

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**CHILDREN IN CROSSFIRE**

**COMPLAINTS POLICY**

Children in Crossfire views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint.
- To ensure everyone at Children in Crossfire knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To ensure all complaints are investigated promptly & fairly.
- To ensure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired.
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

**Definition of a Complaint**

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of Children in Crossfire.

**Where Complaints Come From**

Complaints may come from any individual or organisation who has a legitimate interest in Children in Crossfire e.g. donors, partners, members of the general public, schools, volunteers etc. A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing.

**Confidentiality**

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to be involved and following any relevant data protection requirements.

**Responsibility**

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the board of Directors of Children in Crossfire.

**Review**

This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.  
Last reviewed November 2018

### **Complaints Procedure of Children in Crossfire**

- Written complaints may be sent to our Head office at Children in Crossfire, 2 St. Joseph's Avenue, Derry/Londonderry, BT48 6TH or our Tanzania office at Abla Complex 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Office no 303 & 304, Mikocheni A, Rose Garden Road, PO Box 23204, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. You can also contact us via e-mail at [admin@childrenincrossfire.org](mailto:admin@childrenincrossfire.org)
- Verbal complaints may be made by phone to Head office at +442871269898 or our Tanzania office on +255 (0)22 2775965. The appointed officers are:
  - Head office: Ursula Moore & Caroline Murphy
  - Tanzania office: Gloria Genes & Craig Ferla
- The designated officers must notify the Executive Director of **All** complaints & the outcome of any investigation.

### **Receiving Complaints**

- Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have.
- Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded.
- The person who receives a phone or in person complaint should:
  1. Write down the facts of the complaint
  2. Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number
  3. Note down the relationship of the complainant to Children in Crossfire (for example: partner, donor, volunteer etc)
  4. Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure
  5. Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take
  6. Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words

**For further guidelines about handling verbal complaints, see Appendix 1**

### **Resolving Complaints**

#### **Stage One**

- In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate.
- Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the designated officers on the day it's received.
- On receiving the complaint the designated officer records it in the complaints log located on the shared network and this is accessible only to the two designated officers & the Executive Director. If it has not already been resolved, they delegate an appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action.
- If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.
- Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within 1 week of its occurrence. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.
- Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within [four weeks]. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

- Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

### **Stage Two**

- If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Management Level. At this stage, the Executive Director of Children in Crossfire will decide if it should be passed to the board of Children in Crossfire.
- The request for Management level review should be acknowledged within [1 week] of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.
- The Executive Director may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One.
- If the complaint relates to a specific person, they & their line manager should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.
- The designated officer who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.
- Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within [one week]. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.
- Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.
- The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Executive Director decides it is appropriate to seek board assistance with resolution unless the complaint is made about the Executive Director, in which case this should be reported to the secretary of the board (Ursula Moore) who will then notify the Chairperson of the board. In this case, the Chairperson of the board will respond to the complaint within 1 week.

### **Variation of the Complaints Procedure**

The Board may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about the Chair should not also have the Chair as the person leading a Stage Two review (if the board are required to do so by the Executive Director).

The same applies in the event that a complaint involves one or both of the appointed officers, they too must remove themselves from the procedure on that occasion.

### **Monitoring and Learning from Complaints**

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

**Appendix 1 - Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints**

- Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation
- Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words. Sometimes a person just wants to "let off steam"
- Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry
- Show an interest in what is being said
- Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details
- Ask for clarification wherever necessary
- Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down
- Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) - you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organisation e.g. "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you"
- If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of your organisation, then apologise
- Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue
- Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.
- Don't promise things you can't deliver
- Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met
- Make sure that the person understands what they have been told