

# Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures

MenEngage Global Alliance

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Justification

MenEngage Alliance is an international network of civil society organizations committed to dismantling patriarchy and promoting gender justice by working with men and boys. This policy consolidates the Alliance's commitment to eliminating all forms of sexual violence, including among its member organizations. Considering the widespread nature of this problem across every context, we recognize the possibility that there are people who have been targets of this violence, or, perpetrators - or both - among members of the Alliance. Our organizations are not immune to staff member perpetrating these behaviors, as clearly demonstrated by the #MeToo movement and by the public condemnations against international non-governmental organizations as well as UN Agencies working in development and humanitarian assistance for their failure to protect survivors and the ongoing perpetuation of a status quo of impunity. As an Alliance, we acknowledge that sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence happen in our circles and that many MenEngage Alliance members may not be well prepared and/or lack appropriate tools to be able to prevent and respond to them in an effective, ethical and accountable manner.

This policy is aimed at filling this possible gap within MenEngage Global Alliance, as well as to inspire our members and partners to institute similar policies, capacities and tools. This policy is not replacing the national law, but is more of a commitment as an Alliance towards addressing the issue. We acknowledge that this effort will be a process, which we have committed to carrying out in collaboration with our members, women's rights organizations, and with the committees to be set up to implement this policy.

## 1.2. Commitment

The leadership of MenEngage Global Alliance is fully committed to developing and implementing this policy and will allocate human and financial resources as necessary to adequately address this issue. MenEngage Global Alliance seeks to go beyond a ‘box-ticking’ approach and paying lip service to this important issue, opting instead, to stand firmly in our commitment to the development of our internal response mechanisms to prevent and address all forms of sexual violence.

Members of MenEngage Alliance are committed to act as allies to targets of sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence, be upstanders<sup>1</sup> and hold each other accountable. Our Core Principles, Code of Conduct and mission guide the Alliance and its members to treat everyone with dignity, respect and empathy, to ensure consent in sexual activities while being mindful of power differentials that may compromise consent, and to listen to and to take seriously any concern that we are aware and/or made aware of. The Alliance, as a collective, is committed to support and hold each other to account for the ‘blind spots’ that we might have as individuals and improve our role of being vigilant on possible acts that might constitute sexual violence and finding ways to collectively respond.

## 1.3. Purpose

This policy aims to prevent harm, promote healthy practices, end any potential systems of impunity within MenEngage Global Alliance; ensure policies and practices which provide support to those who have been the targets of such conduct, and ensure accountability for perpetrators.

## 1.4. Scope

The scope of this policy encompasses all types of sexual violence, with a special attention to sexual harassment (see section on “Definitions” for better clarification). The policy applies in particular to our work and relationships within our organizations and networks. Harmful behaviors related to sexual violence, including sexual harassment, taking place in other spheres of our lives will be dealt as part of our Code of Conduct.

## 1.5. Coverage

This policy covers those who represent MenEngage Global Alliance and has a contractual or legal connection with the entity legally registered in the District of Columbia, U.S.A., ‘MenEngage Global Alliance’. This includes: MenEngage Global Secretariat Staff, Global Board

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<sup>1</sup> Upstander is “a person who speaks or acts in support of an individual or cause, particularly someone who intervenes on behalf of a person being attacked or bullied”. Source: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/upstander>

members and officers, volunteers, interns and consultants directly recruited by MenEngage Global Alliance.

This policy will be applicable, and as agreed, to any partner organizations and their staff members with whom MenEngage Global Alliance has or will have contractual arrangements of any form. For example, the members of the Alliance who host regional secretariat and receive sub-grants from MenEngage Global Alliance. Those who are covered by this policy will sign it annually to ensure all potential new policies are understood and followed.

This policy is not of direct legal applicability to the international members of the Alliance, which is made up of over 700 member organizations present and organized in regional and country networks across various regions of the world. We do, however, require all of our members, partners and networks to develop their own policies and procedures<sup>2</sup> which incorporate elements of this Global policy.

## 1.6. Complementarity

This policy is intended to be read in conjunction with the Alliance's [Code of Conduct](#), [Core Principles](#), [Accountability Standards and Guidelines](#) and Child Safeguarding Policy. These instruments complement each other.

