Communications Policy Manual

***Policies and Procedures (COMS)***

**COMS 3.2**

Complaints Management Policy

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| Applicable to | Asian Aid Organisation Ltd and its associated entities |
| Approved Date | 31/07/2013 |
| Reviewed Date | 08/03/2018 |
| Date of Board Endorsement | Endorsed as Draft |
| Review | Annually and as required |
| Scope | This policy is part of the Asian Aid Organisation Policy Framework *and is included within the* Communications Policy Manual |
| Document Reference # | COMS 2.3 |
| Policy Administrator | Communications and Engagement Manager |

# Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the means in which Asian Aid manages complaints relating to its operations. It seeks to make clear the mechanisms available for making a complaint, how they will be handled and resolved.

We are committed to achieving the highest standard we can in every area of our work and to continuous improvement. This applies especially to delivery of services, seeking donations and accountability to stakeholders generally. We are committed to working according to or above the standard required by the Code of Conduct of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID). Receiving concerns and complaints is one of the most important ways of learning what we need to do to improve our work.

The policy will be reviewed annually.

# Guiding principles

Asian Aid has adopted the following principles for our complaint policy and procedures.

Principle 1: Visibility

We will clearly publicise information on our website, and at least once, in our “Response” newsletter, about how and where to complain.

Principle 2: Accessibility

We will ensure that our complaint handling process is as accessible as we can practically make it to all complainants. Complaints can be made by telephone, in writing or by email to the head office in Australia or our partner sites in India, Bangladesh and Nepal.

Principle 3: Responsiveness

We will respond to complaints in a timely manner. We will acknowledge the receipt of the complaint by phone call, mail or email, within 5 working days and will endeavour to reach resolution to the complaint within 30 days.

Principle 4: Objectivity

We will address all complaints in an equitable, fair and unbiased manner using evidence submitted by both the complainant and our personnel through the complaint handling process. When a complaint is made about the actions of a staff member, that staff member will not be involved, other than to provide information, in the investigation process.

Principle 5: Charges

Access to the complaint handling process is free of charge to complainants

Principle 6: Confidentiality

We will observe strict confidentiality in complaint handling.

Principle 7: Consumer/client-focused approach

The interests of our consumers/clients are foremost in our approach to complaint handling.

Principle 8: Accountability

We will ensure that accountability for and reporting on the actions and decisions with respect to complaint handling is clearly established.

Principle 9: Continual improvement

Continual improvement of the complaint handling process and the quality of services is one of our permanent objectives.

# Definitions

Complaint means an expression of dissatisfaction made to an organisation, related to its products or services, or the complaint handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

Complainant means a person, organisation or its representative, making a complaint.

Enquiry means a request for information or an explanation.

Feedback means opinions, comments, suggestions and expressions of interest in the products or the complaint handling process

Stakeholder or interested party means a person or group having an interest in the performance or success of the organization

# Scope of this policy

This policy is intended to apply to any complaint, regardless of who makes it. We will accept complaints relating to our paid staff, volunteers, partners, contracted service providers or anyone else acting on our behalf.

Anonymous complaints can be made, but obviously our ability to investigate them may be limited because of this.

Complaints may relate to, but are not restricted to:

* Concern about the behaviour of staff, volunteers, Board members, suppliers, partners or others acting on UA’s behalf
* Criticism about a fundraising campaign or action
* Concern over inappropriate use of funding
* Any breach of the ACFID Code of Conduct
* Organisational practices, policies or procedures
* Complaints about Asian Aid supported development programs and/or operations of partners

# Communicating our Complaints Policy

Our Complaints Policy is distributed to all our paid staff, volunteers, partners, contracted service providers and all others acting on our behalf at induction. The policy is also available for all staff on a nominated share drive and placed on Asian Aid’s website.

Training and/or communication will also be provided via face-to-face meetings and internal, written communication following an update or change to the policy. This policy is also published on our website.

