



GLOBAL COMPLAINTS POLICY

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Human Appeal – Complaints Policy

1. Introduction and Background

Human Appeal is committed to upholding the highest standards of accountability and transparency in its humanitarian and development work. In line with the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) and recognised safeguarding and accountability principles, Human Appeal is committed to receiving, addressing, and learning from complaints and feedback related to its work.

Human Appeal recognises complaints and feedback as an essential part of accountable programming and is committed to ensuring that concerns can be raised safely, without fear of retaliation, and are addressed appropriately. Through its complaints framework, Human Appeal seeks to ensure consistency in how concerns and feedback are managed and reinforce its responsibility to act on issues raised.

Building on existing approaches, Human Appeal introduced an additional layer in its complaint framework through Case IQ which is an online system for recording, tracking and managing sensitive complaints as they require enhanced confidentiality, safeguarding oversight, or organisational risk management. The introduction of a digitalised system aims to strengthen coordination, visibility, and accountability across operations, while maintaining existing community-level and donor access to complaint and feedback channels. It serves as an approach to ensure that complaints and feedback, that are sensitive, are welcomed and acted upon in a timely and appropriate manner.

Non-sensitive complaints, including routine programme service-delivery, feedback and operational concerns, are typically managed at the country level and are therefore recorded through the Beneficiary Complaints and Response Mechanism (BCRM) whilst donor complaints are managed in line with the Service/Donor Complaints framework. This differentiated approach supports efficient operational management of complaints at multiple levels, while ensuring that sensitive complaints receive appropriate central oversight and safeguarding management.

The framework:

- Reinforces transparency, accountability, and responsiveness;
- Supports safeguarding, protection, and organisational risk management;
- Enables a consistent approach to handling complaints and;
- Promotes organisational learning and continuous improvement.

2. Purpose:

This policy establishes a transparent and accessible organisational framework for complaints and feedback within Human Appeal. It ensures that all concerns, feedback, and complaints are handled fairly, consistently, through appropriate reporting and management mechanisms, and in line with sector best practice standards.

3. Scope

The Complaints Policy applies to all individuals and stakeholders who wish to provide feedback or raise concerns related to Human Appeal's activities, conduct, services, fundraising, programmes, or staff behaviour. The framework covers concerns, complaints, and feedback raised by;

- Affected people and communities (the people we serve)
- Donors
- Partners
- Contractors
- Internal (staff and volunteers) and external stakeholders (members of the public).

This policy should be read in conjunction with The Beneficiary Complaints and Response Mechanism, Case IQ Guidelines, Service/Donors Complaints Guidelines, Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy and Safeguarding Policy which provide guidance on complaint registration, management, escalation, and reporting.

4. Policy Statement

Human Appeal is committed to maintaining high standards of integrity, accountability, and transparency. We welcome complaints as an opportunity to learn, improve, and strengthen trust with our stakeholders. All complaints will be handled with respect, appropriate confidentiality, and without victimisation.

In learning from the complaints and feedback we receive, Human Appeal also strives to continually improve our complaints handling processes to ensure an effective complaints and response mechanism that is safe, confidential, transparent, and accessible to those we serve and work in partnership with.

5. Definitions

- **Complaint:** An expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about Human Appeal's services, actions or inaction, or the behaviour of staff, volunteers, partners, or anyone acting on behalf of Human Appeal.
- These types of complaints will continue to be recorded through the Beneficiary Complaints and Response Mechanism, and Service/Donors Complaints Framework, where they relate to routine service delivery, donor concerns or programme implementation issues.
- **Serious Complaint:** Allegations involving safeguarding concerns, fraud, corruption, criminal activity, abuse, exploitation, sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH), safety and security concerns, or breaches of organisational policies. These types of complaints will be recorded and managed through the Case IQ system and handled in accordance with relevant organisational policies and investigation procedures. Processes for reporting, handling, escalating, and responding to SEAH-related complaints are further detailed within Human Appeal's Standard Operating Procedures on Handling SEAH Allegations.
- **Feedback:** General comments, observations, or suggestions provided by stakeholders that do not require investigation or formal resolution but may support organisational learning and programme improvement.
- Feedback received through beneficiary engagement or donors may be recorded through the Beneficiary Complaints and Response Mechanism and the Service/Donors Complaints Framework to support monitoring, learning, and service improvement.

Malicious complaints

A malicious complaint is one that is intentionally false, misleading, or made with the purpose of causing harm. Any complaint that is found, following appropriate assessment, to be deliberately false or maliciously motivated will be managed in accordance with HA's internal policies and procedures. Where appropriate, HA reserves the right to refer such matters to relevant external agencies, regulators, or authorities.

What is not considered a complaint:

The following are generally not considered complaints under this policy:

- Routine requests for information
- General enquiries about Human Appeal's work or programmes
- Requests to update personal records
- Requests for assistance or services that do not relate to dissatisfaction with Human Appeal's activities
- Contractual disputes or mediation requests between third parties.

Valid complaints must be related to HA staff members/volunteers and HA activities.

Complaints about HA staff members will be considered under this policy only where they relate to actions, decisions, or behaviour undertaken as part of the staff member's role with HA, or where there is a clear and direct link to their employment responsibilities. HA will not investigate or accept responsibility under this policy for matters arising solely from a staff member's personal conduct outside the course of their employment, including activities in their private life or work carried out for another employer or organisation.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities for managing complaints are outlined in the Beneficiary Complaints and Response Mechanism, Case IQ, and Service/Donors Complaints Guidelines which provide detailed procedures for receiving, recording, managing, and resolving complaints in accordance with this policy.

