

**ASSOCIATION OF DEVELOPMENT FOR ECONOMIC &  
SOCIAL HELP (ADESH)**

# **Complain & Response Mechanism Policy (CRMP)**



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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

To improve accountability, ADESH is committed to implement a Complaints & Response Mechanism Policy (CRMP) in its programmes to enable individuals and organizations to raise complaints and give feedback on our work. The system also enables ADESH staff to report on incidents.

A CRMP describes all steps and processes for ADESH to ensure that an effective complaints handling system is in place, so that all stakeholders have an appropriate means of lodging a complaint, that subsequent complaints can be addressed in a professional and effective way, from receipt through to the investigation and follow-up stage.

The benefit for ADESH in receiving complaints is primarily to get input to programs and projects, which will improve the quality of our work, increase the likelihood for success in our long-term and humanitarian work, and reduce the potential for inefficient or misuse of the resources entrusted to us.

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Maintain the quality and continuous improvement in ADESH's work in its working area;
- Protect ADESH staff to report incidents and increase confidence;
- Enable stakeholders to raise a concern and complain on ADESH work and quality relationship with stakeholders;
- Provide general information to the stakeholders regarding ADESH's procedures for handling, responding and resolving complaints and staff incident reports.

### 3. SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

The CRMP should be seen as one system for the whole organization; it includes the whole process from receiving, handling and investigating complaints. This procedure gives confidence to the stakeholders as well as staff to file complaints. ADESH's staff can also report incidents through the CRMP. All complaints are reported in the same system.

ADESH is implementing directly through recruiting and orienting staff and hence, ADESH has a responsibility as staff to address the wellbeing and protection of local communities and individuals in its development and humanitarian programs.

#### 3.1.1 Key definition: what is a complaint, and what is it not?

ADESH recognize what Diakonia defines a complaint “Formal expression of dissatisfaction and/or misconduct, about someone or something”. It distinguishes the term ‘complaint’ from ‘feedback’. Feedback is any positive or negative informal statement of opinion about someone or something – an opinion shared for information but not with the intention of lodging a formal complaint.

**Complaints addressed by this policy-**ADESH will accept complaints related to the following examples:

- Misbehavior or misconduct by a ADESH staff member with reference to ADESH's Code of Conduct
- Violation of ADESH's policies and commitments by staff
- Misbehavior or misconduct by staff member with stakeholder or other staff
- Misuse of funds/fraud by staff
- Issues related to protection and security of rights holders

**Complaints not addressed by this policy-**ADESH will not respond to the following complaints:

- Complaints that are already the subject to current investigation by any regulatory body or legal or official authorities in Bangladesh
- Offensive complaints using inappropriate or abuse language.

### 3.1.2 Anonymous and Malicious Complaint

If a person lodging a complaint chooses to remain anonymous, ADESH will only be able to receive the complaint, but will not be able to respond or guarantee an investigation. Complaints will always be treated with confidentiality. Name and contact details will not be revealed to any person outside the investigation.

If a person lodging complaint that is malicious, any investigation underway must be stopped immediately and disciplinary actions are taken if ADESH staff's makes the malicious complaint.

### 3.1.2 Risk Analysis, Ensure Confidentiality and Safe Environment

If ADESH recognize that there are risks linked to the investigation of complaints and it is therefore very important to always assess what the risks are prior to an investigation and address the risks in an appropriate way.

Confidentiality is critical in the handling of complaints in order to protect the privacy and safety of the complainant, the subject of complaint and other witnesses. Access to and dissemination of information regarding complain will be restricted only to a limited number of authorized staff for the purpose of concluding a necessary investigation. Any breach of confidentiality shall lead to disciplinary action according to Human Resource Management (HRM) regulations.

ADESH shall only allow disclosure when:

- It is required by law;
- It is needed to obtain specialist help for the survivor or advice on the evidence

ADESH seeks to provide a safe environment through which individuals or groups can voice a concern, without fear of reprisal or unfair treatment.

## 4. COMPLAINTS AND INCIDENT HANDLING PROCEDURES

In case a staff member receives information informally, that could be subject for a complaint; ADESH staff is encouraged to proactively ask if the person that is sharing the information would like to make a formal complaint and if needed assist the complainant to make the complaint.

### 4.1.1 Types of complaints: Operational and Serious complaints and incidents

When dealing with complaints, ADESH distinguishes between “operational complaints and incidents” and “serious complaints and incidents”.

**Operational complaints and incidents-** Operational complaints refer to complaints on program and project activities and staff incidents. It may be any of the following:

- Issues of entitlements and commitments not met
- The quality of the implementation of a project
- How a programme has been managed
- Incidence conducted by employee which incur loss the stakeholders

- The quality of the service provided

Operational complaints can often be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction through two-way communication between the complainant and the person who received the complaint at project level. It is however recognized that not all issues can be resolved in this way and some cases may need to be reported.

**Serious complaints and incidents-** A serious complaint is primarily related to breach of Staff's Code of Conduct. A serious complaint can be any of the following:

- Behavior of a ADESH employee
- Allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse
- Allegations of harassment (physical, psychological)
- Allegations of crime, fraud and corruption
- A complaint on an issue posing serious reputational risk to ADESH

Serious complaints should be formally investigated with high respect to confidentiality. Accountability Focal Team (AFT) will decide about the external investigation.

