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Policy and Guidelines Regarding Complaints and Grievances^{*}

Introduction

The Rural Poultry Centre in Malawi (RPC) is a local NGO incorporated under the Trustees Incorporation Act of 1962. It is registered by the NGO Board of Malawi under the NGO Act of 2001. It is a member of the Council for NGOs in Malawi (CONGOMA). RPC is under the overall control of a Board of Trustees which oversees the overall governance and policies of the organisation.

RPC exists to promote the needs of smallholder poultry farmers throughout Malawi and to raise livelihoods and contribute to improved nutrition in rural areas of Malawi. RPC adopts a keep-it-simple philosophy with an emphasis on effective support at the grass roots level.

RPC wants to know if its actions or procedures cause offence. We acknowledge the value of feedback as an important tool in understanding and responding to cases where our performance does not meet expectations. We therefore welcome feedback and will respond constructively and in a timely manner to complaints. We have adopted the following principles for our complaints policy and procedures.

These guidelines are intended for use both by 'outside' persons who are not engaged in any way in RPC's work and activities, as well as RPC personnel who may wish to bring an issue to the attention of management.

Purpose

This document describes the RPC's policy regarding cases of complaints or grievances and sets out clear procedures for all stakeholders whereby any such cases might be followed up and resolved.

Persons wishing to initiate a complaint might include our supporters, donors, the general public, beneficiaries, official bodies, our partners, interns and volunteers.

^{*} **Endorsed by RPC Board:** 8 Feb 2024
Due for review: 8 Feb 2029
Document: [rpc-complaints-guidelines-240208.odt](#)

Guiding principles

At the outset, it is important to note that in accordance with its Code of Conduct, RPC maintains strict policies and zero tolerance¹ for abuse in three key areas:

- Child Protection;
- Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH);
- Fraud and Corruption.

The focal person for RPC's policies for Child Protection and for PSEAH is Dr Pat Boland (Tel: +265 (0)995943034 or email patb@ruralpoultrymalawi.org).

Confidentiality:

RPC is committed to ensuring that all information related to complaints and their resolution should remain confidential. RPC will maintain the privacy of individuals and will not release personal information without permission of the parties concerned.

Accessibility:

Information about complaints procedures will be easily accessible and well-publicised to the people we work with and other stakeholders. We provide clear guidance for making a complaint so as to ensure complainants are not disadvantaged.

Objectivity:

Complaints will be considered seriously and treated with respect and in a fair and equitable manner. Conflicts of interest will be identified to ensure objectivity.

Accountability:

We will ensure that accountability for and reporting on the actions and decisions with respect to complaint handling are clearly established.

Responsiveness:

Complaints will be dealt with in a manner that is timely and responsive. Complainants will be kept informed on the progress of their complaint through the process.

¹ "Zero tolerance" means that *all* allegations or reports of impropriety involving RPC personnel *will be followed up* and investigated to determine whether further action is warranted.

How Complaints may be made:

- 1) Online via the RPC website: <http://ruralpoultrymalawi.org/sendmessage.html>
- 2) By telephone: +265 (0)995943034
- 3) By word of mouth, email or letter, to the Director of RPC, currently:

Dr Pat Boland
PO Box 81
Likuni Malawi
Tel: +265 (0)995943034
Email: phbolandmail@gmail.com
- 4) For complaints where the Director is considered to be compromised or implicated, a direct approach to the Board Chair, currently:

Prof T N Gondwe
PO Box 219
Lilongwe Malawi
Tel: +265 (0)993358407
Email: tgondwe@luanar.ac.mw

The RPC Complaints Officer is the Director of RPC, or, for cases where s/he is compromised/implicated, the Board Chair. The Complaints Officer's function is to receive any complaint, assess the level of seriousness, and decide on the appropriate response should the complaint not be resolved on the spot.

All complaints will be subject to assessment, follow up and our best attempts at satisfactory resolution.

Process for Handling Complaints

All complaints will be considered carefully and considerately. If possible, complaints will be dealt with on the spot and reported to the Complaints Officer verbally or by a project report.

In serious cases, if the Complaints Officer considers after a detailed investigation and discussion with colleagues that there are elements of a criminal nature in the complaints, the involvement of the appropriate regulatory authorities will be sought.

All written complaints will be considered by the Complaints Officer who decides on the course of action to be undertaken. If the issues are not substantiated after initial evaluation, the complaint will be dismissed. The responsible officer will relay a written response and if necessary, a verbal explanation to the originator of the complaint explaining the reasons for dismissing the complaint.

If a significant concern is raised in the complaint, the Complaints Officer will follow up on the issues leading to the complaint. This may be via investigation, setting up a complaints committee, calling for witnesses/evidence, regulatory authorities, etc. As far as possible, the principles of natural justice will apply in that all concerned parties will have an adequate opportunity to express their concerns and justify their position. Once the decision is made, a written response will be conveyed to explain the process and outcomes and reasons to the complainant. The outcomes could involve operational and staff changes. RPC will take note of the level of satisfaction of the complainant to the outcome/s of their complaint.

All serious complaints, their nature and their resolution, will be recorded and routinely notified to RPC management and the Board of Trustees in a manner such as to preserve the confidentiality and privacy of individuals involved. The role of the Board in this process is to improve the future performance of the organisation.

Should RPC's resolution of serious issues be unacceptable to the complainant, RPC will first attempt to agree with the complainant on a mechanism for setting up an independent mediator who can give an opinion, and failing that, suggest to the complainant possible avenues for further pursuing the matter.

Timelines for dealing with Complaints

If possible, minor complaints will be dealt with on the spot. If not they will be referred to the Complaints Officer.

All complaints that are referred to the Complaints Officers will be acknowledged within a week by email/telephone or letter.

The Complaints Officer will provide the response and resolution of the complaints to the complainant within 30 days of receipt of the complaint by written summary and verbal description if necessary. The response will include an acknowledgement of the obligation to update the complainant after 30 days, if the complaint is not already resolved.