

COMPLAINTS POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

Student Volunteer Placements International Inc. (SVPI) is committed to developing and maintaining an organisational culture that optimises the ability of staff, management, directors, trustees and members to achieve our strategic objectives. Receiving feedback and responding to complaints are important ways for SVPI to improve performance and be accountable. SVPI 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. SVPI is committed to the timely and fair resolution of complaints.

DEFINITIONS

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

- a criticism relating to one of SVPI's 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; or
- concern about the behaviour of staff, volunteers, contractors, suppliers, partners or others acting on behalf of SVPI.

A complainant is any person or organisation making a complaint.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

SVPI's Complaints Policy will be implemented and supported by a range of operating principles.

- Clients and stakeholders in countries where SVPI works have a right to complain;
- Complaints should be valued and carefully reviewed, as they provide feedback that can help identify areas that may need improvement;
- Complaints handling procedures should be used as an opportunity to enhance SVPI's relationships with stakeholders;
- Complaints procedures should be well publicised, easy to understand and accessible to all stakeholders in the appropriate language and through appropriate media;
- Children and youth are key stakeholders and procedures and requirements for filing a complaint need to recognise their particular situation and context given their vulnerable and disadvantaged status;
- Complainants should be treated with respect and without prejudice while recognising the need to be fair to both the complainant and to 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.

POLICY PURPOSE

This policy has been put in place to;

- Provide a mechanism for stakeholders to make complaints about the standards of service and or personnel.
- Provide SVPI with a feedback loop to enact its continuous improvement cycle.
- Ensure all workers, volunteers, representatives and contractors are aware of the SVPI Complaints Policy.

APPLICATION OF POLICY

1. Publication of policy

In countries in which SVPI operates, 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 the countries in which SVPI operates will be made available in relevant local languages and explained in the local language if requested.

2. Forms and templates

There are no specific forms and templates for making complaints. If you would like to make a complaint, please do so, by submitting your complaint in writing via our website (www.svpi.org.au) or to the following email address: info@svpi.org.au

3. Complaints in SVPI program countries

Due to the specific nature and/or geographical location of their activities, SVPI's in-country Program Supervisor will be responsible for responding to complaints relating to SVPI's operations in that country. In consultation with the President of SVPI, the Program Supervisor will develop additional procedures in order to fulfil the objects and principles of this policy including putting in place appropriate mechanisms for stakeholders to express complaints in a practical and safe manner.

If the complaint is about the Program Supervisor, complaints should be directed to the President.

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 SVPI's executive management.

4. Complaints in Australia

Complaints to SVPI in Australia can be received by telephone, letter or email. To ensure consistency of response and to manage complaints effectively, SVPI's President will be the person responding to general complaints, including putting in place appropriate mechanisms for stakeholders to express complaints in a practical and safe manner. The President will make sure that these complaints are either resolved or referred on to the relevant manager or department. If the complaint is about the President then the matter shall be dealt with by the Board directly.

5. Information complaints handling procedure

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 (outlined in part 6 below).

6. 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:

- 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; and

- A brief description of the complaint.

- The staff person receiving the complaint must refer the complaint to the in-country Program Supervisor or direct to the President if the complaint is made in Australia.

- The Program Supervisor or President as applicable 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, youth or female, particular care and attention will be given. Gender Mainstreaming practices should be consulted. A brief record of the discussion and any agreed actions will be made.

- The Program Supervisor or President as applicable 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.

- If the complaint is unable to be resolved by the Program Supervisor or President as applicable 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.

- Complaints that have not been resolved by the Program Supervisor to the satisfaction of the complainant will be referred to the President for review.

- The President will review the matter and may:

- Reconsider the original decision and take additional corrective action;

- Overturn previous decisions and institute new measures considered necessary and/or,

- Endorse the action that has already been taken with no further action required.

- If the matter is still unresolved and appears to require additional action it will be referred to the Board for review.
- The Board has the option to refer the matter to an external mediator or alternative dispute resolution agency if this is considered to be the most appropriate option.
- If the complaint involves the President it should be referred to the Board.
- Depending on the nature of the complaint, variations to the above procedures may apply.

7. Recording of Complaints

All complaints will be recorded in the Complaints Register within 5 business days of receipt.

All transactions regarding the complaint, including communications, will be recorded in an electronic folder for audit purposes.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

All individuals working for SVPI, whether paid or volunteer, will adhere to this policy and are responsible for ensuring their actions are in line with this policy. Such individuals are also responsible for notifying the board if they believe this policy is not being followed.

POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or more frequently as appropriate.

FURTHER ASSISTANCE

Representatives who have questions or concerns or require further information in relation to these policies and procedures should contact members of the board or the program supervisor, or where that is not practicable the President of SVPI.

POLICY PREPARED BY:



Neville Neal, President

Date: 01/03/2013

RATIFIED BY:



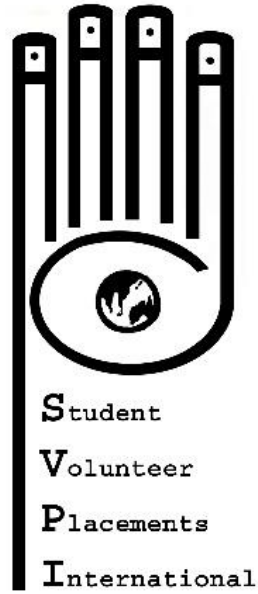
Neville Neal, President

Date: 01/03/2013



Benita Morris, Vice President

Date: 01/03/2013



Partner statement:

Children's Welfare Organization of Nepal (Nepal) (SVPI Nepal) agrees to abide by the principles of this policy and to work constructively to achieve the objectives stated in this policy. SVPI Nepal also undertakes to adhere to local laws and to be proactive in ensuring that no funds are made available to listed terrorist organisations or made available to a person/s that may misuse funds to either directly or indirectly support a terrorist act.

Keshab Khanal

President Children's Welfare Organization of Nepal

Date: 10/12/2013

