

# Complaints Policy

## (incorporating refunds procedure)

### (Reference No.8.3)

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#### EFFECTIVE DATE

01 June 2017

#### INTRODUCTION

Receiving feedback and responding to complaints are important ways for ChildFund Australia to improve performance and be accountable. ChildFund Australia recognises the value of complaints as an important tool in understanding and responding to stakeholder expectations. Ensuring that our stakeholders can hold us to account will improve the quality of our operations and bring greater impact.

Complaints may come from community members affected by our programs, including children and youth, members of the public, partners and supporters including child sponsors and other donors. ChildFund Australia is committed to the timely and fair resolution of complaints.

#### POLICY STATEMENT

##### SCOPE

ChildFund Australia will ensure that stakeholders, including children and youth, have clear and accessible means to make a complaint. ChildFund will respond to complaints in a fair and timely fashion. Complainants will be treated respectfully, kept informed and supported in exercising their right to make a complaint without fear of discrimination.

##### EXCLUSIONS

This policy does not cover complaints by staff, interns and volunteers. These are governed by the 'Whistleblowing Policy' or the 'Grievance Procedures' section of the Sydney office Employee Handbook (for Sydney based personnel), while complaints by Country Office and Pass it Back staff, interns and volunteers are governed by the relevant country office policies and staff handbooks.

##### OBJECTIVE

- clients and stakeholders in Australia and in countries where we work have a right to complain;
- children and youth are key stakeholders, and procedures need to recognise their particular situation and context;
- complaints procedures should be well publicised and accessible to all stakeholders in the appropriate language;

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- complaints should be valued, as they provide feedback that can help identify areas that may need improvement;
- complaints handling procedures should be used as an opportunity to enhance our relationships with stakeholders;
- complainants should be treated with respect and without prejudice, while recognising the need to be fair to both the complainant and the organisation or person being complained about;
- complaints should be dealt with in a manner that is timely, responsive, confidential and fair;
- if a complaint is not resolved and the complainant remains unhappy they have a right to appeal and must be informed of this right.

## DEFINITIONS

A **complaint** is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction about the standards of service, actions or lack of action by ChildFund Australia. It could be:

- a criticism relating to one of our development programs by a community member, including children and youth, partner or government official
- dissatisfaction from a supporter, such as a child sponsor, about an aspect of service
- criticism about a fundraising action or campaign,
- concern about the behavior of staff, volunteers, contractors, suppliers, partners or others acting on ChildFund's behalf.

A **complainant** is any person or organisation making a complaint.

## POLICY IN ACTION

ChildFund will ensure that children and youth have appropriate and authentic means to express complaints and suggestions, and will put in place procedures, mechanisms, guidelines, and training to ensure this.

Even if a complaint appears to be without foundation, or is difficult to understand in the form that it is received, all staff are under an obligation to take reasonable steps to clarify the complaint and obtain additional information that will assist in the assessment and ultimate resolution of the complaint.

Many complaints will be raised informally, and dealt with quickly by staff. An informal approach is usually appropriate and should be used as often as possible. Staff to whom a complaint is made can offer solutions consistent with their normal level of authority. Where the likely solutions appear to require approval from a higher authority, or if requested by the complainant the matter can be referred to a higher staff level.

If complaints cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, the 'formal complaint handling procedure' will be followed (see below).

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Publication of the Policy

In Australia and in ChildFund Australia Country Offices this policy or an appropriate extract will be made available to the public through the website, by verbally informing stakeholders of the policy where appropriate and by providing copies of the policy on request. Copies of the policy in Country Offices will be made available in relevant local languages and explained in local language if requested.

Complaints in ChildFund Australia Program Countries

Due to the specific nature and/or geographical location of their activities, ChildFund's Country and Pass it Back Directors and senior managers are responsible for responding to complaints relating to ChildFund's operations in that country. Country Offices may develop additional procedures in order to fulfill the objects and principles of the Policy including putting in place appropriate mechanisms for children and youth to express complaints in a practical and safe manner. If the complaint is about the Country Director or Pass it Back Director, complaints should be directed to the International Program Director in the Sydney office. Receiving complaints in country can be done in a range of ways and decisions must be made (in conjunction with the local community as appropriate) as to what is most appropriate. In order to establish what the complaint is and its validity, interpreters might be needed. Some complaints about programs and/or staff ways of working may not be able to be resolved easily, and in-country staff may require additional support from the Sydney office.

Complaints in Australia

Complaints can be received by the following methods:

- Telephone
- Letter
- Facsimile
- Email
- In person
- Social Media
- Through comments and feedback on surveys

To ensure consistency of response and to manage complaints effectively, ChildFund Australia's Supporter Relations department will be the primary body responding to general complaints, including putting in place appropriate mechanisms for children and youth to express complaints in a practical and safe manner. The Supporter Relations department will make sure that these complaints are either resolved or referred on to the relevant manager or department.

**Formal Complaints Handling Procedure**

When a complaint cannot be resolved quickly and informally, or is determined by the staff person receiving the complaint to be of a very serious nature the following procedure should be used.

