



BENEFICIARY FEEDBACK POLICY

AEHDA TEAM

Contents

FOREWORD	2
Afghanistan Educational and Health Aid Organization (AEHDAO) BACKGROUND	3
WHAT IS BENEFICIARY ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO AEHDA	3
HOW THIS POLICY WILL SUPPORTS OUR PERFORMANCE	4
AEHDA BENEFICIARY FEEDBACK POLICY COMMITMENT	5
AEHDA BENEFICIARY FEEDBACK MECHANISM	6
AEHDA COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT	6
ANNEX-GUIDELINE FOR RECORDING A COMPLAINT	8

FOREWORD

Since 2021, AEHDA has been working with and for the most vulnerable segments of the Afghan society. Working with marginalized groups implies to listen to the voices of the unheard; the ones that are easily forgotten by the aid system, especially in a war torn countries such as Afghanistan. It is widely recognized that NGOs are most effective when they are accountable to the people they aim to help. This means explaining our work to local people and involving them in making decisions about our activities. It is true for long-term development work and for emergency humanitarian responses.

As Executive Director of AEHDA, it is imperative for me to make sure the work our organization plans and undertakes takes into consideration the vision, opinions, needs and experience of the people we work for. Recipients of aid are often not empowered to provide feedback by default. Beneficiaries rarely have the power to exit aid relationships nor to exercise voice, unless this has been specifically provided for by the implementing organization.

AEHDA beneficiary feedback policy has been designed to make sure the voices of the unheard are taken into consideration during all stages of our aid programming, and in all contexts where we operate. I do expect that this policy will enable AEHDA teams to improve the appropriateness of interventions to their specific contexts, improve the quality of our services and help AEHDA to answer needs that are not initially identified.

With this policy, we aim to become fully accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources.

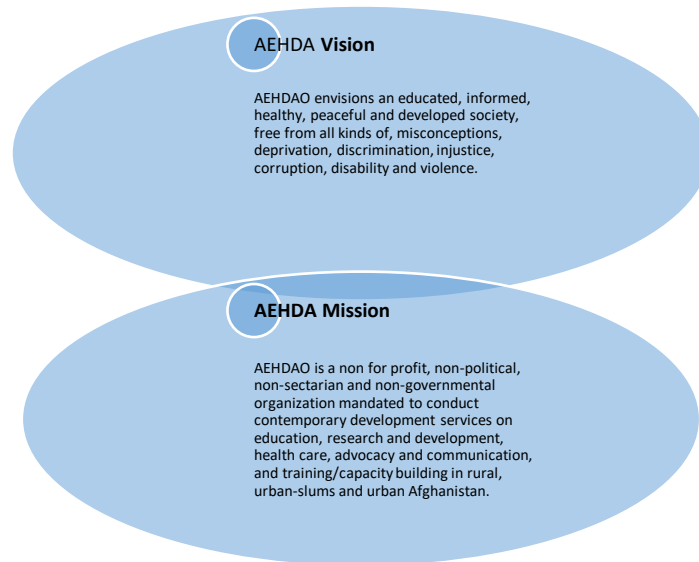
Sincerely yours,

Dr. IHSANULLAH JAMAL

AEHDA Executive Director

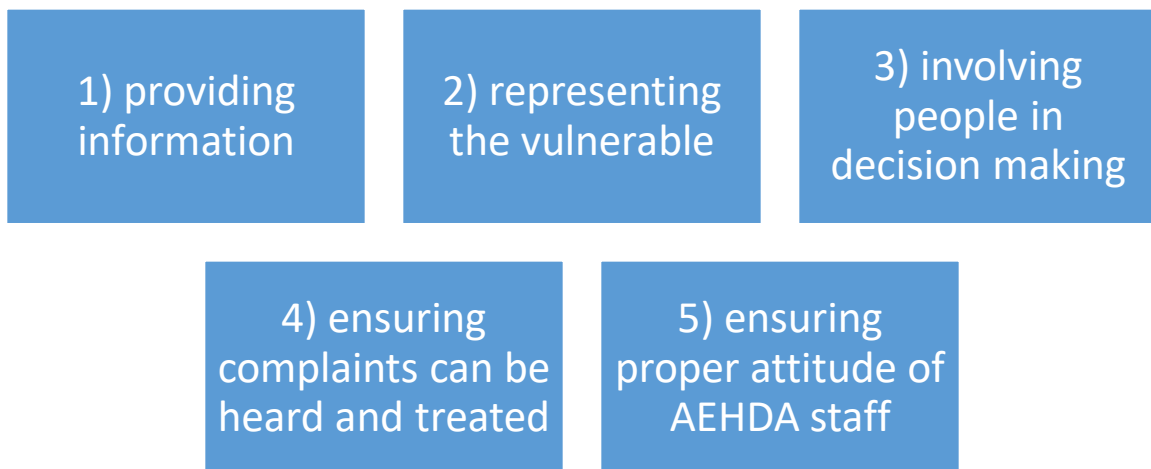
Afghanistan Educational and Health Aid Organization (AEHDAO) BACKGROUND

AEHDA is a non-governmental and non-for-profit organization established in Afghanistan since 2003. AEHDA is registered with Ministry of Economy of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. AEHDA primary focus is to offer a range of services to Afghan people and other marginalized groups in the wider society.



WHAT IS BENEFICIARY ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO AEHDA

Accountability in this context means providing people with the opportunity to understand and influence the key decisions which are made during AEHDA work. In practical terms, accountability to beneficiaries is made up of five key components:



Accountability to beneficiaries brings important practical advantages, including:

- Increasing the chance that AEHDA activities meet beneficiaries' existent needs
- Increasing the sense of ownership that beneficiaries feel towards our work, which improves the chance of long-term impacts
- Supporting beneficiaries' self-respect and self-confidence
- Reducing the risk of fraud, or of funds being used inefficiently
- Reducing the risk of power abuse from our workers towards beneficiaries

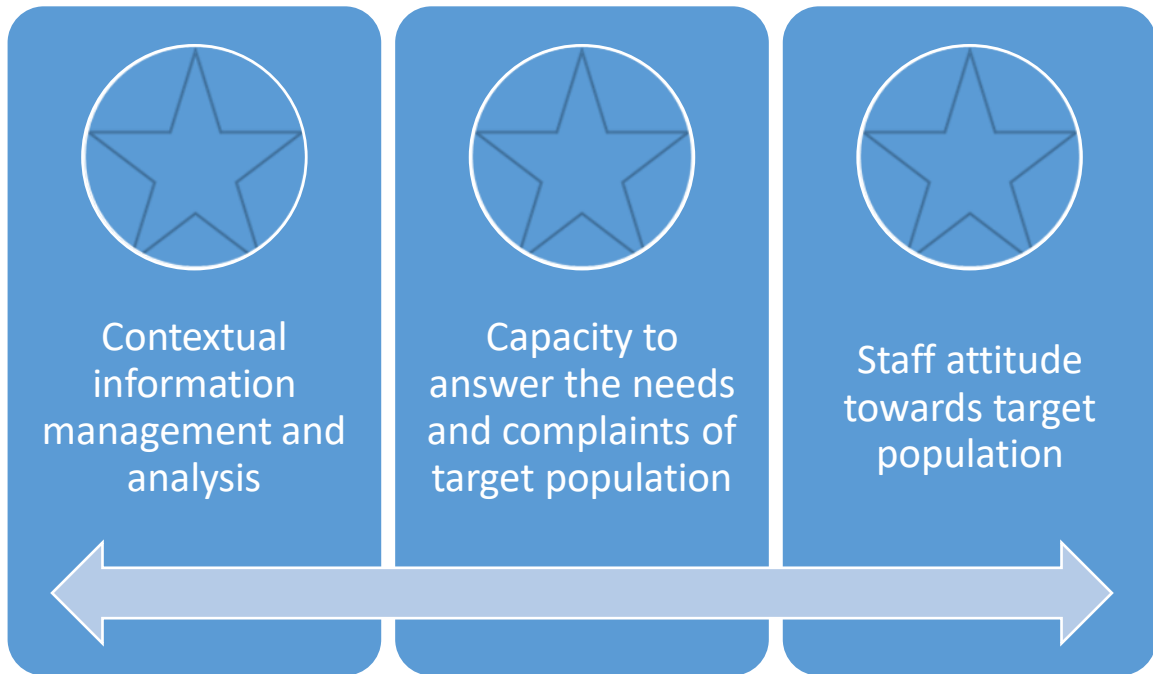
Local work always needs to be adapted to local circumstances. For instance, political or security threats may make it dangerous to publish financial information. There can be a great deal of urgency in humanitarian work, which sometimes over-rides the need to be accountable.