- **Board of Trustees:** Overall oversight; receives reports of serious or high-risk complaints and ensures appropriate resourcing and independence.
- **Chief Executive:** Accountable for ensuring that complaints are managed effectively, fairly, and in accordance with this policy and associated procedures.
- **Performance & Accountability Department (Policy Owner):** Maintains this policy; provides advice on complaint handling processes; monitors organisational compliance; identifies learning and improvement opportunities; and quality-assures complaints management arrangements.
- **People & Culture Department:** Acts as the designated lead for complaints relating to staff and volunteer conduct, workplace behaviour, harassment, discrimination, and other employment-related matters. Oversees disciplinary or corrective action processes where required.
- **Complaint Administrator:** Receives, logs, and maintains complaint records; coordinates communications with complainants and relevant stakeholders; monitors progress against agreed timescales; supports case administration; and produces complaints reporting and management information.
- **Complaint Focal Points (Field Office Based):** Manages complaints confidentially in accordance with data protection and information security requirements, escalates serious complaints to Headquarters, and fulfills responsibilities set out in the Beneficiary Complaints and Response Mechanism (BCRM) Guideline.
- **Staff and volunteers:** Promote awareness of available complaints mechanisms; treat complainants with respect and confidentiality; direct complainants to the appropriate complaints process; support access to complaints mechanisms where required; and promptly report or escalate any complaint, safeguarding concern, or allegation received in the course of their duties.

7. Complaints Procedures

How to Report Complaints

Complaints may be received through a range of accessible reporting channels to include, but not limited to:

- Written communication:
 - speakout@humanappeal.org.uk for concerns related to staff conduct, programmes, or other organisational activities.
 - feedback@humanappeal.org.uk for concerns related to customer service and donations.
- Human Appeal's online platform Case IQ: <https://humanappeal.caseiq.app/portal> for sensitive complaints including fraud, corruption, and safeguarding
- Dedicated hotlines or phone numbers
- Verbal or face-to-face communication
- Complaint and suggestion boxes

All complaints should be sent directly to the above email address. Any complaint sent to a HA individual including the Chief Executive Officer, Board of Trustees and Board of Directors will be redirected to the Case-IQ complaint mechanism upon receipt.

The complainant needs to provide details of:

- What happened
- When and where it occurred
- Who was involved
- Any evidence or supporting documentation
- The outcome the complainant is seeking

Acknowledgement

After the complaint is received, acknowledgement email is sent within 14 working days of receiving a complaint. Further evidence may be requested from the complainant. If no response is received within one month of the initial request, the complaint will be closed.

All complaints will be recorded promptly on the internal complaint handling platform. A record of complaints is maintained to monitor the progress of a complaint and to identify trends or recurring themes in complaint cases for management purposes.

Assessing the Complaint

Following acknowledgement, an initial assessment will be conducted to establish the facts and determine the most appropriate approach for handling the complaint. Based on the nature, severity, and complexity of the matter, a lead investigator will be assigned to oversee the complaint through the investigation and resolution process.

Resolving the Complaint

Human Appeal aims to resolve complaints as promptly and fairly as possible. Most complaints can be addressed and closed within 30 working days, with a final response provided to the complainant within this timeframe.

Where a complaint is particularly complex, involves multiple parties, or requires a formal investigation, additional time may be necessary. In such circumstances, the complainant will be kept informed of progress and advised of the reasons for any delay.

Where possible, HA will provide an estimated timeframe for completion of the investigation and issue of a final response. However, all timescales are indicative and will depend on the nature, scope, and complexity of the complaint. As such, any estimated completion dates cannot be guaranteed.

8. Appeal

Complainants who are dissatisfied with HA's response to their complaint have the right to appeal. Complainants may appeal if their complaint was not upheld, or if the complaint was upheld, but they disagree with the proposed resolution.

The appeal must be submitted within 10 working days of the outcome of the complaint being communicated. Appeals should be submitted to speakout@humanappeal.org.uk and clearly marked "Appeal". The appeal must explain why the original decision is being challenged. New evidence or information not previously considered should be provided.

The appeal will be reviewed by someone independent of, or not directly involved in, the original investigation.

9. Alignment with Sector Standards

Human Appeal's complaints framework is informed by recognised humanitarian standards and commitments, including the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS), and Protection

from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) frameworks. These standards underpin Human Appeal's approach to accountability, participation, feedback management, and organisational learning.

In line with these standards, the complaints framework is guided by the following principles:

- **Accessibility** – complaints and feedback mechanisms are designed to be accessible and appropriate to the context.
- **Confidentiality and Data Protection** – information is handled confidentially and in accordance with applicable data protection laws and requirements. Information is stored securely and only shared on a need-to-know basis.
- **Fairness and Impartiality** – complaints are handled objectively and without discrimination.
- **Timeliness and Accountability** – complaints are addressed within appropriate timeframes, with clear accountability for follow-up and response.
- **Organisational Learning** – complaints and feedback are used to strengthen programme quality, risk management, and accountability.
- **Safety and Protection** – complaints mechanisms ensure complainants are protected from retaliation, victimisation, or harm when raising concerns.

10. Monitoring and Reporting

The Complaints lead or assigned focal point will maintain a register of complaints, monitor the implementation of the complaints framework, analyse trends, and produce quarterly reports for senior management and the Board. Lessons learned will inform organisational learning and continuous improvement. This strengthens governance and oversight.

Policy Scope Note:

This policy sets out high-level commitments, principles, and expectations. Detailed operational procedures, roles and responsibilities, workflows, systems, and timeframes are outlined in the Beneficiary Complaints and Response Mechanism, Case IQ, Service/Donor Complaints Guidelines, Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy and Safeguarding Policy.

11. Policy Review

This will be reviewed every 2 years to ensure continuing appropriateness.