# Complaints Procedure

Our complaints procedure outlines the process by which a complaint can be made, the process for assessing and managing it as well as ways to escalate those where a resolution has not been reached.

This process has been outlined in a flow chart (Figure 6.1) on the following page.

# Making and Receiving a Complaint

Complaints can be made, verbally, in writing or in person via the following channels:

* Directly: by speaking with any staff member or partner
* Phone: by calling our supporter relations team on +61 2 6586 4250
* Email: [contact@asianaid.org.au](mailto:contact@asianaid.org.au)
* Letter / Feedback form: to our head office at 32 Cameron St, Wauchope NSW 2446

Complaints can also be made via our partner offices in the countries in which we operate including:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Bangladesh Children’s Sponsorship Services | Mr Milton Das | [miltondas@baum-bd.org](mailto:miltondas@baum-bd.org) |
| Helping Hand Welfare Society | Mr Binu Sam | [director@hhws.org](mailto:director@hhws.org) |
| Oasis India | Mr Mangneo Lhungdim | info@oasisin.org |
| Community Service Academy Nepal | Mrs Rama Basnet | [basnetrama@hotmail.com](mailto:basnetrama@hotmail.com) |
| 3 Angels Nepal | Dr Rajendra Gautam | [rajendra@3angelsnepal.org.np](mailto:rajendra@3angelsnepal.org.np) |
| Centre for Agro-Ecology and Development | Samita Pradhan | [samita@wrrpnepal.org](mailto:samita@wrrpnepal.org) |

Partner offices are responsible for responding to complaints relating to its operations in each respective country. They must also communicate our policy to children and participants within their programs. Complaints made directly to Asian Aid’s head office will be referred to the director of the partner office.

Serious complaints of misconduct will be made to the designated authority and managed in accordance with Asian Aid’s relevant polices (Code of Conduct, Child Protection etc.) as well as all relevant legislation.

Figure 6.1: Complaints Flow Chart

# Who can receive a Complaint?

Any of Asian Aid’s staff, or partner staff, can receive a complaint. When taking a verbal complaint, they must clarify the person’s concerns and document the details on the Client Complaint Form (Appendix 1). Complaints from children require different forms (Appendix 2 and 3) and staff / partners may use these to assist in getting the necessary details.

Should a complainant wish to remain anonymous, the complaint can still be taken however it may limit the effectiveness of the investigation / resolution.

After taking the complaint, the recipient should advise the complainant of the next steps which are outlined on the following table.

These will generally involve:

* Escalation to the relevant manager for investigation and determination
* Communicating the process / proposed outcome to the complainant within an agreed timeframe.

# Investigating a Complaint

To conduct an investigation the person handling the complaint will:

* Establish the facts and gather the relevant information; and if necessary and/or practicable, interview those involved. Once the investigation is completed a recommended course of action will be made by the person handling the complaint to the Senior Management Team (SMT).
* If the outcome of the investigation is that there should be action taken in relation to an employee then the appropriate disciplinary and other organisational policies and procedures will be followed (e.g. Asian Aid’s Child Protection Policy, Anti-Fraud Policy, etc.).

# Continuous Improvement

Complaints and feedback form a valuable part of Asian Aid’s continuous improvement process. Where complaints and their subsequent investigations identify systemic or procedural improvements, the recommendations will be referred to the relevant manager to investigate / implement as required.

The process will include:

* Assess and report on whether the existing system / procedure is adequate
* If it could be improved, make recommendations and implement
* Provide feedback to the SMT / manager responsible for handling the complaint so they can inform the complainant
* Implement changes once approved.

# Responsibilities

The Communications & Engagement Manager is the first point of escalation for Asian Aid staff and is responsible for:

* Initial assessment of complaints and identifying those which can be dealt which informally and those which are clear, serious, or complex complaints to be addressed according to the complaints handling procedure;
* Ensuring complaints are appropriately referred, resolved and that follow up actions have taken place
* Maintaining the Complaints Log.