The views and experiences of the people who benefit from aid programs are often overlooked and underappreciated, even though they are an invaluable source of insight into program's effectiveness.

HOW THIS POLICY WILL SUPPORTS OUR PERFORMANCE

The views and experiences of people who benefit from aid programs are an invaluable source of insight to improve program's value and relevancy. Through implementation of its beneficiary feedback policy, AEHDA will ensure staffs are conscious about the importance of taking beneficiaries point of view and will engage population further more into its program design. Distorted aid related power dynamic makes it more important for AEHDA teams to seek and use the voice of the beneficiary. Listening to beneficiaries is both the right and the smart thing to do. Beneficiary perceptions are an underdeveloped source of information that can improve practice, leading to better outcomes.

Through the implementation of AEHDA beneficiary feedback policy, our organization will improve its performance in several key areas:



AEHDA BENEFICIARY FEEDBACK POLICY COMMITMENT

AEHDA beneficiaries have differential interests, needs and attitudes and should be able to benefit from and participate in the activities of AEHDA and our partners. Our aim is to increase the interactions between our target populations and us. We aim to listen to populations concerns and to impulse their participation in all stage of project design and implementation. AEHDA commits to integrate, promote and develop its beneficiary feedback policy

INTEGRATION

Integrating beneficiary feedback mechanism in our planning, programmes, management and reporting systems

PROMOTION

Ensuring that all AEHDA staff, volunteers and representatives (includes consultants and people speaking on behalf of AEHDA) are encouraged, equipped and supported in promoting feedback and complaints mechanisms

DEVELOPMENT

Supporting and developing tool that promote beneficiary feedback during project design, implementation and evaluation

Line managers need to reinforce the importance of accountability systems alongside their other responsibilities, and to lead by example. This can be done through existing performance management and appraisal systems, for example by including the establishment and promotion of the accountability system as part of a staff member’s objectives. It may be useful to introduce a checklist for managers to review levels of compliance with the requirements of feedback and complaints systems.

AEHDA BENEFICIARY FEEDBACK MECHANISM

The term “beneficiary feedback” is often used as an adjective to describe a particular approach, system or method. Some commentators refer to beneficiary feedback mechanisms (DFID 2014b, Bonino et al 2014b). Others refer to a beneficiary feedback approach (Jacobs 2010) or a beneficiary feedback process (DFID EPE Notes). Beneficiary feedback is also seen as a principle for enhancing beneficiaries’ voice throughout the program cycle (Ward 2013).

The four types of feedback mechanism proposed by AEHDA are:

- One-way feedback to beneficiaries (information sessions, presentations)
- One-way feedback from beneficiaries (beneficiaries interviews, complaints registration)
- Two-way feedback with inter active conversation between beneficiaries and evaluators but with evaluation team retaining independence and power (focus group discussions)
- Two-way feedback through participatory evaluation with beneficiaries as part of the evaluation team (joint monitoring exercises)

AEHDA COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT

COMPLAINT DEFINITION

A complaint is a grievance made by an individual who believes that a humanitarian agency has failed to meet a stated commitment.

