



Afghan Australian Development Organisation Inc (AADO)

COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

1. The value of complaints and our commitment to good complaint handling

AADO recognises the importance and value of listening and responding to concerns and complaints. We are committed to achieving the highest standard we can in every area of our work and to continuous improvement. Receiving concerns and complaints is one of the most important ways of learning what we need to do to improve our work as AADO seeks to maintain its reputation as an honest and committed not for profit organisation delivering educational programs in Afghanistan.

This Policy applies to all of our people, employees, trainers, trainees and volunteers who are, in principle, familiarised with the policy. We trust that any complaints will be handled in an efficient, effective and professional manner. Receiving complaints is an important way of learning what we need to do to improve our administration and programmes. Our policy document is available on our website and the information contained therein is intended to apply to any complaint, regardless of who makes it.

2. Guiding Principles for our Policy.

- 1 We will clearly publicise about how and where to complain
- 2 We will ensure that our complaint handling process is as accessible as we can possibly make it to all complainants
- 3 We will respond to complaints according to our predetermined timeframes

- 4 We will address all complaints in an equitable, fair and unbiased manner.
- 5 Access to the complaint process is free of charge to complainants
- 6 We will observe strict confidentiality in complaint handling
- 7 The interests of our students/trainees are foremost in our approach to complaint handling.
- 8 We will ensure that accountability for and reporting on the actions and decisions with respect to complaint handling is clearly established.
- 9 Continual improvement of the complaint handling process and the quality of services is one of our permanent objectives, so that we will maintain data collection on complaints, keep abreast of best practices and encourage innovation in complaint handling development.

3. Scope of our Policy

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

We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our organisation, our staff, our volunteers, our partners, our contracted service providers or anyone else acting on our behalf

4. Educating the Organisation

Our Complaints Policy is available online to staff and committee members and a hard copy is located in the AADO Office. We conduct annual strategic planning workshops for the staff and committee when policies and organisational matters are reviewed and discussed in order to ensure all attendees are familiar with this policy.

In Afghanistan, our staff are made aware of the complaints policy by email and site visits and they are encouraged to receive and handle complaints accordingly.

5. Publicising Our Policy

Our Complaints Handling Policy is available here and is also found within our Policies and Procedures Manual which is also available on this website. The Complaints Handling Policy is readily available as a source of information or as encouragement to proceed with a complaint or concern. We make clear in this policy that we value receiving concerns and complaints as it encourages us to improve our procedures and to rectify any inadequacies of our organisation.

In Afghanistan the Complaints Policy needs to be publicised verbally as the document has not been translated into Dari or Pashtun. All staff, trainers and trainees are encouraged to lodge complaints if desired and these can readily be written down and followed through according to the Complaints Policy.

6. Where and How Complaints may be made

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

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

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.

Contact details are:

Melbourne

66 Kerr Street (PO Box 8)

Fitzroy, VIC, 3065

info@aado.org.au

Kabul

House 72, Ashraf Watt, Haji Yaqoob Square

Shar-e-naw, Kabul, Afghanistan

aado.kabul@aado.org.au

7. How Complaints are handled

When an oral complaint is made we will:

1. Listen, record details and determine the outcome desired
2. Confirm that the details given have been firmly understood by us
3. Show empathy but not take sides, lay blame or become defensive

For all complaints we will:

1. Seek from the client the outcome they are expecting
2. Make an initial assessment of the severity of the complaint and the urgency of action
3. Clearly explain the course of action that will follow if:
 - o The complaint is out of our jurisdiction

- We may exercise a discretion not to investigate
 - Preliminary enquiries need to be made
 - Further consideration needs to be given
 - The complaint is to be investigated
4. Not create false expectations
 5. Give an estimated time frame if possible
 6. Check whether the client is satisfied with the proposed action and if not, suggest alternatives
 7. Ensure the complaint is acknowledged and registered
 8. Follow up where necessary and monitor the client's satisfaction.
 9. Make sure our personnel are appropriately trained to encourage and handle enquiries
 10. Ensure a complainant is not required to express their complaint to a person implicated in their complaint or for that person to be involved in any way.

To determine how a complaint should be managed, we use the following criteria:

- a Severity
- b health and safety implications
- c financial implications for the complainant and others
- d complexity
- e impact on the individual, public and organisation
- f potential to escalate
- g 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

8. Inquiries, minor complaints and jurisdiction

On receipt of a complaint we will attempt to determine whether investigation is required or not, depending on jurisdictional questions and whether the complaint is ill conceived.

If the complainant disputes an assessment that a complaint should not be investigated, the person handling the complaint should refer it to a more senior colleague for review. If such a dispute is unresolvable we will refer the complainant to Code Committee of Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), at 14 Napier Close, Deakin ACT 2600, Australia. Phone: +61 2 6285 1816 Email: code@acfid.asn.au

9. How complaints are investigated

We will make every reasonable effort to investigate all the relevant circumstances and information surrounding a complaint. The level of investigation will be commensurate with the seriousness and frequency of the complaint.

The process by which complaints can be resolved includes advice regarding rights and responsibilities, clarity of what the complaint is about, exploration/implementation of strategies, mediation and counselling.

10. Timeframes

1. We will acknowledge written complaints within 5 days
2. We will acknowledge oral complaints immediately
3. We will resolve complaints as quickly as possible and within 30 days unless there are exceptional circumstances.
4. If the complaint is unresolved after 30 days, the complainant will be informed of any progress and kept informed of progress every two weeks

11. Responding to and closing a complaint

Our CEO or Senior Manager will normally make the decision on a complaint that has been investigated. Decisions on more serious complaints may be referred to the Committee of Management.

The decision will be communicated in writing unless the written language is not understood and a verbal decision needs to be given.

The complainant will be encouraged to respond to the decision and if dissatisfied, will be encouraged to provide additional information for a review.

12. Outcomes of complaints

We will learn from the complaints by:

- a. Ensuring that all personnel are informed of the outcomes and the implications for our services, procedures and processes
- b. Taking all required remedial action including changing the way we operate and training staff appropriately
- c. Consulting and taking advice from ACFID or other enforcement agencies

13. Confidentiality

We will not reveal a complainant's name or personal details to anyone in or outside our organisation other than staff involved in handling the complaint without obtaining the complainant's permission

14. Recording Complaint Data

All complaints will be acknowledged immediately upon receipt and documented in a complaints register which will record:

- a. Date of receipt
- b. A description of the complaint and relevant supporting data
- c. The requested remedy
- d. The services and or practice or procedure complained about
- e. The due date for a response
- f. Immediate action taken (if any) to resolve the complaint

15. Reporting about Complaints

1. Complex and/or major complaints will be immediately escalated to the CEO or other Senior Manager
2. All complaints will be reported at the monthly Committee Meetings or Management meetings in Kabul
3. Minor complaints will be summarised and major complaints detailed.
4. An analysis will be included in the complaints report provided with the complaints Data

16. Continuous Improvement

The effectiveness of complaints handling should be monitored and will be reviewed from time to time as appropriate.

As part of the annual strategic planning workshop for the Committee of Management complaints handling should be discussed.