

**BENEFICIARY FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS
POLICY FOR INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION AND HUMANITARIAN
PROJECTS**

VOLKSHILFE ÖSTERREICH
VOLKSHILFE SOLIDARITÄT
VOLKSHILFE FORSCHUNG¹

¹ The present policy applies to the registered associations "Volkshilfe Österreich", "Volkshilfe Solidarität" and "Volkshilfe Forschung". These are summarised below under the term "Volkshilfe Federal Offices (VH BGST)".

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1 Introduction

Volkshilfe has been implementing development and humanitarian projects in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and South-Eastern Europe since 1951. In our international, as in our national work, we seek to amplify the voices of disadvantaged and marginalised people, and promote justice and solidarity. In doing so, we work with civil society organisations and local authorities in countries across the globe.

We strive to adhere to the highest standards of accountability to all our stakeholders, including the public that provides us with donations, local and central government institutions that entrust us with their funds for social programmes as well as the people who are targeted by our aid and humanitarian projects.

We involve the target communities of our projects in all stages of the project management cycle including planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. We prioritise participatory planning processes and work with civil society organisations that are deeply rooted in the communities we serve.

We are committed to ensuring that the communities and people we work with have adequate mechanisms to provide feedback and complaints. Volkshilfe is fully committed to the International Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief, the Common Humanitarian Standards and the Sphere Standards, all of which include standards or commitments on feedback and complaints mechanisms.

2 How Volkshilfe handles feedback and complaints

- We ensure that the people we serve have adequate information about how to provide feedback and complaints to us or our partner organisations. This information can be shared directly through community visits, during the implementation of project activities, via social media or through written communications such as leaflets.
- Our staff and the staff of our partner organisations are trained to be respectful to the people we serve, regardless of their ethnicity, nationality, religion, class, sexuality, gender race, etc., and to be receptive and welcoming to feedback and complaints.
- We strive to offer the people we serve a diversity of ways to submit feedback and complaints. Every project is unique and requires its own solution. Social media and messaging applications have become an increasingly important tool to engage with beneficiaries, including on feedback and complaints. Our staff and the staff of our partner

organisations also receive feedback and complaint during community visits or during the implementation of project activities. Many of our partners regularly receive beneficiaries and other stakeholders in their offices where they listen to and respond to their feedback and complaints. Complaints can also be submitted anonymously via post or letter boxes.

- We will accept feedback and complaints from all our stakeholders, including the general public, our private and institutional donors, project beneficiaries, suppliers and others.
- Feedback and complaints are treated confidentially and are only discussed with those that need to be involved in their resolution. We respect the principle of non-retaliation. Staff members that undermine the principles of confidentiality and non-retaliation with bad intent may be subject to disciplinary action.
- We are committed to responding to feedback and complaints timely.
- Complaints are being investigated and relevant internal and external stakeholders are being involved, as required. For complaints regarding financial matters or fraud, this may include the finance department and/or auditors.
- Serious complaints regarding fraud or corruption, or complaints involving sexual exploitation and abuse are always escalated to Volkshilfe's senior management. Feedback about project activities and non-serious complaints will be dealt with at the appropriate level. For instance, complaints about inclusion/exclusion of project beneficiaries and the timing and nature of project activities are normally best dealt with at project manager level.
- Volkshilfe regularly reviews this policy and our international commitments with our local partner organisations. We will ensure that our partners have the technical capacity and required resources to implement efficient and effective feedback and complaints mechanisms.
- Should a complaint reveal a criminal offence, this will always be reported to the competent law enforcement agency.

3 Review

This policy will be kept under review and updated as appropriate.