



ہلالِ احمر پاکستان

PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO WORKPLACE HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION



INTRODUCTION

1: INTRODUCTION

COMMITMENTS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 1.1 PRCS enacts this policy in order to comply with **THE PROTECTION AGAINST HARASSMENT OF WOMEN AT THE WORKPLACE ACT 2010** of the government of Pakistan and as amended from time to time.
- 1.2 This Policy applies to all individuals serving the PRCS irrespective of the duration or type of their contractual arrangement. This includes all PRCS Staff, Seconded Staff, and other persons working for the PRCS NHQ, including volunteers, interns, and consultants as well as those working on an PRCS-funded project or programs, and sub-contractors and their staff, (collectively "PRCS Personnel").
- 1.3 PRCS affirms the right of every person to be treated with respect and dignity and strives in its operations to safeguard the welfare of its personnel, partners, and affected persons.
- 1.4 PRCS is committed to ensuring a safe, inclusive, and respectful work environment, free from harassment and discrimination. The organization acknowledges that harassment, including bullying and sexual harassment, as well as discrimination, can negatively affect staff mental health, physical well-being, productivity, and team cohesion. Such conduct violates PRCS values and the Fundamental Principles of the Movement.
- 1.5 PRCS adopts a zero-tolerance policy towards harassment and discrimination involving employees, volunteers, interns, clients, contractors, suppliers, or visitors. All reports of misconduct will be taken seriously, and perpetrators will be held accountable. The organization also prohibits retaliation against individuals who report violations of this policy .
- 1.6 PRCS seeks to foster a work culture where everyone feels secure and empowered to report concerns of improper conduct. To this end, PRCS is committed to a survivor-centered approach that aims to do no further harm, in line with the principles of respect, safety, confidentiality, and non-discrimination.

PURPOSE

2: PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF POLICY

PURPOSE

2.1 PRCS Aims to Prevent and Appropriately Respond to Harassment and Discrimination.

This Policy:

- Defines prohibited conduct.
- Outlines the responsibilities of PRCS personnel in preventing harassment and discrimination.
- Provides information on resources for those affected by or witnessing such conduct.
- Details formal resolution mechanisms and reporting channels.
- Establishes the organization's duties in handling and responding to reports of policy breaches.

