

## AUSTRALIAN DOCTORS FOR AFRICA

**Policy:** WHISTLEBLOWER

**Date approved:** 10/2024

**Date of next review:** 10/2027

**Approved by:** Board

### 1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

#### 1.1 Purpose

ADFA is committed to accountability and transparency, and this policy supports those values. The purpose of this policy is to enable ADFA to provide a supportive environment where wrongdoing and/or misconduct by ADFA staff, board or volunteers can be raised without fear of retribution. This policy also provides for an independent internal investigation of the disclosures made.

This policy is consistent with Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct requirements, to guarantee certain protections for those who make good faith disclosures of wrongdoing.

#### 1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all staff, board members and volunteers of ADFA, as well as to all those with whom ADFA has professional dealings, such as contractors, consultants, and partner organisations.

### 2 DEFINITIONS

**Whistleblower:** a person who reports wrongdoing or misconduct in accordance with this policy.

**Whistleblowing:** is the disclosure by or for a witness, of actual or suspected misconduct in an organisation that reveals fraud, corruption, illegal activities, gross mismanagement, malpractice or any other serious wrongdoing.

### 3 POLICY STATEMENT

3.1 Staff, volunteers, contractors and partners who are aware of possible wrongdoing have a responsibility to disclose that information and will be protected from adverse consequences to their retainment.

3.2 **Wrongdoing or Misconduct**, for the purpose of this policy, includes behaviour that:

- is fraudulent, corrupt, or illegal;
- is unethical, such as dishonesty, engaging in questionable accounting practices;
- wilfully breaching ADFA's Codes of Conduct or the ACFID Code of Conduct;
- breaches of ADFA's Child Safeguarding or Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policies;
- is potentially damaging to ADFA, such as maladministration;
- is seriously harmful or potentially seriously harmful to a ADFA employee or volunteer such as deliberate unsafe work practice or wilful disregard to the safety of others in the workplace;
- may cause serious financial or non-financial loss to ADFA or damage its reputation; or
- involves any other kind of serious impropriety including retaliatory action against a whistleblower for having made a wrongdoing disclosure.

- 3.3 Even though a whistleblower may be implicated in the wrongdoing they must not be subjected to any actual or threatened retaliatory action or victimisation in reprisal for making a report under this policy. However, making a report may not protect the whistleblower from the consequences flowing from involvement in the wrongdoing itself. A person's liability for their own conduct is not affected by their reporting of that conduct under this policy. However active cooperation in the investigation, an admission and remorse may be taken into account when considering disciplinary or other action.
- 3.4 When a person makes such a disclosure they are entitled to expect that:
- their identity remains confidential at all times to the extent permitted by law or is practical in the circumstances;
  - they will be protected from reprisal, including adverse employment consequences, harassment or victimisation for making the report;
  - should retaliation occur for having made the disclosure then ADFA will treat it as serious wrongdoing under this policy; and
  - a fair and impartial investigative process will be carried out as per the ADFA Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure.

## 4 PROCEDURES

- 4.1 ADFA will make all staff, Board members, volunteers, contractors and partners aware of this policy, through induction processes, reference in contracts, and via the website. Reports can be raised by anyone (including but not limited to program beneficiaries), including children, parents, guardians, carers, partners, ADFA personnel, members of the public, etc. When overseas, child abuse reports should be made to the nominated team leader or other ADFA representative, who will escalate the complaint to ADFA's CEO or Chair. ADFA representatives include local staff, local consultants and partners, who are able to communicate in local language with community members, and facilitate access to reporting mechanisms.
- 4.2 A whistleblower should report instances of, or suspicions of, misconduct to the CEO in the first instance, via email: ([ceo@ausdocafrica.org](mailto:ceo@ausdocafrica.org)), or to the Chair of the Board via email ([chair@ausdocafrica.org](mailto:chair@ausdocafrica.org)). Alternatively, a complaints form can be submitted confidentially via the ADFA website. The form, and details of the reporting process as per the Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure, are available at <https://ausdocafrica.org/complaints/>.

Reports can also be made in **writing** to:

Chief Executive Officer or Chair of the Board  
Australian Doctors for Africa  
Suite 1, 219 Onslow Road  
SHENTON PARK WA 6008

or via telephone: +61 8 6478 8951

- 4.3 Alternatively, a report can be made directly to ACFID. ADFA is committed to working according to the standard required by the Code of Conduct of ACFID, and a complaint can be made against any ACFID member when it is believed that they have breached the Code. The independent Code of Conduct Committee (CCC) is responsible for receiving, managing and investigating complaints against ACFID members. The full procedure for this is outlined on the ACFID website (<https://acfid.asn.au/code-of-conduct/complaints/>) and also on the ADFA website at <https://ausdocafrica.org/complaints/>. Complaints can be lodged via the following means:

Website: ACFID Code Committee at <http://www.acfid.asn.au/code-of-conduct/complaints>

Email: Chair, ACFID Code of Conduct Committee at [code@acfid.asn.au](mailto:code@acfid.asn.au).

Post: Chair, ACFID Code of Conduct Committee c/- ACFID, Private Bag 3, Deakin ACT 2600 (such complaints should be marked 'confidential').

- 4.4 If DFAT funding is involved, **immediately report** any suspected or alleged instances of child abuse, exploitation, harm or child protection policy non-compliance to the Conduct and Ethics Unit via [childwelfare@dfat.gov.au](mailto:childwelfare@dfat.gov.au).
- 4.5 Reports must be made in good faith and be as thorough as is possible. False or malicious allegations may result in disciplinary actions.
- 4.6 An appropriate investigator will be appointed by the CEO and Chair, who is not implicated in the report, to lead the investigation. The internal investigator must have internal independence of line management of the area affected by the wrongdoing disclosure.
- 4.7 The investigator has direct, unfettered access to independent financial, legal and operational advisers as required, and a direct line of reporting to either the CEO or the Chair as appropriate. Regular reports are required into the investigative process and results.
- 4.8 The investigator is responsible for keeping the whistleblower informed of the progress and outcomes of the inquiry/investigation subject to considerations of privacy of those against whom the allegations have been made.

## 5 REFERENCES

- ACFID Code of Conduct
- ADFA Policy – Complaints Handling
- ADFA Procedure – Complaints Handling

**Established:** October 2021

**Reviewed:** September 2024