1. The staff person receiving the complaint will do so in a positive manner and will record the following details:
  - The name of the person/s making the complaint
  - The date, time and location the complaint is received

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- A brief description of the complaint
2. The staff person receiving the complaint is empowered to handle the complaint in the first instance – if it is within their usual level of authority and they feel able to deal with it.
  3. If the complaint appears to exceed the staff person’s level of authority or they feel unable to deal with it, the complaint should be referred to the staff person’s supervisor.
  4. The ChildFund person dealing with the complaint will explore options and solutions that may help to resolve the concern. At all times the complainant will be treated respectfully and, if the complainant is a child or youth, particular care and attention will be given. A brief record of the discussion and any agreed actions will be made.
  5. The ChildFund person dealing with the complaint is responsible for ensuring that follow up action occurs in a timely fashion. A brief record of the actions taken will be made and copies of any correspondence or other communication will be kept.
  6. If the complaint is unable to be resolved by the staff person or their supervisor an acknowledgement of the complaint is to be sent by email or letter to the complainant within 5 working days of the complaint being received and an approximate timeframe given for the complaint to be fully resolved.
  7. Complaints that have not been resolved by the staff person or their supervisor to the satisfaction of the complainant will be referred to the Sydney Senior Manager or Country/Pass it Back Director for review.
  8. The Sydney Senior Manager or Country/Pass it Back Director will review the matter and may:
    - reconsider the original decision and take additional corrective action;
    - overturn previous decisions and institute new measures considered necessary;
    - endorse the action that has already been taken with no further action required.
  9. If the matter is still unresolved and appears to require additional action it will be referred to the CEO for review.
  10. Senior Managers and the CEO have the option to refer the matter to an external mediator or alternative dispute resolution (ADR) agency if this is considered to be the most appropriate option.
  11. Complaints that relate to a member of staff or volunteer will be directed to the relevant Manager. If the matter involves a complaint against a Country or Pass it Back Director it should be referred immediately to the International Program Director. If the matter involves a Sydney Senior Manager it should be referred immediately to the CEO. If the complaint involves the CEO it should be referred to the Chair of the Board.

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12. ChildFund Australia is a signatory to the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct. If a complainant believes that ChildFund Australia has breached the Code, they should be made aware of their option to complain to the ACFID Code of Conduct Committee.
13. ChildFund Australia is a member of the Fundraising Institute Australia (FIA) and is committed to the Principles & Standards of Fundraising Practice. If a complaint arises in Australia and the complainant believes that ChildFund Australia has breached the Principles & Standards of Fundraising Practice they should be made aware of the option to make written complaint to the FIA.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, variations to the above procedures may apply.

**Sponsor & other donor refund procedures**

A request for a refund of contributions already donated to ChildFund Australia by a sponsor/donor will be considered and determined on a case by case basis. .

When a request for a refund is received, an assessment of the reason given for the refund request is undertaken. The following reasons will usually be considered favourably:

- An error has been made by ChildFund Australia;
- A sponsor/donor decides within the first 1-3 weeks of providing contributions that they have changed their mind and the funds have not already been remitted overseas;
- A sponsor/donor banking details are fraudulently obtained and used;
- The sponsor disputes agreeing to allocation of an additional child through ChildFund Australia marketing programs;
- A sponsor/donor contributions are paid in advance

The following reasons will not usually be grounds for a refund to be given:

- The financial circumstances of the sponsor/donor;
- The sponsor/donor denies or disputes having made a decision with ChildFund or one of its contracted marketing agencies to provide financial contributions;
- Disagreement by the sponsor/donor with the nature of the programs provided by ChildFund;

If it is agreed that a refund is to be made, the sponsor/donor will receive the refund within 10 working days of the decision.

If it is decided that a refund will not be made, the issue is to be resolved using the steps in the Complaint Procedure above.

**Recording of Complaints and Refund Decisions**

Recording of details including those points specified in 1, 4 and 5 (above) should be kept on the relevant existing record, where that exists, eg, country office project file; sponsor or donor's record; international programs project file. If no appropriate record exists a new file will be created for the purpose of recording the complaint and the file will be kept in the Public Engagement department.

In the case of a refund request, the staff member who receives or deals with the refund request enters the details onto the sponsor/donor's existing record on the sponsorship database. These details should document:

- The date the complaint or refund request was received;
- How the complaint or refund request was received (either verbal, written or in person);
- The nature of the complaint or refund request;
- Steps taken to handle the complaint or refund request;
- Outcome of the complaint or refund request.

**Contact details:**

<p><b>ChildFund Australia</b> Level 8 162 Goulburn St Surry Hills NSW 2010 Ph: 1800 023 600 info@childfund.org.au</p>	<p><b>ChildFund Vietnam</b> PO Box 494 Hanoi Post Office 75 Dinh Tien Hoang St Hanoi, Vietnam Ph: 1800 6706 info@childfund.org.vn</p>
<p><b>ChildFund Papua New Guinea</b> PO Box 671 Gordons NCD Papua New Guinea mjoshi@childfund.org.pg</p>	<p><b>ChildFund Cambodia</b> PO Box 93 Phnom Penh Cambodia prashantverma@childfund.org.kh</p>
<p><b>ChildFund Laos</b> PO Box 761 Sisattanak District Vientiane Lao PDR keos@childfund.org.la</p>	<p><b>ChildFund Myanmar</b> 201 ShweLaYaung Tower ShweHinThar Condo Corner of Pyay Rd and Shwe Hin Thar Rd Hliang Township Yangon Myanmar winmayhtw@childfund.org.au</p>
<p><b>ChildFund Pass it Back</b> c/- PO Box 761 Sisattanak District Vientiane Lao PDR chris@childfundpassitback.org</p>	<p><b>ChildFund Timor-Leste</b> PO Box 222 Dili, Timor-Leste</p>
<p><b>ACFID</b> Private Bag 3 Deakin ACT 2600 www.acfid.asn.au</p>	<p><b>FIA</b> PO Box 642 Chatswood NSW 2057 www.fia.org.au</p>

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## **POLICY SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- Whistleblowing policy (Ref No.: 9.8).

## **APPROVAL / AMMENDED**

Originally effective date: 30 Nov 2011

1st amendment: 01 June 2017

## **COUNTRY DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE**