

**THE PUNJAB WOMEN HOSTELS AUTHORITY ACT 2023**  
**(VII of 2023)**

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**TEXT**

**THE PUNJAB WOMEN HOSTELS AUTHORITY ACT 2023**

**(VII of 2023)**

*[17 February 2023]*

An  
Act

*to regulate women hostels established in the private sector.*

It is necessary to establish an Authority to regulate women hostels in the Province with an aim to provide safe and standard accommodation facilities to women; and to provide the ancillary matters.

Be it enacted by Provincial Assembly of the Punjab as follows:

**CHAPTER I  
PRELIMINARY**

**1. Short title, extent and commencement.**— (1) This Act may be cited as the Punjab Women Hostels Authority Act 2023.

(2) It extends to whole of the Punjab.

(3) It shall come into force on such date as the Government may, by notification, appoint and different dates may be so appointed for different areas.

**2. Definitions.**— In this Act:

(a) “Act” means the Punjab Women Hostels Authority Act 2023.

(b) “Authority” means the Women Hostels Authority established under the Act;

(c) “Chairperson” means the Chairperson of the Authority;

(d) “Director General” means Director General of the Authority appointed under the Act;

(e) “Government” means Government of the Punjab;

(f) “hostel” means a building or premises established or used in the private sector as a women hostel;

(g) “Hostel Inspection Officer” means a female officer appointed as Hostel Inspection Officer under the Act;

(h) “Operator” means a person who owns, runs or operates a hostel

(i) “prescribed” means prescribed by the rules or the regulations;

(j) “resident” means a woman who is residing in a hostel;

(k) “regulations” means the regulations framed under the Act; and

(l) “rules” means the rules made under the Act.

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<sup>1</sup>This Act was passed by Provincial Assembly of the Punjab on 09 January 2023; and was assented to by Governor of the Punjab on 23 January 2023; and was published in the Punjab Gazette (Extraordinary), dated: 17 February 2023, pp.3875-3880.

**CHAPTER II**  
**ESTABLISHMENT OF WOMEN**  
**HOSTELS AUTHORITY**

**3. Establishment of the Authority.**– (1) The Government shall, by notification in the official Gazette, establish an Authority to be called the Women Hostels Authority.

(2) The Authority shall be a body corporate, having perpetual succession and a common seal, with powers to enter into contract, acquire or dispose of property subject to subsection (3), and may, by its name, sue or be sued.

(3) The Authority shall acquire and dispose of the property with the prior permission of the Government.

**4. Composition of the Authority.**– (1) The Authority shall consist of a Chairperson and the following members:

- (a) Secretary to the Government, Higher Education Department;
- (b) Secretary to the Government, Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department;
- (c) Secretary to the Government, Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Maal Department;
- (d) Secretary to the Government, Labour and Human Resource Department;
- (e) Secretary to the Government, Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education Department;
- (f) Secretary to the Government, Finance Department;
- (g) Secretary to the Government, Local Government and Community Development Department;
- (h) Secretary to the Government, Housing, Urban Development and Public Health Engineering Department;
- (i) three female members of Provincial Assembly of the Punjab, including one female member from the opposition, to be nominated by the Speaker of Provincial Assembly of the Punjab ;
- (j) one representative of Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Lahore;
- (k) one representative of Operators;
- (l) Director General, Women Hostels Authority Member/Secretary; and
- (m) three non-official members belonging to the relevant field.

(2) The Government shall appoint the Chairperson and the non-official members of the Authority for a renewable term of three years on such terms and conditions as may be prescribed:

provided that the Chairperson and the non-official members shall not be appointed for more than two terms, whether consecutive or otherwise.

(3) The Chairperson or a member, other than an *ex-officio* member, may resign from his office by serving one month's notice in writing to the Government.

(4) No act or proceedings of the Authority shall be questioned or invalidated merely on the ground of existence of any vacancy or defect in the composition of the Authority.

**5. Meetings.**– (1) The Authority shall meet at least once in a quarter, at such place and at such time and shall observe such procedure in relation to transaction of business at its meetings as may be prescribed.

(2) The meetings of the Authority shall be presided over by the Chairperson and, in the absence of the Chairperson by a member of the Authority elected for the purpose by the members present in the meeting.

(3) The quorum for a meeting shall be one half of the total members, the fraction being counted as one.

(4) The Secretary of the Authority may, with the prior approval of the Chairperson, call a meeting of the Authority.

(5) The Authority may, with the prior approval of the Government, co-opt any other person as a member.

(6) The official members may be represented in a meeting of the Authority through their authorized representatives.