# 2. Definitions

There are no perfect definitions that could capture the complexities around sexual violence and sexual harassment. Many of these behaviors and the harm that result are context-specific. In our efforts to clarify these terms, the intention is to provide flexibility to accommodate context-specific situations. Yet, the following should be considered minimum standards for defining these behaviours, and local contexts can go farther in their definitions without contradicting the core elements included here.

## 2.1. Sexual violence

The Alliance defines and understands sexual violence as an umbrella term that includes different forms of harmful sexual behavior such as sexual harassment, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. What they have in common is that abuse of power is at play due to power imbalances between two or more parties, which can contribute to and exacerbate lack of consent.

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<sup>2</sup> They may be asked to sign a membership agreement that includes adherence of this policy with its own contextualization, or to develop their own sexual misconduct policy.

Sexual violence, including sexual harassment, is “a form of violence and a violation and abuse of human rights that is likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual, economic or social harm or suffering[1]”.

These abuses of power are understood at their root cause to be expressions of patriarchal structures and of other inequalities and oppressions, such as racism, colonialism, ethnocentrism, ableism, class privilege and heterosexism, which intersect with sexism and misogyny, targeting certain groups more than others. Although anyone can be a survivor or a perpetrator of sexual violence, research indicates that women experience these forms of discrimination more often than men and that men are at higher risk of committing sexual violence. Transgender and non-gender binary individuals tend to face more sexual violence than heterosexual women.

## 2.2. Sexual harassment

The UN General Assembly affirms that “sexual harassment encompasses a continuum of unacceptable and unwelcome behaviours and practices of a sexual nature that may include, but are not limited to, sexual suggestions or demands, requests for sexual favours and sexual, verbal or physical conduct or gestures, that are or might reasonably be perceived as offensive or humiliating [1]”.

There are three types of sexual harassment behavior:

Sexual coercion (“proposal or execution of an exchange of a workplace benefit or absence of workplace detriment for sexual compliance”)[2]

Unwanted sexual attention (unwelcome verbal or physical sexual advances)

Gender harassment (“verbal and nonverbal behaviors that convey hostility, objectification, exclusion, or second-class status about members of one gender”) [3]. This third type of sexual harassment does not have to be of sexual nature.

All these types of sexual harassment can manifest as “an environmental workplace condition, made up of persistent or pervasive conduct or a single serious incident” [2].

## 2.3. Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

The UN Secretary-General defines these terms as follows [4]:

“Sexual exploitation means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.”

“Sexual abuse means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.” In this policy we expand this definition to

include non-physical sexual abuse such as sexual/sexualized comments, leering and sexually-suggestive gestures.

## 2.4. Specific instances of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse

These include, but are not limited to, the following [5]:

### **Physical conduct**

- Unwelcome physical contact including patting, pinching, stroking, kissing, hugging, fondling, or inappropriate touching
- Physical violence
- Sexual assault, including non-consensual sexual intercourse, and non-consensual sexual contact
- The use of job-related threats or rewards to solicit sexual favors
- Exchange of goods or services for sex that is due to beneficiaries of assistance.

### **Verbal conduct**

- Comments on someone's appearance, age, private life, etc.
- Sexual comments, stories or jokes
- Sexual advances
- Repeated and unwanted social invitations for dates or physical intimacy
- Insults based on a person's sex, sexual orientation or gender identity
- Condescending or paternalistic remarks
- Sending and forcing someone to share sexually explicit messages and pictures

### **Non-verbal conduct**

- Looking or staring in a sexual or undesirable way
- Display of sexually explicit or suggestive material
- Sexually-suggestive gestures
- Whistling and other objectifying or sexually suggestive behaviors
- Using another employee's technical equipment or gadgets, with or without consent, to view sexually explicit materials, including with the intent to intimidate someone

### **Sexual harassment in digital contexts**

Online activities and infractions will be treated with equal seriousness to offline instances, which include, but are not limited to, the following [1 & 6]:

- “Trolling, cyberbullying and other forms of cyber-harassment, including unwanted verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature” [6]
- Stalking, death threats and threats of sexual and gender-based violence
- Arbitrary or unlawful surveillance and tracking, censorship and the hacking of digital accounts, mobile telephones and other electronic devices
- Other behaviors described in previous sections (verbal and non-verbal conducts)

## 2.5. Cultural differences

As an International Alliance, we acknowledge cultural diversity and that acceptance of physical intimacy and verbal ‘banter’ can be different in different cultures (and from person to person, including the use of language and slang). For this reason, we emphasize the need for clear and respectful communication and the recognition that the impact of our actions can be harmful even if our intentions are otherwise.

We also acknowledge that many countries, where our members are present, have stringent policies pertaining to different forms of sexual harassment which lay out what is considered appropriate and inappropriate behavior. However, we also acknowledge that in many contexts these definitions, their interpretations and implementation might be equally ambiguous. In such cases, especially where MenEngage Global Alliance has contractual partnership, this policy document and its intent will be considered as the guiding document for further interpretations and applications based on the context.

## 2.6. Positive sexuality

MenEngage Alliance acknowledges that sexuality is a positive aspect of our human existence. This policy should not be used as an obstacle for engaging in and expressing healthy sexual pleasure, nor as a way to create a sexually stifling environment. On the contrary, by promoting consent, respect and safety, we aim to contribute to people’s sexual rights and freedom. However, MenEngage Alliance discourages any type of sexual relationship among those who represent MenEngage Global Alliance or who have a contractual or legal connection with the Alliance. This is to prevent risk of sexual harassment, misinterpretation, or preferential treatments. Should such relationships occur, those involved are advised to declare their relationship to the Global Director.

## 3. Prevention

### 3.1. Cultural transformation

MenEngage Global Alliance is committed to promote practices that foster a safe environment to openly talk about sexual violence. We want to create an organizational culture where there is shared responsibility for the safety of all people within our organization and with whom our organization interacts. It is recognized that a formal policy on sexual violence will not be sufficiently effective if the organizational culture contradicts the commitments set out in the policy.

Leaders of MenEngage Global Alliance are in a critical position to create the impetus and drive for this cultural transformative goal. Since rigid hierarchies, unequal power dynamics and systemic discrimination against women and other oppressed groups create conditions for sexual violence to happen and persist, there must be constant organizational commitment toward shared power, diversity in leadership positions, institutional democracy, egalitarian norms and relational accountability.

### 3.2. Training, awareness-raising and building skills

MenEngage Global Alliance will ensure those covered by this policy will receive annual trainings and capacity strengthening support, on preventing and responding to all sexual violence, including critical reflections and skills development.

**Training will include these core elements:**

- Understanding sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence, the root cause<sup>3</sup>, the impact on those who are targeted, as well as issues related to power<sup>4</sup>, the intersectionality of discrimination and definitions provided by restorative justice and by legal systems approaches
- Understanding why targets of sexual violence may decide not to report
- Standards of behavior: what respectful behaviors and healthy relations look like in contrast with harassment and abuse

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<sup>3</sup> Causes for sexual violence include abuse of power by anyone in an advantaged position and a sense of entitlement and privilege, particularly by men.

<sup>4</sup> Training may help potential perpetrators to become aware of their harmful behavior. Some may not know that what they are doing is sexual harassment. Targets may not know that what they are experiencing is sexual harassment, either.

- Steps to take if you witness or suspect someone may be a target of sexual violence (how to be an upstander<sup>5</sup>).
- Steps to take if you witness or suspect someone is engaging in sexual violence. (strategies to challenge their behavior, ways to distract or discourage their behavior, when and how to report this behavior, etc.)
- How a person accused of sexual harassment should respond to allegations in an ethical and accountable way.
- Strategies to create a process for supporting people who have perpetrated harassing or other forms of sexual violence to be accountable
- Steps to take if you experience sexual harassment by someone in the organization
- The specifics of the MenEngage Alliance Sexual Harassment Policy and any updates or revisions

### **This training will be:**

Evidence based; championed by senior leaders of the organization/network; repeated and reinforced regularly; tailored to the specific workplace and setting, and position of the person's being trained; conducted by qualified trainers and routinely evaluated. Throughout the capacity strengthening initiatives and processes, MenEngage Global Alliance will closely work with women's rights and social justice leaders, organizations and networks.

The initial training will be followed by ongoing follow-up capacity strengthening activities and initiatives. Every year, MenEngage Alliance will offer a refresher training course on the content of this policy to its staff members, board members and officers, and regional and country network members.

Trainings will be face to face primarily and complemented by online events. Additional resources will be provided to continue this learning (books, websites, videos, etc.)

## **3.3. Vetting and recruitment**

MenEngage Global Alliance will establish rigorous procedures for vetting, recruiting and selecting Global Secretariat Staff, Global Board members (in particular the Co-Chairs), officers, volunteers, interns, consultants and Regional Coordinators with a contractual connection with MenEngage Global Alliance.

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<sup>5</sup> An upstander is someone who: Acts in support of others facing discrimination or abuse; Does not collude with or protect perpetrators (even though they may be close friends or colleagues); Supports peers to recognize the 'blind spots' in their own behaviors, and play a constructive role in holding them to account for their behaviors, including initiating transformative justice process should the survivor wishes to engage in this process.

**These procedures will include the following:**

- Mandatory requirements for references and background checks
- Candidates who have been found to have behaved inappropriately (related to sexual harassment or other forms of violence) will not be eligible for leadership positions within the Alliance unless specific conditions have been met<sup>6</sup>.
- All Board and staff members will sign the core principles and code of conduct that includes having read and understood this policy.

### **3.4. Dissemination of the policy**

This Policy will be widely publicized through appropriate and diverse channels in order to ensure its proper implementation (e.g. posters, brochures, online campaigns, etc.). The following messages will be disseminated among all people who interact with MenEngage Alliance representatives [7].

**If you experience sexual harassment, sexual abuse or exploitation by MenEngage Alliance representative/s, you have the right to:**

- Confront the individual. If you feel comfortable doing so, you should let the person know that the remark or conduct is unwelcome and unacceptable. Explain what happened in your own words, how it made you feel, how others feel about it (if applicable), and how you would prefer to be treated. Keep a record of the incident(s), if possible.
- If the unwelcome behavior continues after you have confronted the individual or a team, or if you feel direct confrontation might put you at greater risk or is not the most suitable response at that time, report the situation to someone connected with MenEngage Alliance who you trust at country or regional or international levels, and who can in turn report to the appropriate channels.
- You also have the right to confront the individual and immediately report the situation without waiting for a change, at the most convenient channels as set forth in this policy.

**If you observe sexual harassment, sexual abuse or exploitation, or are told about it:**

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<sup>6</sup> [13] See this article by Michael Flood (2018) as a reference for making these decisions <https://xyonline.net/content/when-profeminist-men-are-alleged-have-perpetrated-abuse-or-harassment> - He proposes "that individuals who have histories of abuse perpetration can play public roles in violence prevention and feminist efforts, providing certain conditions are in place. Such individuals should be able to speak at events, act as educators, and so on, providing that: (a) the violence they perpetrated was far in the past; (b) they have been held accountable for their behavior; (c) they have made amends; and (d) they speak about their abusive behavior in ways which take responsibility for it."

- Speak up and let the offender/s know how you, as an impartial observer, view the behavior. Show your care and concern.
- Be specific regarding the comment or behavior and tell the individual why it made you uncomfortable. Refer to the organization's policy and/or our mission and values in addition to your own perceptions.
- Consult with the target of such behaviors, whether to report the situation in accordance with the reporting procedures set forth in this policy.

## 4. Response

### 4.1. Survivor-centered approach and restorative justice

MenEngage Global Alliance is committed to develop procedures for reporting and handling situations of sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence that center the perspectives, needs and rights of the targets of such violence. The Alliance encourages reporting of any concerns or allegations of sexual violence by representatives of MenEngage Global Alliance, but is aware that fear of retaliation, shame, mistrust and lack of information are reasons preventing people from speaking up. The right implementation of this policy should counter the trend of underreporting.

The Alliance also takes inspiration by a restorative justice approach, while recognizing that the Alliance is on a learning curve in this field. Restorative justice is “a process to involve (...) those who have a stake in a specific offense and to collectively identify and address harms, needs and obligations, in order to heal and put things as right as possible [8]”. A central element for those who have caused harm, whether this was intentional or not, is to make amends, which comes from accepting responsibility for one's actions and omissions.

