



Tax alert: SHe-Box Portal launched to strengthen workplace safety for women

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The Ministry of Women and Child Development launched “SHe-Box Portal”, a move aimed at strengthening workplace safety for women, on 29 August 2024. The portal aims to create a repository of information related to Internal Committees (“IC”) and Local Committees (“LC”) established across the country and to further the government’s commitment to creating a safer and more inclusive working environment for women.

In a nutshell



Background:

Several labour legislations in India have provisions to ensure and promote safety of women at workplace. There are also compliance requirements for the employer while employing women in night shifts, in mines, and to provide for separate restroom facilities to name a few, apart from the provisions of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013 (“POSH Act”).



Centralised Repository of information:

The newly launched SHe-Box Portal will serve as a repository of information on Internal Committees (ICs) and Local Committees (LCs) formed by government as well as private sectors. It would serve as a single window for women to file complaints, choose the authority to handle it, track the status and to ensure that they are handled in a timely manner and to reduce delays and to eliminate human interference.



Portal contents:

The portal provides for a step-by-step guide on how to register a complaint in the portal. It also has resources related to the POSH Act, including handbooks, training modules, and advisory documents available for free download in both English and Hindi. Additionally, the portal features videos to create awareness about the POSH Act and its provisions.



Central government data to be onboarded by October 2024:

The portal would be fully operational once the information relating to ICs and LCs are updated by the central government, state/UT governments and by the private sector. As a first step towards this, details of nodal officers and ICs of all Central Ministries / Departments are planned to be uploaded in the portal by October 2024.



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Considering the ongoing concerns about workplace safety, particularly with sexual harassment, ensuring a secure work environment for women in India is of essence. Accordingly, on August 29, 2024, the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development launched the revamped SHe-Box. The new SHe-Box portal would serve as a centralised repository of information as well as a platform for registering and monitoring complaints of sexual harassment against women at the workplace.

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Highlights of the SHe-Box Initiative:

- Centralised repository of information having information relating to Internal Committees (ICs) and Local Committees (LCs) formed.
- Accessible to all women regardless of their work status or the sector they belong to, encompassing the government and private sectors, or even as domestic workers.
- Single-window access to register complaints on sexual harassment, track their status, and ensure a time-bound processing of complaint by ICs or LCs.
- Option to choose the authority to handle their complaint, thus reducing potential delays and eliminating human interference.
- Assured redressal of complaints and a streamlined process for all stakeholders.
- Real-time monitoring of complaints.
- Assured confidentiality throughout the process, respecting privacy of the victim.
- Assistance through guides to help the complainant in the complaint process, offering support at each step to ensure a streamlined redressal.
- Availability of resources on POSH Act, including handbooks, training modules, and advisory documents in both Hindi and English, free of charge.
- The process of filing the complaint requires the complainant to have a valid email ID and a mobile number. Upon the victims accessing the SHe-Box website (<https://shebox.wcd.gov.in/>), they must select the option to register a complaint. Once selected, the victims must complete the complaint form with all details, after which the complaint is to be submitted and registered.

Comments:

The SHe-Box initiative aims at fostering the workplace as a safe, equitable and respectful place to women. This is yet another use of digital technology with the legal framework to serve the ends of justice. While the Central Government has set a target of October 2024, for the initiative to be successful all stakeholders need to come on board at the earliest. Hence, it would be imperative for the ICs of all organizations to upload their details to ensure providing a full functional portal to women. The effective implementation of this initiative would help address workplace sexual harassment as well as enable working women to file complaints. Apart from the promise of handling complaints effectively and in a timely manner, the assurance of confidentiality throughout the process would encourage more victims to come forward and seek justice.

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