

BLESS HUMAN RESOURCE POLICY

1. Purpose of HR Policy

1.1 The Personnel Policy aims to set down the policies, conditions, rights and obligations of BLESS employees subject to their performing of the duties and responsibilities in their respective job descriptions. All staff of BLESS (permanent or part-time or volunteers) shall be governed by this policy.

1.2 This policy will be subjected to modification or revision whenever the Governing Body deems it necessary. Such changes will be intimated to the staff.

2. Categories of Personnel

All personnel working for BLESS are classified into following types.

2.1 Permanent Employees

Permanent Employees are individuals who, after satisfactory completion of a probationary period, are given ongoing assignments, either part-time or full-time, and are paid on monthly basis. They will be contracted on long-term basis subject to periodic evaluations, performance assessments and duration of projects. They will have the responsibility towards the day- to-day functioning and/or in any one of more ongoing/prospective projects of the organization. The Executive Committee or the General Body will decide from time-to-time on various categories of permanent employees.

2.2 Contractual Employees

All employees appointed for a specific period as per the requirement of a specific project. They shall continue to work until the project period or the cessation of the project whichever comes first. They are also subjected to performance appraisal for continuation in service during the prescribed period.

2.3 Consultants

Consultants are professional experts hired by BLESS on short-term basis only for the completion of specific tasks and assignments related to the organization or one or more of its projects. Separate and limited contracts, defining their job description, timeline, deliverables, reporting procedures and payment details shall be issued to Consultants. They shall be paid on daily/weekly/monthly basis depending upon the nature of their assignment. They will not be considered as full-time or part-time employees of the organization.

2.4 Volunteers

Volunteers are individuals who work at BLESS out of their own choice or have been deputed at BLESS by other organizations. They shall be assigned tasks from time-to-time as deemed necessary by BLESS. BLESS shall have a limited contract with volunteers and shall not provide any compensation except under special conditions. They shall not be considered as full-time or part-time employees of the organization.

3 Personnel Recruitment

BLESS believes in equal employment opportunity to each individual, regardless of race, color, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin, disability, marital status, HIV, veteran status, or any other occupationally irrelevant condition. This policy

applies to recruitment and advertising; hiring and job assignment; promotion, demotion and transfer; layoff or termination; rates of pay and benefits; selection for training; and the provision of any other human resources service.

3.1 Notice of Vacant or New Position

3.1.1 It is the responsibility of the Executive Secretary to fill vacant positions as well as new regular positions and new temporary positions. The Executive Secretary shall make sure that the positions can be filled under the organizational budget. Recruitment for a new or vacant position can be opened to internal and external competition. For all new positions, a job description shall be prepared or as per the guidelines of the project(s). The Executive Secretary shall take consent of or ratification by the Governing Body of new appointments.

3.1.2 Appropriate advertisements shall be given for inviting bio-data from persons appropriate to each positions and according to the requirements of individual project(s).

3.1.3 The Executive Secretary shall short-list the application received for further process.

3.2 Interview and selection

3.2.1 A selection committee shall be constituted comprising of two external persons and the Executive Secretary for completing the selection process.

3.2.2 The committee shall go through the short-listed applications and shall evaluate each candidate's application with the help of an evaluation form created beforehand, containing well-defined criteria, and conduct interview and other procedures.

3.2.3 The interviews and other forms of selection process such as written test(s), group discussion will serve to make a final choice and also to establish a database of potential future candidates.

3.3 Appointment Letter

Any personnel employed with BLESS shall be issued an appointment letter prior to his/her employment. The appointment letter shall officially announce his/her position within the organization, the place of assignment and the effective date of employment. The appointment letter shall carry annexes, specifying the employee's job description, terms of reference, salary and benefits and other relevant terms of employment.

3.2.1 Probationary Period

A probation period of three months shall apply to all new employees from the date of appointment. Exceptionally, the probation period may be extended to six months. In case, if a new employee fails to perform in accordance to expectations of BLESS, he/she shall be given a notice, terminating the contract at the end of the probationary period.

