

COMPLAINTS POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

UNICEF Australia (UA) seeks to have any complaint or dispute raised and received in a constructive and open manner and resolution achieved in a timely and effective way.

Where practicable, any complaint or dispute about an aspect of UA's operations or practices will be dealt with confidentially. Efforts will be made to ensure the complaint is resolved effectively and with the appropriate degree of urgency and that procedural fairness is extended to all parties.

UA will aim to ensure that those investigating a complaint do not have a conflict of interest and that any complainant is not subject to victimisation or retaliation **because** they have made a complaint.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure transparency and accountability to all stakeholders in relation to complaints regarding UA and its operations. This policy seeks to make clear the mechanisms available for making complaints and the way in which complaints will be handled and resolved.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **Confidentiality:** UA is committed to ensuring that, where reasonably practicable, all information related to complaints and their resolution will remain confidential. The privacy of individuals, whether complainant or complainee, will be maintained and personal information will not be divulged except as required by law.
- **Accessibility:** complaints procedures should be easily accessible and well publicised to the people we work with and other stakeholders. Information relating to the process is accessible and options exist to make a complaint.
- **Reputation:** Complainants are not disadvantaged or victimised for making a complaint. Similarly, the rights of the person against whom the complaint is made will be upheld – no prejudgement will be made, and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigation.
- **Objectivity:** complaints should be treated with respect and in a fair and equitable manner. Potential conflicts of interest should be identified to ensure objectivity.
- **Responsiveness:** we take all complaints seriously and aim to deal with them in a manner that is timely, responsive, and objective. If possible, complainants will be kept informed on the progress of their complaint throughout the process.

APPLICATION

This policy sets out the means by which members of the public, including suppliers and clients to UNICEF Australia (UA) can make a complaint regarding UA and its operations.

UA acknowledges the value of feedback as an important tool in understanding and responding to stakeholder's expectations.

Complaints may come from supporters, donors, the general public, beneficiaries, official bodies and our partners. This policy deals only with external complaints and does not cover internal issues and/or complaints by staff, interns or volunteers. These are dealt with in accordance with the UA Grievance Policy.

The Whistle-blower Policy can be used by either internal or external complainants in instances where the issue relates to suspected unethical, illegal, fraudulent, corrupt, or dishonest conduct. This policy can be found on the UNICEF Australia website.

RESPONSIBILITIES

UA's ELT is responsible for ensuring that UA responds to complaints according to the policy and procedures.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is ultimately responsible for complaints which cannot be resolved by management or ELT.

The Chair of the board is responsible for managing complaints relating to the CEO.

The Supporter Relations Manager acts as the Complaints Handling Officer and is responsible for:

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

IMPLEMENTATION

Definitions

UA defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about the standards of service, actions or lack of actions by UA. It may include but is not limited to the following:

- (a) concern about the behaviour of staff, volunteers, Board members, suppliers, partners or others acting on UA's behalf;
- (b) criticism about a fundraising campaign or action;
- (c) concern over inappropriate use of funding;
- (d) any breach of the ACFID Code of Conduct;
- (e) organisational practices, policies or procedures; **or**
- (f) complaints about UA supported development programs and/or operations of partner Country Offices.

A **complainant** is any person or organisation making a complaint.

Legislative and Regulatory Context

- Australian Council for International Development (**ACFID**) Code of Conduct
- Fundraising Institute of Australia (**FIA**) Principles and Standards of Fundraising Practice
- Public Fundraising Regulatory Association (**PFRA**)
- *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) (**Privacy Act**)

Compliance

The consequence of a UA employee not complying with the policy and procedures may result in disciplinary action (up to and including termination of employment). What action is taken will be dependent on the seriousness of the non-compliance with this policy.

Complaints Handling Process

UA is open to receiving and will endeavour to respond to, all complaints irrespective of who makes them or the nature of the complaint. It is acknowledged however that some complaints are of a more minor nature and may be best resolved quickly and informally (Informal Resolution).

Where a complaint cannot be resolved easily and informally or the complaint is deemed to be of a more serious nature by UA, the Complaints Handling Process described below should be followed.

Making and receiving a complaint

How can a complaint be made?

UA welcomes feedback from our stakeholders, and we take complaints very seriously. All stakeholders should be clear on how to raise a complaint with the organisation.

UA's Complaints Policy is published on the UA website and highlights the following central points for all complaints:

- To make a verbal complaint contact our Supporter Relations Team on 1300 884 233
- Written complaints can be sent to the e-mail address: unicef@unicef.org.au
- Complaints can also be made in person or mailed to our address - Suite 402, Building B, 33-35 Saunders Street, Pymont, NSW 2009
- Complaints regarding suspected breaches of the ACFID Code of Conduct can be made to the ACFID Code of Conduct Committee. Information on how to make a complaint can be found on the ACFID website: <https://acfid.asn.au/content/complaints>

To ensure no disadvantages or barriers to making a complaint, where necessary, language interpreters may be engaged to help establish the nature of the complaint.

Who can receive a complaint?

Complaints can be taken by any staff member and will be referred to the manager responsible for the relevant area for appropriate action. It is important the staff member taking a verbal complaint clarifies the issues, listens to what the complainant has to say and makes a brief and accurate written summary of the complaint. The staff member should also establish if the complainant needs assistance in making the complaint.

The employee receiving the complaint will record the following details:

- (a) the name of the person/s making the complaint;
- (b) the date, time and location the complaint is received; and
- (c) a brief description of the complaint and the expectations of the complainant.

