



Heartprint Complaints Procedure Policy

Key Points

Anyone can make a complaint or express a concern.

We will treat your complaint or concern seriously and confidentially.

If you feel afraid to speak up, there are things we can do to help protect you..

Why this policy exists

At Heartprint, we are committed to receiving complaints or concerns from anyone, especially those most vulnerable. We provide ways to make a complaint that are safe, accessible and publicised.

We are committed to handling complaints in line with our guiding principles, that include transparency, responsiveness and confidentiality.

Complaints can be made by individuals or organisations in relation to any aspects of our work including international development work, humanitarian responses, advocacy work and community engagement activities, as well as in our workplace and other settings. Complaints assist us to identify, address and report on any fraudulent, illegal or unethical conduct (including any sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment) in any of the work we support.

This policy is aligned to our Code of Conduct and meets our legal and regulatory obligations.

This policy applies to

This policy applies to anyone who makes a complaint, regardless of who they are or how the complaint is made, including:

- People inside the organisation
- People outside the organisation
- Our program partners and participants
- Others who wish to make a complaint or report

This policy covers three main categories of complaints:

- General complaints
- Sensitive complaints
- Whistleblower complaints

Definitions used in this policy

Below is a partial list of definitions.

When we use.....	We mean....
we, us, our	Heartprint
You, your	Readers of this policy
Complaint	Any grievance, suspicion, allegation, concern or report about an incident or someone's behaviour. Complaints include general complaints, sensitive complaints or whistleblower complaints.
General Complaint	A complaint from anyone who has observed, heard about or been directly affected by the actions of Heartprint or our partners, or who believes that Heartprint or its partners have failed to meet a specific commitment or obligation.
Sensitive Complaint	A complaint that needs to be treated urgently and confidentially by senior employees within the organisation. A sensitive complaint can be made by anyone who has observed, heard about or been directly affected by the actions of Heartprint or its program partners. Sensitive complaints may include bullying and harassment between employees, or unlawful discrimination.
Whistleblower Complaint	A complaint about wrongdoing such as fraud, corruption, abuse, misuse of resources, risk to health and safety etc. This may also be a sensitive complaint.
Mandatory Reporting	The obligation of certain professional groups and community members to report incidents of abuse. At Heartprint, it is mandatory to report any concerns, suspicions or alleged incidents of child abuse or exploitation and/or any sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment in line with our Anti Bullying, Child Protection, Disability and Inclusion policies. It is also mandatory to report fraud.
Personnel	Any person doing paid or unpaid work for, or on behalf, of Heartprint including Australian-based employees, in-country employees, Board of Directors, volunteers, contractors, sub-contractors and consultants.
Program Partners	Individuals or organisations that Heartprint works with, accompanies and supports to deliver humanitarian and development programs or activities.
Reporter	A person who makes a complaint.
Whistle Blower	A special type of reporter who is linked (directly or indirectly) to the organisation who reports a whistleblower complaint. Under Australian law, a whistleblower may be entitled to extra protection.

Guiding Principles

While every complaint is different, we consistently use these principles

Responsiveness

We will promptly let you know that we have received your complaint. We will respond to complaints according to how urgent or serious they are. If somebody's safety or security is at risk, we will respond immediately and will escalate appropriately. We are committed to managing your expectations, and will inform you, as soon as possible, of the following:

- What will happen (the complaints process)
- When it will happen (the expected timeframes for our actions)
- How it is progressing (whether an investigation may take place, reasons for any delays and how you may be involved)

If we cannot deal with any part of your complaint, we will tell you (and if possible, we will advise you what you can do instead). If the complaint is about something that is not within the scope of our organisation, it will be referred to the relevant party.

Accessibility

We promote safe and dignified ways of making a complaint. We can be contacted in multiple ways and we will let you know how. It doesn't cost any money to make a complaint. We work with our in-country employees and program partners to develop ways to make complaints that are safe, easily accessible, while being mindful of local contexts, culture and language (including low literacy).

People-focused and victim/survivor-centred

We put people first. We understand that making complaints can be difficult. We commit to a "do no harm" approach to our work. We prioritise the safety, rights, needs and wishes of all people whilst ensuring procedural fairness to all parties. We especially recognise the needs of those who are vulnerable or may be victims/survivors of harm.

We will provide you with information about how we handle complaints. We will:

- treat you with dignity and respect;
- actively involve the you in decision making;
- provide you with comprehensive information;
- protect privacy and confidentiality;
- and where required assist you to access other support services including health or psychological services and address any immediate protection assistance and or rehabilitation.