By leaning toward restorative justice, the Alliance questions an overly legalistic approach and the use of criminal concepts to deal with issues of sexual harassment within the organization, while recognizing that the legal system has its role to play in addressing the problem.

The Alliance recognizes that the specific response is dependent on the severity of the situation and on the specific context in which it occurs. However, these procedures provide a common framework to respond in survivor-centered and accountable ways.

### 4.2. Assertive communication and immediate support before escalation

In order to deal with issues related to sexual harassment at an early stage, the following is encouraged.

Anyone who is subject to sexual harassment should, if possible, inform the alleged harasser that the conduct is unwanted and unwelcome. However, MenEngage Global Alliance recognizes that sexual harassment may occur in unequal relationships and that it may not be possible or reasonable to expect someone experiencing harassment to demand a stop to the abusive behavior. In addition, the severity of the situation may preclude such direct communication with the alleged harasser.

### 4.3 Seeking support when at risk of perpetration

If you consider yourself to be at risk for sexual harassing, if you recognize your behaviors as having been sexually harassing, or if you have been told that your actions were perceived as such, it is important to raise the issue with the person to whom you report, or to any person of trust within the Alliance.

A core practice of MenEngage is to engage in reflection – self-reflection, reflection with and amongst colleagues, and reflection on our environments and settings. As a part of this reflection, it is not uncommon for many of us to identify behaviors, attitudes or beliefs that are or can be troubling or harmful – up to and including harassing behaviors.

We may notice in an experience of self-reflection, have our behaviors or attitudes called to our attention by colleagues, or through supervision. It's important to respond in an accountable way. **Here are some suggestions for how to do so:**

- Address it in supervision with the person to whom you report;
- If you have a peer group or are supported through peer supervision, raise it in this group to seek honest and critical feedback;
- Review your behavior or attitudes from the lens of how your behavior/attitudes were respectful, valuing or honoring (rather than the degree to which they were or weren't harmful or harassing). The degree to which you struggle with clearly articulating how your behavior was valuing is an indicator that you may have something to explore further;
- Talk with colleagues or associates, inviting their honest and critical feedback;
- Seek input from female colleagues or associates;
- Talk with the person who you consider that you may have harassed or offended,
- and examine ways to begin making amends;

### 4.4. How to report

If you feel you have been sexually harassed by a representative of MenEngage Global Alliance, it is important to report it to seek help, by any of the following mechanisms:

Direct communication with one of the reporting channels specified in section 4.5 (Channels for reporting)—via email, phone, other electronic media, or in person.

An online form available on the MenEngage Alliance website [www.menengage.org/reporting-a-concern](http://www.menengage.org/reporting-a-concern) that allows anyone to report concerns regarding the behavior of members to whom this policy applies.

Sending an email to [report@menengage.org](mailto:report@menengage.org)

The complainant also has the option to report the incident via another person in the organization that she or he trusts (considered an ally).

If you become aware of any potential incident of sexual harassment it is important to reach out to the perceived target of such harassment to offer support, consulting about the possibility of reporting it to the organization.

The complainant has the option of remaining anonymous. If a name and address is provided, MenEngage Global Alliance will issue a letter acknowledging the receipt of the complaint.

## 4.5. Channels for reporting

The following reporting channels will be available so that people affected can report incidents via the channel(s) they are most comfortable with:

A designated member of the Board of Directors in charge of leading the implementation of this policy. This is the main point of contact for reporting who will be known as the “point person for the Sexual Harassment Policy”.

If a conflict arises with the above designated member, complaints can also be reported to:

- The Alliance Co-Chairs
- The Director of the Global Secretariat
- Staff of the Global Secretariat

Each of these people will receive advanced training on the policy and its procedures, including promising practices in how to receive and process complaints.

The protocol for the implementation of this Policy will provide further direction in how to report and on the channels and people responsible for handling complaints.

## 4.6. How to receive and initially process complaints

Following a survivor-centered approach, the following guidelines are the standards for how the MenEngage Alliance handles allegations:

- Treat the people reporting incidents and/or harassment with respect, empathy and appreciation for coming forward. Recognize their rights, dignity, and self-determination. Let them know that we take any concern regarding sexual harassment or other forms of sexual violence, seriously.
- Treat the complaint confidentially and allow the complainant to be accompanied by more people, if desired. Explain how confidentiality and privacy will be handled so that they can make informed choices. As indicated in 4.3, the complainant may ask an ally to report the incident on his/her/hir behalf.
- Explain the procedures for dealing with the complaint. Explain that MenEngage Alliance will do all within its means to prevent retaliation. Explain that they can also make a complaint outside of the organization, according to the legal framework of the country and to other institutional resources available. Provide such information if requested.
- Encourage the individual(s) to talk specifically about what happened. Ask for the full story, but do not put pressure on the complainant if they are not ready to provide details.
- Take notes, using the complainants' own words and allow them to review your notes to ensure your record of the conversation is accurate. Keep a record of all discussions, taking all steps necessary to ensure confidentiality. Record the dates, times and facts of the incident(s).
- Do not question or doubt the complainant even if there is a delay in reporting the incident. There are many reasons why people do not report sexual harassment or delay reporting.
- Ascertain the views of the complainant(s) as to what outcome they want.
- If the complainants do not want to bring formal charges but the Alliance, after careful investigation, concludes that the accused person represents a threat to the safety of others, the Alliance will take the necessary measures to prevent new incidents.
- Discuss and agree on next steps: an informal complaint process, formal complaint or reporting to local authorities. Choosing to resolve the matter informally does not preclude the individual from pursuing a formal complaint if they are not satisfied with the outcome.
- Regardless of the option taken by the complainant, provide information about support services (social services, health care, legal, career/professional) available and clarify if the organization can facilitate access to these services. Recognize that some targets of

sexual harassment/violence may only want a space to process their experiences without making formal complaints.

## 4.7. Reporting crime

Some instances of sexual violence can imply criminal behavior. The complainant is always entitled to file a criminal complaint if considered pertinent to do so and MenEngage Alliance should collaborate in this effort, if possible. Legal advice regarding local laws may be necessary in some cases.

## 4.8. Informal complaint mechanism

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

- Meet separately with the alleged perpetrator to explain the complainant's concerns, the specific conduct in question, its impact and request them to stop such behaviour. The designated person may not reveal the identity of the complainant if the complainant wishes to remain anonymous. In addition, during this meeting the designated person will:
  - Ensure that the accused person understands the complaints mechanism, including the confidentiality commitment, so that the identity of those involved is protected as far as possible.
  - Give the accused person the opportunity to respond to the complaint.
  - Inform the alleged perpetrator that he/she should not communicate with the complainant regarding this issue, if requested by the complainant.
- Meet again with the complainant to inform them of the alleged perpetrator's response and discuss next steps to resolve the issue. One option is to facilitate discussion between both parties to achieve an informal resolution which is acceptable to the complainant. In such a meeting, the complainant may come accompanied by others for support or these allies can speak for the complainant. Another option is to refer the matter to a designated mediator.
  - Ensure that a confidential record of the process is kept.
  - Follow up on the agreements made to ensure that the behavior has stopped
  - Ensure that the above is done speedily and within 30 days of the complaint being made

## 4.9. Formal complaint mechanism

If the complainant wishes to make a formal complaint or if the informal complaint mechanism has not led to a satisfactory outcome for the target of sexual harassment/violence, the formal complaint mechanism should be used to resolve the matter.

The designated person who initially received the complaint will refer the matter to a Review Committee within MenEngage Alliance to initiate a formal investigation.

## 4.10. The Review Committee

The Review Committee is an impartial party not directly connected with MenEngage Global Alliance. These individuals must be neutral, unbiased, and credible. They are responsible for an objective review of the complaint, a fair investigation and process in which all parties are fairly treated and have an opportunity to provide their version of events. They will report to the Board of MenEngage Global Alliance.

The Review Committee will consist of two to five people with some relevant technical expertise (e.g. gender-based violence, human rights, human resource management, women's rights) and a deep understanding of survivor-centered approaches. In addition, they should represent diversity and balance in terms of gender, race/ethnicity and other identity markers considered relevant. Committee members should not have a conflict of interest, including close relationships<sup>7</sup> with the people involved in the complaint.