SCOPE OF APPLICATION

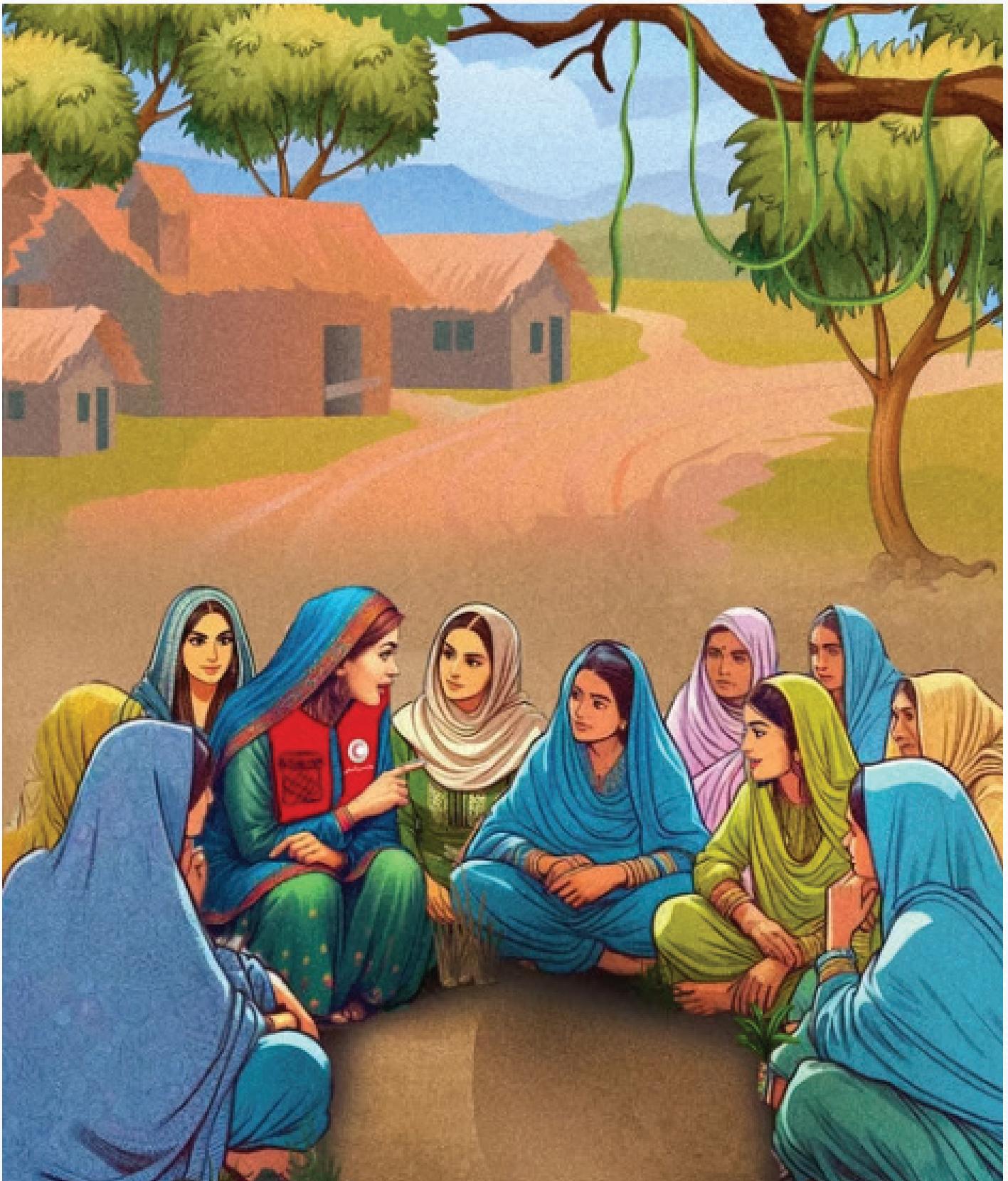
2.2 This Policy Covers Conduct that Occurs:

- i. In the workplace ; and outside the workplace, including on work-related travel, social and
- ii. training events, and in a private context outside working hours under circumstances where the conduct impacts the recipient's work environment.

¹ Whistleblower protection policy

2.3 PRCS includes a standard clause in its relevant agreements with third parties, including implementing partners on their duty to ensure a work environment that is free from harassment and discrimination. Any third party may report allegations of improper conduct allegedly perpetrated by PRCS Personnel in accordance with the terms of this Policy. This includes service providers, contractors or sub-contractors, and their respective personnel.

2.4 Persons who benefit from PRCS's protection or assistance in a local community where the Organization operates are not covered under this Policy. PRCS has adopted a Policy on the Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse applicable to partners and affected persons



DEFINE

3: DEFINITIONS OF PROHIBITED CONDUCT

3.1 For the purposes of this Policy, all types of harassment and discrimination are collectively referred to as "**prohibited conduct**". The Annex to this Policy provides a non-exhaustive list of behaviors that may constitute prohibited conduct.

Types of Harassment: : Bullying/Mobbing. Sexual Harassment, Psychological /emotional harassment

- 3.2** Harassment refers to any improper or unwanted conduct that has, or that might reasonably be expected to have, the effect of:
- i. offending, degrading, humiliating, or intimidating another person; and
 - ii. creating a hostile work environment or unreasonably interfering with that person's work or the work of a group of people.
 - iii. It can be physical, verbal, visual, or written, and may be direct or indirect. Typically, bullying occurs repeatedly and regularly over time.
- 3.3** Harassment may occur through words, gestures, actions targeting one or multiple people at any level. It includes bullying, sexual harassment, and abuse of authority. Anyone can be subjected to harassment regardless of gender identity, age, ethnicity, color, sexual orientation, or other characteristics.
- 3.4** Bullying is offensive, cruel, intimidating, insulting, or humiliating behavior, often misusing power to undermine individuals or groups, regardless of their ranks or status.

Workplace includes any PRCS premise under the procession of NHQ

Affected Persons" refers to persons who look to or benefit from PRCS's protection or assistance. This may include any person in any local community where PRCS is operating.

A hostile working environment is created when incidents of unwanted conduct deprive a person of feeling psychologically or physically safe and prevents the person from effectively carrying out their duties.

- 3.5 Cyber-bullying refers to situations of unwanted or aggressive conduct, perpetrated through electronic or social media that may harm, threaten, or demoralize the recipient(s), and can occur during or outside working hours.
- 3.6 Mobbing is the term used when a group of individuals subject a person to psychological harassment .
- 3.7 Sexual harassment means any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favors or other verbal or written communication or physical conduct of a sexual nature or sexually demeaning attitudes, causing interference with work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment, or the attempt to punish the complainant for refusal to comply to such a request or is made a condition for employment.
- 3.8 Quid pro quo sexual harassment occurs when a person in a position of influence seeks sexual favors in exchange for career or employment benefits, involving promises of rewards or threats of negative consequences.

DISCRIMINATION

- 3.9 Discrimination is unfair treatment or arbitrary distinction based on factors like gender identity, physical appearance, religion, nationality, ethnic or social origin, political opinions, disability, age, language, or personal status.
- 3.10 Discrimination involves actions or omissions, whether direct, indirect, covert, or overt, based on prejudices that result in unfair or unjust treatment of individuals or groups. It can manifest through harassment.



The term "bullying" and "psychological harassment" are often used inter-changeably.

From Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace, Act 2010

PRCS's standards of conduct are found in the PRCSS staff code of conduct and PRCS Staff Service Regulations.. Other relevant internal rules and policies include the PRCS Policy on Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and the PRCS Policy on Child Safeguarding. Staff regulations 12.76 refers to disciplinary action for making false and malicious reports

A photograph of several light-colored wooden blocks arranged on a white surface. One block in the foreground is positioned horizontally and has the word "RESOURCE" printed on it in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Other blocks are scattered around it, some stacked and some lying flat, creating a sense of depth and texture.

RESOURCE

4: RESPONSIBILITIES AND RESOURCES IN THE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO PROHIBITED CONDUCT

4.1 PRCS Personnel and Management Responsibilities

All PRCS Personnel, as defined under Paragraph 2.3 of this Policy, regardless of location of service, position or contract type, shall:

- Familiarize themselves and comply with PRCS's standards of conduct, including this, Policy.
- Take prompt action without use of physical force to diffuse the situation and provide support if they observe inappropriate conduct towards a colleague, encouraging them to seek support and advice.
- Remind colleagues of appropriate conduct and model acceptable behavior in and outside the workplace.
- Avoid filing false or malicious reports, or reports made with reckless disregard for the truth.

4.2 Line Managers shall in addition:

- Commit to a safe and respectful work environment by maintaining high personal conduct standards, reminding team members of appropriate behavior, encouraging healthy interactions.
- Discourage inappropriate conduct that could be offensive or contribute to a hostile work environment, ensuring no offensive material is displayed or circulated.
- Support team members involved in procedures under this Policy, ensuring the survivor feels safe and working to restore a harmonious work environment.
- Continuously seek to build their capacities, skills, and competencies in managing diverse teams.

⁷ PRCS's standards of conduct are found in the PRCS staff code of conduct and PRCS Staff Service Regulations. Other relevant internal rules and policies include the PRCS Policy on Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and the PRCS Policy on Child Safeguarding.

