Kansarmen SL Foundation
Stichting Kansarmen SL Foundation

Policy of Receiving and Settling Complaints and Grievances

Introduction

The Kansarmen SL Foundation, an NGO dedicated to improving Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) in rural communities, schools, disabled communities, and elderly communities in Sri Lanka, places a high value on transparency, accountability, and inclusivity. As we work in collaboration with government authorities, other NGOs, donors, local societies, beneficiaries and staff of KSLF, it is crucial to have a structured and professional approach to handling public complaints and grievances. This procedure ensures that all stakeholders and staff have a clear and accessible means to voice their concerns, knowing that their issues will be addressed fairly and effectively.

This document outlines the procedure for receiving and settling internal and external complaints and grievances at the Kansarmen SL Foundation. It is intended to foster trust and confidence among all parties involved in our projects by providing a clear, transparent, and gender-sensitive mechanism for addressing issues that may arise during the implementation of our WASH initiatives.

i. Procedure for Receiving and Settling Public Complaints and Grievances

Procedure Overview

The Kansarmen SL Foundation recognizes the importance of addressing grievances swiftly and efficiently. We are committed to creating an environment where all stakeholders, including beneficiaries, employees, donors, and community members, can express their concerns without fear of retribution. This policy outlines the steps involved in receiving, investigating, and resolving complaints and grievances.

The procedure is designed to be user-friendly and accessible, ensuring that even those in remote areas or with limited resources can have their voices heard. Special attention is given to issues of gender justice, equity, and equality, in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDGs 5 (Gender Equality), 10 (Reduced Inequality), and 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

Complaint Submission Channels

Complaints and grievances can be submitted through multiple channels to ensure accessibility for all stakeholders:

1. **In-Person:** Beneficiaries and stakeholders can submit their complaints directly at any of our project sites or at our office location, addressed to: No. 546/8 Daluwakotuwa, Kochchikade. Our staff members are trained to receive complaints professionally and respectfully.
2. **Written Submission:** Complaints can be sent via mail to our office address or submitted through a dedicated complaint form available at our office or on our website. This option ensures that those who prefer written communication can have their grievances recorded officially.

3. **Telephone:** A dedicated phone line is available during working hours for receiving complaints at the phone numbers: Program Manager, Chethana (+94 778165166), or the Managing Director, Chaminda (+94 777703736). Our team members handling the calls are trained to document the complaint details accurately and assure the complainant that their concerns will be addressed.
4. **Email:** Complaints can be submitted via a designated email address specifically for grievance handling on the email address: info@kansarmenslfoundation.lk. This method is suitable for those who have access to email and prefer digital communication.
5. **Online Form:** An online grievance submission form is available on our website. This form is designed to be user-friendly and accessible, even for those with limited digital literacy. It allows complainants to submit their grievances conveniently from any location.

Acknowledgment of Complaints

Upon receiving a complaint, an acknowledgment is sent to the complainant within 48 hours. This acknowledgment includes confirmation of the complaint being registered, the reference number for future communication, and an outline of the next steps in the resolution process. The prompt acknowledgment reassures the complainant that their concerns are being taken seriously.

Initial Assessment

Each complaint undergoes an initial assessment to determine its nature and urgency. This assessment is carried out by a designated officer or team, depending on the complexity of the issue. The assessment involves categorizing the complaint based on its relevance to specific projects, its potential impact on the community, and any immediate actions required.

If the complaint is related to a specific project, it is forwarded to the relevant project manager or officer for further investigation. For complaints involving multiple projects or broader organizational concerns, a senior management team may be involved in the assessment.

