



**Partners in Aid**

AUSTRALIA

## COMPLAINTS AND WHISTLEBLOWER POLICY

### Version control & review

Version	Date	Distribution
1.0	<2015	Board members; website link
2.0	June 2016	Board members; Committee members; Partner Organisations, website link
3.0	January 2018	Board members; Committee members; Partner Organisations, website link
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### 1. Background

Partners in Aid, as an organisation, is committed to continuous improvement and welcomes feedback from all stakeholders or members of the public. We acknowledge that we may receive complaints from time to time and view these as a genuine opportunity to review our policies and practices with a view to improvement. All complaints and disclosure of wrongdoing will be taken seriously and acted on in accordance with this policy.

### 2. Definitions

**Whistleblowing** is defined as deliberate, voluntary disclosure of individual or organisational wrongdoing by a person who has access to data, events or information about an actual, suspected or anticipated wrongdoing within the organisation.

**Whistleblower** refers to any Representative who attempts to make or wish to make a report in connection with a wrongful act under this policy and who wish to avail themselves of the protection offered by this policy.

A **wrongful act** includes, but is not limited to:

- breaches of legal obligations (including negligence, breach of contract, breach of administrative law),
- criminal offences,
- mismanagement of funds,
- actual or suspected fraud,
- abuse of authority
- disclosures related to miscarriages of justice,
- health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees,
- damage to the environment,
- the unauthorised use of organisational funds,
- possible fraud and corruption,
- sexual or physical abuse of project stakeholders,

- other unethical conduct, or
- the concealment of any of the above.

### 3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline how a complaint or disclosure of wrongdoing can be made to Partners in Aid and how the Organisation will respond.

### 4. Scope

This Policy applies to all complaints and disclosures of wrongdoing and to all complainants and whistleblowers, no matter who makes the complaint or disclosure or the nature of that complaint or disclosure. It applies to complaints or disclosures of wrongdoing made about the policies, practices or conduct of Partners in Aid as an organisation, its Board, sponsors, donors or volunteers.

A copy of the Partners in Aid Complaints and Whistleblower Policy should be attached to any Partnership Agreement signed with a Partner Organisation.

### 5. Procedures

#### 5.1 General Complaints

- 5.1.1 Partners in Aid will encourage its stakeholders to bring to the attention of the Board any issue where they feel aggrieved by the action of the organisation.
- 5.1.2 The primary contact point for complaints is the Board Chair, who can be contacted via email ([admin@partnersinaid.org.au](mailto:admin@partnersinaid.org.au)), phone, direct message via social media or post, using the contact details outlined on our website ([www.partnersinaid.org.au](http://www.partnersinaid.org.au)).
- 5.1.3 Complaints related to a project overseas can also be raised with the project partner, whose details will be listed on the Partners in Aid website.
- 5.1.4 The website will advise complainants of their ability to make a complaint directly to ACFID on a breach of the ACFID Code of Conduct.
- 5.1.5 The Board will maintain multiple ways that people can lodge complaints and provide information about these mechanisms on its website.
- 5.1.6 All complaints will be treated seriously, and the complainant acknowledged promptly.
- 5.1.7 When a complaint is raised, it will be listed for discussion at the next monthly Board meeting and the complainant advised of that date. Initial action will be determined on a resolution and the complainant advised within one week of the Board meeting.
- 5.1.8 If a complaint requires rapid or urgent attention, the Board Executive will convene as soon as possible (within one week) to consider a

response.

- 5.1.9 Minor complaints should be resolved within two months of having been raised. Where complex complaints, which may require consultation with other organisations or advisors, take longer, the complainant will be kept informed of timelines and progress on resolving the complaint.
- 5.1.10 Should any complaint raised be in relation to a current Board member, that member will be excused from the meeting for the period of the discussion, unless the Board has questions relating to the complaint.
- 5.1.11 All complaints will be reviewed annually by the Board at a Board meeting. Any pattern of complaints, or issues which complaints alert us to, will be addressed promptly at this time.
- 5.1.12 The procedure for making a complaint will be publicised via the website, in newsletters, and in material provided to new members, sponsors or donors. Processes will be advised to Project Partners via the Project Agreement and to children and young people receiving sponsorship, through the Sponsorship Agreement. Project Agreements will also include provisions for partners to advise project beneficiaries of these complaints processes, when the Board cannot communicate directly with them.
- 5.1.13 The procedure for making and responding to complaints will be included in induction procedures for new Board members and volunteers.
- 5.1.14 The final response to a complaint will be signed off by a majority of the Board at a Board meeting. The outcome will be communicated to the complainant in writing within one week of the Board sign off. The complainant will be advised that if they are not satisfied, they may either complain to the ACFID Code of Conduct Committee if they feel there has been a breach of the Code or request the complaint be reconsidered if there has been a misunderstanding or omission of facts by the Board in its resolution.

## 5.2 Whistleblower Policy

- 5.2.1 Staff, volunteers, contractors and partners who are aware of possible wrongdoing have a responsibility to disclose that information.
- 5.2.2 If a wrongful act, or suspected wrongful act, is reported, Partners in Aid will endeavour to protect the whistleblower's identity. They will not disclose the whistleblower's identity unless:
  - the whistleblower consents to the disclosure,
  - the law requires or authorises the identity of the whistleblower to be revealed, and/or
  - the disclosure is necessary to further the investigation.

The whistleblower is also expected to keep the fact that they have raised a concern and the content of their report confidential.

- 5.2.3 Partners in Aid will also take reasonable precautions to store any records relating to a disclosed wrongdoing or suspected wrongdoing securely and to permit access by authorized personnel only.
- 5.2.4 Volunteers, donors and partners who in good faith disclose perceived wrongdoing will be protected from victimization, harassment or any other adverse consequences. In so far as possible, if necessary, they will also be supported emotionally throughout the proceedings.
- 5.2.5 Personnel may raise their concerns either verbally or in writing to the Chair of the Board or, if the concern relates to an overseas project with which Partners in Aid is associated, to the Project Coordinator associated with that project. At the time of raising their concern, the whistleblower should be asked to specify in writing whether they wish their identity to remain confidential.
- 5.2.6 The person to whom the issue is raised shall manage the disclosure, if appropriate, identifying a suitable Partners in Aid individual to investigate the allegation, starting within two weeks of the allegation being made.
- 5.2.7 The person investigating the disclosure will prepare a report to be reviewed by the person to whom the allegation was made, if this is not the person doing the investigation. Ideally this report will be prepared within two months of the allegation being made.
- 5.2.8 The person or persons who are the subject of the allegation will be given every opportunity to respond to the allegation both before and after the report is completed.
- 5.2.9 If the disclosure is found to be valid, appropriate action will be decided upon by the Board. Action may involve termination of a person's position on the Board or a Committee, termination of the person's membership of Partners in Aid, or, in less serious cases, informal action taken to ensure that the problem does not arise again. In the case of the disclosure relating to the actions of a Partner Organisation, action may involve informal discussion, or if the incidence was serious, termination of Partner in Aid's association with the relevant project/s. If criminal action has been committed in Australia or action carried out by an Australian abroad that can nonetheless be prosecuted by the Australian legal system (e.g., sexual abuse of children) the appropriate authorities will be informed.
- 5.2.10 If the suspicion of the whistleblower is found to be baseless or unfounded, he or she will be informed, and no further action taken.
- 5.2.11 Where an investigation does not substantiate the disclosure, the results of the investigation and the identity of the person who was the subject of the investigation must continue to be handled confidentially.
- 5.2.12 The Whistleblower Policy will be included in induction procedures for new Board members and volunteers, as well as being attached to any

Partnership Agreement.

## **6. Review**

This policy will be reviewed every two years.