

SAFE COMPLAINT HANDLING POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

The Gaza Society for Sustainable Agriculture and Friendly Environment (SAFE) is committed to delivering quality programs while maintaining trust through transparent, fair, and responsive complaint handling. This policy applies to all interactions with SAFE's beneficiaries, staff, volunteers, contractors, partners, and other stakeholders. SAFE operates under the Palestinian Charitable Associations Law No. 1 of 2000 and Ministry of Social Development guidelines, aligning with the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability.

2. PURPOSE

This policy aims to:

- Provide a clear, accessible mechanism for submitting complaints and feedback.
- Guarantee impartial, confidential, and timely resolution of grievances.
- Strengthen organizational accountability and stakeholder trust.
- Promote continuous learning by using complaint data to improve services.
- Protect complainants and staff from retaliation or intimidation .

3. SCOPE

Applies to complaints from:

- **Beneficiaries** of SAFE programs and services.
- **Employees, volunteers, and contractors.**
- **Partners, donors, and community stakeholders.**

Complaints may concern:

- Service delivery delays or quality issues.
- Staff misconduct or unethical behavior.
- Sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment (PSEA).
- Discrimination or exclusion.
- Financial mismanagement or corruption.

- Breaches of confidentiality or data protection .

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

SAFE's complaint handling is founded on:

- **Confidentiality:** Protecting complainant identity and data.
- **Impartiality:** Objective investigation free from bias.
- **Transparency:** Clear process, updates, and outcomes.
- **Accessibility:** Multi-channel entry points; support for disabilities and low-literacy individuals.
- **Timeliness:** Acknowledgment within 3 working days; resolution according to severity.
- **Accountability:** Documented actions, follow-up, and public reporting.
- **Learning:** Regular analysis to inform program improvements .

5. COMPLAINT SUBMISSION CHANNELS

To ensure accessibility in Gaza's challenging environment, SAFE offers:

- **In-person:** At SAFE offices and field sites, with suggestion boxes.
- **Email:** complaints@palsafe.org.
- **Phone/WhatsApp/SMS:** +970-599-188092.
- **Online Form:** Accessible via SAFE's website (mobile-optimized).
- **Social Media:** Private messaging on Facebook/Telegram monitored daily. Anonymous submissions accepted, though providing contact details facilitates follow-up.

6. COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURE

6.1 Registration & Acknowledgment

1. **Logging:** Assign a unique reference number upon receipt.
2. **Acknowledgment:** Confirm receipt to complainant within 3 working days, including next steps and expected timelines .

6.2 Classification

Complaints are triaged by severity:

- **Level 1 (Routine):** Minor service issues; resolved within 5 working days.
- **Level 2 (Moderate):** Staff misconduct or programmatic failures; 10–15 working days.
- **Level 3 (Critical):** Corruption, PSEA, major rights violations; 30 working days or longer if legal/action required.

Classification aligns with CHS and Sphere guidance to ensure appropriate prioritization .

6.3 Investigation & Resolution

1. **Lead Officer:** Complaint Handling Officer (CHO) reviews and assigns investigation team.
2. **Evidence Gathering:** Interviews with involved parties, document review, site visits.
3. **Decision & Action:** Written findings and corrective measures defined.
4. **Feedback:** Regular status updates for complainant; final decision communicated in writing. Investigations follow the CHS Alliance Investigators' Toolkit and IASC best practices for fairness and quality .

6.4 Appeal Mechanism

If dissatisfied with the outcome, complainants may:

1. Appeal to the **Complaints Review Committee** within 7 working days.
2. Escalate to the **Director** or **Board** for final internal review.
3. Seek external recourse with the **Ministry of Social Development**, relevant **donor** grievance channels, or **judicial authorities**.

7. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 Sexual Exploitation, Abuse & Harassment (PSEA)

- Treated as Level 3 critical; immediate referral to senior PSEA focal point.
- Survivors offered confidential medical, psychological, and legal support.
- Anonymous reporting encouraged via dedicated channels .

7.2 Protection Against Retaliation

- Zero tolerance for any retaliation or intimidation.
- Whistle-blower protection per UNICEF's policy and FAO's Code of Ethical Conduct.

- Disciplinary measures for offenders.

7.3 Confidentiality & Data Protection

- All complaint data stored in encrypted HR databases, accessible only to CHO and Review Committee.
- Personal data handled per OHCHR confidentiality standards and UNHCR minimum standards for feedback mechanisms .

8. MONITORING, REPORTING & LEARNING

- **Quarterly Reviews:** Analyze complaint trends and systemic issues.
- **KPIs:** Number of complaints, resolution rates, time to close, satisfaction scores.
- **Annual Inclusion Report:** Published internally, outlining performance, challenges, and budget allocation for complaint management (min. 1 % of operating budget).

9. GOVERNANCE & RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Executive Sponsor** (SAFE Director): Policy endorsement, resource allocation.
- **Complaint Handling Officer:** Day-to-day management, coordination of investigations.
- **Complaints Review Committee:** Appeals, policy oversight, quarterly audits.
- **All Staff:** Promptly report concerns, participate in trainings, uphold principles.

10. POLICY REVIEW & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

This policy will be formally reviewed every 12 months by the Complaints Review Committee, incorporating feedback from complainants, staff surveys, audit findings, and changes in the operating environment or legislation.