Investigation

A thorough investigation is conducted by the relevant team or individual responsible for the project or area related to the complaint. The investigation process may involve:

- **Consultations:** Engaging with the complainant, project staff, government authorities, and other stakeholders to gather detailed information about the issue.
- **Site Visits:** Conducting site visits to observe the situation firsthand and gather additional context that may not be evident from initial reports.
- **Review of Documentation:** Analyzing project documentation, agreements, and previous communications to identify any discrepancies or areas of concern.
- **Stakeholder Interviews:** Speaking with various stakeholders, including community members, to understand the broader implications of the complaint and ensure that all perspectives are considered.

Resolution

Based on the findings of the investigation, a resolution is proposed. This resolution is communicated to the complainant, detailing the steps that will be taken to address the issue. The resolution process may include:

- **Corrective Actions:** Implementing specific measures to rectify the issue, such as repairing infrastructure, adjusting project timelines, or addressing staff conduct.
- **Mediation:** In cases where the complaint involves conflicts between parties, mediation may be arranged to facilitate a mutually agreeable solution.
- **Compensation:** If appropriate, compensation or restitution may be offered to the complainant, especially in cases where the grievance has caused financial or physical harm.

Feedback and Follow-Up

After the resolution is communicated, feedback is solicited from the complainant to ensure they are satisfied with the outcome. This feedback is crucial for continuous improvement of our grievance handling process. Follow-up actions may include:

- **Monitoring:** Ongoing monitoring of the situation to ensure that the resolution is effective and that similar issues do not arise in the future.
- **Reporting:** Documenting the complaint, investigation, resolution, and feedback in our internal systems to identify patterns and areas for improvement.
- **Continued Engagement:** Maintaining open communication with the complainant to ensure that they feel supported and valued throughout the process.

Escalation

If the complainant is not satisfied with the proposed resolution, the grievance can be escalated to higher management within the Kansarmen SL Foundation or its mother organization, Stichting Kansarmen SL Foundation. In cases where the complaint involves legal or regulatory matters, the issue may be referred to appropriate government authorities.

Documentation and Reporting

All complaints and their resolutions are documented and stored securely in our internal systems. This documentation is essential for ensuring transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in our projects. Regular reports on grievances and resolutions are reviewed by management to identify patterns, areas for improvement, and potential training needs for staff.

Confidentiality and Protection

We are committed to protecting the confidentiality of all complainants. The identity of the complainant is kept confidential unless they choose to waive this right. Furthermore, no complainant will face any retribution for raising a grievance. This protection is crucial for encouraging stakeholders to come forward with their concerns without fear of negative consequences.

ii. Procedure for Settling Complaints of Employees and Senior Officials

In addition to handling public complaints and grievances, the Kansarmen SL Foundation has a procedure for receiving and settling complaints from employees and senior officials, including whistleblowing policies.

Whistleblowing Policy and Internal Complaints Procedure

The Kansarmen SL Foundation is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and accountability within our organization. We recognize that employees and senior officials may, at times, become aware of practices or behaviors that are unethical, illegal, or in violation of our organizational values. This whistleblowing policy provides a safe and confidential means for employees to report such concerns.

Reporting Channels

Employees and senior officials can report concerns through the following channels:

1. **Direct Reporting:** Employees are encouraged to report concerns directly to their immediate supervisor or manager. If the concern involves the supervisor or manager, or if the employee feels uncomfortable reporting through this channel, they may report directly to the Managing Director, Chaminda (+94 777703736).
2. **Confidential Reporting Line:** A confidential reporting line is available for employees to report concerns anonymously if they prefer. This line is managed by an independent third party to ensure the highest level of confidentiality.
3. **Email:** Employees can submit their concerns via a designated email address for whistleblowing reports. This email is monitored by a senior management team member who is not involved in day-to-day operations to ensure impartiality.

Investigation and Resolution

Upon receiving a whistleblowing report or internal complaint, an initial assessment is conducted to determine the severity and scope of the concern. This assessment is followed by a thorough investigation, which may include:

- **Review of Documentation:** Analyzing relevant documents, communications, and records to identify any violations or areas of concern.
- **Interviews:** Conducting confidential interviews with the complainant, witnesses, and any other relevant parties.
- **Legal Consultation:** Consulting with legal advisors to ensure that the investigation and resolution process complies with all applicable laws and regulations.

