

MAA INTERNATIONAL

COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE

MAA International (MAA) is committed to maintaining high levels of professional standards in every area of our work and to a process of continuous improvement but recognise that complaints, grievances and disputes may occur within any organisation.

MAA views complaints as an opportunity to put things right for the person making the complaint and to learn and improve the activities and organisational processes that we undertake in the future.

MAA also recognises that external bodies may need avenues to raise complaints with MAA.

Therefore, MAA values and take seriously any feedback or complaints received and make a commitment to handle, respond and seek a fair resolution of all complaints in an efficient and equitable manner.

This policy is intended to ensure that MAA handles complaints fairly, efficiently and effectively.

The key objectives of this policy are:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
- To streamline the complaints handling procedure.
- To ensure that all the relevant people at MAA know what to do if a complaint is received
- To ensure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To ensure transparent and fair procedures are in place.
- To ensure that MAA responds to complaints in an impartial and timely manner
- To commit to keeping strict confidentiality in the complaints handling process
- To commit to the continual improvement of the complaint handling process and the quality of services

1.2 POLICY SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff (paid and volunteer), contractors and board members, receiving or managing complaints from the public and clients made to or about MAA, regarding aid programmes, services, staff, or the complaint handling process.

This policy covers complaints made by members of the community and all relevant stakeholders affected by our programs including members of the public, partners and supporters.

1.3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

MAA expects staff at all levels to be committed to fair, effective and efficient complaints handling. The following outlines the nature of the commitment expected from staff and the way that commitment should be implemented.

1.3.1 Executive Management are responsible for:

- Promoting a culture that values complaints and their effective resolution.
- Providing adequate support and direction for key staff responsible for handling complaints.
- Regularly review reports about complaint trends and issues arising from complaints.
- Encouraging all staff to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints to resolve them promptly.
- Support recommendations for service, staff and complaint handling improvements arising from the analysis of complaint data.

1.3.2 Manager responsible for complaints handling must:

- Demonstrate exemplary complaint handling practices.
- Keep informed about best practice in complaint handling.
- Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints.
- Assist those making a complaint, if necessary.
- Comply with our complaints handling policy and procedures.
- Recruit, train and empower staff to resolve complaints in accordance with MAA's policies and procedures.
- Ensure recommendations arising from complaints data analysis are reported to management and implemented where appropriate.
- Provide regular feedback to management and/or the governing body on issues arising from complaints.
- Provide suggestions to management on ways to improve the complaints handling management system.
- Implement changes arising from individual complaints as directed.

1.3.3 All staff and volunteers are responsible for:

- Understanding and complying with MAA's complaints handling practices.
- Treating all people with respect, including people who make complaints.
- Providing assistance to people who wish to make complaints access MAA's complaints process.
- Being alert to complaints and assisting staff handling complaints resolve matters promptly.

1.4 DEFINITIONS

The following terms are used in this policy document and are defined as follows:

- **Complaint:** An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products or services, or the complaint handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.
- **Complaints handling/ management system:** All policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used by an organisation in the management of complaints.
- **Complainant:** A person, organisation or its representative making a complaint.
- **Feedback:** Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly or suggestions and expressions of interest in the services provided or the complaint handling process.
- **Inquiry:** A request for information or an explanation.
- **Policy:** A statement or instruction that sets out how we should fulfil our vision, mission and goals.
- **Procedure:** A statement or instruction that sets out how our policies will be implemented and by whom.
- **Stakeholder or interested party:** A person or group having an interest in the performance or success of the organisation.

2 POLICY & PROCEDURES

2.1 POLICY STATEMENT

This policy provides a framework for MAA's compliance with The ACFID Code of Conduct complaints handling process. MAA recognises the importance and value of documenting and responding to concerns and complaints. MAA are committed to maintaining high levels of professional standards and accountability in every area of our work, specifically in aid and development activities, seeking donations and accountability to stakeholders.

2.2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

All complaints and disputes will be addressed promptly and are modelled on the principles of:

- Transparency;
- Fairness;
- Accessibility;
- Responsiveness;
- Efficiency;
- Respect;
- Accountability.

All members and staff at MAA are expected to work cooperatively as a team, to acknowledge any dispute at an early stage, and to resolve any dispute in the most constructive manner possible.

MAA will ensure that information about how and where complaints may be made to or about us is well publicised, on our website.

Any conflict of interest arising from a dispute will be declared and all steps will be taken to ensure persons working to resolve a dispute are impartial.

Members and staff are expected to maintain strict confidentiality in the complaints handling process.

2.3 RESPOND TO COMPLAINTS

Where possible, all complaints will be resolved at first contact with our organisation. Where appropriate, MAA may offer an explanation or apology to the person making the complaint.

MAA will assess and prioritise complaints in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to safety or security, the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.

MAA is committed to managing people's expectations, and will inform the complainant as soon as possible, of the following:

- the complaints process
- the expected time frame for any action to be taken
- the progress of the complaint and reasons for any delay
- the possible outcome of their complaint

2.3.1 Complaints Involving Staff

The MAA Board delegates responsibility for resolving complaints or disputes involving staff members to the CEO.

Where a staff member makes a complaint concerning another staff member, this will be dealt with in accordance with the staff grievance policy, section 13 in the *MAA Employee Handbook*.

