

External Complaints Handling Policy: Assisi Aid Projects

Introduction

Assisi Aid Projects recognizes the importance of being accountable to the communities we serve. A clear and visible complaint handling process ensures stakeholders are able to express their concerns with the assurance that issues will be addressed.

A complaint or dispute is made by an external body, party or individual. As an example: client, beneficiary, member of the public, donor, external agency.

A complainant is any person or organisation making a complaint.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide all stakeholders (e.g. program beneficiaries, donors, funders, partners) and the general public with a clear and accessible complaints process and procedures.

Policy

Assisi Aid Projects is committed to ensuring that all complaints are taken seriously and followed up in a timely manner. Complaints will be seen as a way of encouraging the organisation to improve the services it offers.

Anybody who participates in Assisi's development activities, as well as partners and other stakeholders has the right to expect a good service from us and can make a complaint to Assisi directly, or to our partners or to ACFID. All Clients can make the complaint directly or have someone else represent them.

Complaints relating to a breach of the ACFID Code of Conduct can be made to the [ACFID Code of Conduct Committee](http://www.acfid.asn.au/code-of-conduct/code-of-conduct-committee). <http://www.acfid.asn.au/code-of-conduct/code-of-conduct-committee>

Assisi Aid Projects will:

- Recognise the right of every individual connected to its programs and its staff to raise issues of concern about other beneficiaries, staff or the services and programs provided.
- Accept and consider all complaints without prejudice.
- Deal with complaints in confidence. Confidentiality and privacy will be made clear to complainants.
- Treat people respectfully, and fully inform and support them in exercising their rights to make a complaint without fear of reprisal.
- Make decisions based on the facts presented in all matters requiring investigation.
- Exclude from the Complaints Register highly sensitive and confidential information.
- Inform stakeholders on how to make a complaint at service entry and will discuss the policy during the course of the program/activities.

Procedures - Receiving a complaint

Responding to a complaint: Procedural Guidelines

- Complainants must be treated with respect. Staff receiving complaints must listen, accept the complaint, and be courteous and committed to solving the complaint.
- If complaints can be solved (relatively) immediately and on the spot then staff must be encouraged (and managed) to do so.
- If a complaint is not (relatively) immediately solvable it needs to be recorded on a standard form.
- All complaints will be resolved in a timely manner locally in the first instance and referred to the appropriate senior line management if unresolved.
- Many complaints will have easily identifiable solutions and can be quickly resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.
- A formal complaint exists only when a satisfactory solution cannot be offered after a person first makes the issue known.
- Persons to whom a complaint is made can offer any solutions consistent with their normal level of authority. Where the likely solutions appear to require approval from a higher authority, the complaint must be referred to that person.
- The person with a complaint should always be reminded that intention is to resolve a complaint to the satisfaction of all parties.
- The complainant can have a person of their own choosing to support or represent them.
- If a resolution to the complaint is not accepted by the complainant Assisi Aid Projects and the complainant may refer to an external investigative body.
- In the event that a complaint is deemed to be unreasonable the complainant will be advised in writing of such and no further communication will be entered into in regard to that complaint.
- In case of dissatisfied with the decision the complaint can be taken to the Ombudsman's Office.
- The data from complaints will be recorded in a relevant [Complaints Register](#)

When receiving a complaint, the following information needs to be recorded on [a record of Complaint Form](#):

- The name of the person/s making the complaint;
- The date, time and location the complaint is received;
- The name of the person receiving the complaint;
- A brief description of the complaint;
- A brief description of the actions taken following the complaint, including the solutions offered;
- Confirmation that the complainant was advised of the opportunity to be supported or represented by a person of their choosing and advised of their right to appeal against a decision.

Recording and resolution process for complaints

- The Record of Complaint and associated actions will be compiled by the staff member receiving the complaint and kept on site.
- The completed Record of Complaint Form should include the above-mentioned information before being forwarded to the relevant Manager for inclusion in the Register of Complaints maintained by them.
- Data collated in the register is to be included in the Country Manager's monthly report.
- The Executive Officer is to compile an Annual Record of Complaints dealt with by the Executive Officer (those matters referred to the Executive Officer), which is to be presented to the Committee of Management at the end of the financial year.