⁸ Staff regulations 12.76 refers to disciplinary action for making false and malicious reports

HUMAN RESOURCES

4.3 Human Resources functions in PRCS to prevent and resolve workplace issues, including in respect of any inappropriate conduct, acting as a support and adviser to PRCS Personnel and Management. Human Resources is responsible for:

- Implementing and monitoring adherence to measures aimed at promoting a safe and respectful working environment through the provision of information.
- Undertaking a thorough screening of any new staff member, during the recruitment and selection process.
- Providing information, advice, and guidance to those experiencing or witnessing inappropriate conduct in connection with their work for PRCS.
- Handling formal complaints of allegations of harassment, including sexual harassment, and discrimination in accordance with the procedures set out on the official platforms provided.
- Play a pivotal role in administering disciplinary actions as per PRCS Staff Regulations and policies when misconduct is alleged or confirmed.
- Collaborate with line managers to uphold or restore a harmonious work environment for all involved parties.
- Monitoring compliance with this Policy, keeping the record of the outcome of reviews and investigations, and the types of corrective measures that have been taken by the relevant committee.

4.4 PGI Managers/Officers/Focal Points at PRCS support programs, operations, and services to address and prevent violence, discrimination, and exclusion. They focus on preventing identity-based violence, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and serve as a key resource for survivor support and referral services, promoting a survivor-centered approach. PGI specialists also provide technical advisory support and relevant trainings for the implementation of related policies.



REPORT

5: Resolution Mechanisms and Reporting Procedures

REPORTING PROCEDURES;

5.1 PRCS Personnel may report a possible breach of this Policy to:

- The whistleblower complaint platform, a dedicated platform that accepts anonymous and identifiable complaints. Reports made through this channel are forwarded for action to the relevant committee as appropriate.
- In writing via the safeguarding email address

5.2 If the Secretary General is the subject of the alleged prohibited mis conduct, the committee if deems appropriate shall intimate the Chairperson of the PRCS Board of Management.

5.3 When filing a report anonymously, individuals should provide essential information about the allegations and the involved parties, along with supporting factual evidence. However, it's important to note that anonymous reporting or lack of evidence may limit further pursuit beyond an initial review and could impact referrals to appropriate resources.

5.4 The PRCS acknowledges that there is no strict time limit for reporting concerns after the alleged events due to the recognition that reporting can be challenging and may take time for individuals to feel comfortable raising issues.

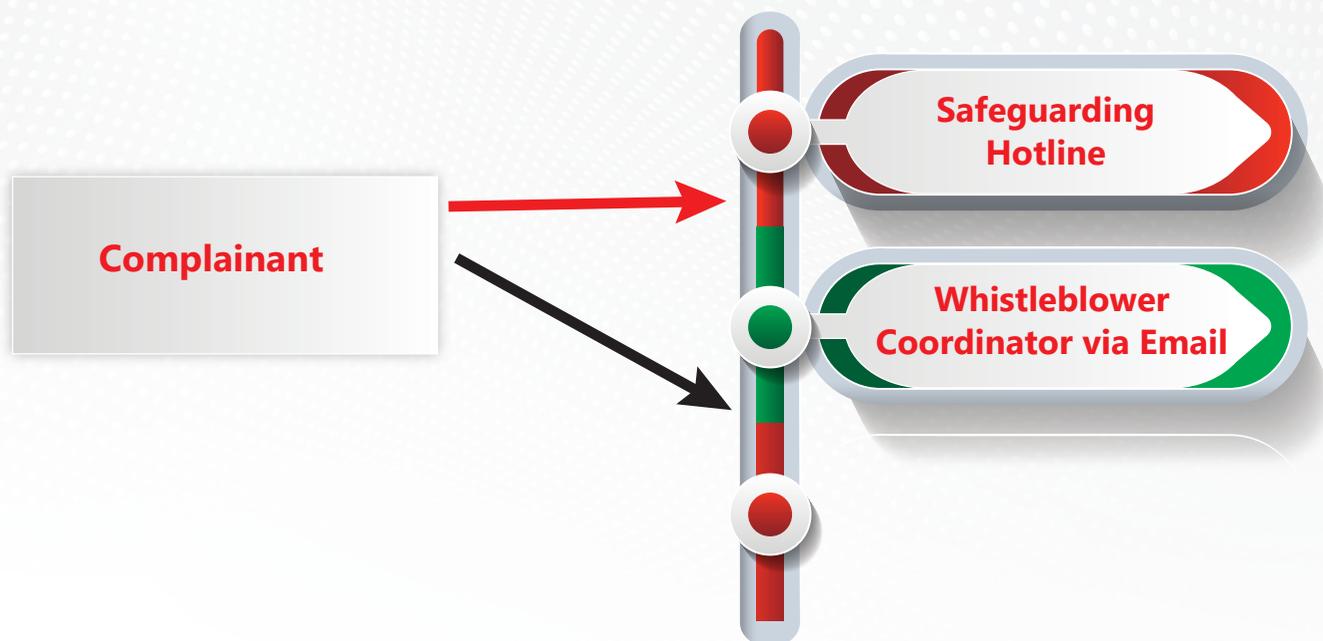
⁹ A person other than the perpetrator and the victim. This person may have witnessed/heard about the incident or may have been approached by the aggrieved party to intervene informally.

