

INF Australia Complaints Handling Policy

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Owner:	CEO	Approved on:	July 2018
Users:	All	Scheduled review date	June 2021

THIS POLICY COMPLIES WITH: ACFID CODE OF CONDUCT COMMITMENT 7.3

RELATED INF AUSTRALIA POLICIES: INF AUSTRALIA CODE OF CONDUCT; INF AUSTRALIA WHISTLEBLOWER POLICY; INF AUSTRALIA CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

RELATED INF AUSTRALIA PRACTICE DOCUMENTS:

1. INTRODUCTION

The International Nepal Fellowship [Australia] Ltd (hereafter called INF Australia) is committed to transparency and accountability with everyone who is impacted by our work – beneficiaries, communities and partners, supporters and the general public in Nepal and in Australia.

We are committed to being effective in our work, to learning and continuously improving, and we believe that receiving and responding to comments and complaints is an important part of this.

This policy applies to all our people - employees and volunteers – and they should be familiar with it. Those with particularly relevant responsibilities should be trained in its application. It also applies to the work that we do and the impact that this has on communities in Nepal.

We make clear the value we place on receiving concerns and complaints in all relevant communications. We advise how a copy of this policy may be obtained and we provide clear information on how complaints may be made, both in Australia and in Nepal, and in English and Nepali.

The following principles will guide the way we receive and handle complaints:

- Visible and accessible
- Responsive, objective and fair
- Free of charge
- Accountable and focused on our stakeholders
- Continuously improving both our complaints handling and activities.

2. Policy

2.1 INTERNAL HANDLING OF COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

2.1.1 COMMENTS

INF Australia strives to be honest, trustworthy and transparent and we are committed to making what we do consistent with what we say. We have an open door policy and welcome questions, comments or suggestions. These should be directed to:

Office Manager, INF Australia, PO Box 5400, West Chatswood, NSW 1515

Email: ausoffice@au.inf.org

Telephone: +61 [0] 2 9411 1195

If contact details are included, comments will be responded to.

We will encourage comments and suggestions about our work when visiting partners and beneficiaries and in regular communication with them. Partners will be encouraged to receive comments and suggestions at any time and forward them to us in confidence.

2.1.2 COMPLAINTS

Any suspected improper or illegal activity by INF Directors, Staff or Volunteers should be reported immediately. While concerns about serious illegal activity should be reported directly to the relevant authorities, the intention of this Policy is to enable concerns to be raised within the Organisation prior to seeking resolution outside the Organisation.

Concerns or complaints about any improper or illegal activity can be raised in confidence with the CEO of INF Australia who has responsibility for investigating all reported complaints and allegations. Concerns can be raised anonymously, although this could make it more difficult to investigate. These should be addressed to:

CEO, INF Australia, PO Box 5400, West Chatswood, NSW 1515

Or Email: ceo@au.inf.org

Telephone: +61 [0] 2 9411 1195

The CEO will notify the sender and acknowledge receipt of the reported violation or suspected violation within ten business days. All reports will be investigated and appropriate corrective action will be taken.

In the event that a concern relates to the CEO, it should be addressed to the Chair:

Chair, INF Australia, PO Box 5400, West Chatswood, NSW 1515

Or Email: chair@au.inf.org

We are open to receiving complaints about our people or activities whenever visiting partners and beneficiaries. Partners will be encouraged to receive complaints at any time and forward them to us in confidence.

In Nepal, complaints can be raised in confidence through our partner organisation, INF Nepal and should be addressed to the HR Manager.

HR Manager, INF Central Office, Simpani, Pokhara; or by email hr.manager@nepal.inf.org.

2.1.3 SCOPE

This Policy is intended to apply to any complaint, regardless of who makes it.

We will accept complaints relating to our paid staff, our volunteers, our partners, our contracted service providers or anyone else acting on our behalf.

A complaint may be made by a person to whom we deliver services or goods or who is affected by our services or goods, a partner, a local organisation with which we work, our staff, volunteers, donors or a member of the public. Anonymous complaints can be made, but our ability to investigate them may be limited.

2.1.4 IMPLEMENTING THIS POLICY

Our Complaints Policy has been distributed to all staff, volunteers, partners, and others acting on our behalf. We require all those who may be involved in any way with a complaint to formally signify their commitment to this policy.

We run induction programs for our governing board members and all relevant personnel. Personnel directly involved in complaint handling are fully trained in all aspects of this policy and its implementation. We take special care to train our field personnel to encourage, receive and handle complaints taking account of language issues and cultural sensitivities.

2.1.5 PUBLICISING THIS POLICY

We make clear the value we place on receiving concerns and complaints in all relevant communications.

Where literacy is a constraint we will orally invite expressions of concern and complaint on a regular basis and we will take care to give this invitation in a way that is culturally appropriate. We will take special care to facilitate complaints from vulnerable populations including children and marginalised groups.

We ensure that making a complaint to us is as easy as possible. We will take complaints orally in person, over the phone and by any written means. We will do our very best to assist a complainant to put their complaint in writing or to write it down ourselves as faithfully as we can.

All relevant communications explain this and explain our procedures for handling complaints including:

- where or to whom complaints can be made
- information to be provided by the complainant
- the process for handling complaints
- time periods associated with various stages in the process
- the complainant's options for remedy, including external means
- how the complainant can obtain feedback on the status of the complaint.

2.1.6 WHERE AND HOW COMPLAINTS MAY BE MADE

We are able to receive complaints orally in person or by telephone and in writing by post or email. Where complaints are made orally we will ensure our write-up of the complaint contains all the information the complainant wishes to provide.

Complaints may be made by a friend or advocate of the complainant on their behalf.

Where appropriate, we may establish complaint committees involving representatives from partner organisations and members of communities we are serving.

Where appropriate we may utilise complaint/suggestion boxes. We recognise that in some circumstances complainants may wish to remain anonymous. Because such complaints can alert us to problems that need fixing we will accept them though clearly it may not be possible to provide a remedy to an individual.

2.1.7 HOW WE WILL HANDLE COMPLAINTS

When we take an oral complaint we will:

- Identify ourselves, listen, record details, and determine what the client wants;
- Confirm that we have understood and received the details;
- Show empathy for the client, but not attempt to take sides, lay blame, or become defensive;

For all complaints we will:

- Understand from the client the outcome/s they are expecting;
- Make an initial assessment of the severity of the complaint and the urgency of action
 - Clearly explain to the client the course of action that will follow:
 - if the complaint is out of our jurisdiction;
 - if we may exercise a discretion not to investigate;
 - if preliminary enquiries need to be made, or further consideration needs to be given: or
 - if the complaint is to be investigated.
- We will not create false expectations, but assure the client that the complaint will receive full attention;
- Give an estimated timeframe or, if that is not possible, a date by which we will contact them again;
- Check whether the client is satisfied with the proposed action and, if not, advise them of alternatives.
- Ensure that the complaint is appropriately acknowledged;
- Follow up where necessary, and monitor whether the client is satisfied;
- We will register all complaints

Where appropriate we will ensure that personnel working in communities we serve are able to encourage and handle inquiries and making of complaints so as to take account of cultural and gender sensitivities and to ensure that cases involving children are appropriately handled.

We will ensure that a complainant is not required to express their complaint to a person implicated in their complaint. We will also ensure that a person implicated in a complaint is not involved in any way with the handling of that complaint.

Initial assessment of complaint.

We will first assess whether there is more than one issue raised in the complaint and whether each needs to be separately addressed.

To determine how a complaint should be managed, we will assess it in terms of the following criteria:

- a) severity (eg, is there an immediate threat to safety; have laws been broken?)
- b) health (including mental health) and safety implications;
- c) financial implications for the complainant or others
- c) complexity (do we fully understand the issue, or how widespread it is?);
- d) impact on the individual, public and organisation;
- e) potential to escalate; and
- f) the need for, and possibility of immediate action.

