

## **Complaint and Response Mechanism policy**

### **1. Introduction**

COAST Trust is a people-centered organization that accountable to its stakeholders. It is committed to working in an open and responsible way that builds the trust and respect of stakeholders. To ensure that we continually improve the way we work. We want to know the views of our stakeholders. Ensuring that our stakeholders can hold us to account will improve the quality of our work in all areas of activity. Our stakeholders have every right to raise a complaint. We are committed to allow complaints and caring those in an appropriate and timely manner. The **Complaints and Response Mechanism Policy** will set out our procedures for managing complaints. This policy will actively be disseminated to all our stakeholders. The policy will be kept under review and subject to annual report to the board to trustees.

### **2. Purpose**

The policy will set out the procedure for submitting, caring, and managing complaints. It will define what kinds of complaints can be received and what will be outside of the remit of COAST and who can complain. It will describe the steps of dealing with a complaint and our monitoring process to integrate the system. It will sketch the people's expectation on us and when they make a complaint.

It is hoped that most complaints or concerns about the activities or views of COAST Trust can and will be dealt with informally by staff or volunteers at local level. However, it should be mentioned that all the issues can not be resolved in this way. Thus a formal complaints mechanism is required for those occasions when an individual or organization wishes to make their complaint a matter of record and to receive a formal response.

### **3. Definition**

A complaint is where an individual or a group expresses their concern or dissatisfaction about the standard of services, how it treats its personnel, its stakeholders and when COAST Trust policies, guidelines and manuals are not respected by COAST Trust or its staff or volunteers. The complaints mean differences between declared policies and practices at any level and if staff or the stakeholders and if transferred to the upper level(s).

Complaint could include the following:

- i. A violation of the COAST Trust policies, guidelines, manuals and code of conduct.
- ii. A concern about the behavior of staff or the quality of the program implementation.
- iii. How a service has been managed which has a direct impact on the affected population.
- iv. Abuse of power manifested against those with less social power, and how they are treated physically and psychologically.
- v. Sexual harassment and manipulation by a person in a position of power providing any type of assistance in exchange for sexual acts
- vi. Staff members involved in corruption or abuse of their position for private gain, such as misusing the financial and other resources of the organization.

A complaint has to be about some action for which COAST Trust is responsible or is within our sphere of influence.

**Complaint is not:**

- i. A general inquiry about COAST Trust's work.
- ii. A request for information.

- iii. A contractual dispute.

The complaints procedures do not apply to complaints that are subject to current investigation by any regulatory body or other legal or official authorities. Such issues will be dealt with under the relevant regulatory regime.

A complaint mechanism is all steps and processes an organization that adopts from the time the allegation is made up to the time the investigation report is finalized.

#### **4. Who can complain?**

- i. Individual program participants or a community with whom we work
- ii. People's organizations, local civil society, local government body, government officials, other development partners and any organizational staff.

#### **5. How to make complaints?**

- i. The complaints can be made through formal (e.g., written) and informal (e.g., telephone or verbal).
- ii. There is a discussion with the different stakeholders and they expressed their views that they are easier to make complaints through phone/verbal in the adjacent office(s).
- iii. The complaints can be given to any staff member(s), any board member(s) and any COAST Offices.
- iv. Through a trusted intermediary (this means is important for sensitive complaints)
- v. Apart from this the Regional Program Coordinator, Regional Team Leader, Director, Executive Director and Chairperson -Board of Trustee (C-BoT). All of their communication means are available in the diaries, offices and website.
- vi. All offices will hang a complaint box and which key will be lying with the designated officials from the management.

#### **6. How to respond complaints**

All staff should respond positively to any complaints made to them and feel confident to do so. Guidance and procedures are provided for staff and for affected population, in order to avoid ad-hoc, defensive, negative responses and uncertainty about what is expected of staff in responding to complaints. Complainants and staff need to know what the expectations are regarding timelines for dealing with complaints. This includes time limits or targets are defined for dealing with complaints at each stage. A structured timetable (as shown at Appendix-1) known to all parties encourages a focus on problem solving.

- i. Each office will receive the informal complaints from the different sources and the respective officials will try to solve the complaints by 7 days. If not possible by him/her/them then, those will be transferred to the immediate higher level and they will try to solve within next 10 days. If not possible by them then the complainant (s) will be reached to Chief Information Officer (CIO) and s/he will try resolve within another next 5 days. If CIO will unable to resolve the complaint (s) then it will be referred to Director and s/he will solve the complaint within next 3 days. During the submission of complaint (s) the complainant will let know about the timeframe of the resolution.
- ii. Any formal or written complaint (s) will be forwarded to CIO directly and s/he will try to solve the problem by 15 days. If it will not be possible by CIO then s/he will refer to Director and s/he will try to solve within next three days. If Director will be unable to solve the problem then s/he will refer to Executive Director (ED) and s/he will try to solve the problem within next 2 days. If ED can not solve the problem then s/he will refer to Board of Trustee (BoT) and BoT will solve the problem within another 5 days.

- iii. All complaints will be responded according to their exact requirements. The anonymous complaint (s) will be handled by the immediate office near to the complainant.
- iv. The complaint related to sexual harassment, exploitation or abuse would be dealt by “**Sexual Harassment Receiving Committee**” in the organization and try to resolve by 30 days if not then it will be referred to the case in police station or court.
- v. The serious complaints like corruption, fraud will be dealt by CIO. But s/he has to make it very confidential about the sources of the complaints.
- vi. If the complainant is not happy about the result then s/he/they can appeal to Director/ED/BoT.
- vii. In each office there will be set a complaint box so that anyone can drop a complaint into the box. The box will keep open everyday and the complaint(s) will be currier to CIO at urgent basis. Nobody except CIO will be allowed to open envelop of the complaint (s).