One member of the Review Committee will be the investigator who, in consultation with the entire Committee, will perform the following tasks:

- interview the complainant or the survivors separately
- determine the most appropriate moment to inform the person accused that a complaint has been received and that an investigation will be or is being conducted<sup>8</sup>.
- interview the person accused separately
- interview other relevant third parties (e.g. witnesses) separately
- request a temporary removal (leave) from the organization of the person accused, if considered necessary to continue with the investigation or to prevent potential harm
- examine any documentation provided and conduct its own research to clarify, expand, or verify the information received
- assess the level of harm, the degree of threat, level of responsibility accepted by the person accused

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<sup>7</sup> Close relationship includes close friendship, family or business connections, etc.

<sup>8</sup> In some instances, informing the accused person at the outset is not recommended as this may obstruct the investigation.

- keep a record of all actions taken and ensure that all these records are kept confidential
- produce a report detailing the investigations, findings and recommendations

Based on the investigator's report, the Review Committee will:

- decide whether or not the incident(s) of sexual harassment or sexual violence took place
- report the outcome of the formal investigation to the complainant and the person accused
- follow up to ensure that the consequences for those found guilty and the reparation for the targets of sexual violence are implemented, including that the abusive behavior has stopped and that the targets are satisfied with the outcome
- if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, the Review Committee will collaborate with the complainant to find solutions to such concerns. This also applies to the alleged perpetrator to the extent this is reasonably possible.
- if it cannot determine that sexual harassment/violence took place, the Review Committee, in consultation with the complainant, may still make recommendations to ensure proper functioning of the organization that prevents such incidents<sup>9</sup>.
- ensure that the process is implemented as quickly as possible, within 30 days of the complaint being made.

#### **4.11. Alternative to formal and informal complaint mechanisms: Monitoring**

As an alternative to both the informal and formal complaint mechanisms described above, MenEngage Global Alliance could decide to monitor and provide support to member organizations or regional networks who are in charge of the investigation of a case. It is expected that members organizations will cooperate with the MenEngage Global Alliance in dealing with such cases, keeping a transparent communication line between the teams. The same is expected from the person/s whose behaviour has been questioned. The Alliance expects an accountable response from both the person challenged and the organization conducting the process by which we mean to listen, to be critically aware of one's own power and privilege and to remain open to criticism, acknowledging any harm caused and making amends.

MenEngage Global Alliance will observe and check the progress and the quality of the response given by the organization and person/s involved in a case and may set guidelines for

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<sup>9</sup> While the complainant's considerations are important, the responsibility to ensure proper functioning of the workplace rests on the management.

the timeline of the process that they engage before the Global Alliance steps in and makes decisions.

#### **4.12. Special mechanisms for child sexual abuse**

MenEngage Global Alliance recognizes the need to develop special response mechanisms and procedures if children<sup>10</sup> are involved in cases of sexual violence or abuse. The mechanisms elaborated in this document may not be suitable in such cases, although the general principles apply. Please refer to the MENENGAGE GLOBAL ALLIANCE CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY. As a general rule, we adopt the UN Secretary-General position for UN staff that states: "Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defense" [4]

#### **4.13. Protection of whistleblowers and of the accused person**

Whistleblowing is the courageous act of reporting any malpractice, breach of the code of conduct or illegal behavior incurred by others to the organization leadership or to external authorities. MenEngage Global Alliance is committed to protecting whistleblowers from retaliation or threat. Any person who retaliates against those who report sexual harassment will be subject to disciplinary actions.

Whistleblowers are not required to provide evidence to prove their claims if they have reason to suspect something is wrong and consider it deserves further investigation by the organization or authorities.

Although our main priority is the interests and needs of those who are targets of sexual violence, the Alliance is also committed to giving fair and reasonable safeguarding to the accused person/s.

#### **4.14. Conclusion and actions to be taken following an investigation**

Based on the recommendations received by the Review Committee, if the results of the investigation verify the complaint, a governing body of MenEngage Global Alliance will decide, in no more than 30 days, what action should be taken and, after consultation with the complainant, what support is needed. The organization will report back to the complaining party in a timely fashion.

