

## World YWCA Feedback and Complaints Policy

This policy outlines how World YWCA handles feedback and complaints about the work of the World YWCA, its staff or other affiliated persons. If you have feedback or complaints about the work of a World YWCA Member Association (MA) or related associations, please see the **World YWCA Statement on Complaints against World YWCA Member Associations**. If there are any concerns relating to the actions of the World YWCA or its staff, volunteers, Board or global governance bodies members, World YWCA offers a mechanism to address these concerns. This document outlines what can be expected from World YWCA Office and World YWCA Board when we receive complaints, and the process and timelines for responding to the complainant.

### 1. Purpose

To strengthen accountability, the World YWCA is committed to a mutually respectful, open, collaborative and transparent communication with and feedback from its affiliated Member Associations (MAs), internal and external stakeholders and general public; in line with the World YWCA values, policies, the Standards of Good Management and Accountability and codes of conduct. In addition, as a member of [Accountable Now](#), a cross-sector platform for internationally operating civil society organisations (CSOs) who strive to be transparent and responsive to stakeholders. World YWCA is committed to implement the [12 Accountability Commitments of Accountable Now](#) and to fulfilling [Dynamic Accountability](#) practices to go beyond compliance while seeking to respect human rights, be independent and work ethically and professionally.

Although this policy does not go into detail on receiving neutral or positive feedback, World YWCA welcomes all kinds of feedback and encourages people to submit this to the World YWCA via [feedback@worldywca.org](mailto:feedback@worldywca.org).

### 2. Handling complaints

World YWCA will uphold the following principles when handling complaints:

**Confidentiality:** We are committed to protecting the privacy and safety of those who submit feedback to World YWCA, as well as anyone else named or otherwise involved in the issue. All information received will be treated in confidence, and will not be shared with anyone who is not directly involved in the processing of the complaint. If World YWCA needs to share the complaint received with the World YWCA Board or global governance bodies, all identifying information relating to the complainant will be removed, including names, contact information, and information about the complainant's position – unless the complainant requests otherwise.

**Objectivity:** Complaints are addressed in an impartial and objective manner. Any potential conflicts of interest on the part of the Office, Board or global governance bodies will be declared, and the person with a conflict of interest will be excused from the complaint review and response process.

**Timeliness:** Complaints that fall within the scope of this policy, as defined above, will be processed in accordance with the timeframes outlined below in Section 7, Process. Any delays to the process will be communicated to the parties involved as soon as possible, with an estimated new timeline.

**Learning-oriented approach:** It is World YWCA's aim that all complaints received lead to learning and improvement. As such, World YWCA will work to address any weaknesses or deficiencies that may be brought to light by the complaints received and aim to communicate transparently about learnings and progress.

### 3. Key terms and concepts

The following terms are defined for the purpose of this policy:

**Feedback:** Any positive or negative statement of opinion/comments, or more formal complaints, from a stakeholder about our mission and values, strategies, policies, objectives, decisions, activities, governance, performance, use of resources, or behaviour of World YWCA staff, volunteers, Board or global governance bodies members. World YWCA distinguishes two types of external feedback: a **comment**; and a **complaint**.

**Comment (or general feedback):** An expression of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, or a suggestion for improvement. It may be expressed formally or informally, and may or may not require a response.

**Complaint:** A more formal claim that World YWCA has failed to meet a World YWCA value or commitment. A complaint may be a written or verbal statement against World YWCA expressing dissatisfaction with World YWCA work and/or policies, and a response and/or resolution is expected.

**Serious/sensitive complaint:** These are complaints relating to gross misconduct, such as sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud, corruption, or other illegal actions.

**World YWCA Office:** The World Office, in consultation with the World Board and MAs, develops the World YWCA's strategy, implements work plans and programmes, and support and coordinates other global bodies such as World Board and Nominations Committee.

**World YWCA Board:** Between World Council meetings, the World Board is the main decision body for the World YWCA<sup>1</sup>, making all decisions regarding policies, membership and overseeing the work of the General Secretary and World Office.

**World YWCA Nominations Committee:** The Nominations Committee is a Committee of the World Council that operates independent from the Board. Its role is to deliver a transparent and open process for nomination and election to World Board and Nominations Committee at World Council, and for filling vacancies on the World Board and the Nominations Committee between World Councils<sup>2</sup>.

### 4. Scope

#### *Complaints addressed by this policy*

This policy applies to the work carried out by World YWCA, its staff, interns, consultants, volunteers, Board, Nominations Committee and global governance bodies' members and may relate to:

- World YWCA's compliance with the Standards of Good Management and Accountability, and World YWCA policies, particularly the codes of conduct;
- World YWCA's compliance with the 12 Accountability Commitments of Accountable Now;
- The functioning of this feedback and complaints mechanism.

#### *Complaints not addressed by this policy*

World YWCA is not able to accept or look into:

- Issues that are, or could be, the subject of legal proceedings (e.g. relating to contractual matters or criminal activities). These should be dealt with under the appropriate legal jurisdiction;

<sup>1</sup> World Board Role: Articles 35 – 36 – 37, [World YWCA Constitution](#)

<sup>2</sup> Nominations Committee Functions: Article 68, [World YWCA Constitution](#)

- Complaints on World YWCA's advocacy work<sup>3</sup> because it does not align with the complainants' personal beliefs;
- Complaints about World YWCA's MAs. For any concerns relating to MAs, please see the World YWCA Statement on Complaints against World YWCA Member Associations;
- Abusive or offensive;
- Repeatedly stated in a manner not conducive to resolution.

## 5. Who may submit a complaint?

Any person or entity may submit a complaint, as long as it is in line with the points laid out in Section 4, Scope.

