

IAS COMPLAINTS RESPONSE POLICY

THE POLICY

As an International None Government Organization, IAS believes and welcomes feedback and will react in a constructive manner to complaints from the people the organization works with. We acknowledge that staff (internal) or beneficiaries, service providers etc. (external) have a right to complain when they feel that IAS has wronged them in one or another way. IAS believes that a well managed mechanism for handling complaints (internal and external) can improve the quality of our work, and that there is need to discover in a timely manner evidence of activities that may threaten or impede compliance with IAS policies as the organization strives to serve all target communities.

In doing this, the process put in place to handle complaints, when implemented and properly maintained, will assist in the efforts to reinforce ethical behaviors related to the work that IAS does, and will definitely detect and correct any unacceptable conduct. Establishing an early warning system and bringing issues or matters arising, to senior management, and in time, will prevent or detect and correct possible problems before they cause serious harm or damage.

This policy applies to all departments within International Aid Services; Country programs, target community, suppliers, contractors, donors and all partners.

The policy shall be reviewed after three years of implementation

WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

As per the Vision and Mission of IAS, and as per the context of this policy, a complaint is a grievance made against International Aid Services as an organization, or any of its employees, partners and or associates where there has been failure to do as promised; and that promise (verbal or written) should be related to our activities and as per our Mission and Values and or the conduct of IAS staff and representatives.

STAKEHOLDERS

In coming up with guidelines for complainants, there are four major or key stakeholders.

1. The individuals who bring the complaint (Complainants). These can be either from within IAS (Current or former Employees, Trainees or Volunteers) or from outside the organization (the beneficiaries or target community, Suppliers, contractors, partners, donors)
2. The accused, who could be individuals or groups. These can also be either from within IAS (Current or former Employees, Trainees or Volunteers) or from outside the organization (the beneficiaries or target community, Suppliers, contractors, partners, donors)

3. The victim may have been victimized by different kinds of misconduct or/ and abuse such as manipulation, threats, violence, wrongful use of power and money, etc., and especially cases of sexual offences. *Sexual Offences can be defined as abuse of a role or power* where a person in a vulnerable situation is being exploited instead of protected. It is about one person exploiting his/her position towards a person he/she is in a helping relation to, whether that be by sending out sexual signals or by introducing a sexual relationship to that person. *With sexual offences we mean the whole range of sexual acts, from offensive language to imposed sexual intercourse or similar acts.* Complainants of sexual exploitation or abuse could come from within or from outside the organization.
4. Other interested parties like family members of the accused, government line ministries or bankers.

HOW TO FILE A COMPLAINT

It is in the interest of IAS that anyone wishing to express a concern of any kind and against anyone within the organization should feel free and comfortable doing so. In this guideline, anyone is free to use the following avenues.

1. One can decide to discuss with any senior manager, supervisor or any IAS staff on ground from where the complaint comes
2. Use a confidential conversation with human resource personnel
3. Send a mail to the IAS website anonymous complaints e-mail address

STEPS TO ADDRESS COMPLAINTS

1. Receive and accept the complaint

Officers concerned will receive each complaint (Verbal or Written), and this should be recorded in A Claims Log. Upon submission of the complaint, the IAS officer in charge at the time will determine whether the complainant desires anonymity (somehow in agreement with the person himself/herself. IAS officer cannot release his/her name without permission) which should be granted in accordance with the IAS Anti-Corruption Policy. The officer recording the complaint should sign it (name and date) and the complainant should get a signed copy. Complaints will be acknowledged within a week from the time the complaint is logged.

2. Reviewing the complaints

The IAS officers in charge and the committees to handle complaints should make prompt reviewing of the complaint. A complaints committee will consist of at least one Senior Management member from HQ and field level plus a programme person. Complaints will be reviewed to confirm whether or not they fall within the scope of IAS' complaints policy. At this stage, the committee reserves the right to reject any unfounded complaints.

3. Investigate the claim

This is a stage which determines who will be involved in dealing with the claim or complaint whether external or internal. Depending on the nature of the complaint, and the people involved, it is recommended that all cases should be taken with equal seriousness. If the accused is a Senior Manager (Programme Officer or Country Director) one who leads others, a risk analysis will be made by senior management, to decide if it is appropriate to suspend the subject of complaint, or not. IAS will not handle criminal offences; such should be referred to the law of that particular Programme Country.

Serious complaints such as complaints about sexual exploitation/abuse, fraud or corruption will and should be dealt with within two weeks such a complaint is logged.

4. Solve the problem (Resolve)

IAS will deal with complaints according to their level of urgency, but will aim to resolve serious issues within **one month** and routine issues within **two months**. A lot is involved within this step. At this stage it could just be the accounts department paying off a single invoice. On the other hand, a corrective action – for example, the termination of an employee, like a senior officer for mismanagement of the office – could be far-reaching. In such cases IAS senior management, in consultation with the Head Office or the Chairperson of the IAS Executive Board, will refer critically to the laws that govern the Program Country in question together with the IAS Employment Policy. In case an employee was on suspension as investigations were being carried out, and it is proven that there was no offence, such must be recalled back to the job. Records must be kept at each step for future reference in case there is an appeal on the decision taken.

5. Response to the complainant

The complainant, victim and subject of complaint will be informed at the end of the process about the outcome and or action taken. At this stage all stakeholders (The complainant, the accused and the victim) must have clear information from the committee that handled the case if they so wish.

6. Appeals process

In case a complainant is not satisfied with the response they have received from IAS or if they feel the remedy action is inadequate they may appeal. This will majorly depend on the level of the complaint. If the complaint has been handled by a team below the Country Director, then the appeal should go to the Country Director. If the complaint is about the Country Director, then the appeal should go to the Chief Executive Officer. Above the CEO the appeal should go to the Chairperson of the IAS Executive Board. Any person wanting to appeal against a decision must make the appeal within and not later than four weeks after the decision. IAS will avail two opportunities to appeal.

IMPLEMENTATION

IAS is committed to the full implementation of this policy. By this policy, IAS encourages all stakeholders to be able to come forward with a complaint without fear of retaliation. Any retaliation by a staff member or other representative of the organization may result to discontinuation of the staff member from the organization.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Complaints that are classified as sensitive are handled with utmost confidentiality. IAS will ensure that a limited number of persons who need to know about the complaint will be involved in the process.