

Communications Policy (Appendix 11)

Key Terms

As used in this Policy, the following terms have the following meanings:

"Authorized staff" means a Help Lesotho Senior Manager (s) or any other organization employee or representative who has been authorized by the Country Director or the Executive Director to speak with a Third Party with respect to a particular topic or on a particular occasion.

"Insider" means an employee, officer, director or volunteer.

"Nonpublic information" means information that has not been Publicly Disseminated and is otherwise not available to the general public.

"Publicly disseminated" means information that has been made available through the distribution of a press release. Notably, information is generally not considered to be Publicly Disseminated if it has only been posted to the organization's website.

"Third party" means partners, donors, other organizations, reporters and any other party who is not bound by a duty of confidentiality to the organization.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

1. Introduction

Good internal communication is the foundation of trust. Just as we want our beneficiaries to trust us, we must act in ways that ensure we trust each other. Within every group, there are competing demands and priorities. It is only by taking the time, making the commitment, and truly listening that we will communicate well and openly with each other. It takes every one of us to preserve this kind of trust.

Communication takes on many forms and is fundamental to the success of any organization. Honest and open communication forms part of Help Lesotho's mission and is key to achieving our objectives. Well-informed staff feel more involved, are happier and more capable of executing their responsibilities effectively. Communication is critical in engaging our staff in the organization's strategic direction. The leadership of Help Lesotho is committed to being, and must remain, open to questions and to hearing concerns at all times, understanding that good communication is the foundation of a healthy work culture and productive conflict resolution.

There are various channels of communication available to staff within the organization and many processes, formal or informal, for their use within departments and the organization. This Policy outlines the responsibilities of all staff in maintaining good communication practice.

It is to be noted that healthy leadership at any level requires the use of good judgement in knowing when to hold personal information confidential and when to inform one's superiors. This balance is what leads to trust and allows management to support employees when they need it most. Such practices as gossip and negative or hurtful communication is harmful to everyone in the organization.

Let us hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards of positive and encouraging open communication for our own benefit, for that of our work and for the good of the organization.

Taking the time to communicate properly is to be considered a top priority and everyone's responsibility.

2. Objectives

The objectives of this Policy are to:

- Ensure staff are fully informed of all relevant Help Lesotho activities, to enable them to be as effective as possible in their role and to support the strategic direction of the organization;
- Ensure all staff are aware of their responsibility for maintaining good communication practices internally and with Canada office;
- Provide guidelines on when employees should hold information in confidence and when it is in the best interests of all to share it;
- Provide easy access to essential, useful and engaging information for staff; and
- Provide effective methods of communicating during a serious pre- emergency incident.

3. Responsibilities

This section details the responsibilities of all staff, and of particular groups, in communicating effectively within the organization.

3.1 Senior management (Country Director, Program Manager and Finance and Administration Manager) will:

- Ensure information is made available to all staff in a timely manner and via appropriate channels;
- Ensure managers and supervisors have the relevant information available to communicate with their staff effectively;
- Respond to their direct reports in a timely fashion and with adequate detail to ensure they are able to proceed with their activities in the best way;
- Meet in person individually with their direct and indirect reports on a regular basis to build relationships and foster openness; and
- Maintain open two-way communication and listen carefully to feedback and comments from all staff.

3.2 Middle Management (Youth Leadership Officer, Youth Development Officer, Senior Officer Advocacy and Gender, Administration Officer and Senior Accountant) will:

- Hold regular individual meetings to discuss issues with direct and indirect reports;
- Hold regular team meetings to ensure information is available and understood within the context of the department and working environment;
- Respond to their direct reports in a timely fashion and with adequate detail to ensure they are able to proceed with their activities in the best way;

- Foster and maintain reliable, constructive two-way communication, listening and responding to feedback; and
- Keep senior managers informed at all times to promote sound leadership and protect the best interests of the organization.

