Somali Family
SERVICES

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Community Feedback and Complaints Response Mechanism (CFCRM) Policy

SFS commits to accountability by actively listening to the communities and individuals it serves. This policy establishes a clear, confidential, and accessible feedback and complaints system. Its purpose is to give all beneficiaries, community members, and stakeholders a safe, trusted channel to share feedback (suggestions or praise) or lodge complaints (about misconduct, fraud, poor service, etc.) related to SFS programs, staff, or partners. A robust CFCRM enhances accountability, transparency, and trust. It aligns with international standards (Core Humanitarian Standard commitments on communication and feedback), Sida's accountability guidelines, and Do No Harm principles. SFS will ensure community members know how to use this system and that responses are timely and appropriate.

Scope

This policy applies to **all** SFS projects, programs, and operations (in any location). It covers every SFS employee, volunteer, partner, consultant, and supplier. **Any individual or group** affected by or benefitting from SFS's work – including beneficiaries, local communities, and other stakeholders – is entitled to use the feedback and complaints mechanism. Both general feedback (comments, suggestions, compliments) and formal complaints (grievances of any nature) are included.

Guiding Principles

- **Accessibility:** Provide simple, widely publicized channels in all operational areas (see below). Ensure materials and processes are in local languages and inclusive of women, youth, elderly, and persons with disabilities.
- **Confidentiality and Safety:** Handle all feedback discreetly. Protect the identities of complainants and whistleblowers; never disclose personal details without consent. Ensure complainants are safe from retaliation or intimidation.
- **Transparency:** Clearly communicate procedures, timelines, and possible outcomes to complainants and the community. Publish general information about how many complaints were received and resolved (aggregate data only).
- **Timeliness:** Acknowledge receipt of every complaint within 72 hours. Strive to complete investigations and provide feedback within 30 working days. Explain any delays to the complainant.
- **Impartiality and Fairness:** Investigations are objective and evidence-based. Complainants and respondents are treated with respect and given a chance to present their side.
- **Accountability:** Senior leadership ensures complaints lead to corrective actions. Feedback outcomes are communicated to complainants (as appropriate) and incorporated into organizational learning.

Legal and Policy Framework

SFS's CFCRM policy is grounded in:

- **Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS):** Commitments 4 and 5 (communication and feedback/complaints).
- **Sida Accountability Guidelines (2023):** Emphasizing transparency and anti-corruption.
- **Diakonia P.O.W.E.R. Programme Framework (2025–2028):** Requirements on partner

accountability.
- SFS's own PSEA, Anti-Fraud, Whistleblower Protection, and Gender Equality policies.
- The Somalia NGO Consortium Accountability Charter and any other relevant local codes of conduct.

Feedback and Complaints Channels

SFS will offer multiple, accessible channels so people can choose how to give feedback safely. Channels include, for example:
- **Toll-free hotline:** A dedicated phone line (+252 61 146 8432) answered by trained staff.
- **Email:** A confidential email address (e.g. complaints@sfs.org) for written feedback.
- **Suggestion Boxes:** Secure feedback boxes placed in public areas (with sealed envelopes for privacy).
- **In-Person:** Reporting directly to any trained SFS staff or field facilitator (who then forwards the report).
- **SMS/WhatsApp:** A mobile number or SMS hotline for areas with phone/text access.
- **Community Forums:** Regular community meetings or focus groups where people can voice feedback (these are documented by staff).

All field teams will actively inform communities about these options (through posters, radio announcements, meeting notices, etc.). Information provided will explain what kinds of feedback can be given and assure confidentiality and non-retaliation.

Complaint Categories and Handling Units

Complaints and feedback will be categorized to ensure they reach the right handlers:

- **Programmatic Feedback:** (e.g. comments on service quality, relevance, accessibility) – handled by the **Programme Manager**.
- **Administrative/Staff Conduct:** (e.g. delays in service, staff behavior issues, rights violations) – handled by **Human Resources**.
- **Financial Irregularities/Fraud:** (e.g. misuse of funds or assets) – handled by **Finance Department** and reported to the Executive Director.