3.2.2 Staff Orientation

All new employees shall get an orientation about the organization's mission and strategies, its structure and the staff within it, the policies and conditions of employment, the internal rules and regulations, etc.

3.3 Remuneration

3.3.1 BLESS believes in attracting and retaining a qualified and effective workforce through a system of payment that is both appealing and fair. All permanent employees of BLESS are

entitled to a basic salary, depending upon their skills, qualification and experience. The basic salary shall be mentioned in the appointment letter.

3.3.2 Salary Increment

Salary increment of the permanent employees shall be based on an employee's position and performance. Increment shall be provided to employees on annual basis after their performance evaluation. Salary increment is calculated on the basis of basic salary of the staff.

3.3.3 The salary increment of all contractual employees shall depend on the provisions of the specific projects for which they are appointed.

3.4 Travel Rules & Regulations

3.4.1 Travel

(1) Staff members may be asked to travel away from their usual workplaces on authorized missions. The policy on payment of travel allowances shall depend on the project(s) and the Secretary in consultation with the Project Coordinator shall decide on the same. The staff shall claim the travel expenses in the prescribed format with all evidences of travel. The expenses shall not be reimbursed if proper justifying documents (original receipts) are not attached. The rules related to mode of transport, local conveyance, accommodation, food, and use of own vehicle shall be decided by the Executive Secretary.

4 Leave and Holidays

4.1 Leave

- (1) All employees are entitled to the following leave mentioned hereunder with pay. However, leave cannot be claimed as a matter of right.
- (2) All applications for leave by staff shall be submitted to the Executive Secretary through respective Program Coordinator/Supervisor of project(s) at least three days prior to availing the leave. In case of Coordinator/Supervisor, the same shall be submitted directly to the Executive Secretary. The concerned staff shall make necessary alternate arrangements if necessary, for work when they are on leave in consultation with the Program Coordinator/Supervisor.
- (3) On emergency occasions, leave shall be intimated to the Program Coordinator/Supervisor over phone and in case of Program Coordinator/Supervisor, to the Executive Secretary and a leave letter shall be submitted within three days.

4.2 All employees are entitled to the following leave with pay.

4.2.1 Casual Leave (CL)

- (1) All employees of BLESS are entitled to 18 days in a calendar year not exceeding 10 days at a time including notified holidays and weekly holidays. This leave is accrued monthly at the rate of 1.5 working days.
- (2) CL cannot be combined with any other type of leave or vacation.

4.2.2 Sick Leave (SL)

Employees are entitled to 12 working days of sick leave with pay per calendar year. Sick leave is accumulated at the rate of 1 day for every full month worked.

Employees have to present a medical certificate to substantiate claims for sick leave with pay for absences exceeding two successive days.

4.2.3 Maternity Leave (ML)

- (1) Maternity leave with full pay may be sanctioned to a woman staff for not exceeding 90 days. However, it cannot be availed for more than twice in her entire career.
- (2) ML may also be availed in case of miscarriage, including abortion, subject to the condition that the total leave granted in respect to this to a woman staff shall not exceed more than 45 days in her career.
- (3) Application for ML shall be supported with a certificate by a qualified medical practitioner.

4.2.4 Paternity Leave (PL)

- (1) Male employees are entitled to paternity leave of 11 calendar days twice in their career.

4.2.5 Mourning Leave (MoL)

- (1) In case of death of a parent, child or spouse, employees shall be given mourning leave of 15 days each.

4.2.6 Emergency Leave (EL)

- (1) Emergency leave is granted to employees for any serious illness of a parent, child or spouse and/or personal emergencies. A total of 7 days per calendar year can be allowed for emergency leave.

5 Leave without Pay

- (1) Leave without pay may be granted to employees up to 30 days per year.
- (2) Leave without pay that is taken for a month or more shall not be counted as time worked, hence no benefits shall accrue to the employees during such period.
- (3) Employees on probation are not entitled to have leave with pay.
- (4) Leave without pay is applicable when the employee has exhausted all his annual and sick leave.