**6. Removal of Chairperson and members.**– (1) The Government may remove from office, the Chairperson or a member, other than *an ex-officio* member, if he:

- (a) has been adjudicated insolvent; or
- (b) has been convicted of an offence which involves moral turpitude; or
- (c) has become physically or mentally incapable of acting as the Chairperson or the member; or
- (d) has abused his position and rendered his continuance in the office prejudicial to public interest.

(2) The Chairperson or a member shall not be removed from office except after affording him a reasonable opportunity of hearing.

**7. Powers and functions of the Authority.**– (1) The Authority shall regulate and monitor the hostels to ensure provision of safe and standard residences to women.

(2) Without prejudice to the provisions of subsection (1), the Authority, in relation to the hostels, shall have the powers to:

- (a) formulate and enforce standards, procedures, processes and guidelines on business model, category, hygiene and safety of the hostels;
- (b) to register the hostels in the prescribed manner;
- (c) determine terms and conditions of service of employees of the Authority;
- (d) collect and analyze relevant and technical data;
- (e) regulate Operators and residents to ensure safety and quality control;

- (f) organize training programs and general awareness on safety and standards;
- (g) levy fee for registration of hostels and the renewal thereof in the prescribed manner;
- (h) liaise with national and international organizations for exchange of best practices;
- (i) approve the Budget of the Authority and to re-appropriate funds;
- (j) evaluate and monitor the implementation of the decision of the Authority; and
- (k) perform such other functions as may be necessary for the discharge of its functions under the Act.

**8. Categorization.**— (1) The Authority may categorize the hostels based on the international best practices in such manner as may be prescribed.

(2) Upon categorization under subsection (1), the Authority shall issue a certificate showing the category of the hostel, and the Operator shall display such certificate at a conspicuous place of the hostel premises.

**9. Director General.**— (1) The Government may appoint a Director General in such manner and on such terms and conditions as may be prescribed.

(2) The Director General shall hold office during the pleasure of the Government.

(3) The Director General shall be the Secretary of the Authority.

(4) The Director General shall be responsible for accomplishing the objectives of the Act and for efficient implementation of the Act, the rules and the regulations.

(5) The Director General shall exercise such powers as are mentioned in the Act or as may be prescribed or delegated to him by the Authority.

**10. Hostel Inspection Officer.**— (1) The Authority may, by notification in the official Gazette, appoint such number of Hostel Inspection Officers for such areas or districts as it may deem fit.

(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in subsection (1), the Authority may confer the powers of Hostel Inspection Officer on a Government servant.

**11. Powers of Hostel Inspection Officer.**— (1) A Hostel Inspection Officer may:

- (a) issue improvement notice to any hostel, which appears to him to be working in contravention of the Act, the rules or the regulations;
- (b) enter or seal any hostel which he believes is operating or carrying on business in contravention of the Act;
- (c) impose fine on an Operator;
- (d) examine any book or documents with respect to any hostel; and
- (e) demand identity card, registration certificate, or any other ancillary document from an Operator.

**12. Employees of the Authority.** – The Authority may appoint, determine the number, categories, rank and terms and conditions of service of employees of the Authority.

### **CHAPTER III REGISTRATION AND ENFORCEMENT MECHANISM**

**13. Registration of hostels.**– No hostel shall be operated unless it has been registered with the Authority on such form and in such manner as may be prescribed.

**14. Improvement notice.**– (1) If an Hostel Inspection Officer has reason to believe that any Operator has failed to comply with any provision of the Act, the rules or the regulations, he may serve an improvement notice upon such Operator:

- (a) stating the grounds for believing that the Operator has failed to comply with any provision of the Act or the rules or the regulations;
- (b) specifying the matter which constitutes non-compliance on the part of the Operator;
- (c) intimating the measures which the Operator is bound to take to ensure compliance; and
- (d) specifying the time period within which the Operator has to ensure compliance.

(2) If the Operator fails to comply with the improvement notice within the specified time, the Hostel Inspection Officer may recommend to the Director General for suspension or cancellation of registration of the hostel or taking any other action provided under the Act.

(3) On receipt of a recommendation under subsection (2), the Director General may make an appropriate order.

**15. Dispute resolution.**– (1) In case any dispute arises between a resident and an Operator, the matter may be referred to the Director General, in writing, within seven days of the incidence of dispute.

(2) The Director General shall call the resident and the Operator concerned along with the relevant record within seven days of the receipt of reference.

(3) The Director General shall resolve the dispute by making an order in writing, after affording opportunity of hearing to the parties within fifteen days of the concluding hearing.

(4) The Director General may delegate his powers to any of the officers of the Authority.

### **CHAPTER IV OFFENCES AND PENALTIES**

**16. Failure to comply with directions.**– If an Operator, without reasonable cause, fails to comply with any order or notice issued by the Authority or an Hostel

Inspection Officer, he shall be liable to fine which may extend to rupees fifteen thousand.