Investigating a complaint uses World YWCA limited resources, so we expect the person who is making the complaint to:

- Provide as much information as possible;
- Be willing to be contacted and engage in the resolution process, if warranted;
- Understand that making a complaint triggers a formal process which require resources.

Feedback provided by or concerning a person under 18 will be dealt with in the strictest confidence.

Complaints may be submitted anonymously. This may limit the extent to which we are able to respond to the complainant, particularly if contact details are not provided. However, World YWCA will make sure in all cases to take the information we receive into consideration and follow up internally as far as possible, and use it as an opportunity to learn.

## 6. Who will be involved in reviewing the complaints we receive?

All complaints submitted will be received and reviewed by the World YWCA Complaints Focal Points (General Secretary, a staff member and a Board member), who are responsible for logging feedback and ensuring complaints are investigated. Where there are potential conflicts of interest within the World YWCA Office staff or Board member appointed as Complaints Focal Points, an alternative member of staff or Board will be appointed to deal with the matter.

Quarterly or more often, as warranted, the World YWCA Office will share information with the Board President on complaints received and actions taken to address them.

A summary of the complaint – without any information that could disclose the complainant's identity – may also be shared with other World YWCA staff and Board members for learning purposes.

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<sup>3</sup> Advocacy work is based in World YWCA Council and World YWCA Board adopted policies, Articles 21f and 35, [World YWCA Constitution](#)

## 7. Process for submitting feedback and complaints about World YWCA

### *Submitting a feedback or complaint*

Feedback may be submitted by visiting the World YWCA dedicated feedback page:

<https://www.worldywca.org/feedback/>

You can also contact World YWCA by mail, phone, or email:

Complaints Focal Points, World YWCA, L'Ancienne Route 16, 1218 Grand-Saconnex, Geneva, Switzerland.

Telephone: +41 22 929 6040

Email: [feedback@worldywca.org](mailto:feedback@worldywca.org)

Submissions to the above postal address, telephone and email are received by the staff Complaints Focal Point.

If the feedback or complaint relates to World YWCA Office activities or personnel, it should be addressed directly by World YWCA General Secretary, Board member and staff Complaints Focal Points.

If there is a serious complaint to make in regards World YWCA General Secretary, it should be addressed directly by the Board President, Board member and staff Complaints Focal Points.

If the complaint relates to the World YWCA Board, it should be addressed directly by the Board President. If the complaint relates to the World YWCA Board President, it should be addressed directly by the Complaints Focal Points.

When submitting a complaint, please provide the following information:

1. An explanation of the issue. If your concern relates to a specific World YWCA Standards of Good Management or Accountability Commitments, World YWCA policy, or mechanism, please mention which one.
2. If your complaint relates to a specific member of staff, the Board, Nominations Committee, and global governance bodies' members, or other person affiliated with World YWCA, it would be helpful for you to specify the person concerned; however, this is not mandatory.
3. Any steps you may have already taken in this regard, including previous correspondence with World YWCA or any affiliated persons on this matter.
4. Whether you would like us to disclose your identity to those directly involved/mentioned in your concern when we are looking into the matter. If you do not specify, we will by default keep your identity confidential.

### *How we will process complaints*

**Recording the complaint:** The complaint, once received, will be recorded by the World YWCA staff Complaints Focal Point in a secure password protected online folder. All communication and documents relating to the issue will be saved in the folder.

**Acknowledgement of receipt:** World YWCA will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 10 business days, explaining the World YWCA's mandate, next steps, and scope/limits of actions. This information will be communicated to the complainant via email, as far as this is possible.

**Investigation and response:** World YWCA Complaints Focal Points will investigate the complaint to assess whether it is well-founded, speak to any staff or other affiliated persons involved in the issue, and agree on a plan to respond to the issue.

During this period, World YWCA Complaints Focal Points may reach out to the complainant (if contact information was provided) to request further information or clarification.

**Following up with the complainant:** World YWCA Complaints Focal Points will share in writing with the complainant the outcome of the investigation of the complaint, including any actions planned to take in response, within a month after receiving the complaint.

**Appeals:** World YWCA takes seriously the proper and fair functioning of the World YWCA complaints handling process, and will look into any issues raised in this regard. Appeals will not necessarily result in a different decision, but if the complainant believes the complaint has not been handled fairly, they may present an appeal requesting an internal review of the process. The request for appeal should be submitted in writing. The World YWCA will acknowledge the appeal within 10 business days of its receipt and will handle the appeal and inform all parties of its resolution with the utmost brevity. In order to guarantee objectivity in the appeals process, a member of staff and/or Board other than that which were initially assigned as Complaints Focal Points will be responsible for the review process.

#### *External transparency, learnings and improvements*

All complaints and feedback will be logged from their receipt to their resolutions. World YWCA will use this register to periodically monitor the type of complaints received, the measures taken to resolve them and their outcomes, and any proposals for improvement. This information will be shared with the World YWCA staff and Board on a quarterly basis and included in the annual internal report to the movement and in the annual accountability report submitted to Accountable Now and reviewed by an Independent Review Panel. The report will be used to analyse and improve the procedures and practices, and will be presented for review by the World Board. World YWCA will not include specific information about individual complaints to ensure confidentiality for all parties involved.

If you have used the World YWCA feedback mechanism and you believe that it is not functioning, you are welcome to bring this to the attention of Accountable Now, as having a functioning feedback and complaints mechanism is a key requirement for Accountable Now members.

#### **8. Review of this policy**

This policy was last reviewed and approved by the Board in December 2020. The policy will be periodically reviewed to assess whether it is still effective and fit for purpose. Updates may be made as frequently as needed, subject to approval by the World YWCA Board.