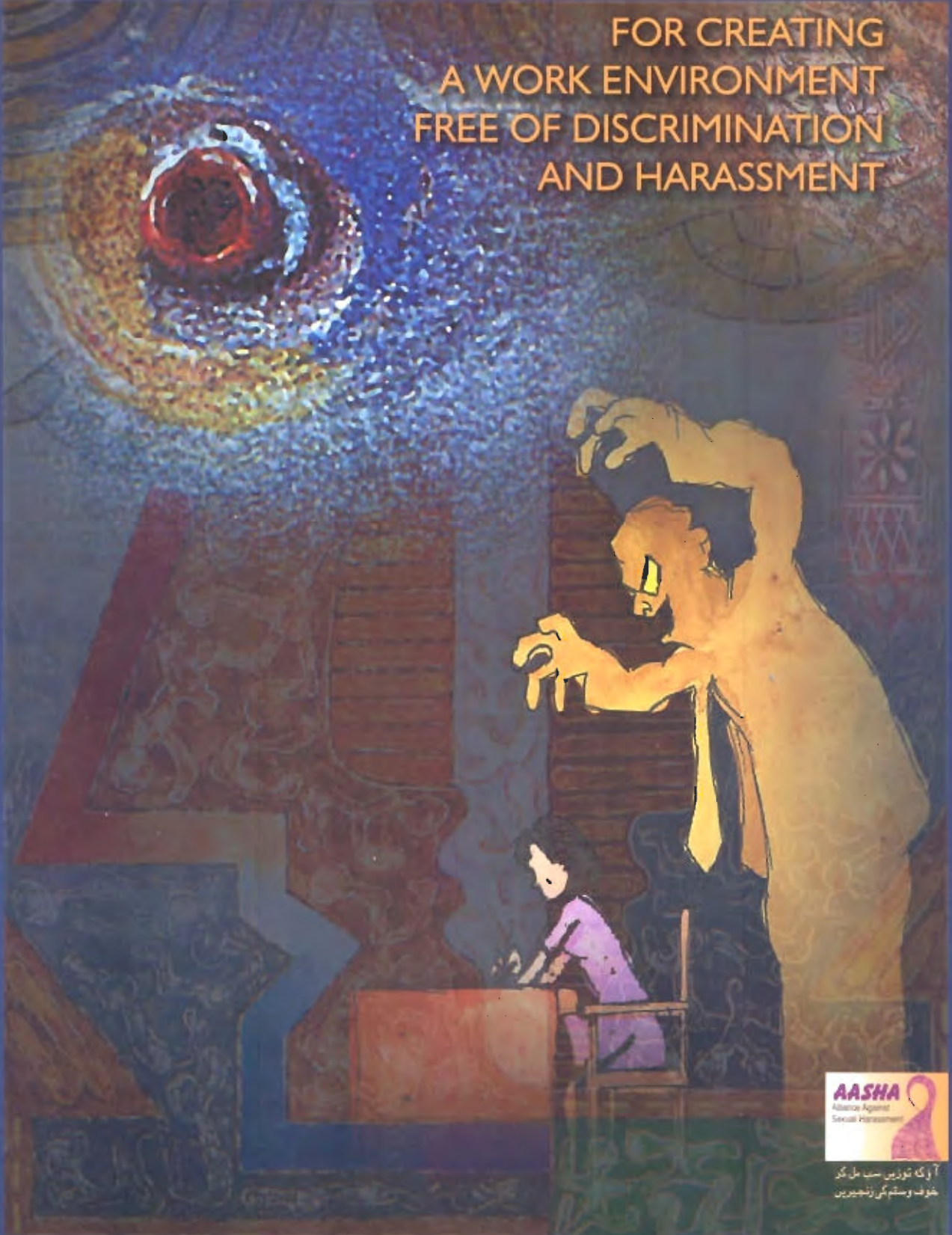


GUIDELINES

FOR CREATING
A WORK ENVIRONMENT
FREE OF DISCRIMINATION
AND HARASSMENT



آرگنائزیشن سبب مل کر
خوف و ستم کی رنجیروں

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BACKGROUND

In Pakistan it has been difficult for women to fully contribute to their country's development because the environment to work, in general, is difficult and un-supportive. Women commonly face inappropriate behaviour and harassment on the streets, at the work place and in public places.

The government has been trying to increase the number of women employees for the last several years, but even the minimum quota of 5% remains unfilled. Outside the government some women are working in senior positions and are running businesses, but, in general, the trend of women working in government or private employment has not become popular. Regardless of the economic and social compulsions to earn an income, women have to face several hurdles to work outside their homes.

Some organizations have explored the reasons and found that women either face social constraints and, therefore, do not attempt to get into employment situations or they are discouraged by the aggressive work environment. Those who do come out to work, have to fight for their rights and get little support to carry on. The attitude of their male colleagues and the management is usually not conducive and does not encourage women to exercise their right to work and contribute to the economic development of the society.

The following are some examples, identified in various studies, of discrimination and harassment experienced by women:

At home: giving less importance to the girl child, belittling her, trivializing the woman working at home, not allowing her to take decisions, inflicting violence, etc.

On the streets: catcalling, touching, putting down, making fun, intimidating and singing to tease women.

In the buses: touching, pushing, humiliating, swearing and using vulgar language

In public places: staring, touching, intimidating, shoving, aggressively stopping the way, restricting entrance to places, chasing and inflicting violence.

At work place: leering, staring, making passes, discriminating, abusing authority for sexual favours, asking out, flirting, inflicting violence

Not all people think like this. Many who are enlightened and wise realize that society has developed and so has the role of women. Women now can, and should, contribute to society, not only in the home but in every aspect of life. No country can progress if half of its population is restricted from contributing to its progress. Women have rights, like men, as citizens of our country and they should have equal opportunity at work. Men and women both have the right to work in an environment free of discrimination, intimidation and harassment.

Why does inappropriate behaviour occur with women at their work place?

Though women in agriculture and many other occupations have been working outside their homes since several centuries, the general myth or traditional concept that women should stay at home still prevails. People in general think that women who are working outside, shouldn't be there and, if they are, they must not be good women. A general subtle assumption that they are immoral prevails, consciously or unconsciously, in the minds of men and this is reflected in their attitude.

The general belief that women are subordinate and inferior to men also prevails in society and, therefore, an environment where women have the same or higher authority at work becomes unacceptable, and this uncomfortable feeling culminates in harassment.

Why is it important to address gender discrimination and sexual harassment at work?

It is very important to recognize that every person has the right to live a life of dignity and to earn a living in an environment free of discrimination and harassment.

It is difficult to change people's attitudes at home and on the streets, however when they choose to work in an organization they have to accept a certain standard of work performance and behaviour and, therefore, it is very important that at least at the work place organizations take responsibility of meeting certain standards of professionalism.

In addition, for a work place to be productive it is extremely important for the employees to feel safe and respected. This is their right and it impacts the