



**Gender Equity and Equality (GEE) and the  
Prevention of Sexual and Gender Based  
Violence (SGBV): Policy of the Sri Lanka  
Institute of Tourism & Hotel Management  
(SLITHM)**

**Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel  
Management**



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## **Background**

Gender inequalities and sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) is a matter of concern for higher education institutions in Sri Lanka. The University Grants Commission (UGG) recognises that deep rooted inequalities and inequities in the system and behaviours legitimized and perpetuated by social institutions (for example ragging) can make campuses unsafe for student and staff.

## **SLITHM's Commitment**

The gender equity and equality (GEE) and prevention of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) policy outlines the commitment of SLITHM to enhance gender equity and prevent sexual and gender based violence in our institution and in our external work with partner organizations and communities.

Through this policy, SLITHM commits to promoting equality between women and men and creating an equitable working environment where SLITHM delivers tourism and hospitality education and training on par with national and international standards.

SLITHM commits to eliminating unlawful discrimination and harassment; and to providing an inclusive working, learning and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all its staff and students are respected to assist them in reaching their full potential.

Through this policy, SLITHM will work to meet the demands of the tourism and hospitality industry by removing any barriers which might deter people of the highest caliber from applying to SLITHM as staff or students.

## **Policy Development Process**

This policy was developed in consultation with the Director General , Deputy Director General (Academic), Deputy Director General (Non Academic), Director HR and Head (F&B Cluster).

## **Policy Framework**

This policy seeks to create a framework to assist SLITHM in encouraging gender equality and equity in all students, academic, administrative and support staff, female and male. It also seeks to ensure participation and appropriate representation of both genders in all its decision making process and in preventing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV).



### **Scope of the policy**

The policy establishes the basis for SLITHM's cooperation with the Tourism and Hospitality industry at large to promote equality between women and men. This policy applies to all members of SLITHM, including students, employees, visitors, any individuals regularly or temporarily employed, studying, living, visiting, conducting business, or having any official capacity at the school. This policy also applies to off-campus conduct with local and international educational entities as well as any other interactions that is likely to have a substantial adverse effect on any member of the school.

### **Policy Vision**

In line with SLITHM's vision "to be the Center of Excellence in Training and Education for Human Resource Development of Tourism and Hospitality Industry in Asia", this policy will contribute to making SLITHM a safe environment for all, where relationships between men and women are equal and respectful. SLITHM aims to be a gender-responsive institution with zero tolerance towards SGBV.

### **Policy Mission**

To enable SLITHM provide a gender-responsive organizational environment, to integrate gender into the functions of the school in order to attain gender equality and women's empowerment and to promote zero tolerance against SGBV.

### **Guiding Principle**

The principle guiding the policy are as follows:

- Principles of GEE shall be upheld.
- Principle of zero tolerance to SGBV shall be upheld.
- There will be equal participation of male and female staff and students in the implementation of the policy.
- Gender empowerment is central to the achievement of the goal and objectives of the policy.
- Transparency, accountability, confidentiality and sensitivity in the implementation of the policy shall be upheld.



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- Partnership and collaboration between staff and students are essential to the realization of a conducive learning and working environment free from SGBV.

**Objectives of Policy**

- To achieve gender balance in enrolment of students while promoting Sri Lankan hospitality and its values to global heights.
- To maintain gender-disaggregated statistics on both staff and students for decision making.
- To create and enhance consciousness about gender equity and SGBV, including masculinities and femininities in SLITHM.
- To address gender issues in the content of courses and course materials.
- To support the development of policy documents from a gender perspective and the use of gender sensitive language at all levels of activity.
- To prevent cases of SGBV at SLITHM.
- To create awareness on the reporting procedure for victims of SGBV including circumstantial evidence.
- To provide prompt, effective, consistent and fair guidelines for handling cases of SGBV at SLITHM.
- To develop a comprehensive policy framework that provides guidelines and mechanisms for protecting learners and staff at SLITHM from sexual and gender based violence.

**Why is Gender Equity and the Prevention of SGBV important to SLITHM?**

➤ **Key Definitions**

**Consent:** is informed, affirmative, voluntary, conscious, revocable, actively given permission to sexual activity/conduct. Lack of protest, lack of resistance, or silence cannot alone be interpreted as consent. A person is unable to give consent if the person is incapacitated due to drugs, alcohol, physical or intellectual disability, or unconsciousness.

**Gender:** A broad term referring to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female; the relationships between women and men and girls and boys; and the relations between women and those between men. Rigid understandings of these socially constructed attributes, opportunities and relationships reinforces power differences and inequalities between women and men, and boys and girls, this in turn undermines the health, safety, wellbeing and status of women and girls in the society.



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**Gender Equality:** Refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration.

**Gender Based Violence:** Gender-based violence in its simplest form is any act of abuse or harassment directed at an individual based on their gender, with women particularly at risk of physical, emotional, psychological, or sexual harm. Violence includes any act of verbal or physical force, coercion, or life-threatening deprivation directed at an individual that draws back to dominant societal norms surrounding gender.

**Sexual Violence:** is assault and violence of a physical nature, such as rape, sexual battery, molestation, or attempts to commit such acts or any other intentional physical conduct which is sexual in nature inflicted on a person without his/her consent.

➤ Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Sri Lanka

**Facts and figures (1,3)**

- As of 2019, 24.9% of women in Sri Lanka had experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence.
- Partner physical and sexual violence is more prevalent than non-partner sexual violence.
- 18.8% of women who have been in a relationship have experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner in their lifetime.

**Masculinities and SGBV (4)**

- Majority of men in Sri Lanka related manhood to dominance and violence.
- It is important to examine masculine norms and attitudes that influence perpetration of violence against women.
- There is a need to work closely with men and boys to deconstruct what is masculine from a positive perspective by promoting respect for gender diversity among youth.
- Masculinity is shaped by intersecting identities of class, caste, ethnicity or sexuality.
- Many children, especially boys, experience some form of violence or neglect during childhood.
- Men who experienced sexual, physical or emotional abuse during childhood are more likely to perpetrate violence against women in adulthood.



- Almost one third of men who perpetrated sexual violence including rape did so for the first time between the ages of 15 and 19 years.

➤ Policy Frameworks Pertaining to Gender Equity and SGBV

**International Policies:** Sri Lanka ratified the convention on the *Elimination of Discrimination against women in 1981* and its optional protocol. In line with *Sustainable Development Goals 5*, Sri Lanka is implementing strategies to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Sri Lanka has ratified ILO conventions relevant to gender equality in the workplace, all of which are in force. They include: *Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958* (No. 111), *Employment Policy Convention, 1964* (No. 122), and *Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951* (No. 100).

**National Policies:** The National Plan of Action on sexual and gender based violence is based on Sri Lanka's *Policy Framework and National Plan of Action to address Sexual and Gender based Violence (SGBV)*. In 1998, Sri Lanka enacted the *Prohibition of Ragging and Other Forms of Violence in Educational Institutions Act*.

In Sri Lanka, harassment and violence of a sexual nature are criminal offences under Sections 345 and 363 of the Penal Code (as amended in 1995) and is also criminalized in the context of Higher Education under Section 2(2) of the *Prohibition on Ragging and All Forms of Violence in Educational Institutions Act*. No 20 of 1998.

Strategies to Enhance Gender Equality/Equity for All at SLITHM

➤ **Organizational culture**

SLITHM shall promote and enforce gender-responsive organizational culture to eliminate gender inequities in all activities. To achieve this, SLITHM commits to:

- Developing and enforcing policy guidelines on the use of gender inclusive language throughout our tourism and hospitality education and training.



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- Reviewing and updating all existing policies, forms, and procedures to eliminate sexist language and establish gender equality.
- Developing and operationalizing policy prohibiting public display of visual aids and materials that are demeaning to men and women.
- Organizing special gender awareness orientation programmes for new members of SLITHM.

➤ **Safety and Security**

SLITHM's management and administration shall promote a gender friendly and inclusive secure environment to ensure effective protection of bodily integrity and dignity of every member of its community to strengthen safety and security measures for all its members. SLITHM shall:

- Implement policy and regulations on sexual harassment.
- Develop and enforce guidelines to ensure a secure environment that include street and security lighting; posting security at strategic points; providing night surveillance services; availing hotlines for emergencies etc.
- Institute concrete mechanisms to address gender-based violence against students and staff.
- Strengthen counselling services and allocate adequate resources for prevention, management, and rehabilitation of survivors of gender based violence at our institutions.

➤ **Awareness and creation**

SLITHM shall enhance the understanding and appreciation of GEE and SGBV throughout the entire SLITHM community with the aim of preventing occurrence of SGBV. To achieve this, SLITHM shall:

- Conduct workshops on GEE and SGBV for all staff and students.
- Create and support an advocacy group to advance issues of GEE and SGBV.
- Publish the policy on GEE and SGBV and disseminate to all members of staff and students.
- Require all staff and students to undertake to abide by the policy.
- Commit to regularly sensitise the SLITHM community on the policy.

➤ **Curriculum**





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SLITHM shall mainstream gender in the formal curriculum and strengthen co-curricular programmes. To achieve this, SLITHM shall:

- Create a framework for engendering SLITHM's curriculum.
- Mainstream gender issues in SLITHM's formal curriculum.
- Review and engender all existing curricula and ensure that new programmes are gender responsive.
- Encourage staff and students to actively participate in co-curricular activities design and implement a mandatory cross cutting core course on gender and development for all first year undergraduate and postgraduate students.

➤ **Capacity building and training**

SLITHM will enhance the capacity of members of its community and managers to support the implementation of the policy. To achieve this, SLITHM shall:

- Train all members of the SLITHM community to facilitate the implementation process.
- Institute empowerment programmes to protect all members of the SLITHM community against SGBV.
- Strengthen the current guidance and counselling unit to deal effectively with cases of SGBV.
- Facilitate health providers to recognize and be responsive to the emotional and psychological needs of staff and students.