Confidentiality

We know people may feel safer to report a complaint if they know it will be treated confidentially. This means your identity (your name and other details) will not be shared, where possible and appropriate. It is also possible to make an anonymous complaint.

Sometimes we need to share some information with other people. Confidentiality means we share with the minimum number of people, and only with people who need to know ('need-to know' basis).

Impartiality

Each complaint will be handled with integrity and without bias. We follow procedural fairness which means that all parties, including the respondent, are treated in a dignified way. We will ensure that the person handling a complaint is different from any employee who is being complained about.

Zero tolerance of retaliation or punishment

We will take all reasonable steps to make sure that people making complaints are not negatively affected because a complaint has been made by them. In the case of someone making a complaint on your behalf (for example, a family member speaking up instead of you), we will do our best to ensure that you, and that person, are not affected.

Continuous improvement

We learn from complaints and concerns. We strive to prevent it happening again. By analysing complaints, we can identify where we can improve our programs, policies or service delivery. Trends and problems that require action can also be highlighted.

Policy Commitments

How to make a complaint

We have multiple ways of making a complaint that are easy to use.

Complaints Focal Point

You can make a complaint to the General Manager in-person or via:

Email: information@heartprint.org.au

Any employee

You can make a complaint to any Heartprint employee. They may consult with their direct manager or may contact the General Manager directly to get advice on the next steps.

However, all sensitive or whistleblower complaints (including child protection, sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment or fraud) must be reported the General Manager and Heartprint Board.

Some employees are designated as mandatory reporters for the purposes of child protection, (either through their role description or through their registration to a professional body).

Partners or our employees in-country

In the countries where we work, complaints can be made to program partners or Heartprint personnel in-country. Sensitive complaints (such as child abuse or sexual exploitation) must be reported to General Manager and Heartprint Board.

Program partners and contractors have an obligation under their contracts with Heartprint to have processes in place to receive and manage complaints, and are required to follow these. We work with partners and personnel in-country to ensure that they:

- Understand their obligations to receive and manage complaints
- Provide multiple options for making a complaint that are easy to use and accessible including child-friendly ways.
- Make the process culturally appropriate
- Handle complaints in line with relevant organisational policies, procedures, contracts and the law
- Record and report where required to Heartprint

Receiving complaints and feedback from participants is important. It helps both our partners and us. It is also part of the monitoring and evaluation of programs or projects. We will continue to work with our partners to strengthen their own feedback and complaints mechanisms.

Types of Complaints

A general complaint includes but is not limited to:

- Funding and program decisions
- Program implementation
- Fundraising and Supporter Services
- Conflict of Interest issues
- Employment issues including complaints or concerns about:
 - Safety or security within the work environment
 - Unethical behaviour associated with organisation changes
 - Unfair or unjust employment conditions

We support a culture of speaking up. If you have a complaint about employment issues, you should first speak with your manager and refer to the Staff Handbook. If you feel your complaint is not being heard, it is appropriate to escalate it in line with this policy.

A sensitive complaint includes but is not limited to:

- Corruption
- Theft
- Fraud
- Misuse of funds
- Exploitation
- Abuse
- Harassment
- Bullying
- Discrimination
- Misconduct negligence
- Matters raised under Heartprint's Anti Bullying, Child Protection, Disability and Inclusion policies.
- Any other abusive or inappropriate behaviour by our personnel, partners or those involved in our work in-country
- Bullying, harassment or discrimination between personnel

A whistleblower complaint

A person who makes such a complaint is known as a whistleblower. Whistleblowers have extra protection under if they:

- Are connected to Heartprint in a certain way (be an 'eligible whistleblower')
- Tell the right person (an 'eligible recipient')
- Make a certain type of complaint (a 'disclosable matter')

If you suspect something is wrong, even if it is not illegal, it is your responsibility to report it.

Assigning complaints

Where appropriate, general complaints are referred to the local level to be investigated and resolved. Where this is not possible (because the complaint is sensitive, because there isn't enough capacity or expertise at the local level, or because the allegation involves senior personnel), the matter will be referred to a more senior person in the organisation.

Sensitive complaints (including fraud, sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment and child protection matters) are always referred to the General Manager. Sensitive complaints will be managed and investigated by senior personnel.

Complaints will be assigned to an appropriate person who is impartial with the authority to take action where necessary. For example, where a complaint involves the General Manager, it will be directed to the Chair of the Board.

Referring complaints to other organisations

Complaints that are made about another organisation and/or their personnel will be referred to that organisation. It is the responsibility of that organisation to resolve it under their own complaints handling mechanism.