#### 4.1.2 Responsibilities in Handling Complaints and Incidents

**ALL ADESH Staff have a Responsibility-** All ADESH's employees are required to report allegations, or suspicions of breaches related to ADESH's Code of conduct. Proven deliberate non-disclosure will lead to disciplinary action. The obligation to disclose is included in ADESH's Code of Conduct.

A flow chart in Annex 1 gives a visual glimpse of the procedure and responsibilities for handling serious complaints.

**Executive Director (E.D) or Executive Committee (E.C) -** Executive director will make decision based on the complaint investigation recommendation. If the complaint against the ED than Executive Committee will make decision. E.D and E.C are responsible for:

- Ensuring that a system to handle and respond to complaints in a safe and effective.
- Ensuring that the guidelines for complaints handling is followed
- Ensure that CRP is operational and effective for improving performance
- E.D/ E.C will have the power to reinvestigate/ incident field visit if they think for the need of.
- Before decision making if necessary ED/EC can recommend AFT to reinvestigate the case.

**Accountability Focal Point (AFP) -** Responsible for

- Overseeing the roll- out of CRMs
- Ensuring that complaints are documented and are complete and secure.
- Informing stakeholders about their right to complain
- Synthesis report of different types of complaints received and the status of their resolution shall be reported annually

- Learning documentation and propose for the continual improvements
- AFP will notify the decision of ED/EC to both the accuser and victim.
- AFP will also provide necessary advice and information to the accuser and victim about appeal and its process.

**Accountability Focal Team (AFT)** – Comprise of 3 key persons from the organization. ED and AFP will not be the member of the AFT. They are responsible for

- Ensuring that ADESH's CRP is relevant and functional and that resources (staff, financial and technical) are allocated to ensure the system is maintained
- Risk analysis and take risk mitigation measures
- Ensuring qualified investigations of serious complaints.
- After getting investigation report from CIT, AFT will make scrutiny over it and deliver the investigation report with necessary recommendation to ED/EC.

**Complains Investigation Team (CIT)** – Comprise 3 key persons from the organization. AFT will appoint the CIT based on the relevant experiences. They are responsible for

- Planning for the investigation for the serious complain;
- Gather evidence for proceed investigation;
- Responsible for fair investigation and reporting including recommended action;
- In the period of investigation process any other authority or body cannot exercise any power or order on to CIT;
- Each and every staff or personnel in the organization are responsible to provide any necessary assistance or information to CIT.

#### 4.1.3 Steps in processing complaints

The flowchart in Annex 1 outlines the main steps taken at different levels in the handling of serious complaints. These are also described here.

##### **a. Acknowledging the Complaint**

The complainant shall receive confirmation of receipt of the complaint. By sending an acknowledgement, ADESH shows that the allegation is taken seriously and handled according to procedures.

##### **b. Risks analysis and Protection**

Risks should be addressed, and any security concerns should be referred to management. Investigation of serious complaints can also involve a risk for the staff or person that conducts the investigation. AFT is responsible to minimize these risks as far as possible.

##### **c. Determining the need for an investigation**

In general, only serious complaint goes through an investigation process. Serious complaints are always referred to Accountability Focal Team (AFT) who then decides if an allegation needs to be

investigated.

#### **d. The investigation process**

If a serious complaint warrants further investigation, responsible Accountability Focal Team (AFT) appoints an Investigation Team that involves the 3 key persons from the organization (Never involve the person who is subject for accusations). Executive Director or Executive Committee will make decisions for action on a complaint based on the investigation recommendations. The Complaint Investigation Team (CIT) shall have contextual knowledge and will, if possible, be gender balanced.

#### **Key steps of Investigation and Reporting**

- Appointing the investigation team
- Planning the investigation
- Gathering evidence
- Validating evidence
- Reporting on findings
- Conclusions and recommendations
- Deliver the report

#### **e. Communicating Investigation Outcome and appeal process**

The outcome of the investigation shall be communicated to the complainant immediately after a decision is made. Any decision will be followed by immediate action after appeal

If the Complainant or the Subject of the Complaint is not satisfied on the resolution of the complaint, he/she may lodge an appeal within 15 days upon receipt of the decision. If this is the case, the reasons given and any other new evidences to make a decision whether or not to conduct a new investigation shall be analyzed. The appeal shall be considered only once.

#### **4.1.4 Action Time Allotment**

ADESH will always strive to take action and solve complaints in a timely manner. However, the time it takes for each complaint to be solved will depend on the complexity and character of the complaint. Serious complain should have to solve within 3months and operational complain should have to solve within 30 days.

### **5. Learning and continual development**

A synthesis report of the types of complaints received and the status of their resolution shall be reported annually. The annual reports will focus on learning points and how ADESH aims at improving our way of working. This policy will be formally reviewed regularly. Critical lessons learnt and suggestions for improvement should be considered as appropriate and relevant when there is a need to update the system.

# Annex 1: Flowchart for handling serious complaints of ADESH