➤ **Women's participation**

SLITHM shall adopt proactive measures to increase the proportion of women in its programs as well as increase the participation of women in decision making through recruitment, promotion, and retention in order to eliminate existing gender imbalances within systems, structures, and all core activities of SLITHM. To achieve this, SLITHM shall:

- Establish a quota system for female student entrants.
- Design and implement scholarship programs scholarships for female students.
- Design and implement programmes that ensure equal opportunities and affirmative action.



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- Design and implement a gender-responsive cross generational leadership and mentoring programme, particularly for young female staff and students in Tourism and Hotel Management.
- Establish and implement programmes with adequate facilities and resources to support the multiple roles of SLITHM's staff, particularly their career, studies and care-giving roles.
- Develop and implement a gender sensitive and responsive human resources policy
- Develop a databank of qualifications, specialties, and experiences of women on the supreme governing bodies, such as the senate and other related bodies.

#### ➤ **Staff and Student welfare**

SLITHM shall plan and provide welfare services for all its staff and students to achieve optimal productivity. To meet this, SLITHM shall:

- Engender human resource policies.
- Formulate and implement a gender-sensitive policy on disability including accessibility to the on campuses buildings and facilities.
- Formulate and implement a policy on pregnant and parenting students and sensitise all relevant staff on sexual and reproductive rights of students.
- Invest in child care facilities on SLITHM campus for the benefit of parenting staff and students.

### Mechanisms for Preventing and Addressing SGBV

#### ➤ **Responsible authorities**

SLITHM's governing body will appoint a committee to investigate sexual or gender-based violence. The committee will have gender parity, reflect the diversity of the SLITHM community, and have external members who shall preferably have a legal background. Members will be drawn, as much as possible, from among those who have demonstrated gender-sensitivity and interest in working on issues of gender equality and equity and be trained to investigate and inquire into cases of sexual harassment and sexual violence. The committee will have the authority to appoint mediators in consultation with senior management and the parties concerned, towards an informal resolution process where necessary. The committee will receive and screen complaints relating to sexual or gender-based harassment and sexual violence, participate in preliminary investigations



at the request of senior management to gather evidential information, and recommend appropriate courses of action to senior management in relation to complaints.

➤ **Who May Complain**

All persons governed by this policy may complain, as well as visitors to SLITHM and/or third parties who have a personal or professional link to the alleged victim or who have witnessed the alleged conduct.

All procedures followed pursuant to this policy shall be impartial, fair, prompt, and confidential, having regard to due process requirements including safeguarding the rights of the person/s accused of prohibited conduct.

➤ **Appeals**

In the event of SLITHM not taking action on a complaint, or if the complainant or respondent is dissatisfied with the disciplinary action taken by the relevant authorities, she/he shall have the right of appeal. On receipt of the appeal, the governing body shall appoint a Committee to hear the appeal, in line with existing disciplinary procedure. The Appeals Committee shall report to the governing body its findings and recommendations on the nature of the action to be taken on the appeal.

➤ **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality shall be maintained regarding all complaints. Interview recordings, if any, communications, documentations, and reports shall be divulged only to authorized persons. If any person involved in the investigation is found to have breached the confidentiality requirement, s/he shall be reported to the senior management with a recommendation for removal from the investigation.

➤ **Disciplinary action**

Any member of the academic, academic support, administrative or non-academic staff, student, service provider, or resident found guilty of sexual or gender-based harassment and sexual violence shall be liable for disciplinary action. A subsequent offence of a similar nature found to be perpetrated by the same offender/s shall carry an enhanced penalty.



### Preventive Measures

- This Policy shall be accessible to the entire SLITHM community and shall be made available in Sinhala, Tamil, and English and be included in student handbooks and on SLITHM's website.
- SLITHM shall prepare a one-page leaflet that draws attention to the Policy and the contact information of persons to be contacted in an emergency and display it on relevant notice boards.
- A clause on this Policy shall be included in all staff contracts and letters of appointment.
- The Policy shall be discussed at all relevant student orientation programs conducted by SLITHM.
- Staff development and training programmes for academic, academic support, administrative, and non-academic staff shall include a component designed for promoting gender equality and equity and for developing gender sensitivity in the workplace. Such programs shall include a session on this Policy. Special training sessions on the Policy shall be conducted for wardens of student residential halls.
- Student associations of SLITHM shall include a reference to this Policy and to the Prohibition on Ragging and All Forms of Violence in Educational Institutions Act.
- All service contracts entered into by SLITHM with providers of outsourced services shall include a provision which states the obligation of any party entering into such contract to adhere to this Policy.
- SLITHM shall provide a trained counselling service to address prevention and consequences of sexual or gender-based harassment or sexual violence. This service shall also be made available to any of the parties from whom a complaint was made under this Policy.
- SLITHM shall assist in pursuing a complaint in a court of law by the aggrieved party if she or he so wishes.