The findings of the investigation are reviewed by a senior management team, and a resolution is proposed. This resolution is communicated to the complainant, and appropriate actions are taken to address the issue. If the concern involves serious misconduct or illegal activities, the matter may be referred to external authorities.

Protection for Whistleblowers

The Kansarmen SL Foundation is committed to protecting whistleblowers from retaliation. Employees who report concerns in good faith will not face any negative consequences for their actions. This protection extends to all aspects of employment, including job security, compensation, and opportunities for advancement.

Gender Justice, Equity, and Community Inclusion

Our grievance and complaints procedures are designed with a strong focus on gender justice, equity, and community inclusion. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by women, girls, and marginalized groups, our policies ensure that these voices are given priority and are addressed with the utmost respect and urgency.

Gender Justice

We are committed to promoting gender justice in all aspects of our work. This commitment extends to our grievance and complaints procedures, ensuring that women and girls can report issues without facing discrimination or bias. We provide training to our staff to handle complaints sensitively, especially those involving gender-based violence or discrimination. This training includes understanding the specific barriers faced by women and ensuring that our procedures are accessible and supportive for all.

Equity

Equity is at the heart of our grievance handling process. We ensure that our procedures are inclusive and accessible to all, regardless of socio-economic status, disability, or geographic location. Our approach includes:

- **Accessible Reporting Channels:** We offer multiple channels for reporting grievances to ensure that all stakeholders, including those with disabilities or limited access to technology, can submit their complaints effectively.
- **Support Services:** We provide support services such as language assistance, counseling, and advocacy to ensure that all complainants can navigate the grievance process without barriers.
- **Fair Treatment:** Every complaint is treated with fairness and impartiality, ensuring that all stakeholders are given equal consideration and that no one faces discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic background.

Community Inclusion

Our grievance procedures are designed to be inclusive of community perspectives, especially those from marginalized and underrepresented groups. We actively engage with community leaders and stakeholders to understand their specific concerns and ensure that our procedures are responsive to their needs. This engagement includes:

- **Community Outreach:** We conduct outreach activities to educate communities about their rights and the grievance procedures available to them. This includes holding information sessions and workshops to ensure that all community members are aware of how to report issues.
- **Participatory Approach:** We involve community representatives in the development and review of our grievance procedures to ensure that they reflect the needs and perspectives of the communities we serve.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** We maintain open channels for feedback from communities to continuously improve our procedures and address any emerging issues or concerns.

Endorsement

The Kansarmen SL Foundation is steadfast in its commitment to uphold the highest standards of transparency, fairness, and inclusivity through our grievance and complaints procedures. We believe that by prioritizing gender justice, equity, and community inclusion, we can create an environment where every voice is heard, and every concern is addressed with integrity and respect.

This policy reflects our dedication to these principles, and we expect all members of our organization, as well as our partners and stakeholders, to adhere to these guidelines.

By signing below, the undersigned affirm their commitment to this policy and its implementation across all levels of the Kansarmen SL Foundation.

Signatories:

[Signature]
Mr. Chaminda Fernandopulle
Managing Director
Date: _____
Phone: +94 778165166
Email:
chaminda@kansarmenslfoundation.lk

[Signature]
Niluka Palendagama
Secretary
Date: _____
Phone: +94
Email:

[Signature]
K. P. Gnanapala
Chairman
Date: _____
Phone: +94
Email:

Kansarmen SL Foundation

Website: https://kansarmenslfoundation.lk/site/
Twitter: https://x.com/Kansarmen_org
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/Kansarmenfoundation?mibextid=LQQJ4d
Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/kansarmensl?igsh=Zmsybnk3MnN2dmw0
LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/company/kansarmen-s-l-foundation/