If we assess the complaint as significant in terms of one or more of these criteria we will classify the complaint accordingly.

2.1.8 INQUIRIES, MINOR COMPLAINTS AND JURISDICTION

We will aim to deal immediately with inquiries and minor complaints which are made orally by telephone or in person, that is during the initial phone call or meeting. However, as far as possible, we will ensure that the inquirer or complainant is completely satisfied with the information and or resolution provided.

On receipt of a complaint we will also attempt to determine whether investigation is required or not depending on whether the issue is within our jurisdiction and whether the complaint is ill conceived.

If the complainant disputes an assessment that a complaint should not be investigated, the member of staff handling the complaint will refer it to a more senior colleague for review.

We will encourage the complainant to respond and advise whether or not they are satisfied with our decision. In our decision we will advise that if a complainant is not satisfied we will be prepared to consider any additional information they may provide and to review our decision.

In all cases we will advise that the complaint may be referred to the Code Committee of ACFID. We will provide all necessary information for referral to the Code Committee and offer to assist in referral.

2.1.9 OUR 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.

2.1.10 HOW WE WILL LEARN FROM COMPLAINTS

We will ensure that all relevant personnel are informed of the outcomes of complaints and the implications for our services, goods, procedures and processes.

We will take all required remedial action. We will be prepared to change the way in which we operate and improve or undertake further training of staff. Where needed we will counsel or discipline staff or volunteers.

Where appropriate we will consult and take advice from ACFID and/or other relevant regulatory/enforcement authorities.

2.1.11 CONFIDENTIALITY

Reports of violations or suspected violations will be kept confidential, to the extent permitted by law, and consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation.

2.1.12 COMPLAINT DATA

We will register all inquiries and complaints. We will ensure that the following information is contained in written complaints and if not, and in the case of oral complaints, record this information ourselves:

- date of receipt
- a description of the complaint and relevant supporting data;
- the requested remedy;
- the service(s) and/or good(s) and/or practice or procedure complained about;
- the due date for a response;
- immediate action taken (if any) to resolve the complaint

2.1.13 REPORTING ABOUT COMPLAINTS

We will immediately escalate complex and/or major complaints to our CEO or his/her delegate.

All complaints will be reported at our weekly Team meetings and our governing board meetings. Minor complaints will be reported in summary form. Major complaints will be reported in detail.

Our Annual Report will provide de-identified information on complaints.

2.1.14 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

On a continuing basis we will monitor the effectiveness of our complaint handling and make improvements as appropriate. We will conduct an internal review of the effectiveness of our complaint handling every year.

2.1.15 NO RETALIATION

No-one who in good faith reports improper or illegal activity shall suffer harassment, retaliation or adverse employment consequence. Anyone connected with INF who retaliates against someone who has reported a violation in good faith may be subject to discipline.

2.1.16 GOOD FAITH

This policy is based on people acting in good faith to report concerns that they have reason to believe are true. INF Australia may take action against anyone who makes unfounded allegations that are proven to have been made recklessly, maliciously or with the foreknowledge that the allegations were false.

2.2 EXTERNAL HANDLING OF COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

INF Australia is a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and is a signatory to their Code of Conduct. The Code requires its signatories to meet high standards of corporate governance, public accountability and financial management.

ACFID monitors compliance with the Code and offers a mechanism to address concerns relating to signatories' conduct. More information about the ACFID Code of Conduct can be obtained from ACFID at:

Website: www.acfid.asn.au;

Email: code@acfid.asn.au;

REVISION HISTORY

Date	No	Summary of Changes	Section/s that changed	Authorised by:
February 2015	2	New process for making complaints	2	INFA Board
July 2018	3	Minor review	2.1.2	INFA Board