4.4 Absences

4.4.1 An employee who is unable to come to the office is required to notify the concerned supervisor of the reason for his/her absence.

4.4.2 Unauthorized absences are grounds for disciplinary action. The following procedures shall apply:

- i) An employee that has been absent for two consecutive working days without notice nor explanation shall be personally sought of by the Executive Secretary. He/she shall be asked to put in writing the reason(s) for his/her absence.
- ii) If, after seven consecutive days of absence, the employee continues to fail to give any explanation of the cause of his/her absence, the employee will be considered to have resigned from his/her position.
- iii) In cases where the employee cannot give any satisfactory answer to the cause of his/her absences, in the judgment of the Executive Secretary, the employee may be subjected to disciplinary action.

5 Holidays

5.1 All employees are entitled 16 days' public holidays in a calendar year. Public holidays are specified in advance by the Executive Secretary. Employees who are required to work on public holidays are entitled to compensatory day off. BLESS shall keep records of number of hours/days worked by its employees on public holidays. Request for compensatory leave shall be substantiated with this record and approved in advance by the Executive Secretary.

5.2 In the event that a public holiday is declared by the government on a certain day without prior notice, BLESS staff cannot consider it a holiday until and unless notified by the Executive Secretary. All public holidays are subject to the approval of the Executive Secretary.

6 Staff Movement

6.1 Assignments and Transfers

6.1.1 According to project needs, any employee can be transferred temporarily or permanently to any location where BLESS conducts its activities. The transfer may be the result of a promotion, a change in role due to service requirements or other reasons.

6.1.2 A permanent transfer to a new place of work that includes a new job mandate shall result in a contract renewal. In addition, the employee concerned shall be notified one month in advance of his change in situation.

7 Interim Positions and Promotions

7.2 An employee may be called on to temporarily perform a job in a higher category. That does not automatically give him/her the right to the salary and benefits of this position. However, after a reasonable amount of time, BLESS shall reclassify the employee in the category of the new job or return him/her to his/her former duties.

7.3 An employee who receives a promotion can be required to complete a probation period in the new position. If the probation period is successfully concluded, the employee shall be reclassified in the new job category and at a salary scale level higher than his former position. If the probation period is not satisfactorily completed, the employee shall be reinstated in a position at the same level as his former position.

8 Employee Termination Rules

8.1 Prohibition on Outside Employment and/or Engagement

8.1.1 Full-time regular employees of BLESS are not allowed to undertake outside employment.

8.2 Termination of Employment

8.2.1 Employees shall lose their jobs under any of the following conditions:

(1) Voluntary Resignation

- i) A permanent employee wishing to resign from post may do so by giving a resignation letter to the Executive Secretary stating the reasons for resignation and effective date of the same. Threemonths of prior notice is required for such resignations.
- ii) A temporary employee of or an employee on probation may resign up on submitting one-month notice or one month's salary in lieu of it.
- iii) The date in which the resignation letter is received at the BLESS office is considered the date on which notice of resignation is given. Failure to provide sufficient notice may be ground for forfeiture of all accrued employee benefits.

(2) Redundancy of the Position

Depending on the nature and volume of its operation, BLESS may declare certain positions redundant. Persons occupying those positions shall therefore be forced to be separated from BLESS with proper notice. While doing so, BLESS shall give a minimum of two-month notice in advance.

(3) Termination with cause grounds for employee termination are the following:

- i. Continuing inefficiency and gross negligence of duty.
- ii. Fund misuse.
- iii. Misuse of office equipment, and other properties.
- iv. repeated unauthorized absences and leaves
- v. intoxication while on official business or within office premises
- vi. unauthorized disclosure of official information
- vii. Any other reasons decided by the Executive Committee from time to time and the same shall be intimated to staff

9 Retirement

9.1 When a permanent employee reaches the age of retirement, according to the country's law, the employment relationship comes to an end. BLESS shall notify the employee by letter, stating the date the employment terminates. The retiring employee shall receive salary up to the date of departure.

10 Death

10.1 When an employee dies, his/her salary and benefits will automatically be paid to his/her legal heirs.

11 Procedures for Termination and/or Disciplinary Action

11.1 BLESS shall ask the employee for a written explanation on the offense deemed committed by the employee concerned, identifying the charges against him/her and the particulars of the facts relied upon to support it.

11.2 The employee is given three working days to submit his/her explanations. Based on the written explanations submitted by the employee concerned and the strength of evidence presented, BLESS Executive Secretary may choose to decide on the charges or pursue further investigation of the case.

11.3 The Executive Secretary shall, if it feels necessary, suspend the employee in question from duty during the period of investigation subject to the following conditions:

11.4 should the employee be in a position to tamper with the evidence against him/her.

11.5 should the employee's continuing presence in the organization be deemed inimical to the interest of the organization.

11.6 During such suspension, the employee shall be given 25% of his/her last month salary drawn as subsistence allowance.

12 Conflict Management

12.1 Conflict resolution

12.1.1 Whenever a dispute arises among the BLESS staff, it shall be resolved in a constructive manner, i.e. the solutions shall lead to positive changes. Employees who feel unfairly treated or who have complaints about a situation or about working conditions should notify the Executive Secretary immediately.

12.2 Staff behavior

12.2.1 BLESS expects its employees to adopt attitudes and behavior that maintain the good image of the organization. BLESS employees shall display an exemplary level of professionalism and integrity.

12.2.2 Furthermore, besides the usual rules every good employee needs to follow (respect, courtesy, punctuality); there are particular procedures of conduct for members of the organization which must be observed.

12.3 Political Activities

12.3.1 Since BLESS is a non-political organization, employees shall not participate in activities of a purely political nature on work premises or during working hours. It is also prohibited to use the organization's materials for these purposes.

12.4 Discrimination and Harassment

12.4.1 Under the principles established by BLESS, no employee, man or woman, has the right to put pressure on another, make intimate advances, give preferential treatment or show sexual favoritism at work.

12.5 Conflict of Interest

12.5.1 To avoid putting themselves in a conflict of interest with the objectives and operations pursued by BLESS, employees shall respect the following guidelines:

- (1) It is prohibited to use BLESS property for illegal or unauthorized purposes.
- (2) It is prohibited for any BLESS employee having confidential information to disclose it without expressed authorization beforehand.
- (3) Employees cannot at any time accept a job from another employer if this job interferes with their work schedule and their duties and responsibilities.
- (4) Employees shall avoid putting themselves in situations where they may gain profit or derive direct or indirect interest by influencing a contract award.
- (5) Employees cannot solicit or accept tips, gifts, favors or other forms of gratuities for services rendered or required to be rendered in performing their duties within the organization.

13 Settling Grievance Policy

13.1 Grievances

13.1.1 If an employee feels unfairly treated by circumstances that infringe on his/her rights or change his/her employment conditions, he/she should discuss the situation with his/her immediate supervisor. If, after the matter has been discussed and corrective measures taken, an employee feels it has not been satisfactorily settled, he/she can submit a grievance to the Executive Secretary, who will discuss and provide appropriate solution. All grievances shall be handled internally because there is no recourse to external mediation or arbitration.

14 Performance Evaluation and Skill Training

14.1 Performance Evaluation System

14.1.1 The performance evaluation system is a means by which BLESS can increase its efficiency and that of its employees. The purpose of the system is for the organization to fulfill its mission by attaining its objectives and for employees to grow and feel fulfilled through proactive performance supervision. The system enables, among other things, the harmonizing of individual employee objectives with those of the organization, the measuring of employee potential and work performance and the support of employee improvement by working with them on their development needs.

14.1.2 The annual performance evaluation seeks specifically to:

- i) promote communication between employees and their supervisors;
- ii) clarify expectations concerning objectives and performance;
improve employee performance through on-going monitoring and feedback;
- iii) assess and reward individual performance;
- iv) allow employees to express their career aspirations.

14.1.3 The performance evaluation focuses on the individual employee in relation to the tasks and responsibilities assigned to him. It is not necessarily a comparison of one employee's performance with that of another. Thus, the employee's work performance is to be assessed in relation to absolute procedures, that is, according to the evaluator's performance criteria and not according to relative procedures.

14.1.4 The performance evaluation also allows BLESS to assess the quality of human resources in their department or organization, note important information concerning expectations and needs and clarify decisions concerning transfers or work assignments.

14.2 Elements of the Performance Evaluation System

14.2.1 A performance evaluation system is composed of three main stages that generally take place over a period of a year:

14.2.2 Performance planning

The performance planning stage enables employees and supervisors to come to an agreement on what is to be accomplished during the year and how it will be carried out. The following procedures and tools are used to facilitate this stage:

a) Job description or list of duties

Each employee must have an up-to-date job description defining the purpose of the work and the responsibilities involved.

b) Setting of objectives

For each key responsibility associated with a position, at least one objective should be established for a particular period. The objectives should be clear and quantifiable, and the assessment criteria should be mentioned.

c) Individual action plan

The individual action plan is a planning tool used to specify the steps to be taken to achieve the objectives set beforehand. The action plan should be prepared jointly with the immediate supervisor. It may also involve new initiatives facilitating improved productivity or personal capacity development.

14.2.3 Performance Monitoring and Management

Staff performance and productivity should be managed on an on-going basis throughout the year. The following elements, among others, are involved:

a) On-going Supervision

This means taking the time to observe, examine sources of difficulty and seek solutions.

b) Regular Communication

This involves regular exchanges so that employees can receive feedback about their performance and receive the necessary supervision.

c) Periodic Evaluation

This involves formal, scheduled meetings between an employee and supervisor to discuss activities carried out, end results and the adjustment of the action plan and objectives, if necessary. A minimum of one meeting every six months is suggested to ensure satisfactory results.

14.2.4 Annual Performance Evaluation

(1) The annual performance evaluation is the analysis, based on documentation from previous stages of the process, of an employee's work record. The evaluation addresses two fundamental questions. The first relates to the past and involves verifying what was accomplished qualitatively and quantitatively during the year. The second relates to the future and consists of identifying means to be considered to ensure the employee continues to grow and develop.

(2) The performance evaluation form should include all the sections needed for the evaluation. This includes a section relating to performance evaluation in relation to the objectives established at the outset and in relation to the responsibilities of the position, a section that specifies or targets what is needed for the employee's development and finally a section allowing the employee and the evaluator to express their comments and affix their respective signatures. The form should also include a performance level classification and a definition of each of these levels. The annual performance evaluation does not have any financial impact on salaries. It is first and foremost a tool to evaluate the employee's performance and take remedial action if necessary.

14.2.5 Skill Training and Professional Development

Depending on available funds, BLESS shall foster the professional development of its employees in order to be as effective as possible in its activities. The training programs

chosen should address the actual needs identified and expressed during performance evaluation sessions.

15 Bond

15.1 As part of the staff and organizational development activities, BLESS may at times decide to send a designated staff person for trainings, exposures, exchange visits and/or further studies both abroad as well as at local level. BLESS will bear the full/partial costs of the trainings/studies for this. However, the designated staff sponsored for the trainings/studies is required to sign a bond with BLESS that requires him/her to complete the full tenure of working with the organization.

16. Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy

16.1 BLESS commits to provide a safe, healthy and congenial organizational environment to all its staff. BLESS also commits to ensuring gender equality and gender justice through all its policies, practices & interventions.

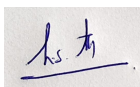
16.2 The BLESS anti-sexual harassment policy shall be in line with the provisions under the legal enactment on the subject by Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India that is the 'The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 and The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Rules, 2013'.

17. Child Protection Policy

17.1 The main purpose of the policy is to protect children from all forms of harm (physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual or any other negligence) and create an enabling environment.

17.2 The BLESS child protection policy shall be in line with 'The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012'.

This HR Policy has been approved by the Governing Body.



L. S. Anthony Samy
Executive Secretary