1. PREAMBLE

Li-BIRD is a transparent and result-oriented organisation, and is accountable for its actions. It is essential for the organisation to have a policy and procedures for reporting complaints and addressing them through appropriate actions thereby protecting those who wish to raise a complaint, and improve organizational accountability to partners, beneficiaries and stakeholders. The Complaints Handling (CH) Policy and Procedures establishes a formal mechanism to help Li-BIRD learn about the gaps and problems, manage risks, rectify mistakes, improve the quality of programme delivery, and ensure adherence to organisational policies while maintaining confidentiality and protecting its staff, beneficiaries, partners and stakeholders. The CH policy and procedures does not replace a culture of openness and dialogue but establishes a formal mechanism to address concerns. The CH policy is one way of raising concerns with Li-BIRD, while several matters can still be raised through ongoing communication and interaction with partners, beneficiaries and stakeholders.

2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this CH policy and procedures is to provide a fair and consistent means to address complaints. Li-BIRD is committed to ensuring that its CH policy and procedures for lodging complaint is accessible across Li-BIRD’s mission and to the public at large.

Li-BIRD has a number of policies in place e.g., Safeguarding Policy 2019; Whistle blower Policy 2018; Conflict of Interest Policy 2018; Child Protection Policy 2018; Governance Manual 2018 (amended in 2021); Financial Administration Regulation 2006 (amended in 2018); Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy 2011 (amended in 2021), Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy and Procedure 2021 (amended in 2023); and Personnel & Administration Regulation 2007 (amended in 2018), and Anti-Money Laundering and Combating Financing of Terrorism Policy 2022. The CH policy should be used in conjunction with other relevant policies cited above to make decisions on how to prevent and respond to any complaints or concerns related to Li-BIRD as an organization, its staff, beneficiaries or stakeholders.

This CH Policy and Procedures provides guidelines for the identification of complaints and outlines formal procedures to be adopted as a complaint handling mechanism. Any individual or organization can lodge a complaint, including the following (but not limited to):

- Li-BIRD as a whole or as an organisation;
- Breaching of Conflict of Interest Policy, Child Protection Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy, Sub-Grant Partnership Policy, Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy, GESI Policy, and Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Combating Financing of Terrorism (CFT) Policy.
- Complaints may be made regarding any aspect of Li-BIRD and that no knowledge of Li-BIRD’s policies or other internal arrangements is required.
- Accessibility and misuse of resources and brands posing risk to organisation’s reputation and integrity;
- Scientific fraud (e.g. data falsification, plagiarism) or ethical violation (e.g. regarding use of data, authorship, rights);
- Sexual harassment, exploitation, discrimination and abuse including child abuse;
3. UNDERSTANDING A COMPLAINT

A complaint is a specific grievance of an individual or organization who believes that LI-BIRD or any of its staff members, including interns, on-the-job trainee, motivators, field facilitators, vendors, or contractors have failed to meet a commitment or have failed to abide by the agreed policies and standards. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the quality of service, actions or lack of action by LI-BIRD or its staff, sub-grantees, volunteers or anyone directly involved in the delivery of LI-BIRD’s work. It is a criticism that expects a prompt, fair and confidential response to resolve the issue. LI-BIRD shall make every efforts in terms of distinguishing grievance and feedback that it receives formally or informally. Feedback is either positive or negative formal or informal statement of opinion and serves as part of the ongoing dialogue with employee, partners, beneficiaries, and other key stakeholders for improvement. Whereas, grievance is a circumstance where individuals, employees, beneficiaries or other stakeholders think they have been treated unfairly and are affected negatively by the organisation’s activities and operations or by its staff.

LI-BIRD’s CH policy and procedures is designed to handle both sensitive and operational complaints, which are elaborated below:

**Sensitive complaints:** A sensitive complaint is a complaint about corruption, sexual exploitation and abuse or the violation of rules. Sensitive complaints include the following (but not limited to):

- Misbehaviour, misconduct, misuse of funds, fraud, corruption, money laundering, financial misappropriation, financing of terrorism by staff and sub-grantee;
- Misuse of resources, power, position, authority and brands posing risk to organisation’s reputation and integrity, including scientific fraud and ethical violation;
- Sexual harassment, exploitation, discrimination and abuse, including child abuse; and
- Issues related to environmental, social and gender safeguarding.

**Operational complaints:** These are largely operational complaints such as insufficient quality and quantity in the implementation of programme activities; partner dissatisfaction with contracts and/or inadequate consultation and coordination with partners/ stakeholders.

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

LI-BIRD’s Complaint handling policy and procedures is guided by the following principles:

- **Accessibility:** Complainants should be able to make a complaint as easily as possible through written correspondence, email, telephone, online message, website or verbally. LI-BIRD is committed to making communication as simple and easy as possible.
- **Timeliness:** Complaints shall be resolved in a timely manner. LI-BIRD commits to remain in regular communication with a person who lodges a complaint. LI-BIRD will provide a time frame by when they can expect to receive a response. Complainants should lodge complaints within 3 months of the incident. In exceptional circumstances LI-BIRD may respond to a complaint that is older than 3 months although the passage of time may make it harder to resolve the complaint satisfactorily.
- **Confidentiality:** All complaints irrespective of sensitive or operational in nature shall be handled with absolute confidentiality to protect the identity of the complainant/s. Any breach of
confidentiality shall be considered as major misconduct. LI-BIRD shall respect the local cultures and practices while dealing with complaints.

- **Documentation**: LI-BIRD will ensure proper documentation of all complaints along with the actions taken.
- **Mutual respect**: LI-BIRD will treat the complainant with courtesy and respect. LI-BIRD expects the complainant to communicate their concerns fairly and appropriately.
- **Part of continuous learning process**: The learning from the complaint handling and response mechanism will be analysed and a synthesis will be brought into discussion at the Management Committee and to the Executive Board. This information will not necessarily be available to the public. LI-BIRD shall apply the learnings to improve the quality of service delivery, enhance accountability and improve organisational governance.

5. **COMPLAINTS THAT CANNOT BE DEALT WITH BY THIS POLICY**

All internal employment conditions such as staff salaries, staff’s performance appraisal, working station/area, etc will not be handled by applying this policy but are referred to the Management Committee and handled as per the standard organisation’s policy. The complaints mechanism and procedures do not apply for complaints that are subject to the current investigation by any regulatory body, legal or official authorities. These complaints include but not limited to the following:

- Events requiring investigation by a professional and/or a disciplinary body.
- Events requiring an independent inquiry into a serious incident involving national government authorities.
- Events requiring investigation of a potential criminal offence.
- The complaints procedure will cease immediately if the complainant explicitly takes a legal course of action.

If the complaint is not within the scope of LI-BIRD, the complainant will be informed accordingly.

6. **COMPLAINTS HANDLING COMMITTEE**

LI-BIRD shall form a three member Complaint Handling Committee (CHC) comprising: (i) Admin and HR Manager, (ii) Compliance Manager, and (iii) MEAL Manager. The Admin and HR Manager will work as the Focal Person and the CHC will perform the following roles/responsibilities:

- **Acknowledgement of complainant**: Once the complaint is received, the Focal Person will provide verbal or written acknowledgement to the complainant verifying the complaint was received within 10 working days.
- **Review and categorization of complaints**: The CHC shall review and categorise the complaints either as sensitive and operational complaints.
- **Investigation and recommendation for actions**: Irrespective of whether the complaint is sensitive or operational in nature, the CHC shall present the complaint to the Management Committee and/or the Executive Board (as deemed appropriate). The CHC in consultation with the Management Committee and/or the Executive Board shall identify and assign a person or a team for conducting investigation and possible recommendations for action. The CHC will review the investigation findings and recommendations before submitting to the Management Committee and/or the Executive Board for action.
- **Communicating decision and actions to the complainant**: The CHC will ensure that the complainant is responded to in writing with findings and actions taken to resolve the case in question.
• Capacity building, monitoring, documentation and review of the policy: The CHC shall look at the prevention, redress and monitoring of LI-BIRD’s complaint handling systems. The CHC will provide orientation to staff, beneficiaries, partners, sub-grantees, and other key stakeholders for effective implementation of CH Policy. CHC shall conduct periodic monitoring to ensure accountability, effective implementation and documentation of CH policy; and

• Identification of Focal Person at the Project, Cluster or Site Offices: The CHC shall identify and designate a Focal Person at the Project, Cluster or Site Office level for handling complaints that are operational in nature. The Focal Person at the Project, Cluster or Site Office will forward the sensitive complaints to the Management Committee or the Executive Board via the CHC. For operational complaints, the Focal Person will work closely under the supervision of the CHC who in turn will seek guidance and approval from the Management Committee and/or the Executive Board for actions and the resolution of the complaint in question.

6. APPLICATION OF COMPLAINT HANDLING POLICY TO PARTNERS/SUB-GRAnteES
• LI-BIRD will encourage its partners and sub-grantees to develop and implement complaint handling policy and procedures. If required, LI-BIRD will provide support to develop and/or strengthen their complaints handling system/mechanism;
• Sensitive complaints about a partner organisation or sub-grantee will be referred to the respective partner organisation’s complaints handling system if that is safe and trustworthy and only with the complainant’s consent.
• Operational complaints about a partner organisation or sub-grantee will be referred to the respective organisation unless different arrangements are agreed.

7. COMPLAINT LODGING PROCEDURE
LI-BIRD will follow the following complaint lodging procedures:

• Complainant may lodge complaint either in English or Nepali language in writing (in their own format) or may lodge a verbal complaint through any of the LI-BIRD staff who will support in documenting details of the complaint as per the complaint registration form (Annex 1).