Where a member or external agency makes a complaint against a MAA staff member, the CEO or a delegate, such as the Operations Manager will:

- (a) Notify the employee about whom a complaint is being made and the nature of the complaint;
- (b) Investigate the complaint and provide the staff member with an opportunity to respond to any issues raised;
- (c) Attempt to mediate the dispute (if appropriate) and/or attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the external party;
- (d) Take any other action necessary to resolve the issue.

Any disciplinary action against a staff member arising from a complaint will be handled in accordance with the *MAA Employee Handbook* policies and procedures and the Employment Contract.

2.3.2 Complaints Involving Board Members

MAA Complaints against a member or board member should be referred to the CEO. The CEO, or an approved delegate, will attempt to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of the complainant.

The CEO or delegate will advise the person about whom a complaint is being made of the notification and the nature of the complaint.

Where the CEO is the subject of a complaint, the complaint should be referred to another Executive Member of the MAA Board.

If the matter remains unresolved, the CEO or notified Board Member will raise the matter at the next Board meeting following notification. Depending on the seriousness of the complaint, the Board may deal with the matter at this board meeting by determining appropriate action to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of the aggrieved party and the MAA member.

Under the MAA constitution, the Board has powers to suspend or terminate the membership of any member who wilfully 'refuses or neglects to comply' with the provisions of the constitution, or who is 'guilty of conduct prejudicial to the Interests' of MAA. Such action must be taken in accordance with the process described in the constitution, which provide for proper notice and rights of appeal.

2.3.3 MAA External Complaints and Feedback

MAA offers service users, members, stakeholders and the public the opportunity to provide feedback on their experiences with MAA. We value this feedback and aim to manage complaints in a prompt, fair transparent and consistent way.

Any person or organisation using MAA services or affected by its operations has the right to complain.

Complaints' procedures and a commitment to consider all complaints are simple and easy to use and are effectively promoted, so that all people using MAA services have the opportunity to make a complaint if they wish to do so.

Service users, stakeholders and members are entitled to be heard and have their concerns addressed in ways that ensure access and equity, fairness, accountability and transparency.

MAA recognises that the issue of complaint is important to the complainant and must be taken seriously.

Resolving complaints, where possible, to the satisfaction of the complainant is the goal of the complaints policy process.

Complaints will be dealt with in a timely manner and parties to the complaint will be kept informed of progress of the complaint. MAA procedures will reflect principles of natural justice.

Feedback data (both positive and negative) is considered in organisational reviews and follow up.

Board Members, Staff, and volunteers are aware of MAA's procedures for managing client feedback and complaints.

MAA takes a proactive approach, through its communications strategy to ensure all service users, stakeholders and members are aware of the complaints policy and procedures.

2.4 COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

All Board Members, Staff, volunteers and students are given information about the complaints procedure as part of their induction.

This Complaints Handling Policy informs service users, stakeholders and members of:

- How to make a complaint to MAA;
- Who to complain to;

- How MAA will deal with the complaint – complaints process and timelines;
- Rights to a support person and interpreter;
- How to make a complaint to an external body including contact details.

2.4.1 Complaints Initiation Process

Service users, stakeholders and members may make a complaint in writing or verbally, in the following order to:

1. The Staff Member they were dealing with at the time;
2. The supervisor of that worker;
3. The CEO; or
4. The Board of Directors.

If the complaint is about the CEO, or a Board Member, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the Chair of MAA's Board. A special email account has been set up to receive such complaints.

A staff member will look at the complaint within seven (7) days of the complaint being received. They may contact the person for more information.

2.4.2 Complaints Resolution Process

The staff member investigating the complaint will decide how to respond to the complaint and make sure action is taken.

A letter will be sent to the person within fourteen (14) days of the complaint being received explaining what is being done to investigate and resolve their complaint. If the complaint has not been resolved by this stage the person will be asked to formalise their complaint in writing (if this has not already been done).

MAA aims to investigate and resolve all complaints within a further twenty-eight (28) days of receipt of the formalised written complaint. If this time frame cannot be met, the person will be informed of the reasons why and of the alternative time frame for resolution.

All complaints must be dealt:

- Seriously;
- Quickly;
- Confidentially; and
- Without preventing the complainant from using MAA's services.

Service users, stakeholder and members have the right to access a support person at all stages of the complaints resolution process. Copies of all complaints and details of actions taken are centrally filed in the Complaints File, held in the CEO's office. This file is confidential. Within six (6) months of the complaint being resolved, the CEO must review the actions taken to ensure adequate follow up.

2.5 ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING

MAA will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis by management and the Board of Directors. This will inform any improvements that need to be made to our operational processes and the services provided.

On a regular basis we will monitor the effectiveness of our complaint handling processes and make improvements as necessary.

Where appropriate, we will consult and take advice from ACFID and /or other relevant regulatory/ enforcement authorities.

3 REVISION HISTORY

Date of this release: 06 October 2015	Date of next revision: 17 May 2019
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Revision Number	Revision Date	Summary of Changes	Changes Marked?
1.0	19 September 2012	Policy Written	N
2.0	06 October 2015	Update with new logo and minor enhancements.	N
3.0	17 May 2018	New sections incorporated and further details included	N