**17. Hygiene and safety.**— If an Operator contravenes the prescribed standards of hygiene and safety, he shall be liable to cancellation of hostel registration or fine up to rupees ten thousand.

**18. False information.**— If an Operator furnishes or gives false or misleading statement or information, or produces any false or misleading document before the Authority or an Inspection Officer, he may be liable to cancellation of his hostel registration or fine up to rupees twenty five thousand.

**19. Obstructing the Inspection Officer.**— (1) Any person, who obstructs an Hostel Inspection Officer in the performance of her duties, shall be liable to fine up to rupees ten thousand for first contravention and up to rupees twenty thousand for every subsequent contravention.

**20. Hostel without registration.**— If a hostel is operating without registration, it shall be liable to be sealed and shall be de-sealed after its registration on such conditions and in such manner as may be prescribed.

**21. Appeals.**— (1) An appeal against an order or fine imposed by Hostel Inspection Officer may be made to the Director General within thirty days of such order, and the Director General shall decide the appeal within a period of one month.

(2) Any person aggrieved by an order of the Director General, except an order under subsection (1), may within fifteen days of the receipt of the order, file an appeal before the Secretary, Women Development Department of the Government, in such manner as may be prescribed, who shall decide the appeal within thirty days.

## **CHAPTER V FINANCE AND AUDIT**

**22. Fund.** — (1) There shall be established a fund to be known as Women Hostels Authority Fund to be administered and controlled by the Authority.

(2) The Fund shall consist of:

- (a) funds provided by the Government;
- (b) loans or grants by the Government;
- (c) grants and funds negotiated and raised, or otherwise obtained by the Authority with the prior approval of the Government;
- (d) fee, charges, rentals and fines collected by the Authority;
- (e) income from the lease or sale of the property; and
- (f) all other sums received by the Authority.

(3) The Authority shall meet all of its expenses from the Fund.

**23. Bank accounts.**— The Authority may open and maintain its accounts at the scheduled banks.

**24. Budget and accounts.**— (1) The Authority shall maintain proper accounts and other records relating to its financial affairs including its income and expenditures and its assets and liabilities in such form and manner as may be prescribed.

(2) After the conclusion of a financial year, the Authority, in the manner prescribed, shall cause to be prepared for the financial year, statements of account of the Authority which shall include a balance sheet and an account of income and expenditures.

(3) The Authority shall approve its annual budget for a financial year.

**25. Audit.**— (1) The Auditor General of Pakistan shall annually audit the accounts of the Authority.

(2) The Government, in addition to the audit under sub-section (1), may cause the accounts of the Authority annually audited by a Chartered Accountant or a firm of Chartered Accountants.

(3) The auditor appointed under subsection (2) shall be provided such access to the books, accounts and other documents as may be considered necessary for the audit of accounts.

(4) The auditor shall submit the annual or any special audit report to the Authority, and the Authority shall take appropriate remedial measures or other action in the light of the audit report.

## **CHAPTER VI MISCELLANEOUS**

**26. Annual report.**— (1) The Authority shall, within three months of the close of a financial year, submit to the Government its annual performance report.

(2) The Government shall cause the report received under subsection (1) lay before Provincial Assembly of the Punjab.

**27. Delegation of powers.**— The Authority may delegate, subject to such conditions and restrictions as may be specified in the order, any of its functions to a body, committee or an officer.

**28. Public servants.**— The Chairperson, the members and the employees of the Authority shall be deemed to be public servants within the meaning of section 21 of the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860 (XLV of 1860).

**29. Immunity.**— No suit, prosecution or other legal proceedings shall lie against the Authority, the Chairperson, a member or any employee of the Authority for anything done in good faith under the Act, the rules or the regulations.

**30. Bar of jurisdiction.**— No civil court shall entertain a suit or an application against any proceedings taken or order made under the Act.

**31. Rules.**— The Government may make rules for carrying out the purposes of the Act.

**32. Regulations.**— (1) Subject to the Act and the rules, the Authority may, by notification, frame regulations to give effect to the provisions of the Act.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1), the regulations may provide for:

- (a) procedure for transaction of business of the Authority;
- (b) standards, categorization and guidelines in relation to any hostel;
- (c) improvement notices and prohibition orders;
- (d) registration procedures;
- (e) inspection of hostels; and
- (f) finances, accounts, budget and reporting procedures.

**33. Power to remove difficulties.**— If any difficulty arises in giving effect to any provision of the Act, the Government may, within two years of the commencement of the Act, make such order not inconsistent with the provisions of the Act as may be necessary to remove the difficulty.