

## **HELP LESOTHO EXTERNAL COMPLAINTS POLICY 300-13**

### **1. OBJECTIVE**

The objective of this policy is twofold: first, to ensure that complaints received by Help Lesotho about our activities, services, programs, staff or volunteers are handled in a manner that is expeditious, fair and transparent; and second, to use complaints as a means to improve programs and services. This policy does not cover complaints by Help Lesotho staff. These are dealt with in Help Lesotho's Human Resource Policy Manuals.

### **2. DEFINITIONS**

**HL** refers to Help Lesotho, an incorporated not for profit organization with charitable status

**Board** refers to the Board of Directors of Help Lesotho

**Staff** refers to the staff of HL

**Complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction about the service, actions, or lack of action by Help Lesotho as an organization or by a staff member or volunteer acting on behalf of Help Lesotho. Examples include but are not limited to:

- perceived failure to do something agreed upon;
- failure to observe policy or procedures;
- error made by a staff member or volunteer; or
- unfair or discourteous actions or statements by a staff member or volunteer.

### **3. POLICY STATEMENT**

**3.1** Guiding principles for handling complaints are the following:

- It is in the interest of all parties that complaints are dealt with promptly and resolved as quickly as possible.
- The review of complaints is fair, impartial and respectful to all parties.
- Complainants are advised of their options to escalate their complaint to a more senior staff person if they are dissatisfied with treatment or outcome.
- Complainants are provided clear and understandable reasons for decisions relating to complaints.
- Updates are provided to complainants during review processes.
- Complaints are used to assist in improving services, policies and procedures.

**3.2** A complaint may be received verbally (by phone or in person) or in writing (by mail, fax, email). An employee or volunteer who receives a complaint should first determine the proper person to handle it. This will generally be the person who has the primary relationship with the complainant or has the specific

knowledge that is needed to resolve the problem. It is the responsibility of the person who receives the complaint to either resolve it or transfer it to another person who can resolve it. If the complaint is transferred, the recipient must acknowledge to the transferor that he/she has received it and will act on it.

**3.3** The person who initially receives the complaint should acknowledge to the complainant that the complaint has been received and will be acted on either by him/herself or another employee. If a timeframe for action can be determined, that should be included in the acknowledgement. Basic contact information including name, phone number and email address should immediately be recorded.

**3.4** Help Lesotho staff will make every effort to resolve complaints received in a timely fashion. When receiving a verbal complaint, staff should listen and seek to understand the complaint, and may attempt to resolve it immediately. Complaints received in writing should be acknowledged within two business days and staff should attempt to resolve the matter within 10 business days.

**3.5** Where a complaint cannot be easily resolved, it should be escalated to the Executive Director or Country Director. If the unresolved complaint is about the Country Director, the Executive Director will manage it. If the unresolved complaint is about the Executive Director, the Chair of the Board will manage it.

**3.6** Complainants should be kept informed of the status of their complaint. Every attempt should be made to resolve escalated complaints within an additional 10 business days so that all complaints are resolved within a month of having been received.

**3.7** Help Lesotho staff will keep a record on a common tracking document of all complaints. The staff person who manages the complaint will record on the tracking document a description of the complaint, who managed it, what was done to resolve the complaint, timeframe, and a description of the resolution.

**3.8** Staff will inform the Executive Director or the Country Director as soon as feasible of all complaints that can not be resolved within two business days or that involve money.

**3.8** The Executive Director and the Country Director will each maintain in a secure place a binder containing the records of complaints developed pursuant to 3.7.

#### **4. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

**4.1** The Executive Director in Canada and the Country Director in Lesotho will have responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. They will develop a common tracking document to be used separately in each country to record complaints and subsequent action.

**4.2** The Executive Director as part of her regular report to the Board will provide the number and type of complaints at least once annually.

#### **5. COMMUNICATING THIS POLICY**

**5.1** This policy will be posted on the Help Lesotho website.

#### **6. REVIEW & EVALUATION OF THIS POLICY**

**6.1** The Board will review this policy within 5 years of its adoption with a written record of the review attached to the policy.

**7. DATE OF ENACTMENT AND SIGNATURES**

This policy was adopted by the Board of Directors of Help Lesotho at a duly constituted meeting on May 30, 2013.