## **7. Complaints tracking and monitoring**

- i. There will be a system for the documenting the complaints in each office. The respective complaints response officials will record the complaints.
- ii. Each of the complaints response officials will make compilation of nature of complaints and to be discussed and mitigation process in all possible meetings.

## **8. Safety and confidentiality**

The safety and confidentiality of the complaint messages and source will be maintained except if it is not required by the state law and order authority and if it is hampered the organizational harmony as decided by the Executive Director.

## **9. Authority**

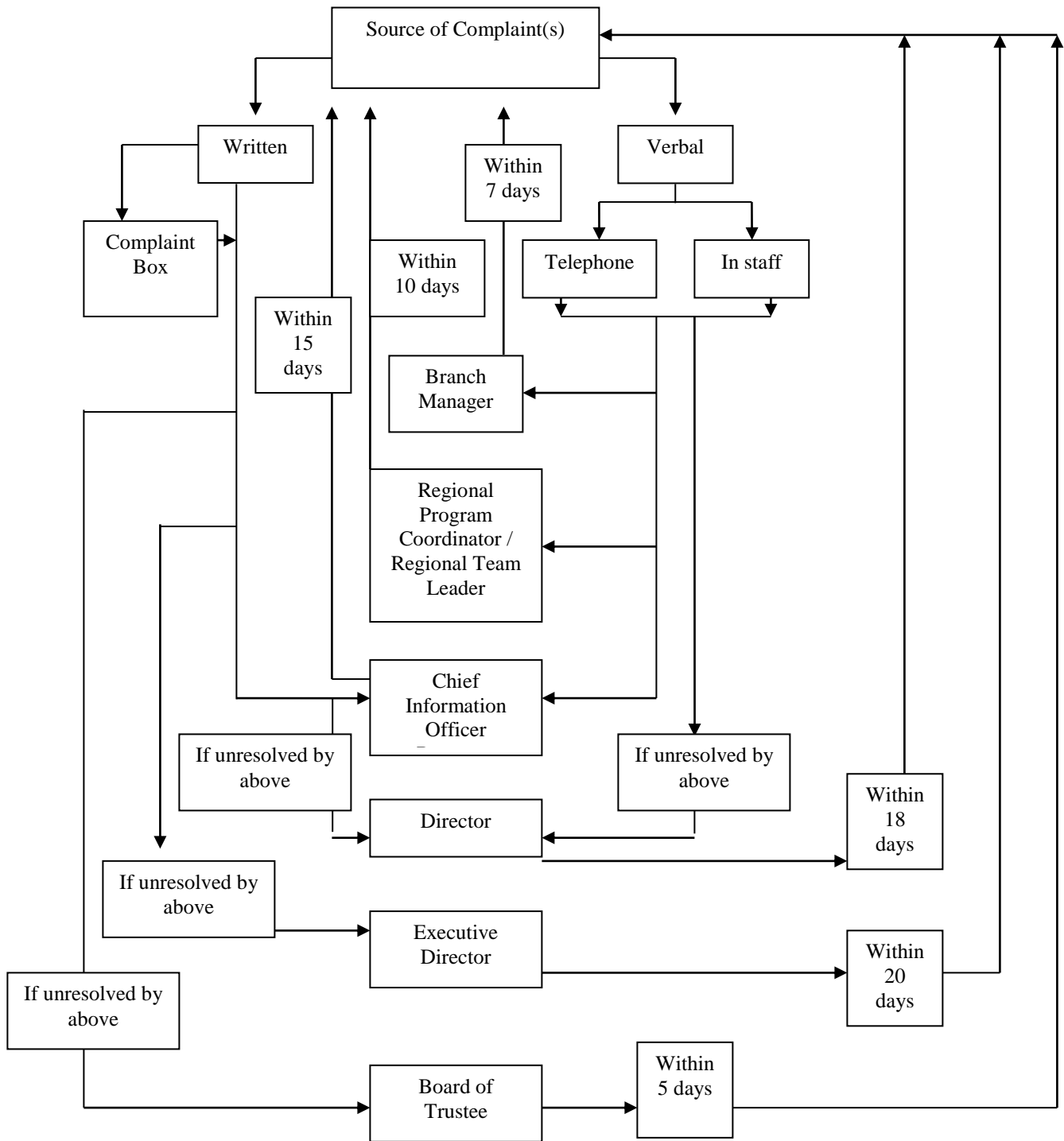
COAST board of trustee will have the approval authority of the policy.

## **10. Implementation and review**

- i. After preparing the draft of the policy CIO will submit it to ED and then after editing ED will place to the board for approval. The policy will be reviewed by every three years.
- ii. This policy will be informed and opened to all the beneficiaries and stakeholders since the beginning of the project/program.
- iii. This policy will be oriented to the staff during the induction period and foundation training course.
- iv. All offices will preserve the Bengali version of this policy. In the group resolution book this policy will also be printed in Bengali.
- v. The designated complaints response officials’ address and contract details will be available in all groups, offices and COAST website.
- vi. This policy will be the integral part of all operational manual especially of human resource manual and it will also be in COAST website.

Dated: October 2013

## Appendix-1



**Complaint Response Mechanism Flow Chart**