

## **Mahboba's Promise Complaints Policy**

### **Introduction**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction. It is a specific grievance of anyone who has been negatively affected by actions of Mahboba's Promise staff, volunteers, partners or anyone acting on behalf of Mahboba's Promise or who believes the organisation has failed to meet a stated commitment.

We believe that our supporters should have confidence that their donations are applied for the purposes for which they are intended. It is their right to follow the mechanisms we have in place to lodge a complaint if they feel that confidence is being eroded.

We believe that we are accountable to the people we aim to help through our work. All beneficiaries and stakeholders of our projects need the opportunity to be heard if they have a grievance or suggested improvements related to our work.

Mahboba's Promise has an ethical obligation to listen to, investigate and respond promptly to complaints raised with the organisation. It also has obligations under the Code of Conduct of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and other statutory bodies to effectively recognise and resolve any complaints.

### **Guiding Principles**

#### **Accessibility**

We will ensure that our complaint handling process is as accessible as we can practically make it to all complainants.

#### **Responsiveness**

We will respond to complaint according to our predetermined timeframes.

#### **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.

#### **Confidentiality**

We will observe strict confidentiality in complaint handling.

#### **Accountability**

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

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to outline the process the organisation takes when dealing with complaints and feedback. How someone can lodge a complaint about any aspect of Mahboba's Promise. We accept the feedback as an important tool in understanding and responding to someone expectations.

### **Scope**

This Policy applies to any complaint made to Mahboba's Promise. Complaints are accepted relating to all Mahboba's Promise staff, volunteers, partners and anyone acting on behalf of the organisation.

Complaints may be made by a person whom we service, who is affected by our services, a partner, a local organisation with which we work, our staff, volunteers, donors or a member of the public.

Any complaint is accepted by Mahboba's Promise that is made in good faith without malicious intent.

## **Policy**

Mahboba's Promise has an established process to promote prompt, effective resolutions to any complaints raised with the organisation. Mahboba's Promise is committed to reviewing complaints as a way to promote organisational learning and improve its policies, processes and overall actions..

Mahboba's Promise strives to:

- Provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint, irrespective of their gender, status, background and ability
- Publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- Make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- Make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- Gather information which helps us to improve our operations

## **Publication of the Policy**

The complaints policy is publicised in a number of ways:

- As displayed on the Mahboba's Promise Inc. website together with our contact details and reference to the ability to make a complaint regarding an alleged breach of the Code to the ACFID Code of Conduct Committee.
- The complaints policy is publicised in the Annual Report together with our contact details and reference to the ability to make a complaint regarding an alleged breach of the Code to the ACFID Code of Conduct Committee.
- The Complaints Policy is explained in a culturally and age appropriate way to all beneficiaries and stakeholders involved in Mahboba's Promise development activities upon commencement of such stakeholder's relationship with Mahboba's Promise.
- Through providing all those wishing to visit a Mahboba's Promise facility with a copy of the Complaint Policy during their visit.

In Afghanistan, the Complaints Policy is translated in Dari (or Pashtu if operating in a Pashtu-majority area) and displayed at all Mahboba's Promise facilities. In order to accommodate for literacy constraints, Mahboba's Promise accepts oral complaints and takes special care to publicise our Complaints Policy in our Afghanistan facilities and to our Afghanistan stakeholders in a way that is culturally and linguistically sensitive. Furthermore, in order to accommodate for vulnerable populations such as children in our care, Mahboba's Promise will utilise pictorial means of communication to take complaints where needed.

It is a fundamental policy of Mahboba's Promise that the communities that we work with are heavily consulted in all of our development projects. As part of this process it is the responsibility of Mahboba's Promise personnel to communicate the Complaints Policy and procedure to the members of these communities. This involves distributing our Complaints Policy and communicating our complaints procedure to community members and elders as adapted to the local language and cultural context.

## **Implementation of the policy throughout our organisation**

Our Complaints Policy has been distributed to all of our staff, volunteers, management committee members and all others acting on our behalf at the commencement of their relationship with Mahboba's Promise. Furthermore, our Complaints Policy is included in all partnership or contract agreements. It is a requirement of Mahboba's Promise that all those who may be involved in any way with a complaint must read and sign this policy to demonstrate their commitment to it.

## **Training**

All new staff, volunteers and management committee members are provided with training regarding our complaints policy and procedures during induction training with the organisation. Partners or contractors working with Mahboba's Promise will be provided with summary training regarding our complaints policy and procedures at the commencement of their relationship with Mahboba's Promise. Those staff who are directly responsible for receiving and handling complaints receive specialised training regarding our complaints policy and are trained to take into account language and literacy issues and cultural sensitivities when handling complaints.

## **Procedure**

### **1. How to make a complaint**

Complaints may be addressed to Mahboba's Promise by any means (email, orally, letter, telephone, personal contact, in person at our Afghanistan or Australian office).

Contact details are as follows:

Mahbobas's Promise Inc  
PO Box 6234  
North Ryde NSW 2113, Australia  
Telephone: +61 2 9887 1665  
Email: [office@mahbobaspromise.org](mailto:office@mahbobaspromise.org)  
Website: [www.mahbobaspromise.org](http://www.mahbobaspromise.org)

In Afghanistan, complaints can be addressed to:

Mahboba's Promise Afghanistan  
Shamali Main Road – Boostan-e-Kabul St  
Kabul 27500  
Afghanistan  
Telephone: 93774421442  
Email: MPA General Manager - [khalid.malikzada@gmail.com](mailto:khalid.malikzada@gmail.com)

Within Mahboba's Promise's Afghanistan facilities complaint boxes are available for staff and beneficiaries of our programs such as children in our care to submit complaints in a confidential manner. Verbal complaints may be taken by any member of Mahboba's Promise's staff.

A person within Afghanistan can also lodge their complaint with our Sydney office via the above channels if they wish to do so.

There is no fee for lodging a complaint and there are no adverse repercussions for a complainant.

### **2. Taking the complaint**

If the complaint is made by telephone or in person to staff, a volunteer or Management Committee member, they must:

- Listen, emphasise and show understanding, be patient and courteous.
- Not become defensive, blame someone else or jump to conclusions.
- Respect the complainant's wishes (e.g. if they would like to speak privately to a member of the Management Committee and do not wish to discuss their complaint with you, advise them that you will arrange for a Committee member to call them back.)
- Thank the person for raising the problem and bringing it to our attention.

- Write down what the person says and ask them to repeat specific details that need to be correct, particularly their contact details.
- Ask questions to make sure we understand the background (e.g. names, type of problem, location of the problem) and summarise the issue back to the person.
- Advise the person what will happen next. i.e. A Management Committee member or the Office Manager will call them back within 48 hours.
- Record a file note of the complaint with date of call, all the details and a note of what response has been promised and when into the complaints register.
- Make sure to bring the communication to the attention of the Management Committee.
- Take every reasonable action to ensure the safety of the complainant if necessary.

If the complaint is made by email, or letter:

- Ring or email the complainant to confirm the complaint has been received, get further information if required and confirm that a Management Committee Member or the Office Manager will get back to them within 48 hours.
- Make a record of the complaint with date/time of call/email and content in the complaints register.
- Make sure to bring the communication to the attention of the Management Committee.

### **3. Processing of the complaint**

The Office Manager will be the “person responsible” for investigating the complaint and for liaison with the complainant and the Management Committee, unless there is a perceived conflict of interest or the complaint relates to the Office Manager. If this is the case, the complaint will be investigated by a member of the Management Committee.

The person responsible will:

- Keep a file for the complaint with all file notes and background information, with updates made as progress is made.
- Make an entry in the Complaint Log - found in the Governance section of the Sydney office Shared Drive. If a complaint is made within Afghanistan, MPA must inform the Sydney office and provide the file information for the complaints register in Sydney.
- Respect the complainant’s right to privacy and anonymity if requested.
- Gather information, plan the investigation; interview or ask for statements from any staff/ volunteers involved and consult the Mahboba’s Promise President, Mahboba Rawi, and members of the Management Committee where appropriate. Assess the complaint and give it priority. Is it minor (such as, a misconception based on an error), moderate (requires some investigation and possible remedial action) or serious (carries high or extreme reputational, financial or legal risk to Mahboba’s Promise)?
- Evaluate the risk to the organisation/stakeholders arising from the complaint, if any, and keep the Management Committee informed of any perceived risk.
- If the complaint refers to accusations of any form of sexual abuse or exploitation, the complaint must be immediately referred to the authorities and the Management Committee must be informed immediately. It is the responsibility of the Management Committee and management team in Afghanistan to take immediate action to ensure the safety of all stakeholders.
- If the outcome of the investigation is that there should be action taken against an employee then the appropriate disciplinary and other organisational policies and procedures will be followed. Any action taken must be coordinated by the Management Committee and Mahboba’s Promise Afghanistan management team.
- Keep in touch with the complainant and let them know that they are taking full responsibility for dealing with the problem.
- Adopt a solution-focused approach by actively involving the complainant in this process.
- Propose a solution which may incorporate some or all of the following: a full or better explanation of what occurred, an apology, organisational or operational change.

- Offer the complainant the proposed solution and get their agreement that this satisfies them.
- Keep the complainant informed of progress during the process.
- Ensure all promised action is fully completed promptly.
- Advise the complainant of any action that will be taken to prevent the problem arising again.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the proposed solution, offer an internal review by the Management Committee
- If the complaint refers to an alleged breach of the ACFID Code of Conduct, the complainant must be advised of the ability to make a complaint directly to ACFID and referred to the appropriate method to do so.

Complaints should be marked 'confidential' and emailed to:  
 Chair, ACFID Code of Conduct Committee  
 Email to [code@acfid.asn.au](mailto:code@acfid.asn.au)

Or posted to:  
 Chair, ACFID Code of Conduct Committee  
 Care Of ACFID  
 Private Bag 3  
 Deakin ACT 2600

- Ensure all steps to resolve the dispute are documented
- Complete the investigation and conclude the process within 21 days unless that time frame is not achievable.

#### **4. Follow-Up**

- Where appropriate, follow-up with complainant at a future date.
- The file notes should be tabled at the next Management Committee meeting.
- Implement any changes necessary to prevent a re-occurrence of the complaint.
- Once a year at the Management Meeting in June, prior to the financial year end and writing of the Annual Report, the Complaints Log should be discussed and analysed as a whole to see what trends emerge, if any, and discuss future action.
- Best practice dictates de-identified reporting in the Annual Report.
- Where the majority of the Management Committee believes the complaint is a major transgression of the ACFID Code of Conduct, Mahboba's Promise will notify ACFID of the matter.

#### **Continuous improvement**

Mahboba's Promise will monitor the effectiveness of our complaint handling on a continuous basis and make improvements as appropriate.

We will:

- Maintain data collection on complaints for the purpose of identifying trends or upcoming issues.
- Provide data on complaints to the Management Committee on an annual basis to identify trends or review issues and improve practice where necessary.
- Keep abreast of best practices (both locally and overseas) regarding complaint handling.

#### **Responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of the Office Manager to ensure that:

- All staff and volunteers are trained to take complaints.
- Access for complainants is clearly stated on the Mahboba's Promise website, annual reports and other relevant organisational collateral.
- Complaints are investigated and reported to the Management Committee.

It is the responsibility of Mahboba's Promise Afghanistan management team to ensure that:

- This policy is translated into Dari (and/or Pashtu when necessary)
- The policy is distributed at all Mahboba's Promise operated facilities and projects
- The policy is included as part of all partnership or contracting agreements
- All staff, volunteers, beneficiaries of our programs and members of the communities we work with are aware of this policy and can access it if required

It is the responsibility of the staff and volunteers to ensure that:

- Where possible, potential problems are identified to prevent and address issues before they become formal complaints.
- Complaints are handled in accordance with the Complaints Resolution Policy and Procedures.

It is the responsibility of the Management Committee to ensure that:

- The Complaints Log is reviewed annually and any lessons, training or compliance issues related to this are addressed
- Adequate insurances are in place to avoid personal liability of Mahboba's Promise office-bearers, committee members and their agents.