- 5.5 Whenever a complaint/report is received the whistleblower coordinator for handling the complaints/reports shall, receipt of the report within 48 hours manner and may request additional information prior to, or in connection with, the initial review procedure, known as a Preliminary Assessment and the investigation must be completed within 3 months (see Part 6).
- 5.6 In the event that the alleged perpetrator is one of the members of the Relevant Committee or the Investigation team, he/she shall be replaced by another senior and respected staff member.
- 5.7 If the alleged perpetrator belongs to one of the RCRC movement partners, or to any other agency, PRCS personnel are encouraged to report on official reporting platform and once received by the relevant committee, it must be brought to the notice of the Secretary General who will take-up the matter with the respective movement partner/external agency.
- 5.8 The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) is responsible for providing support to individuals involved in incidents. The designated committee may, with consent, refer survivors or those affected by allegations of wrongdoing to a health or mental health professional for an initial assessment regarding the need for psycho-social counseling.



**RESOLVE
CONFLICTS**

FLOW CHART – REPORTING PROCEDURES



CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMED CONSENT

- 5.9 All reports received through official platforms shall be treated with discretion and confidentiality. Anyone involved in receiving and handling reports of alleged breaches of this Policy has a duty to maintain the confidentiality of the process. Information is therefore shared only on a need-to-know basis.
- 5.10 Safeguarding Focal point, will obtain the prior consent of a person who files a report before sharing their identity with the alleged offender reports if suspicions of alleged misconduct will be handled with utmost confidentiality, balancing the need for a thorough review and potential investigation. The Whistleblower's identity will only be disclosed if their evidence is required, with their consent or as mandated by law.





6: Response and Handling of Reports of Alleged Prohibited Conduct Preliminary Assessment

EARLY INTERVENTION THROUGH DIRECT ACTION

- 6.1 When a report is filed through the formal channels, it initiates a “Preliminary Assessment” by the relevant committee. This assessment evaluates whether allegations of prohibited conduct are credible, verifiable, and material. The findings inform subsequent decisions on appropriate actions. The process may include preliminary fact-finding.
- 6.2 In the event the conclusion of the Preliminary Assessment is that the matter does not raise a legitimate concern of possible prohibited conduct or is a false allegation, strict actions shall be taken against the complainant in light of policies and internal rules of PRCs. The complainant will be so informed, and the initial matter shall be considered closed.
- 6.3 In the event the conclusion of the Preliminary Assessment is that there is a legitimate concern of possible prohibited conduct, the matter shall normally proceed to an investigation (see paragraph 6.5 below).
- 6.4 After completing a Preliminary Assessment, Relevant Committee if it considers expedient may refer affected individuals to the Secretary General for resolution of the issue. During this time, if an amicable resolution to the matter is expected, the investigation it can be suspended for up to 30 days.

INVESTIGATION

- 6.5 The investigation will be carried out by an Inquiry/Investigation Committee comprising of qualified investigators trained by IFRC Integrity Line or a similar agency, following the Uniform Guidelines for Investigators.

¹⁰ These criteria are defined as follows: i) credibility, that is, whether it is reasonably possible that the incident(s) occurred; ii) verifiability, that is, whether sufficient evidence can be obtained related to the allegations; and iii) materiality, that is, whether the allegation(s), if substantiated by evidence, would constitute a breach of PRCs's internal rules.

6.6 The Inquiry Committee shall consist of three members of whom at least one member shall be a female. One member shall be from senior management and one shall be a senior representative of the employees or a senior employee. One or more members can be co-opted from outside the organization provided that such a person has received the relevant training, if the organization is unable to designate three members from within as described above. An Investigation Manager shall be designated by the Secretary General from amongst them.

INVESTIGATION/INQUIRY PROCEDURE

- 7:** The Inquiry Committee, within three days of receipt of a written complaint, shall communicate to the accused,
- Require the accused within seven days from the day the charge is communicated to him/her to submit a written defense and on his/her failure to do so without reasonable cause, the Committee shall proceed ex-parte; and
 - Inquire into the charge and may examine such oral or documentary evidence in support of the charge or in defense of the accused as the Committee may consider necessary .
- 7.1:** Inquiry Committee shall have power to regulate its own procedure for conducting inquiry and for the fixing place and time of its sitting.
- 7.2:** The following provisions inter alia shall be followed by the Committee in relation to inquiry:
- The statements and other evidence acquired in the inquiry process shall be considered as confidential;
 - Adverse action shall not be taken against the complainant or the witnesses;
 - The inquiry Committee shall ensure that the employer or accused shall in no case create any hostile environment for the complainant so as to pressurize them from freely pursuing her complaint; and
 - The Inquiry Committee shall give its findings in writing by recording reasons thereof.
- 7.3:** The Inquiry Committee shall submit its findings and recommendations to the Secretary General within thirty days of the initiation of inquiry and can be extended under justified reasons. If the Inquiry Committee finds the accused to be guilty it shall recommend to the Secretary General for imposing disciplinary measures
- 7.4:** The Secretary General or another designated decision-maker under staff regulations can choose to suspend the subject of concern from duty until the investigative process concludes. They may also implement other interim measures, such as adjusting reporting lines. Additionally, with the complainant's consent, appropriate interim measures can be taken to support them during this period.
- 7.5:** All PRCS personnel interviewed by investigators must cooperate fully and provide truthful information. Confidentiality regarding the ongoing investigation must be maintained by everyone involved. Breaches of confidentiality by PRCS personnel may lead to disciplinary action and could negatively affect any proceedings related to the complaint.

Refer Annex 2 for preliminary assessment and investigation flow chart

DISCIPLINARY AND APPEALS PROCESS

- 8: In the event the investigation establishes that prohibited conduct has occurred, appropriate administrative or disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the provisions of section 12.43 and 12.44 of PRCS Staff Service Regulations.
- 9: In the event the perpetrator of misconduct is not an PRCS staff member or is not otherwise regulated under the PRCSS's Staff Regulations, the matter will be handled in accordance with the terms and conditions of their contract.
- 10: Any party aggrieved by decision of the Secretary General on whom minor or major penalty is imposed may within thirty days of written communication of decision submit an appeal to the relevant Provincial or Federal Ombudsman appointed in terms of THE PROTECTION AGAINST HARASSMENT OF WOMEN AT THE WORKPLACE ACT 2010

ONGOING SUPPORT

- 11: At the close of the investigation and/or disciplinary process, line managers have a special responsibility to monitor the situation closely to ensure that the parties to the complaint make the transition back to the work environment as smoothly and quickly as possible in cases where this is foreseen.
- 12: In addition to providing psycho-social counselling and support through PSS Staff, the organization maintains a list of additional support referral services.

13: PROTECTION AGAINST RETALIATION

All persons who report allegations of prohibited conduct under this Policy in good faith, and any person who assists them or provides information in the course of an investigation will be protected against retaliation in accordance with the Organization's Whistleblower Protection Policy.