Reflection and Learning

All complaints registered will end with a reflection of process and outcomes. This process identifies the origins of the issues raised and support the design of measures needed to repair or ameliorate development practice.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Responsibilities of Committee of Management:

- Review and address unresolved complaints.

2. Responsibilities of the Executive Officer:

- Ensure that the complaints registered at country level are tabled at the Committee of Management meetings especially those that have implications at the organisational and strategic levels.
- To ensure partner organisations are aware of the complaints policy

3. Responsibilities of staff

- It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that anyone wishing to make a formal complaint about Assisi Aid Projects programme and/or ways of working is able to do so in an accessible way.
- It is the responsibility of the immediate supervisor of the person receiving the complaint to ensure the complaint is addressed.

4. Responsibilities of Partner organisations

- It is the responsibility of partners organisation, to inform all stakeholders (program beneficiaries, donors, funders, partners) that anyone wishing to make a formal complaint about Assisi Aid Projects programme, partners and/or ways of working is able to do so in an accessible way.
- It is the responsibility of the immediate supervisor of the person receiving the complaint to ensure the complaint is addressed.

How to make a complaint

Complaints relating to a breach of the ACFID Code of Conduct can be made to the [ACFID Code of Conduct Committee](http://www.acfid.asn.au/code-of-conduct/code-of-conduct-committee). <http://www.acfid.asn.au/code-of-conduct/code-of-conduct-committee>

Process to make a complaint

If you have a complaint about the Assisi Aid Projects' programs, projects, partner organisations or a staff member, follow these steps:

1. Let a staff member know. You can put your complaint in writing or verbal complaints are equally valid. Complaints can be made by phone, email or letter. See point 5 for contact details.
2. If you prefer, you can discuss the issue with a person you trust and this person can make the complaint on your behalf.
3. If you need help and wish to remain anonymous, Assisi will assist you to make a complaint by providing access to a third party or staff member not associated with your complaint.
4. When making a complaint, provide as much detail as possible about the complaint and if you can, explain the outcome you are seeking to rectify this matter.
5. Please address your complaint to the relevant Project Manager or the person's immediate supervisor. If the complaint is about Assisi Aid Projects, direct your complaint to the Executive Officer: Ross house, 247-251 Flinders lane, Melbourne, Victoria 3000 Australia. Tel +61 3 9650 1291. Email: assisi@assisi.org.au

Complaints related to **Assisi partner organisations** can also be lodged at assisi@assisi.org.au or on the details in countries below:

Cambodia:

Live & Learn Environmental Education:
#40, Street 568, Sangkat Beoungkak II
Khan Tuolkok
PO Box 91
Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Tel: +855 23 885 502
Email: cambodia@livelearn.org

Solomon Islands:

Uepi Island Resort
<http://www.uepi.com/index.php/contact-bookings/contact-us>
Jason Kelly E: jason@marovotimber.com

Timor Leste

Alola Foundation / Fundasaun Alola
Rua Bispo de Medeiros, Mascarenhas, Mercado Lama, Dili, Timor-Leste
T: +670 3323 855 Email: info@alolafoundation.org

India programs

Assisi Initiatives for Development (AI)
1st Cross Street, Sundar Nagar, Trichy
Tamil Nadu, India – Postal Code - 620 021
Mr Sathyaseelan sat.idf@gmail.com

Assisi will acknowledge receipt of your complaint in writing within three working days to ensure that it is investigated.

You will be informed of the outcome by phone and/or writing or email in a timely manner. Please provide your contact details.

Related documents

1. Assisi Aid Projects Quality Framework
2. ACFID Code of Conduct <http://www.acfid.asn.au/code-of-conduct/acfid-code-of-conduct>
3. ANCP Program Guidelines
http://www.usaid.gov/eng/Document/ancp_guidelines.pdf
4. Complaints Register