- **Safeguarding/PSEA Cases:** (e.g. sexual exploitation or abuse, child protection concerns) – handled by the **PSEA/Child Protection Focal Point**, with support from HR and senior management.
- **Partner Misconduct:** (e.g. partner NGO failing to meet obligations or behaving unethically) – handled by the **Programme Director** or designated partnership manager.

Other categories can be defined as needed. For each case, the designated responsible team or person ensures the complaint is recorded, investigated, and resolved.

Complaints Handling Procedure

Each complaint or piece of feedback is processed through the following steps:

1. **Log Receipt:** The first person to receive a complaint (at a hotline, office, or meeting) logs it into a standard Complaint Register. Key details (date, channel, summary) are recorded.
2. **Acknowledgment:** Within 72 hours, the complainant is informed that their feedback/complaint has been received (via phone, text, or in writing). This builds trust that action will follow.
3. **Assessment & Routing:** The Accountability Focal Point (AFP) reviews the complaint to assess severity and assigns it to the appropriate unit (as per categories above). If urgent (e.g. abuse allegation), it is escalated immediately.
4. **Investigation:** The responsible unit conducts a timely and confidential investigation, gathering information and interviewing relevant parties. Investigations are concluded within 30 days, with extensions only if unavoidable.
5. **Resolution and Feedback:** Based on findings, the unit determines corrective measures (e.g. service remedy, policy change, disciplinary action). The outcome is communicated back to the complainant (respecting confidentiality) and implemented. Even if details cannot be shared, the complainant is told the case is closed.
6. **Documentation:** All steps and outcomes are documented in the Complaint Register. Copies of reports and decisions are kept for internal record-keeping.

Throughout the process, SFS ensures that complainants understand their rights (e.g. to an interpreter, to have a support person, to anonymity). Where a complaint involves a vulnerable person, extra care is taken (e.g. obtaining informed consent from a guardian, providing psychological support referrals).

Roles and Responsibilities

- **Executive Director:** Final oversight of the CFCRM. Ensures sufficient resources and reviews trends and lessons from complaints. Approves any major corrective actions.
- **Accountability Focal Point (AFP):** Leads the implementation of this mechanism. Consolidates complaints data, monitors case progress, reports trends to management and donors. Advises on improvements to the process.
- **Programme Managers:** Actively encourage beneficiaries to use feedback channels; ensure their teams do not impede or discourage complaints. Handle relevant programmatic issues.
- **HR Department:** Manages grievances related to staff conduct; takes disciplinary actions when needed. Maintains confidentiality for employee-related cases.
- **Finance Department:** Investigates and addresses financial complaints or fraud. Works with auditors and legal authorities as required.
- **All Staff and Partners:** Must treat feedback seriously, refer complaints to the AFP, and implement any corrective actions. They are expected to uphold transparency and to report misconduct they observe.

Confidentiality and Complainant Protection

- All complainants are protected under SFS's Whistleblower/Protection Policy. Their identity and details are shared only on a need-to-know basis.
- Information about complaints is stored securely; access is limited to the AFP and relevant managers.
- Retaliation against anyone for raising a complaint is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Learning and Improvement

- **Periodic Review:** Quarterly, the AFP (or committee) reviews the Complaint Register to identify patterns (e.g. repeated staff or program issues). Summary reports are submitted to senior management.
- **Action on Trends:** Lessons learned from complaints inform training, program adjustments, and policy changes. For example, if multiple complaints concern water delivery, SFS reviews that process.
- **Community Feedback:** SFS periodically surveys communities (or uses suggestion forums) to gauge satisfaction with the mechanism itself and make improvements.
- **Donor Accountability:** If a complaint involves a specific donor-funded activity, SFS follows any contractual escalation procedures and informs the donor in accordance with agreements.

Reporting to Donors and Authorities

- Any complaint implicating donor funds or violating contractual terms is reported to the donor as required by the grant agreement.
- Serious legal violations (e.g. fraud, violence, SEA) are reported to the appropriate authorities (e.g. police, anti-corruption agencies) promptly. SFS cooperates fully with investigations.

Policy Review

This CFCRM policy is reviewed at least every two years or sooner if required by new laws, donor requirements, or lessons learned. The AFP leads the review, and any updates are approved by executive leadership. The revised policy is then redistributed to all staff and partners.

Abdurashid Mohamed Ali

SFS Executive Director

Signature____________ Abdurashid Ali

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