SAFEGUARD ON
GRIEVANCE MECHANISMS
2023

Scope of application

Grievance Mechanisms are a fundamental pillar of stakeholder engagement and an essential part of implementing WWF’s place-based activities (hereafter ‘activities’). They provide a transparent and trusted way for individuals and communities who may be adversely impacted by the activities to voice their grievances and seek resolution.

This safeguard applies to all individuals and communities who may be affected by WWF’s place-based activities.

Each WWF office is responsible for developing and maintaining effective procedures to enable individuals or communities to have their grievances addressed in a timely manner.

Objectives

The objectives of this safeguard are to:

- Strengthen WWF’s accountability by ensuring that effective mechanisms are established at relevant levels to enable individuals and communities who may be adversely impacted to raise their grievances and have them addressed
- Address received grievances in a timely and effective way that resolves conflicts through collaborative problem-solving, improves mutual understanding and strengthens accountability
- Through these mechanisms, improve the environmental and social outcomes of WWF’s work.
Requirements

The following is required in all contexts, where WWF’s place-based activities are planned or ongoing:

1. Assess whether an effective grievance mechanism is in place. For WWF Offices, this may be embedded in the country-level complaints processes established under the WWF’s Speak Up! Core Standard on Whistleblowing and Complaints Management. The grievance mechanism must be:

   a. Legitimate: Customised to respect the particular social context and trusted by individuals and communities intended to use the mechanism
   b. Accessible: Known by its intended users, with accessible entry points and accommodating for potential cultural, linguistic, logistical or other barriers to access
   c. Predictable: Clear and known time-bound procedures
   d. Equitable: Enabling informed, respectful and fair engagement of all parties
   e. Transparent: Keeping parties informed throughout their case and providing information on the overall performance of the mechanism to the wider public
   f. Rights-compatible: Ensuring that procedures and outcomes are compliant with applicable law and internationally recognized human rights
   g. A source of continuous learning: subject to periodic review and update to reflect lessons learned from implementation and informing organisational learning
   h. Based on dialogue and meaningful consultations with potentially affected individuals and communities.

2. Where needed, ensure the existing grievance mechanism meets the effectiveness criteria stated under requirement 1.a-h.
3. Assess the availability of other grievance mechanisms that are accessible to potentially affected individuals and communities, including ownership, scope, usage and effectiveness. Assess whether WWF or its partners should establish collaboration with such grievance mechanisms as complementary, and if so, engage with the respective operators to agree on the arrangements for the collaboration.

4. Where available mechanisms are not fit for purpose for the nature of WWF’s place-based activities, design a localised grievance mechanism. The mechanism must fulfil the requirements of the Speak Up! Core Standard, meet the effectiveness criteria of requirement 1.a-h) and additionally, must:
   a. Have a clearly defined scope of application, be designed to best address the identified risks, and be integrated with the country-level grievance mechanism;
   b. Be designed based on meaningful consultations with potentially affected people and communities, ensuring that they are respected as rights-holders. Where possible and with community consent, WWF’s mechanism be designed to support or supplement existing community dispute resolution processes;

5. Actively communicate the options available, including any country level, localised or relevant third party mechanisms and WWF’s Office of the Ombudsperson, for raising concerns and grievances about WWF’s activities so that potentially affected individuals and communities are able to make informed choices on where and how to report their grievance.

6. WWF expressly prohibits any form of retaliation for raising or reporting grievances or for assisting in a review or investigation.

7. Where WWF collaborates with, or contracts a third-party to operate a grievance mechanism, there must be an agreement between WWF and the third-party that clarifies
the roles and responsibilities of each party, including communication protocols and arrangements for the financial sustainability of the mechanism.

**Relationship to other safeguards**

Grievance Mechanisms are a fundamental pillar of stakeholder engagement and an essential part of implementing WWF's activities. This safeguard is therefore applied alongside that for Stakeholder Engagement.