We will abide by all mandatory reporting requirements. We are obligated in certain circumstances to report to authorities, such as law enforcement agencies, DFAT or ACFID.

Regarding complaints with criminal aspects (including alleged incidents of fraud, sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment), we take the view that these should also be reported. We will consider whether it is safe to do so, and take into consideration the wishes of the victims/survivors and whistleblowers.

In addition to abiding by mandatory reporting requirements, any complaint that involves allegations or suspicions of abuse of a child or adult will be referred to the Heartprint Board.

Where an investigation is required a lead agency will be appointed.

If a reporter believes that Heartprint has breached the ACFID Code of Conduct, a complaint may be lodged with the ACFID Code of Conduct Committee (<https://acfid.asn.au/content/complaints>). We will provide the necessary details.

Managing complaints

All complaints will be recorded. We will treat reporters respectfully, and will inform them within 2 working days that we have received their complaint.

If the complaint involves child protection matters, we will use the Complaint Handling Procedure.

When we receive a complaint, Heartprint will respond to the complaint in line with this policy and any relevant standards and legislation.

Complaints are taken seriously and will be handled as quickly as practical. We will aim to resolve complaints within 30 days. If a complaint is not resolved within 30 days, we will let the reporter know and continue to keep them informed.

We will inform reporters of the outcome (subject to legal and regulatory requirements or guidance including the ACFID Code of Conduct) as soon as possible.

We address complaints in a fair, equitable, objective and unbiased manner.

Where this policy conflicts with legislation, Heartprint will comply with legislative obligations.

If complaints relate to program partners and/or their personnel in the countries where we work, Heartprint will work with the partner to address the complaint in line with cultural, social, program and local contexts.

We work with our partners to ensure it is easy for people to make a complaint. Our partners are responsible for handling complaints in line with cultural, social, program and local contexts. This forms part of our accompaniment and capacity building initiatives in accordance with the Anti Bullying, Child Protection, Disability and Inclusion policies.

Maintaining your anonymity

Complaints can be made anonymously. In those cases, while we may not be able to respond directly to the reporter, we may be able to use the complaint to alert us to matters that need to be investigated and/or referred to authorities.

Where practical and appropriate, we will protect the identity of reporters. Personal information that identifies individuals will only be disclosed when required by law. When required for purposes of the investigation or other related purposes, all reasonable efforts will be taken to de-identify information that is not required for the purpose of the disclosure. In some instances, it may not be possible for an investigation to progress if the existence of the report cannot be disclosed and a statement by the individual cannot be provided as evidence.

We understand that some complaints need to be kept confidential in order to protect those making or involved in the complaint. However, in some instances we might judge that the reporter will be better served if others are involved in the resolution of a complaint. Third parties will only be included in the resolution of confidential complaints on a case-by-case basis and with the agreement of the reporter.

We will reduce the risk that a reporter will be identified by, for example, removing identifying information about them, using gender-neutral language, limiting access to information on a 'need to-know' basis and engaging qualified employees to handle the complaint.

Providing support and protecting you from harm

Together, we will assess any immediate needs for protection or assistance as soon as possible after a complaint is made.

We will work with you to identify what support you may need. For example, we may be able to provide or refer you to services (such as counselling or medical services). We will also take reasonable steps to ensure you are safe and not exposed to further harm.

For Heartprint personnel, we may be able to provide flexible working conditions or workplace modifications and ensure managers are aware of their responsibilities.

If you have suffered harm despite this support in place, we will let you know how to make a further complaint.

We will offer protection to you, as long as your complaint is made in good faith. The protections include:

- Your identity being kept confidential
- No 'payback', punishment or retaliation
- No legal action being taken against you for breach of contract, etc
- Potential compensation and remedies

Investigating complaints

We will communicate transparently how we will investigate the complaint.

Ensuring fair treatment

We will handle complaints confidentially where it is practical and appropriate. The investigation will be impartial and fair for all involved (including the reporter and the respondent).

Respondents will be provided with support throughout the process and may also access external counselling services.

If you are the respondent, you will be told what the complaint is about (the subject matter) to enable you to respond appropriately. Where relevant you will have an opportunity to provide additional information and name other sources who may verify this information.

Outcome of Complaints

If a complaint is upheld, the matter will be referred for appropriate disciplinary processes. In the case of vexatious complaints made by a Heartprint employee, they will be referred for appropriate disciplinary action.

Communicating outcomes of complaints

We will ensure that the reporter and the respondent are informed of the outcome of the complaint. Other personnel will be informed of the outcome as required based on a need-to-know basis depending on the nature of the complaint. During this process, we will continue to respect the confidentiality of persons involved where appropriate. We will take all required remedial action as indicated by the investigation. Where needed, we will counsel personnel and undertake disciplinary action. In keeping with confidentiality and privacy requirements, we will consult with relevant bodies for advice.

