

Whistleblowing Policy

Version 2, Effective from January 01, 2022



RISDA-Bangladesh

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1. Policy Statement

RISDA-Bangladesh (“the Organization”) is committed to the highest standards of transparency, probity, integrity, and accountability that the Organization gives space for the whistleblower to inform any irregularities, safeguarding issues, violation of policies, and other related issues for the public interest.

The Whistleblowing Procedure sets out the framework for dealing with allegations of illegal and improper conduct. This procedure is intended to provide a means of making serious allegations about standards, conduct, financial irregularity or possible unlawful action in a way that will ensure confidentiality and protect those making such allegations in the reasonable belief that it is in the public interest to do so from being victimized, discriminated against or disadvantaged. This procedure does not replace other policies and procedures such as the complaints procedure, the Grievance Policies, and other specifically laid down statutory reporting procedures.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The aim of the policy is to encourage staff, volunteers, and program participants to come forward with credible information on illegal practices or violations of adopted policies of the organization. The specific purposes are

- ❑ To provide avenues for the people to raise concerns in confidence to transparency, probity, integrity, and accountability of the Organization.
- ❑ To receive feedback on any action taken by the organization and personal concerns.
- ❑ To make the staff accountable for the works policies and program participants.

3. Scope of the Policy

This procedure applies to all employees of the Organization, including Associates and contractors. This procedure does not replace other policies or procedures of the Organization. For example, if an employee has a grievance about their working conditions they should use the Grievance Policy of the Organization or, if they felt that their manager or a colleague was treating them unfavorably, they should use the Sexual Harassment Elimination Policy. Similarly, if an employee has a concern about the conduct of a fellow employee in the working environment (e.g. that they are not treating colleagues with respect) they should raise this with their line manager, or if that is not possible, with the ED, Chairman of Executive Committee or through the whistleblowing policy.

This procedure applies to, but is not limited to, allegations about any of the following:

- Conduct that is an offense or breach of the law
- Alleged miscarriage of justice
- Serious Health and Safety risks
- The unauthorized use of funds
- Possible fraud and corruption
- Sexual, physical or verbal abuse, or bullying or intimidation of employees, customers or service users
- Abuse of authority
- Other unethical conduct
- Violation of any policy of the Organization.

4. Reporting

The Organization recognizes that the decision to make an allegation can be a difficult one to make. However, whistleblowers who make serious allegations in the reasonable belief that it is in the

public interest to do so have nothing to fear because they are doing their duty either to the Organization and/or to those for whom the Organization or they are providing a service. The Organization will take appropriate action to protect a whistleblower who makes a serious allegation in the reasonable belief that it is in the public interest to do so from any reprisals, harassment, or victimization. The contact person for reporting any issue is the Head of HR & Administration Section of the Organization.

5. Confidentiality

All allegations will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal a whistleblower's identity unless the whistleblower otherwise requests. However, if the matter is subsequently dealt with through other procedures such as the Disciplinary Procedure. Similarly, if the allegation results in court proceedings then the whistleblower may have to give evidence in open court if the case is to be successful. The Organization will not, without the whistleblower's consent, disclose the identity of a whistleblower to anyone other than a person involved in the investigation/allegation.

6. Anonymous Allegations

This procedure encourages whistleblowers to put their name to an allegation wherever possible as anonymous allegations may often be difficult to substantiate/prove. Allegations made anonymously are much less powerful but anonymous allegations will be considered at the discretion of the ED. In exercising discretion to accept an anonymous allegation the factors to be taken into account:

- The seriousness of the issue raised
- The credibility of the allegation; and
- Whether the allegation can realistically be investigated from factors or sources other than the complainant

7. Untrue Allegations

No disciplinary or other action will be taken against a whistleblower who makes an allegation in the reasonable belief that it is in the public interest to do so even if the allegation is not substantiated by an investigation. However, disciplinary action may be taken against a whistleblower who makes an allegation without reasonable belief that it is in the public interest to do so (e.g. making an allegation frivolously, maliciously, or for personal gain where there is no element of public interest).

8. Procedure for Making Allegation

It is preferable for allegations to be made to an employee's immediate manager to whom they report. However, this may depend on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice. For example, if the whistleblower believes that management is involved it would be inappropriate to raise it directly with them. The whistleblower may then make an allegation directly to the Executive Director (ED) of the Organization.

If ED receives an allegation he/she will consider the allegation and may discuss it with EC Members. The Head of HR and Admin will discuss with the whistleblower and if they wish to proceed with the allegation will be investigated.

9. Allegation

Whether a written or oral report is made it is important that relevant information is provided including:

- The name of the person making the allegation and a contact point.
- The background and history of the allegation (giving relevant dates and names and positions of those who may be in a position to have contributed to the allegation);
- The specific reason for the allegation. Although someone making an allegation will not be expected to prove the truth of any allegations, they will need to provide information to the person they have reported to, to establish that there are reasonable grounds for the allegation.

Someone making an allegation may be accompanied by another person of their choosing during any meetings or interviews in connection with the allegation. However, if the matter is subsequently dealt with through another procedure the right to be accompanied will at that stage be in accordance with the relevant procedure.

10. Action on receipt of an Allegation

The line manager will record details of the allegation gathering as much information as possible, (within 5 working days of receipt of the allegation) including:

- The record of the allegation;
- The acknowledgment of the allegation;
- Any documents supplied by the whistleblower

The investigator will ask the whistleblower for his/her preferred means of communication and contact details and use these for all communications with the whistleblower in order to preserve confidentiality. If the allegation relates to fraud, potential fraud or other financial irregularity the Treasurer will be informed within 5 working days of receipt of the allegation. The Treasurer will determine whether the allegation should be investigated and the method of investigation. If the allegation discloses evidence of a criminal offense it will immediately be reported to the Executive Committee (EC) and a decision will be made as to whether to inform the Police. If the allegation concerns suspected harm to children the appropriate authorities will be informed immediately.

If the issue is around suspected harm to vulnerable children, youth and adults, this should be referred to Safeguarding Policies.

11. Timetable

Head of HR and Admin will acknowledge the allegation in writing within 10 working days with

- An indication of how the Organization propose to deal with the matter
- An estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- An indication of whether any initial inquiries have been made
- Information on whistleblower support mechanisms
- Indication whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not

Where the allegation has been made internally and anonymously, obviously the Organization will be unable to communicate what action has been taken.

12. Support

The Organization will take steps to minimize any difficulties which may be experienced as a result of making an allegation. For instance, if a whistleblower is required to give evidence in criminal

or disciplinary proceedings the Organization will arrange for them to receive advice about the procedure and advise on the support mechanisms that are available. The Organization accepts that whistleblowers need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed.

13. Monitoring

A Register will record the following details:

- The name and status (e.g. employee) of the whistleblower
- The date on which the allegation was received
- The nature of the allegation
- Details of the person who received the allegation
- Whether the allegation is to be investigated and, if yes, by whom
- The outcome of the investigation
- Any other relevant details

The Register will be confidential and only available for inspection by the Executive Committee. The ED will report annually to the Executive Committee on the operation of the Procedure and on the whistleblowing allegations made during the period covered by the report. The report will be in a form that does not identify whistleblowers.