The employee receiving the complaint should also inform the complainant that any personal information received will be handled in accordance with the UA Privacy Policy which can be found on the UA website.

In some instances, a complainant may request that their identity is not divulged however it should be acknowledged this may restrict the resolution of the complaint and such confidentiality may not always be possible.

Acknowledging a complaint has been received

Each complaint must be acknowledged as it is received. Acknowledgement will also include an outline of the next steps. If an oral complaint is received the staff member should take the name and contact details so the outcome can be communicated to the complainant in a discrete manner.

Registering Complaints

All complaints dealt with under the complaints handling process, whether verbal or written are recorded by the Supporter Relations team on the complaints record log. These records will be used to ensure complaints are dealt with effectively, to monitor trends and to ensure continuous improvement of the complaints handling process and our work.

If a staff member, other than a Supporter Relations Representative receives a complaint they are to send the details of the complaint to the Supporter Relations team for recording.

In the event the complaint relates to a member of the Supporter Relations team, the matter will be referred to the Finance team.

The Chief Operating Officer will review the Complaints Record Log on a monthly basis and follow up on any outstanding matters or identified trends.

Assessing and reviewing a complaint

When a complaint is received and addressed through the complaints handling process, an assessment must be made about the appropriate course of action. This can only be achieved through investigation.

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 relevant Executive Leadership Team (ELT) member.
- If the outcome of the investigation is that there should be action taken in relation to an employee then the appropriate disciplinary and other relevant organisational policies and procedures will be followed (e.g., UA's Child Safeguarding Policy, PSEA Policy, Anti-Fraud Policy, etc).

Remedy or System Improvement

At times, remedy and systems improvement may arise out of complaints dealt with under either Informal Resolution or under the complaints handling process. This procedure will be initiated by the relevant manager using the following steps. It also applies to suggestions.

1. Assess if remedy and/or systems improvement is warranted or no action is required.
2. Implement immediate remedy/system improvement or plan future implementation of remedy/system improvement.
3. Inform complainant of outcome.

Remedy is action taken to correct or rectify a situation for an individual and may involve one or more of:

- (a) providing explanation and reasons if not previously provided;
- (b) concluding that the complaint has been substantially resolved;
- (c) reaching a compromise solution;
- (d) giving an apology or providing a service not previously provided;
- (e) addressing or referring the issue for system improvement.

Systems improvement is an opportunity to improve **policies, procedures, organisational culture, or similar issues** to prevent future problems. Systems improvement may involve one or more of:

- (a) referral for consideration of policy change;
- (b) policy development or revision;
- (c) process improvement, such as changes to procedures and workplace practices;
- (d) program review;
- (e) expert assistance, staff development or performance improvement;
- (f) improved implementation, such as issuing updated documentation or reminders;
- (g) monitoring compliance; or
- (h) other action to ensure that the matter is handled appropriately in future.

Informing complainant of outcome

Once the complaint has been resolved, if possible, the complainant will be advised of the outcome of the complaint. UA will endeavour to ensure this process is mindful of the confidentiality of the complainant and any individual involved in the matter.

Timeframe for Response

UA will seek to resolve complaints as quickly as possible and ensure complainants are regularly updated as to the progress or outcome of their complaint.

For less serious complaints UA will endeavour to resolve matters, or provide an update with an expected timeframe, within 5 working days.

For more serious complaints UA will endeavour to resolve matters, or provide an update with expected timeframe, within one month.

Appeals Process

If the complainant is unhappy about the responses received from UA or if they believe action has not been implemented, they may appeal to the next management level. If the matter involves an executive level manager, it should be referred immediately to the CEO. If the complaint involves the CEO it should be referred to the Chair of the Board.

Publication of the Policy

UA will provide clear information to its stakeholders and members of the public about how to make a complaint and the ability to make a complaint to the ACFID Code of Conduct Committee for suspected breaches of the Code by a signatory organisation.

This information will be made public on the UA website and in the Annual Report. UA staff will inform relevant stakeholders of the policy where appropriate and provide copies of the policy on request.

Training of Policy

New staff will be provided with the policy as part of their induction to the organisation. The policy will also be available for all staff on a nominated share drive and placed on UA's website.

Training and/or communication will also be provided following an update or change to the policy.

Beneficiaries and stakeholders of international programs

UA may receive complaints relating to one of our directly supported programs or country office partners by a community member, including children and youth, implementing partner or government official. All complaints relating to UNICEF's in-country operations will be managed according to UNICEF's established internal mechanisms, as outlined in the UNICEF Executive Directive CF/EXD/2007-005 Revision 2 – Section 3.

UNICEF country offices are responsible for responding to complaints relating to UNICEF's operations in each respective country. Complaints made directly to UA will be referred to the head of the office (Country Representative) or division concerned.

Serious complaints of misconduct related to UNICEF country offices (particularly relating to fraud or sexual exploitation and abuse) will be made to the designated authority and managed according to established guidelines, **including** the Director, Office of Internal Audit and Investigation, the focal point appointed to receive reports of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Associated Internal Policies and Guidelines:

UA Child Safeguarding Policy

UA Protection From Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy

UA Fraud Policy

UA Grievance Policy

UA Whistle Blower Policy

POLICY REVIEW

Version	Date	Comments	Author/s	Approved By	Review Date
V1	June 2013		Chief Operating Officer	EMT & Board	June 2016
V2	28 June 2016		Chief Operating Officer	EMT & Board	June 2017
V3	May 2020	Legal Review and Update	Director of People and Culture	ELT & Board	May 2020