Appealing a decision

We want you to make sure the complaint is satisfactorily resolved. We encourage you to ask for clarification or feedback during the process. If, after having the opportunity for feedback, you do not feel satisfied with the outcome, you can submit a formal appeal via information@heartprint.org.au. You will be contacted by a representative of Heartprint with updates and the outcome of the appeal.

Accessing this policy

This policy will be available on www.heartprint.org.au website.

Socialising this policy and providing training

This Policy is distributed to all Heartprint personnel, partners, and all others acting on our behalf. During induction programs and refresher training, we ensure they are familiar with this policy. For personnel who visit our programs

and projects, we provide extra training about how to encourage and receive complaints (especially with regard to accessibility including language and culture). We support partners to understand the Heartprint policy and develop their own complaints mechanisms.

Learning from complaints

We are prepared to change the way in which we operate and improve or undertake further training of employees. We will communicate the implications for our policies, procedures, processes, programs and projects so that we can embed organisation learning.

Roles and Responsibilities

At Heartprint, we recognise that a culture of speaking up starts with strong leadership.

The Board of Directors is responsible for:

- Ultimate accountability for our organisational policies
- Guiding the governance and culture of Heartprint through strategic leadership
- Demonstrating a commitment to a culture of speaking up and leading by example
- Approving this policy and holding the Leadership Team accountable to how effectively this policy is implemented
- Investigating very serious complaints and providing a response

Leadership Team members are responsible for:

- Demonstrating a commitment to a culture of speaking up and leading by example
- Ensuring our procedures, practices, plans and operations align with this policy
- Reporting to the Board via the General Manager on policy matters
- Ensuring their team are aware of this policy and understand their responsibilities
- Monitoring and responding to any complaint that is assigned to them to investigate

The General Manager is responsible for:

- Ensuring this policy is upheld
- Demonstrating a commitment to a culture of speaking up and leading by example
- Informing the Board of any concerns relating to complaints that may present risk to Heartprint or its personnel
- Where appropriate, giving progress reports to the Board in relation to complaints (such as the number and nature of complaints received, the outcome of investigations, corrective action implemented, and any trends that have been identified)
- Ensuring all personnel are accountable to this policy

The Complaints Focal Point is the Heartprint employee identified as the point of contact for any complaint received. They are responsible for:

- Ensuring this policy is accessible via the Heartprint website
- Assessing who is the most appropriate person to respond to a complaint
- Recording the complaint in a secured database
- Receiving complaints directly from the reporter, or from any personnel
- Referring the complaint to the correct person to manage or investigate
- Supporting the person(s) appointed to handle the complaint using good practice

Managers are responsible for:

- Demonstrating a commitment to a culture of speaking up and leading by example
- Creating transparent practices that show how complaints will be handled
- Communicating this policy and related procedures to personnel

- Regularly including speaking up and complaint management as an agenda item at team meetings
- Engaging their teams in an open, honest and meaningful way to ensure they understand what is expected of them, and will participate in resolving complaints where necessary
- Ensuring personnel are aware of the policy and understand their role in handling complaints about any Heartprint work, activities, or behaviours of Heartprint or program employees

In-country managers (including Country Representatives) are responsible for:

- Giving this policy information on how to make a complaint to program partners
- Ensuring in-country procedures for handling complaints are consistent with this policy

Personnel are responsible for:

- Understanding and following this policy and related procedures
- Ensuring that your actions are in line with this policy, and that your work reflects the Guiding Principles and Policy Commitments above
- Not encouraging others (directly or indirectly) to breach this policy
- Reporting any breach to your manager, to the General Manager at information@heartprint.org.au

We have a shared responsibility to ensure a culture of speaking up at Heartprint.

Related Documents

This policy supports Heartprint's compliance with the following:

Legislation:

- Corporations Act 2001 (Cth)
- Taxation Administration Act 1953 (Cth)

Standards and Codes:

- Heartprint Management Standards
- Heartprint Complaints Handling Policy
- Heartprint Code of Conduct
- Heartprint Child Protection Policy
- Heartprint Anti Bullying Policy
- Heartprint Whistle Blowing Policy
- Heartprint Disability/Inclusion Policy
- Heartprint Health & Safety Policy
- Heartprint Privacy Policy
- Heartprint Safeguarding Policy
- Department Foreign Affairs and Trade Australian NGO Accreditation Guidance Manual June 2017
- Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC) Governance Standards
- Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS)