

## **HELP LESOTHO EXTERNAL COMPLAINTS POLICY 300-23**

### **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**

**Board** means the Board of Directors of Help Lesotho.

**Staff includes** the staff of Help Lesotho residing in Lesotho or Canada and includes interns.

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

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

### **3. POLICY STATEMENT**

**3.1 The following are the** guiding principles for handling complaints:

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

**3.2** A complaint may be received orally (by phone or in person) or in writing (by mail, fax, email). An employee or volunteer who receives a complaint shall, unless it is agreed between them that the complaint has arisen from a misunderstanding or is otherwise immediately resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, determine the appropriate 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 shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint to the person who transferred it, confirm whether he/she is the appropriate person to receive the complaint, and, if so, shall act on it.

**3.3** The person who initially receives a complaint shall 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 shall be included in the acknowledgement and, if possible, appropriate contact information as to the name, phone number and email address of the person who will be handling the complaint.

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

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

**3.6** Complainants shall be kept informed of the status of their complaint. Every attempt shall be made to resolve complaints that have been forwarded to the Executive Director or Country Director within an additional 10 business days so that all complaints are resolved as quickly as possible.

**3.7** Help Lesotho staff shall keep a record on a common tracking document of all complaints. The staff person who manages the complaint shall record on the tracking document a description of the complaint, the name, phone number and e-mail address of the complainant, the name of the person who managed the complaint, what was done to resolve the complaint, the timeframe, and a description of the resolution.

**3.8** Staff shall inform the Executive Director or the Country Director as soon as possible of all complaints that involve money, or that cannot be resolved within two business days..

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

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

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

**5.1** This policy is to be posted on the portion of the Help Lesotho website that is accessible to the general public.

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

**6.1** The Board shall review this policy within 3 years of its most recent 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. The Board reviewed and approved a revised version of the policy on January 16, 2023.