3.3 All staff will:

- Read, question, and process communications provided to ensure one's activities and understanding are in line with recent developments and expectations;
- Maintain a commitment to positive, constructive communication with the full realization of the destructive, negative effects of gossip, speculation and practices that undermine another person;
- Remain open to feedback, questions and concerns at all times, realizing that catching misunderstandings early is essential to everyone's effectiveness;
- Bring issues, concerns, potential misunderstandings and feedback to a direct supervisor or manager as soon as possible;
- Respond to questions, emails, requests and such promptly and as fully as possible; and
- Communicate with colleagues across Help Lesotho in a timely manner as required.

3.4 Communications Meetings

- All staff members will create time to attend and actively participate in staff communications meetings as appropriate, including Professional Learning Community, Quarterly Staff Meeting, Program Meetings, Finance and Administration Meetings, Middle Management Meeting and Senior Management Meetings among others.
- Plan meetings in such a way that there is time for questions and feedback.
- Ensure that minutes are available via Dropbox in a timely manner and that staff members are informed by all-staff email.
- Ensure that issues raised in meetings are followed up on in a timely manner and communicated well.

4. Communicating Change

Effective communication is extremely important during times of change – either in policy, procedure, program or scheduling. Poor communication about changes is often the source of tension, misunderstanding and faulty execution. Successful communication occurs when:

- The affected staff feel well-informed and fully understand the change and their role in it;
- Everyone understands the implication of changes on many levels;
- People are informed at the beginning of any process and kept informed throughout;
- Misunderstandings and questions are identified as soon as possible and responded to quickly;
- No one is excluded who should be a part of the discussion and implementation of the change.

5. Types of Communication

Face-to-face: Emphasis should be placed on face-to-face communication as the most effective mode, allowing frank discourse, feedback, questions and airing of concerns. This should be a regular, scheduled practice and always for such conversations as an Annual Performance Review, a Disciplinary Process and discussion of personal factors that may impact one's performance, etc.

Email: Email is an effective way to communicate with multiple people, create a 'paper' trail of correspondence and effectively respond electronically. Staff members are reminded that general email communication remains the subject of the Help Lesotho's Electronic Equipment and Computer Use Policy and the Code of Conduct, which provide details of appropriate use, email management, security and confidentiality. When to copy one's direct or other managers is a matter of judgment and, although we try to avoid flooding people's inbox with emails, it is often best practice to copy people who may be involved or held responsible. When in doubt, copy them. Staff members are reminded that use of Help Lesotho computers is not to be used for personal emails.

Social media and external websites: Staff may use social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc.), on Help Lesotho computers and during work time when directly related to their position responsibilities and when requested by a manager, and subject to the Help Lesotho's Code of Conduct, the principles being respect and dignity in all correspondence. These apps are not to be used as formal channels by which to communicate to staff or management. Staff members are reminded that Help Lesotho computers are not to be used for personal social media and other purposes.

Communicating with non- personal computer (PC)-based staff: It is important to ensure that staff members who do not have regular access to a PC are not overlooked in receiving important information. Supervisors and managers are responsible to check often that such staff members are informed in a timely manner, either verbally or in print. Important information or notices must be printed and pinned to notice boards. All staff emails will be kept to a brief and concise format to allow them to be easily read in print.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

1. Introduction

This External Communications Policy sets forth the policies of Help Lesotho regarding how staff may communicate with outside parties, particularly our partners, government authorities and the general public.

This Policy applies to all Help Lesotho employees and volunteers. Any contravention of this Policy should be brought to the attention of the Country Director and may constitute grounds for disciplinary action.

2. General Policy

It is Help Lesotho's policy that all its communications with Third Parties or outside sources comply with this policy. Occasionally, employees may be contacted by outside sources or the media requesting information about the organization, its employees, directors or beneficiaries. In order to avoid providing inaccurate, incomplete information to outside sources, all outside inquiries regarding the organization

or its employees, directors or beneficiaries or operations must be referred to an authorized staff or Country Director. Only authorized staff member or Country Director are authorized to make or approve public statements pertaining to the organization or its employees, directors or beneficiaries or operations.

In the event of non-intentional disclosure by an Insider of information that might be material, Nonpublic Information, the insider must immediately inform the Country Director, who, in turn, may consult with the Executive Director on the best way to mitigate the effects of the non-intentional disclosure.

Whenever an authorized staff or the Country Director is uncertain about this Policy, he or she may consult with the Executive Director to ensure compliance.