• Complaint may be made through any of the following mechanisms:
  (i) Complaint box (Complaint boxes are available in all LI-BIRD offices in accessible areas.)
  (ii) Mailing (PO Box 324, Ranipauwa, Pokhara, Kaski, Nepal)
  (iii) Email: complaints@libird.org
  (iv) Telephone: +977 61 576834 or +977 61 585357
  (v) Complaint may also be lodged by filling a web-based complaint registration form for lodging complaints (available in LI-BIRD’s public website https://libird.org/submit-a-complaint/)
  (vi) In-person (through any staff of LI-BIRD)
  (vii) Focal Person, including the CHC members

• Handling of Complaint Box - The complaint box will be opened and retrieved by the designated Focal Person in presence of at least one other staff member and retrieve the complaints on a weekly basis.
8. POLICY MONITORING AND REVIEW
This policy shall be reviewed every three years. Such review will take place in light of progress made in the policy implementation and guidance/feedback received from LI-BIRD Executive Board, Management, staff, programme participants, beneficiaries and other key stakeholders.

This policy was approved by the LI-BIRD Executive Board on 13 September 2021 and amended on 1 March 2023.
Annex 1: Complaint Registration Form गुनासो दर्ता फारम
This form should be completed by the person wishing to lodge a complaint or documented by LI-BIRD Staff. All information must be held securely, and confidentiality must be maintained at all times.

जसले गुनासो दर्ता गरेको हो, उसले यो फर्म भर्नुपर्नेर्ा यी विवरणमा भएका सबै जानकारीको गोपनियता सम्बन्धित कर्नुपर्नेर्ा राख्नुपर्नेर्

Your full name (तपाईको पुरा नाम)*:  Sex (लिंग):  Age (उमेर):  

Phone / mobile* (फोन वा मोबाइल नम्बर):  

Email (If available)(उपलब्ध भए ईमेल ठेगाना दिनुहोला :  

Place for filing the complaint (गुनासो दर्ता गरेको स्थान ) *

Description of the complaint (गुनासोको विवरण)

1. Who were involved? Against whom is the complaint? The person (or persons) the complaint/incident is about ( को-को संलग्न थिए ? यो गुनासो कसको विरुद्ध हो ? यो गुनासो व्यक्ति (व्यक्ति को) वा घटना सम्बन्धित हो? )

2. What happened? Or what do you suspect has happened? (के भएको थियो? अथवा यहाँलाई के भएको शाका लागेको छ? )*  

3. Where did the incident happen (Mention District, Municipality, Ward, Location)? (घटना कहाँ भएको थियो, जिल्ला, पालिका, वाडा र र स्थान खुलाउनुहोला )

4. When or during what period did the incident occur? (घटना कहिले वा कुन अवधीमा भएको थियो ?)

5. If you need support, please let us know how we can help you? (यहाँलाई केही सहयोग चाहिए भने हामीले यहाँलाई कसरी सहयोग गर्न सक्छौ ?)

6. How did you find out about the incident? Who else knows about the incident? How long have you known about the incident? (यहाँलाई घटनाको बारे कसरी थाहा भयो? यो घटनाको बारेमा अरु कसलाई थाहा छ ? यो घटनाको बारे यहाँलाई थाहा भएको कति समय भयो ? )
7. Name of witnesses (if any) provide the names of witnesses and where they can be contacted, if known. (साक्षी कोहि थियो, साक्षीको नाम र सम्पर्क विवरण दिन्नुहोला)

8. State what kind of a response you expect from LI-BIRD and how you wish to see the matter resolved (यहाँले ली-बर्डबाट कस्तो कारवाहीको अपेक्षा राख्नुभएको छ ?)

9. Are you connected to our organization in some way? (के तपाईं ली-बर्ड संस्थासँग प्रत्यक्ष र अप्रत्यक्ष रुपमा आवद्ध हुनुहुँदै? )

10. Description of the complaint (गुनासोको विवरण) [Please describe place, date, causes, what happened, who were involved and the consequences as detailed as possible (कृपया गुनासोको सम्बन्धमा कहाँ, कब, कस-कसको संलग्नता थियो र के-के भएको थियो र कस्ता परिणाममा भन्ने बारे सक्नेवासम्म सबै विवरण खुलाउने प्रयास गर्नु होला)] :

    *Acceptance (मन्जुरी-नामा )

By submitting this complaint you accept LI-BIRD’s Complaint Handling Policy and Procedures by which the complaint will be processed. (यो गुनासो दर्ता गरेर यहाँले ली-बर्डको गुनासो दर्ता नीति तथा प्रक्रियामा रही गुनासोलाई अगाडि बढाउन स्वीकार गर्नुहुन्छ)

    *Yes, I accept the process for the complaint mechanism (हो, म संस्थाको गुनासो सम्बन्धि नीति तथा प्रक्रिया बमोजिम यो गुनासो दर्ता गर्ने राजि छ ) Submit (दाखिला गर्न) .

    गुनासोकताको हस्ताक्षर (Signature of Complainant)

    Date (सम्पति):

For LI-BIRD’s use only (ली-बर्डको प्रयोगको लागि मात्र )