

Mission East (MEED) Annual Complaints Handling Report – 2024



Background

Mission East (MEED) is committed to being accountable to the affected populations we assist – the beneficiaries and communities where we operate. MEED is, an organization that welcomes complaints and feedback on what we do and how we do it, constantly striving to improve our work. Beneficiary Complaints mechanisms (BCM) allow us to improve our programmes and respond swiftly to feedback. They are crucial for preventing and detecting of fraud, corruption, sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse, as well as other code of conduct breaches. We aim to maintain a well-defined and accessible complaints mechanism, while fostering 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 headquarters level. We also require our local partner NGOs to set up complaint's mechanisms and feedback on jointly implanted projects.

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 2024 and planned developments for 2025.

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 | Ukraine | Tajikistan | Armenia* | Nepal* | Syria* | Lebanon* | Nigeria* | Chad* | Sudan* |
|---|----|-------------|---------|------------|----------|--------|--------|----------|----------|-------|--------|
| 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 | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Interagency coordination call centers ** | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | |

* partner led programs only

** The UNOPS-managed Awaaz Afghanistan provides callers with vital information and serves as a platform for feedback on humanitarian responses as well as the delivery of basic human services.

Overview of Complaints received in 2024

| | HQ | Afghanistan | Ukraine | Tajikistan | Armenia* | Nepal* | Syria* | Lebanon* | Nigeria* | Chad* | Sudan* | Total |
|--|----------|-------------|----------|------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Serious complaints (e.g. alleged fraud or breach of Code of Conduct) | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Standard complaints (operational complaints, quality of services, beneficiary selection, etc.) | 0 | 17 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 16 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 5 | 48 |
| Total | 2 | 17 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 16 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 5 | 50 |

* Partner led programs only

Details of serious complaints received in 2024

| Country & Theme of complaint | Findings | Outcome / Action taken / Lesson learnt |
|---|----------------------|---|
| HQ | | |
| Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (SEAH) allegation against MEED staff member. | Complaint not upheld | HQ led investigation concluded that allegations could not be substantiated. However we will take measures to further improve our due diligence screening of MEED staff members before hiring. |
| Fraud and corruption allegation against MEED staff member. | Complaint not upheld | HQ led investigation concluded that allegations could not be substantiated. Change in a local policy to increase transparency and understanding. |

Details of standard complaints received in 2024

| Country & Theme of complaint | Findings | Outcome / Action taken / Lesson learnt |
|--|-----------------------|---|
| Afghanistan | | |
| Person claimed that government official collected and redistributed cash from beneficiaries who were selected and received cash as part of a cash distribution intervention. (2) | Complaints upheld | Measures have been taken to prevent similar issues in the future. |
| Beneficiary complained that he was not selected for additional rounds of cash distribution. (3) | Complaints not upheld | Beneficiary didn't meet the eligibility criteria. Improve our efforts to explain the selection criteria to the community. |
| Community member claimed that certain members who don't own agricultural land had still received wheat seeds and fertilizer. (3) | Complaints not upheld | Eligibility criteria for beneficiaries have been updated to further ensure that only those with adequate land for cultivation receive wheat seeds and fertilizer. |
| Community member indicates the needs for fodder and support to provide shelter for his animals. | Complaint not upheld | These requests will be taken into consideration in other interventions and included in our need assessments. |
| Community member claimed that a government official was provided with a greenhouse by MEED and sold it off. | Complaint not upheld | Clear communication on the eligibility criteria and the selection of beneficiaries. |
| Beneficiary claimed he had been selected for livestock assistance but received bee-keeping assistance instead. | Complaint upheld | Beneficiary was selected for livestock initially but not enough livestock support was available, hence bee-keeping assistance was offered. |
| Beneficiary received bees for beekeeping but no adequate support and training was provided. (2) | Complaints upheld | MEED to provide more comprehensive training programs focused on beekeeping. |
| Food for work beneficiaries claimed that the food ratio was not sufficient. | Complaint not upheld | The basis of the food ration was explained and justified. |
| Food items provided were out of expiry date | Complaint upheld | Food items were replaced. |
| Community members participating in food for work activity were lacking safety equipment. (2) | Complaints upheld | Safety equipment was provided |
| Tajikistan | | |
| Authorities of a certain district asked why MEED is not only contracting firms from the same district for a WASH intervention | Complaint not upheld | MEED explained to authorities that contractors are selected via an open tender process which is open to all firms regardless of their location. This is in line with donor regulations and MEED procurement policies. |
| Armenia | | |
| Timing of an activity was changed without informing all participants. | Complaint upheld | An apology was provided and communication process and methods with participants was reviewed. |
| A parent raised a concern about a group activity organized in a city park, stating that the venue was not sufficiently accessible for children using wheelchairs. | Complaint upheld | An apology was provided for this oversight. Usually oversight is considered during planning of an event. |
| Beneficiary complaint that the training program was overloaded with content. | Complaint not upheld | Local partner explained that due to limited funding they decided to provide a heavy loaded training so participants would engage with all the necessary tools and skills. |
| Nepal | | |
| Request from community to form human right advocacy alliance at local level. | Complaint upheld | Human right advocacy alliance at rural municipalities have been formed. |
| Local partner field staff felt unwelcome when they wanted to conduct the planned activities in the community. | Complaint upheld | Consultation took place with the community and training was conducted. |
| Not enough drinking water was provided during awareness raising event. | Complaint upheld | Provision of drinking water during large events will be improved |
| Community members asked local partner for support in creating employment opportunities. (2) | Complaints not upheld | Requests go beyond the range of projects but they will be considered in other / further interventions. |
| Students requested specific WASH intervention for their school. | Complaint not upheld | Request will be considered in other / further interventions. |
| CSO requested support from the local partner to run their operations. | Complaint not upheld | Local partner explained the limitations in support which can be provided due current funding. |
| Community leader stated that project activities should be conducted in the community building instead of in a hotel. | Complaint not upheld | Local partner confirmed that activities would be conducted in the community building. |
| Community member raised concerns on potential bias in beneficiary selection. | Complaint not upheld | Local partner explained the selection process and criteria which is aimed to avoid any subjective / personal bias. |
| Community member complained that instead of FSL training, actual FSL inputs should be provided. | Complaint not upheld | Local partner explained the limitations in support which can be provided due current funding. |
| Community members requested the support on WASH to be expanded beyond awareness activities. | Complaint not upheld | Local partner explained the limitations in support which can be provided due current funding. |
| Community leader complained about a lack of coordination on the distribution of search and rescue materials. | Complaint not upheld | Local partner explained that distribution will take place in close coordination with communities and authorities. |
| Community member requested support to be extended to her area. | Complaint not upheld | Local partner explained the limitations in support which can be provided due current funding. |
| CSO member requested support to carry out advocacy activities. | Complaint not upheld | Local partner explained the limitations in support which can be provided due current funding. |
| Community leader complaint that promised search and rescue materials were not yet provided by local partner. | Complaint upheld | Local partner confirmed that search and rescue materials will be provided soon. |
| Community leader asked local partner to consider specific budget for emergency relief. | Complaint not upheld | Emergency fund will be allocated in 2025 plans / planning. |

| Country & Theme of complaint | Findings | Outcome / Action taken / Lesson learnt |
|---|-----------------------|---|
| Nigeria | | |
| Project participants complaint about some items in the business kits they received which were beyong the expiry date. (6) | Complaints upheld | The vendor was contacted and expired items were replaced with new ones. |
| Sudan | | |
| Some people reported that they did not receive NFIs during distribution. (2) | Complaints not upheld | There were limited NFIs available and selection was based on prrioritizing the most vulnerable. Registration and critiria were re-examined and explained to community leaders. |
| WASH intervention didn't include training for water management committees | Complaint not upheld | Due to limited implementation period training was not part of the project plan. We have coordinated with partners to make sure training is included in future training plans. |
| IDP committes shared concern about the short duration of the WASH intervention and the lack of NFIs. (2) | Complaints not upheld | Needs are higher than what could have been addressed within the scope and timeframe of the project. Concern was shared with donors and in cluster meetings. WASH support will be included in our intervention plans for 2025. |

2024 Observations and Key Developments

- As in previous years we can see that our BCM mechanisms are more widely used for providing feedback from the communities to our partners and Mission East. This wider feedback which are not necessarily complaints usually include: requests for additional support, questions about selection criteria for a certain intervention, suggestions for new projects. In this report we mostly include complaints but we recognize the importance of BCM mechanisms for different types of feedback.
- We regularly receive genuine requests for support which we are not able to fulfil. This can be due to budget limitations or lack of mandate for additional interventions. We always aim to refer these requests to other organisations or actors as much as possible but are not always able to. We experience in some cases a lack of organisations which are able and willing to take on referrals, hence people we refer to other organisations and actors might not always be helped.
- We still observe that the size of the program doesn't always correlate with the number of complaints. We are operating in different (cultural) contexts and environments where in some cases complaining is perceived ungrateful or will backfire. This might explain why there is a difference between the various country programs.
- In 2024 we worked with 16 partner organisations. We require all our partners to establish a complaints mechanism in cases where they don't exist yet. We provide help and support in establishing and supporting these were needed. In 2024 we established a partner portal for partners which includes our policies and guidance on BCM. Go-live of the portal was early 2025 so now partners have direct access to these relevant documents.
- In 2024 the independent CHS renewal audit (which started in Q4 2023) was completed by HQAI. Our CHS certificate was renewed until March 2027¹. The audit report under Commitment 5 (Complaints are welcomed and addressed) indicates the following:

*Mission East continues to strengthen its culture in relation to accepting and managing complaints at all levels, including at the partner level. The organisation's complaint handling system is documented, well understood by staff and accessible throughout the organisation. Staff, partners and communities express confidence to use available mechanisms.*²

- In addition to the CHS renewal audit, in 2024 we were subject to an ex-ante assessment to become a humanitarian partner for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO).³ The audit report was finalized in 2024 and our application to become a humanitarian was filled with ECHO soon afterwards. Consequently, partnership was awarded by ECHO in June 2025.
- In Q3 2024 we conducted a workshop with MEED staff and our partners discussing current practices on BCM's in our country programs and lessons learnt.

¹ https://hqai.contentfiles.net/media/documents/Certificate_of_compliance_ME-2024-03-25.pdf

² https://hqai.contentfiles.net/media/audit_reports/1_ME_RA_Summary_2024-03-22.pdf

³ <https://www.dgecho-partners-helpdesk.eu/>

Key complaint mechanism actions planned for 2025

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 2024 will be in integrating feedback from the CHS audit and look into improving communication to communities. This might include new guidelines for community communication.
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 yearly stock taking of complaints.
5. As our Ukraine program evolves, we will set up formal mechanisms to receive and address feedback.
6. We will focus on some of the recommendations made as part of the CHS renewal audit and the audit for the ECHO humanitarian partnership.
7. Additional guidance will be provided on the usage of our project management tool (the Workbook) to make sure lessons learnt from feedback provided can be taken forward.