An authorized staff or the Country Director may not depart from the principles set out in this Policy without the explicit prior approval of the Help Lesotho Executive Director or the Board of Directors.

3. Help Lesotho work/products

All works or products that staff members or volunteers create, develop or use while working at Help Lesotho are owned and belong to the organization, meaning that insiders are strictly prohibited from sending, giving or sharing to a Third Party without explicit written permission of the Country Director or Executive Director.

4. Responding to media queries

Media queries can come from a variety of sources, such as newspapers, magazines, television and radio, with various levels of coverage, such as local, regional, national and international. Regardless of the source of the query, all staff must follow these guidelines to ensure responses that accurately reflect the views of the organization.

- All media queries should be referred immediately to authorized staff or staff designated by the Country Director. This includes requests to interview/film/photograph beneficiaries.
- Beneficiaries who provide their photo or interview for the purpose of sharing outside the organization must sign the permission sheet.
- All staff should inform the designated staff of any contact with the media. Any questions relating to the organization should be passed to the designated staff immediately without comment.
- A written record of the response will be made by the designated staff and signed off in agreement with the Country Director, or designated member of staff.
- Other organisations that may be impacted by the Help Lesotho response will be notified of the query prior to release of the information.
- The response will be issued taking into account the media deadlines, where reasonable notice has been given by the media.

5. Professional References

Help Lesotho will, in most cases, provide references for employees, ex-employees or volunteers when requested. However, there is no obligation on the organization to do so. Only an authorized staff member or Country Director is authorized to provide a reference pertaining to its employees, ex-employees or volunteers. Any reference sought from Help Lesotho must be referred to the Country Director or a designated staff.

References will be provided only to appropriate parties. Before providing a reference, the staff member/volunteer should verify the identity of the person requesting the reference. If in doubt about the identity of the person requesting the reference, the staff member should ask for the request in writing. The staff member should not give out any information to parties who do not have a legitimate “need to know”.

Written references shall be clearly marked ‘Private and Confidential’ on an opaque cover page and shall be sent to an appropriate individual in the organization seeking the reference.

In considering whether to give a reference, and in determining the content of any such reference, referees must not discriminate on any grounds covered in Help Lesotho’s Discrimination Policy.

When providing references, referees shall

- take reasonable care;
- provide information that is true, specific, and fair, and that does not give a misleading impression;
- express opinions as opinions rather than statements of fact; and
- restrict the information given to the employee's job-related performance.

A staff member can act as a personal referee for any individual. However, such references must be made on the staff member’s own notepaper and must say that the reference is being made in a personal capacity. On no account should such personal reference be written on Help Lesotho’s letterhead, using a Help Lesotho email or signature, or in any way suggest that Help Lesotho endorses the reference.

6. Press Releases

Help Lesotho may issue press releases from time to time to share or disclose information that is important to or of use to the public. Press releases will be prepared and reviewed in accordance with the organization’s established practices, and signed off and issued by the Country Director and/or Executive Director or their designate.

7. Copyright

The receipt of information, such as booklets, documents, and manuals, does not give the recipient or organization the automatic right to re-use, re-distribute or re-produce it in any way that would infringe copyright. This includes, for example, making multiple copies, publishing and issuing copies to the public. Permission to re-use the information must be obtained in advance from Help Lesotho Country Director or the Executive Director. Awareness of any infringement of copyright should be reported to the Country Director.

8. Rumours

No Insider may comment on rumours. An authorized staff or the Country Director is permitted to state that the organization has a policy against commenting on rumours.

9. Help Lesotho Letterhead and Email

Employees are strictly prohibited from using Help Lesotho stationary, electronic letterhead, logo or email address or signature for personal use, professional references, media engagement or job applications without explicit written permission.

10. Violation of this Policy

Selective disclosure of material (training modules, publicity documents, policies, correspondence and email content), Nonpublic Information in any forum other than in accordance with the approved methods listed above, or by any individual other than an authorized staff, and without the express approval of the Country Director and/or Executive Director, may be considered a contravention of this Policy. A contravention of this Policy may result in a disciplinary action in accordance with the employee policy handbook.