ANNEX L: EXAMPLES OF PROHIBITED CONDUCT

Harassment. Sexual Harassment, Bullying

The examples below are not exhaustive and are meant to be used for guidance on what behaviours may constitute prohibited conduct.

Examples of Harassment Include:

- Repeated shouting and aggressive behaviour in public or private.
- Repeated offensive language, jokes, sarcasm, gossip, or ridicule.
- Racial slurs and negative stereotyping of an individual or group.
- Innuendos or other suggestive offensive or derogatory comments about an individual's personal characteristics.
- Display of images or written materials that are offensive, obscene or objectionable.
- Deliberate desecration of religious and/or national symbols.
- Putting sustained pressure on others to participate in activities unrelated to work.

Examples of Bullying Include:

- Openly aggressive behaviour, including intimidation, threats, or abusive language.
- Negative comments related to a person's personal or professional competence without a factual basis or legitimate authority that have the effect of undermining the person.
- Constantly humiliating, mocking or belittling someone.
- Intentional exclusion of colleagues from obtaining information required for the performance of their work duties.
- Interfering with a person's workspace, materials, or equipment.
- Requesting staff to do personal favours or errands.
- Pressuring staff to distort facts or break the rules.

Examples of Cyber-Bullying Include

- Sharing derogatory and humiliating things about the target by mass email or mass chat.
- Spreading lies or gossip about the target on social or traditional media.
- Sending threatening or harassing text messages or emails directly to the target.
- Publishing and/or circulating personal details or other information aimed at humiliating the target.

Examples of Sexual Harassment Include:

- Deliberate and unsolicited physical contact, or unwelcome, unnecessarily close physical proximity.
- Direct unwelcome propositions of a sexual nature, including any link between acceptance of such propositions and conditions of employment, promotion, professional development, etc.; "dates" if they persist after the recipient has declined such invitation(s).
- Invitations to social activities or "dates" if they persist after the recipient has declined such invitation(s).
- Repeated sexually oriented comments, innuendos or exaggerated compliments about a person's appearance, or physical features.
- Crude, suggestive, and obscene language or gestures, or the telling of risqué or obscene sexual jokes or stories.
- The exhibition of materials of a sexually oriented nature in the workplace.
- Quidpro quo" sexual harassment by a supervisor or person in a position of authority with respect to the target's employment status.

DISCRIMINATION

Examples of discriminatory behaviour or treatment include:

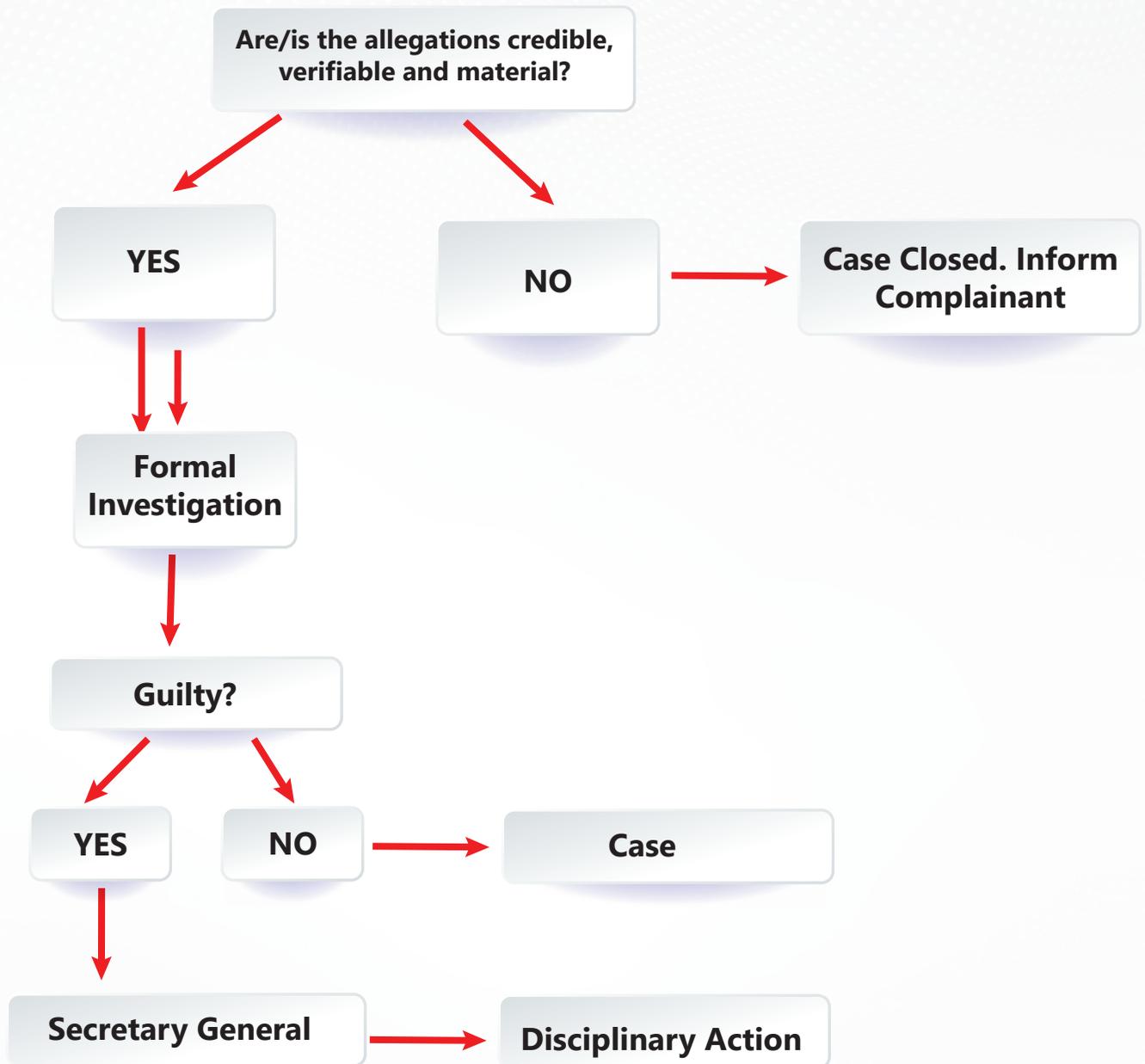
- Giving less favourable treatment based on gender, status, personal characteristics, or other grounds as defined in section 3. 13 of this Policy
- Not recommending or considering a staff member for promotion or other advancement on grounds of a protected characteristic.
- Giving more favourable performance appraisals to certain staff rather than others, without reasonable Justification and not because of an individual's personal performance.
- Social exclusion based on an individual's personal characteristics.
- Denigrating cultural or religious festivals or making derisory comments against an individual's beliefs.
- Dismissive treatment or the expression of stereotypical assumptions about a group to which the staff member belongs.
- Marginalizing someone by regularly omitting them from meetings and conversations relevant to their work.
- Repeatedly ignoring or excluding a team member from meetings or office activities; side-lining by talking across them or not listening to them.
- Regular setting of clearly unattainable targets and deadlines.
- Monitoring work unnecessarily and intrusively.
- Interfering with a colleague's ability to work effectively (e.g., by impeding their access to information or resources).
- (Mis)Use of power or authority to coerce an individual not to exercise their right to raise concerns about potential breaches of the PRCs Internal Rules.

3: Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed approximately every **2 years** if and when necessary

4. In case of any inconsistency between this policy and the TORs, SOPs, rules, or regulations adopted by PRCS on whistleblowing, the latter (TORs, etc.) shall prevail, provided they are not inconsistent with national law.

ANNEX 2 PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT AND INVESTIGATION FLOW CHART





ہلالِ احمر پاکستان

+92-051-9250404

National Headquarters, Sector H-8 Islamabad

www.prcs.org.pk