Different factors should be considered when deciding about consequences for those who engaged in sexual harassment or other form of sexual violence, such as the severity and frequency of the wrongdoings, the wishes of those who were targets of sexual violence, and

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<sup>10</sup> The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as "a human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier".

the degree of responsibility accepted by the accused person. Any of the following consequences may apply:

- A dialogue with the accused person, to help him/her take responsibility for his/her mistake, make amends and apologize for the harm caused.
- A written warning.
- Educational intervention with the accused person on respectful relationships, motivations to engage and to cease such behaviors, as well as other opportunities for accountability and amends-making.
- For all the actions presented above, a follow-up will be necessary to check with the complainant if the unwelcome behavior has stopped and a written record should be kept on file.
- Disciplinary actions for more serious harassment may include removal from leadership positions or relieving of responsibilities within the organization, withholding of increments or promotion, fine, suspension from services from two to six months without pay, removal of membership from the MenEngage Alliance and from his/her organization, termination, or reporting the accused to local authorities.
- When dismissing staff or board members, or in cases of expulsion from the Alliance, other organizations from the sector<sup>11</sup> will be informed to prevent perpetrators from doing harm elsewhere. Employment contracts will include a clause on this after legal advice on labor matters is obtained. This notice to other organizations will include individuals with pending allegations of sexual harassment who leave MenEngage Alliance before the completion of the process.

#### **Reparation for targets of sexual harassment and violence:**

- An apology from the perpetrator (verbal and/or written) that includes a recognition of the harm caused, regardless of intent, and a commitment of no repetition. (Note: whether the apology is accepted as sincere is ultimately up to the person who has been target of sexual harassment).
- If mistakes were committed by the organization in the handling of the case, the leaders of the organization should also issue an apology.
- Commitment that the behavior will cease
- Re-credit of any leave taken due to the harassment
- Support with legal, medical and counselling expenses, free of charge
- Transfer, with no job disadvantage (if possible and in case the complainant does not wish to work in the same premises as the accused)
- A promotion if the target was demoted as a result of the harassment

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<sup>11</sup> Non-governmental organizations working for gender equality and human rights.

- Those who perpetrate sexual harassment also harm the organization. Therefore, an apology for the collective who form the organization is also necessary.

A list of external resources for both the survivor and perpetrator will be provided, as well as referrals to relevant services, if possible.

The resolution of an internal grievance procedure and transformative justice is not binding in most cases, which means that a complainant who is dissatisfied with the final determination of the Alliance's internal grievance handling procedure can seek other recourse, including by filing a lawsuit.

In the unlikely event of a false accusation, if the person making the accusation is a staff member, he or she will be liable for disciplinary action.

## **5. Monitoring and Evaluation**

The implementation of this policy will be continuously evaluated, using surveys, interviews with key stakeholders and discussions in MenEngage Alliance meetings. MenEngage Alliance will collect data on members' perceptions of the organization's internal environment; the prevalence, nature and experience of sexual harassment; on how this policy is being used and whether or not it is effective.

The findings about how the policy has been implemented—including the prevention initiatives implemented, the number of reports made, their period, how many involved an investigation and their outcomes—will be publicly available. Recommendations for improvements will be included. A comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation framework for this policy will be further developed.

An advisory panel consisting of recognized feminist advocates, organizations specializing in addressing sexual and gender-based violence and survivors will be formed. This advisory body will be a component of the Monitoring and Evaluation framework. Its members will provide feedback and recommendations in relation to implementing and updating this policy.

# Annex

## INCIDENT



### REPORT TO:

- designated member of the Board or co-chairs of MenEngage Alliance  
[report@menengage.org](mailto:report@menengage.org)
- co-chairs [www.menengage.org/reporting-a-concern](http://www.menengage.org/reporting-a-concern)
- Global Director
- Global Secretariat staff
- Ally within MenEngage Alliance



## Receiving and processing complaints

### Informal complaint

Meetings  
Conversations  
Agreements

### Formal complaint

Review Committee.  
Investigator

### Monitoring

Open communication  
Member org. in  
charge

### Reporting to police



## Decision-results

Report outcomes  
Follow up  
Check with parties



## Governing body of MenEngage Alliance will decide on

- Consequences for the accused
- Reparation for targets of sexual harassment/violence
- Organizational changes

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