The CEO is responsible for complaints which cannot be resolved by the C&E Manager or Senior Management team.

The Chair of the Board is responsible for managing complaints about, or referred by, the CEO.

# Timeframes

We will acknowledge written complaints within 5 days. We will acknowledge oral complaints immediately.

We will aim to resolve complaints as quickly as possible and within 30 days unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If a complaint is not resolved within 30 days we will inform the complainant of progress and keep them informed of progress every two weeks.

# Closing out and escalation of complaints

A complaint cannot be closed until the complainant has been informed about steps taken to address the complaint and is satisfied that it has been addressed appropriately.

Where a complainant is unhappy with the response, or they believe it has not been implemented, the complaint must be escalated. In the first instance this should be to the senior management team. If the complaint involves a member of this team, or has failed to have been resolved by this team, it should be escalated to the chief executive officer. From the CEO it should be escalated to the Chair of the Board.

Serious complaints of misconduct will be made to the designated authority and managed in accordance with Asian Aid’s relevant polices (Code of Conduct, Child Protection etc.) as well as all relevant legislation.

# Appendix 1

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# Appendix 2

## COMMUNICATION FORM (under 12 years)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| WHAT IS A COMPLAINT? | |
| Sometimes things happen that we are unhappy or confused about. We sometimes refer to these things as ‘Problems’.  It is important that we share our problems, or things that upset us, with people we trust.  Letting other people know you are unhappy with something, or something done on your behalf, means that they can provide advice and help you find the best solution. | |
| YOUR DETAILS | |
| It is important that we have your full name so that we can contact you and help you resolve your problem or concern. | |
| Name: |  |
| Grade/Class: |  |
| Program/School Name: |  |
| MY IDEAS OR CONCERNS | |
| It is important that you provide information about your problem or concern to help us understand the situation and how best we can help you. | |
| Write or draw a picture of your idea or your concern in the box below. | |
|  | |
| Write or draw a picture of your ideas about how things could be differently, or how things could change for the better. | |
|  | |
| WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT? | |
| Once you submit this form to your School Teacher or School Principal, a member of the XXX Team will come to visit you.  They will talk to you about your problem, to make sure they understand what has made you upset, and then they will help you talk to the person/people involved to try and help everyone find a solution. | |
|  | |
| OFFICE USE ONLY | |
| Date received: |  |
| Received by: |  |

# Appendix 3

## COMMUNICATION FORM (12 years and over)

|  |  |
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| WHAT IS A COMPLAINT? | |
| At times in life we face problems and challenges. Sometimes these things can upset us and make us unhappy.  A ‘Complaint’ is a formal way to document and share a problem you are facing with  People you trust. Often these people can provide advice and help you find the best solution – especially when you don’t know what to do on your own  By completing this form you are asking someone from the BCSS Team to listen to you, to understand your problem, and to help you find a solution. | |
| YOUR DETAILS | |
| It is important that we have your full name so that we can contact you and help you resolve your problem or concern. | |
| Name: |  |
| Grade/Class: |  |
| Program/School Name: |  |
| MY IDEAS OR CONCERNS | |
| It is important that you provide information about your problem or concern to help us understand the situation and how best we can help you. | |
| Write about your concern in the box below. | |
|  | |
| Write about how things could be different, or how things could change for the better. Write any suggested solutions that you would like to see occur. | |
|  | |
| Write about how you think the <project team> can help you, and what you would like to see happen next. | |
|  | |
| WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT? | |
| Once you submit this form to your School Teacher or School Principal, a member of the XXX Team will come to visit you.  They will talk to you about your problem, to make sure they understand what has made you upset, and then they will help you talk to the person/people involved to try and help everyone find a solution. | |
|  | |
| OFFICE USE ONLY | |
| Date received: |  |
| Received by: |  |