

# Mission East (MEED) Annual Complaints Handling Report - 2022

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## Background

Mission East (MEED) is committed to being accountable to the affected populations – beneficiaries and communities where we are working. Mission East is, an organization that welcomes complaints and feedback on what we do and how we do it, as we are constantly striving to improve our work. Beneficiary Complaints mechanisms (BCM) allow us to improve our programmes and quickly react to feedback; they are also indispensable in allowing prevention and detection of fraud, corruption, sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse, as well as other breaches of the code of conduct. We are striving not only at maintaining a well-defined and accessible complaints mechanism, but also at creating an organizational culture where complaints are welcomed and addressed. Beneficiary complaints mechanisms are set up in each of the countries where Mission East operates, as well as at HQ level. We also require our local partner NGOs to set up complaint's mechanisms and feedback on projects that we are implementing jointly.

## Objectives of the report:

This report is intended to provide a transparent overview of complaints handling at Mission East, as part of our strategy of being accountable to local population. It follows from Mission East commitment to accountability to affected populations and the Core Humanitarian Standards. The report provides an overview of the complaints received, followed by the actions taken and changes adopted in response to complaints, both for serious/sensitive complaints and standard complaints. There follows a description of the state of Mission East's complaints mechanism, the complaints channels available in each country, and the development of our complaint's mechanisms in 2022 and planned developments for 2023.

## State of the beneficiary complaints mechanisms

In all Mission East country offices and in most partner NGOs, mechanisms to receive and respond to complaints have been established following consultations with communities. Where partner NGOs do not have the capacity to handle complaints and feedback, Mission East office takes care of this. Complaints are received, logged, and responded to. If necessary, corrective actions are taken, which may include improvement or change of policies. Responses are always provided to complainants.

As our operating modalities in the various countries regularly changes, we adapt our complaints mechanisms accordingly. Although our aim is to have formalized and documented mechanisms in place, we also rely on more informal mechanisms in case community members are not comfortable with the formalized process or when a formalized process is simply not existing (yet).

Most of the complaints are 'standard complaints' about non-sensitive matters typically concerning the implementation of activities, decisions taken or organisational policy. Serious or sensitive complaints could be complaints about corruption, fraud, sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, other abuse of authority, gross misconduct, or malpractice. Due to the serious nature of such complaints and the potential allegations against staff that they represent, such complaints will need confidential handling and the involvement of senior staff at HQ. Our partner organisations are responsible to inform Mission East

immediately when a serious complaint has been raised. Depending on their specific requirements and thresholds donors will be informed about complaints we received. Furthermore, as this reporting is made publicly available all, including donors, have access to our complaints reporting.

Complaints can be raised in various ways depending on the local situation and in consultation with the community. The following channels are used:

	HQ	Afghanistan	Tajikistan	Iraq	Nepal*	Lebanon*	Syria*	Armenia*	Nigeria*	Myanmar*	Ukraine*
Phone line			✓	✓				✓		✓	✓
sms (text messages)	✓							✓			✓
website form				✓				✓		✓	
phone app (whatsapp, messenger, viber etc.)		✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
through focal points in communities	✓								✓		
through focal points on safeguarding			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
face-to-face meetings	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
e-mail		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
box in communities			✓	✓	✓			✓			
box in Mission East or partners' office					✓				✓	✓	
referrals from partners											

\* partner led programs only

## Overview of Complaints received in 2022

	HQ**	Afghanistan	Tajikistan	Iraq	Nepal*	Lebanon*	Syria*	Armenia*	Nigeria*	Myanmar*	Ukraine*	Total
Serious complaints (e.g, alleged fraud or breach of Code of Conduct)	4	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Standard complaints (operational complaints, quality of services, beneficiary selection, etc.)	2	13	0	15	52	0	0	2	0	0	5	89
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>97</b>

\* partner led programs only

\*\* HQ indicates complaints which have been received by HQ channels but where all related to MEED field offices

## Details of serious complaints received in 2022

Country & Theme of complaint	Findings	Outcome / Action taken / Lesson learnt
<b>Afghanistan</b>		
Intermediary agent didn't distribute cash to a beneficiary although the beneficiary was selected by MEED	Complaint Upheld	There was unclarity about the identity of the beneficiary due to the absence of a proper ID document. The community leader was able to confirm the identify of the beneficiary which allowed the distribution of cash to the beneficiary.
Beneficiaries complained that distribution of cash started much later than planned / promised	Complaint Upheld	Contract negotiations with the mobile provider took much longer than planned hence the delay in the cash distribution. We will factor this in, in future planning of cash distribution.
Complainant was excluded from actual distribution although he orginally met the eligibility criteria and was included in the original distibution plan	Complaint Not Upheld	Complainant moved to another location at the time the distribution took place making him uneligibile for our intervention
<b>Nepal</b>		
Corruption in partner organisations	Complaint upheld	Investigation by partners found that individual partner staff had acted corruptly. In three partners staff were fired or former staff barred from further employment. Other partner staff received final warning letters. Measures were taken to improve fraud awareness and strengthen control mechanisms. Donors were informed.
<b>HQ</b>		
Allegations of misconduct of MEED staff member in field office	Complaint upheld	Staff member was fired
Allegations of misconduct of MEED staff member in field office	Complaint not upheld	Although misconduct was not proven, communication and behaviour of staff member was discussed and addressed.
MEED field office breached supplier contract	Complaint not upheld	Contract was not breached, but we strenghtened our process as part of contract drafting and signing
Fraud in partner organization finances	Complaint not upheld	Deliberate corruption could not be proven, rather administrative mismanagement. Funding to partner was put on hold until administrative / financial management was further strenghtened.

## Details of standard complaints received in 2022

Country & Theme of complaint	Findings	Outcome / Action taken / Lesson learnt
<b>Afghanistan</b>		
Distribution of agricultural inputs is not targeted to the right people	Complaint not upheld	There was no evidence for the complaint, complainant was informed.
Some HHs received more cash than they were eligible for	Complaint not upheld	There was no evidence for the complaint, complainant was informed.
Water tap point is installed too far away from the house of the complainant	Complaint not upheld	The water tap has been installed in accordance with SPHERE standards. The complainant was informed.
Village elders taking unlawful advantage of seed distribution	Complaint not upheld	Beneficiaries have planted the seeds as planned. The complainant was informed.
Modality offered by contractor to beneficiaries for cash distribution wasn't working properly	Complaint upheld	Arrangements with the contractor were made and payments were able to take place.
Complainant received cash late	Complaint upheld	This was due to the cash distribution company ME contracted.
Seven different complaints on beneficiary eligibility	Complaints not upheld	All these seven cases were again checked with the eligibility criteria and we concluded for all that the criteria had been applied correctly. All complainants were informed.
<b>Iraq</b>		
Person was not part of the vulnerability assessment and need assessment for our shelter program as they were not at home but they claim to be eligible	Complaint upheld	They will be included in our next assessment and if found eligible be included in our intervention
Beneficiary asks for second installment of shelter intervention although first installment hasn't been spend	Complaint not upheld	Beneficiary hasn't met the eligibility criteria after all and will not receive the 2nd installment
MEED staff had promised complainer a cash grant as part of our shelter intervention	Complaint not upheld	Promises made by MEED staff could not be proven
Person requests MEED to be hired as staff member as he is a neighbour of one of our offices	Complaint not upheld	We have recruitment policies which we follow. Hiring will take place following an application and selection process.
Eleven different complaints on beneficiary eligibility for our shelter rehabilitation program	Complaints not upheld	All these eleven cases were again checked with the eligibility criteria and we concluded for all that the criteria had been applied correctly. All complainants were informed.
<b>Nepal</b>		
Beneficiaries of different caste than MEED staff felt discriminated as ME staff didn't want to have lunch with beneficiaries	Complaint not upheld	MEED staff were not able to have lunch with beneficiaries as they were behind schedule in their monitoring visit. Beneficiaries have been assured ME staff don't hold prejudice towards community.
Community members request to be included in training activities	Complaint not upheld	Community members don't meet the eligibility criteria
Farmer group claims eligibility for farming inputs for individual farmers.	Complaint not upheld	Eligibility criteria for intervention are not met
Claim that certain people were included as beneficiary in intervention although they didn't meet selection criteria	Complaint not upheld	Selection process and selection criteria were followed
Goods were not provided to women group as planned	Complaint upheld	Delivery of good was done to correct this
Teachers want to be part of climate change related trainings	Complaint upheld	Teachers will be included in future trainings
<b>Armenia</b>		
Training facility is not fit for purpose	Complaint upheld	Potential training facilities will be better screened
Psychological trainings should be more diverse	Complaint upheld	Training topics will be more diverse and different trainers will be hired
<b>Ukraine</b>		
Delay in cash distribution	Complaint Upheld	Delay was caused by money agent, working closely with money agent to avoid this in the future
4 Persons claimed eligibility for cash distribution intervention	Complaints not Upheld	Persons didn't meet the eligibility criteria for cash intervention
<b>HQ</b>		
Unfair treatment in recruitment process managed by MEED field office	Not upheld	Recruitment procedure error was acknowledged but this didn't lead to an unfair or biased recruitment process.
Improper behaviour by MEED staff member in MEED field office	Not upheld	No evidence of wrongdoing was found

\* Nepal received 52 standard complaints; we provide a snapshot in above table

## 2022 Key Developments in BCM

- We started working in with our partners in an emergency response as part of the Ukraine crisis, complaints mechanisms were established.
- We informed our donors on two serious complaint we received, and we kept them up to date while we were running the investigation process.
- In 2022 Mission East has continued to monitor the functioning of the BCM remotely in each of our countries and support local NGOs in setting their BCM.

## Key complaint mechanism actions planned for 2023

1. We will run sessions with Mission East staff and our partners to discuss experiences and learnings which will strengthen our BCM mechanisms. We will especially look at countries where we received none or a minimal number of complaints. If required, we will run specific trainings for either Mission East staff or our partners.
2. Mission East will continue to update BCM guidelines taking into account feedback from Mission East teams, partners, communities, donors and the independent audits.
3. The focus of BCM development in 2023 will be in integrating feedback from the previous CHS audit and look into improving communication to communities. New guidelines for community communication expected in fourth quarter 2023.
4. Mission East will continue to monitor the status of the BCM in all countries of operations and with partners. All partner organizations will be included in our bi-yearly stock taking of complaints.