

29. FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

Policy Number: H29	Effective Date: 12 th April 2018
Version: 05	Revised Date: 31 st July 2020
Drafted by: Human Resources Manager	Responsible person: DD, ED
Date Approved by Board: 12 th April 2018	Scheduled Review Date: April 2023

Purpose

The purpose of the Feedback and Complaints Policy is to hold This Life accountable to the Cambodian community for the quality of programs and services delivered by This Life. This policy provides an avenue to resolve issues and concerns, strengthens relationships with the communities we serve, identifies gaps and opportunities for improvement particularly in program delivery, and enhances This Life's reputation as a community based and driven organisation. It enables real time analysis of the impact of our programs, including the satisfaction of our communities and the extent to which their needs are being met. It allows This Life to identify problems or potential problems early, from the less serious to the most serious, such as incorrectly targeted programs or those not having the desired impact or having unintended consequences, gaps in information or process, misuse of assistance by staff or communities (fraud or bias), or poor staff behaviour including breach of our Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct.

This policy will protect the safety and dignity of those who make a complaint, as well as those who are complained about and provide a respectful means for addressing grievances, and the provision of redress where it is required. It demonstrates our commitment to the rights of communities and our commitment to achieving our goals. As This Life works with many individuals under the age of 18, we endeavour to make the feedback and complaint process as child friendly and accessible as possible. We recognise that even children and young people who are not themselves primary stakeholders but are in the care of adults who are accessing our services are nevertheless This Life beneficiaries. This policy and how to access support through it is publicised in an age appropriate way via channels that are effective in communicating with children and young people. All complaints made by children and young people are responded to promptly and in an appropriate manner.

This policy encompasses both formal and informal mechanisms to provide for as many avenues of feedback to be provided to the community as possible. The use of either formal or informal channels will take into consideration gender and protection issues including for example cultural appropriateness of face-to-face communications between people of different gender groups, public mobility and participation, access to mobile phones for different gender and age groups, and what risks beneficiaries may face if it is found that they provided feedback or made a complaint. All feedback and complaints can be made anonymously.

Scope

This policy extends to all members of the Board of Directors, staff, consultants, volunteers and interns. Training on this policy will form part of the induction for new staff members, interns and volunteers. Additionally, it is required that if organisations entering into a formal partnership with This Life do not possess a similar policy holding them to equal or higher standards, they commit to adhere to this policy. In accordance with This Life's Partner and Affiliated Organisations Policy, and in compliance with the ACFID Code of Conduct, this requirement shall form part of all Memoranda of Understanding between This Life and partner organisations.

This policy, and the feedback and complaint mechanisms that facilitate, are not restricted for Beneficiaries but are open for use by any stakeholder including donors, partners and members of the public.

Definitions

Stakeholders are individuals and groups that can affect or are affected by an organisation's policies and/or actions.

Beneficiaries are those who receive assistance as part of This Life's programs.

Beneficiary Feedback and Complaints Mechanisms: The systems and processes that give the recipients of This Life programs the opportunity to comment, make suggestions, express gratitude or criticise the products, services or targeting of a project or program of which they may be recipients.

Feedback: People have a right to have their voices heard in judging our response to their identified needs, whether proactively sought by This Life or initiated by the individual(s). Asking for the views of the affected population can help us understand the difference we are making during the course of our work, and not just at the end of a project. **Beneficiary feedback** includes comments, suggestions, statements of appreciation and criticisms expressed by the recipients of This Life's projects.

Complaints: A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made by an individual or group of individuals or communities who believes that This Life has failed to meet a stated commitment. This commitment can relate to a program or project plan, beneficiary selection, an activity schedule, a standard of technical performance, an organisational value, a legal requirement, or any other point. Less serious complaints may relate to poor quality or performance more serious complaints to fraud, abusive behaviour or child exploitation.

Whilst a complaint in itself is negative (a grievance), making a complaint and seeking redress can be a positive process enabling us to rectify issues and improve our program delivery.

If a complaint is received from a beneficiary that is outside the scope of This Life's programs or services, it will be assessed against the relevant support services in Cambodia with full consideration given to the nature of the complaint and any safeguarding issues it presents, and referred to the organisation or body best suited to address it appropriately.

Confidentiality:

Complaints received by This Life will be kept in confidence but may be discussed with relevant stakeholders in communities (with the permission of the complainant) or with appropriate staff within This Life who will be assisting directly in resolution of the complaint. Where the matter involves an allegation about the conduct of a specific staff member, this information will be restricted to the Executive Director and This Life's Board of Directors, and the person delegated by the Executive Director to undertake any investigation and mediation or resolution on This Life's behalf. Any such complaint will be managed in accordance with This Life's Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy.

Methods of Submission:

This Life will accept Feedback via **formal** and **informal** channels.

Stakeholders may choose to provide feedback directly to Program staff, Program Managers, Section Leads, the Executive Director or to the Board of Directors. Feedback forms will be provided in English and Khmer.

Submission of feedback or complaints may be made through any of the following channels:

- Face to face
- Through our Complaint Form (see appendix)
- By telephone (063966050)
- By email (contact@thislifecambodia.org)
- By Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/thislifecambodia/>)
- Via the contact form on our website (<https://www.thislife.ngo/contact-us>)

Formal feedback is generally elicited through evaluation workshops or targeted interviews with primary beneficiaries in the program evaluation process, and through consultation with donors and partners.

Complaints to This Life may be made through any of the channels above. Hard copies of the Complaint Form will be carried by This Life staff when visiting communities and additionally may be found in This Life's office or downloaded from our website. The form captures key details including dates, name of complainant (complainants may remain anonymous), the names of any staff members affected, the nature of the complaint and any reasonable outcome sought by the complainant.

Additional Steps

If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint through This Life's complaints-handling process, they have the ability to make a complaint, should it include an alleged breach of the ACFID Code of Conduct, to the ACFID Code of Conduct Committee. The contact details and process can be found on the ACFID website (<https://acfid.asn.au/content/complaints>).

Process for Managing Beneficiary Feedback and Complaints:

On receipt of feedback or complaint, This Life will follow the following steps:

1. Acknowledge the feedback or complaint and collect the requisite information on the form
2. Assess and analyse the feedback or complaint to determine the severity of any concerns raised, and whether further investigation is required. Concerns relating to safeguarding, sexual abuse, abuse of funds, potential physical harm, staff misconduct or reputational risk to This Life are automatically considered serious incidents and are escalated immediately to Step 3.
3. Consult with the Executive Director and relevant Section Lead(s) to appoint, if required, an appropriate person to investigate the matter, to mediate and resolve any issues. A mediated solution is our preferred approach to managing complaints wherever that is possible
4. Any staff member who is assigned to investigate will provide a report on the resolution of the matter to the Section Lead(s) and Executive Director
5. Where a complaint alleges serious incident as defined in Step 2, the Executive Director will advise the Board of Directors who may require the Executive Director and the Human Resources Manager to investigate the matter and provide recommendations to the Board for action
6. This Life maintains a confidential database to track and monitor feedback and complaint resolution, to monitor any trends and to provide regular reports to the Board; the information on this database will be anonymised at the request of the complainant or survivor
7. From the outset of the investigation, This Life will provide assistance to complainants with referrals to services offering appropriate medical, social, legal and financial assistance. Where any acts of misconduct found to have been by members of This Life's Board of Directors, staff, consultants, volunteers or interns, This Life will also contribute to covering any cost incurred while accessing these service

Communication and Implementation of the Beneficiary Feedback and Complaints Process

Program Coordinators will be responsible for ensuring that their staff explain and promote this process to the communities with whom they work, and will provide hard copy forms to communities on request. Staff should encourage anyone to come and talk to them personally, or by phone call, if not confident submitting a complaint or feedback in writing, and should also familiarise themselves with This Life's Child-Friendly Complaints Guidelines to ensure their explanations and promotion tools are age appropriate. Section Leads and members of the Senior Management Team will be required to report on the implementation of this process for programs within their control and will report quarterly to the Executive Director.

It is the responsibility of the Senior Management Team to ensure that donor and partner organisations are familiar with this policy, and that lessons learned from instances of feedback and complaint are appropriately recorded and acted upon in a process of continuous and transparent quality improvement.

Authorisation