

Complaints Policy

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1. COMMITMENT

In operating according to the standards required by the Code of Conduct, NSIP is committed to achieving the highest standard in every area of its work and to continuous improvement.

NSIP encourages the public to continually engage in dialogue to help improve the delivery of its services as well as accountability and transparency to its stakeholders. Through a range of mechanisms, the public and stakeholders can directly engage with NSIP to raise issues, provide feedback and to ask for and receive information about the organization.

NSIP recognizes the importance and value of listening and responding to inquiries, concerns and complaints. This is one of the most important ways of learning how to improve its work. The '*Complaints Policy*' provides an effective, accessible and safe process for stakeholders to raise feedback, a concern or a complaint and receive a response.

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The '*Complaints Policy*' is based on the principles of:

- Providing a formal, public and accessible mechanism for receiving and responding to complaints.
- Ensuring that feedback, concerns and complaints are handled effectively, efficiently, objectively and in utmost confidentiality.
- Providing clear, well publicized and easily accessible information about the process for making a complaint to all stakeholders, irrespective of their gender, status or background, and without prejudice to their future participation.
- Fostering, where applicable, an innovative community orientated complaints handling process that includes training of staff based on continuous improvement.
- Taking special care to train program partners/stakeholders to encourage, receive and respond to feedback, concerns and complaints.

3. DEFINITIONS

A *complaint* is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction made to NSIP related to its activities where a response or resolution is requested. A *complainant* means a person, organization or its representative making a complaint. A *stakeholder* refers to a person or group having an interest in, or benefiting from, NSIP's programs.

4. SCOPE OF POLICY

This '*Complaints Policy*' refers to complaints related to the NSIP Board, staff, volunteers, program partners, consultants or anyone else acting on behalf of NSIP. A concern of complaint may be made by any stakeholder be in a: NSIP Supporter, a staff member, a volunteer, a consultant, a program partners, an employee of a government authority with whom NSIP work, or a person affected by NSIP services.

5. PROMOTION AND SOCIALISATION

This 'Complaints Policy' is distributed to all Directors, staff, volunteers, and program partners. The policy is also communicated to primary stakeholders as part of in-country project activities. When working in communities NSIP will endeavor to translate the policy into the local language. This policy can also be found on our webpage for the 'Governance and Transparency' regards.

This policy is distributed to all NSIP's personnel, program partners, and all others acting on NSIP's behalf. During induction programs and refresher training, we ensure they are familiar with this policy. The Complaints Focal Point (and other personnel involved, directly and indirectly, in complaint handling) are fully trained in all aspects of this policy and procedures. 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 policy and develop their own complaints mechanisms.

6. PROCESS FOR RECEIVING COMPLAINTS

NSIP's preference is to receive feedback, concerns and complaints by email or in writing. If the complaint is made orally NSIP commits to recording the complaint in writing. In all cases the confidentiality and anonymity of the complaint will be respected.

6.1 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 organization.

6.2 Sensitive complaints (including fraud, sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment and child protection matters) are always referred to the CEO and will be managed and investigated by the Board.

6.3 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 CEO, it will be directed to the Chair of the Board.

7. COMPLAINTS RELATING TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS

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

NSIP will abide by all mandatory reporting requirements and are obligated in certain circumstances to report to authorities, such as law enforcement agencies of donors.

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

8. HANDLING PROCESS

NSIP's approach is both people-focused and victim/survivor-centered. We put people first. We understand that making complaints can be difficult. We commit to a "do no harm" approach to our work. We prioritize the safety, rights, needs and wishes of all people whilst ensuring procedural fairness to all parties. We especially recognize 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 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.

The NSIP's CEO has prime responsibility for the management of this policy and its mechanisms. When a complaint has been made NSIP will not take sides, lay blame or become defensive. It will ensure that the complainant is satisfied with the intended process. To determine how the complaint is to be managed NSIP will assess it in terms of: severity; health (including mental health) and safety; financial implications; the complexity; the impact on the complainant; systematic implications; and potential timeframes, including the need for and possibility of immediate action.

9. MINOR COMPLAINTS

NSIP may receive minor concerns or complaints that may be based on a misconception or insufficient information that can be readily provided or corrected by a member of staff. If the complainant is satisfied with the response the complaint may be considered an enquiry.

10. METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

NSIP will make every reasonable effort to investigate all relevant circumstances and information relevant to the complaint. The level of investigation will match the seriousness and frequency of the complaint.

11. TIMEFRAMES

NSIP commits to acknowledging written complaints within five working days, and oral complaints immediately. It further aims to resolve complaints within thirty working days. If the complaint is not resolved by then it will inform the complainant of the progress and keep them regularly updated regarding the progress of their complaint.

12. RESPONDING TO A COMPLAINT

Either the CEO, or the NSIP staff member delegated by the CEO to investigate the complaint, will normally make the decision in relation to resolving the complaint. Serious complaints may be referred by the CEO to the Board for consideration and decision. The complaint will be addressed in writing or orally in exceptional circumstances in remote rural locations. The complainant will also be asked whether they are satisfied with the decision. If they are not satisfied, a review of the process and decision will be undertaken.

In some cases, NSIP will advise that the complaint be referred to the Code Committee of respected donor's regulatory body. NSIP will provide all necessary information for referral.

13. OUTCOMES OF COMPLAINTS

In order to learn from complaints NSIP will ensure that all relevant personnel are informed of the outcomes of complaints and the implications for the delivery of programs.

NSIP will take all required remedial action, be prepared to change the way in which it operates, and commit to further training of staff if necessary. Where needed staff or volunteers will be counselled or disciplined. Where appropriate NSIP will consult and take advice from donor relevant regulatory/enforcement authorities.

14. CONFIDENTIALITY

NSIP will, at all times, respect the confidentiality of the complainant.

15. RECORD KEEPING

All complaints will be registered. A record of the complaint will include the date of receipt, a description of the complaint, supporting and related documentation, and details of the response.

16. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN COMPLAINT HANDLING

NSIP will monitor the effectiveness of its complaints handling on a regular basis and make amendments as appropriate.

17. NSIP CONTACT PERSON

A complaint can be sent to NSIP in any of the following ways:

Complaints email: info@nsip.org

Direct email to the CEO.

If the complaint is about the CEO, complaints should be referred to:
Chairperson of the Board.

18. PUBLIC COMPLAINTS POLICY

NSIP is a member of National Campaign for Education, Social Welfare Council and adheres to the Nepal Government's Code of Conduct. As such, NSIP draws to the attention of its donors, supporters and members of the public that complaints can be made directly to donors if it is believed that NSIP has breached any aspect of the Code of Conduct. Complaints should be marked 'confidential' and emailed to concerned.