This commitment can relate to a programme or project plan, beneficiary selection, an activity schedule, a standard of technical performance, an organisational value, a legal requirement, or any other point. Less serious complaint may relate to poor quality or performance, more serious complaint to fraud, abusive behaviour or sexual exploitation.

The opportunity for communities (both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries) to provide AEHDA with their feedback and complaints, and in exchange to receive feedback or response from us, is an important part of being accountable. This also applies to other key stakeholders, such as our partners, or local authorities, and AEHDA staff.

Complaints procedures need to be carefully planned and follow certain key principles. A badly designed or managed complaints procedure can be harmful. Here are recommendations for good practice to establish a complaints mechanism:

- ❖ Should be **appropriate**
- ❖ Should be **safe**
- ❖ Should be **well understood**
- ❖ Should **promotes transparency**
- ❖ Should be **timely**
- ❖ Should be **effective**
- ❖ Should be **accessible to all**

AEHDA will plan and budget for a complaints mechanism from the beginning of project design. Although a separate complaints mechanism is not required for each individual project, it must be seen as part of the core work of project teams, and not as something that is parallel to be carried out by dedicated accountability staff only.

AEHDA will build staff awareness and commitment to its complaints mechanism

Staff commitment to manage and use a complaints mechanism is a critical factor for its success. Team discussions and awareness raising materials can be used to build staff understanding and appreciation of the importance of complaints. A complaints mechanism however always risks being seen as a threat by staff.

Issues to highlight to staff include:

- The rights of affected communities
- AEHDA's organizational commitment to manage complaints
- The benefits and challenges of a complaints mechanism

ANNEX-GUIDELINE FOR RECORDING A COMPLAINT

As general procedure, the complaints should be received and registered in the following manner:

- ❑ Identify yourself as AEHDA staff, your name, and role in the organization/project
- ❑ Attend each complaint with a positive attitude
- ❑ Listen to what the person is saying
- ❑ Explain that the information they give will be treated confidentially
- ❑ Inform the person that they have the right to be heard, and offer additional information if they request it, or if you consider it necessary. Explain the types of complaint AEHDA can deal with and the types they can't deal with.
- ❑ Identify yourself with what the person is saying, but without assuming responsibility
- ❑ Complete the complaints form, and confirm with the person the details that you have registered on the form. The form must allow the following to be clearly identified
 - Date of making the complaint
 - Name, age and gender of complainant
 - Name of village
 - Description of the complaint/problem: what is the problem? When did it happen? Where did it happen? Who was involved? Any other information or evidence?
- ❑ Repeat what you have recorded back to the complainant and verify your understanding of the situation. Revise if necessary.
- ❑ Offer a solution for the situation if it is appropriate or feasible
- ❑ Verify that the person complaining understands the following steps in the complaints handling process.
- ❑ Indicate to the person that their complaint will be delivered to AEHDA senior management team and that they will receive a call within a maximum of 15 days.
- ❑ Indicate to the person the reference number of their complaint.
- ❑ End with a positive attitude
- ❑ Thank the person for their trust and time
- ❑ Inform him or her about the procedure for follow-up from AEHDA's side, and check they understand

Each AEHDA employee who records complaints must be prepared in the following manner:

- ❑ Can communicate basic information about AEHDA and AEHDA's project in a confident and consistent manner
- ❑ Knows AEHDA's organizational structure, and the general roles and responsibilities of each staff member in their geographical area of operation
- ❑ Has available a need to know checklist of key information (office address and contact details, areas of operation, project objectives and activities, organizations with whom we work, name of others, including authorities with whom we are coordinating)
- ❑ Can describe the complaints mechanism
- ❑ Trained to record complaints
- ❑ Has a positive attitude towards complaints