

Practical Action

GLOBAL COMPLAINTS FRAMEWORK

Version	2
Date	September 2020
Scope	All employees
Review Date	September 2023

Approval required from	Name	Date approved
Policy Owner:	Global Head of People & Culture	September 2020
Responsible Director:	Finance & Services Director	September 2020
Board approval		September 2020

Queries:	Contact the Policy Owner
Exceptions:	Contact the Responsible Director

Big change starts small

1. Introduction

This framework intends to guide individuals should a situation arise of needing to raise a concern or complaint. Practical Action is committed to being a transparent, accountable organisation that is willing to listen and respond to feedback. In line with that commitment, we expect individuals who have concerns about an aspect of our work to raise those concerns. We hope that with good communication and collaboration we can informally identify and address issues to improve the way we work. However, we also recognise that there may be occasions when a formal process is required.

Not all complaints or concerns need to be dealt with in the same way and Practical Action has a suite of policies and procedures designed for staff, donors, beneficiaries, partners or members of the public to raise issues of concern they may have and have them dealt with in a fair and transparent way. This applies whether individuals are in the UK, a regional/country office or any other location in which Practical Action operates. Practical Action staff have a responsibility to speak up about matters of concern and we encourage any other individuals to raise concerns that they may have.

If an individual has a complaint or concern, they should use this framework as a guide. This framework aims to:

- a) encourage individuals to speak up and raise concerns
- b) support informal resolution of concerns (where appropriate)
- c) direct individuals to the most relevant formal policy
- d) outline important principles when considering and responding to concerns

2. Why do we want to hear complaints?

Having a well-designed and well managed mechanism for handling concerns or complaints will:

- identify areas of our work which need to be improved
- enable Practical Action to learn from feedback
- improve the quality of our work
- enhance the trust and confidence of our stakeholders
- safeguard and protect individuals or resources
- help us manage risk and promote good governance

3. What is a complaint?

In the context of this framework, a complaint is an expression of concern or dissatisfaction. It is a specific concern of anyone who believes that Practical Action, or a representative of Practical Action, has failed to meet a stated commitment or acceptable standard. For example, this may relate to our programme work, how employees or individuals acting on behalf of Practical Action have behaved, how we use our resources or any other issue within the control of Practical Action. Practical Action will respond to all formal complaints.

Informal feedback differs from a complaint, as feedback can be either a positive or negative opinion. We encourage individuals to be open and share feedback with Practical Action on an ongoing basis.

Feedback may be shared for action or information only and does not constitute a complaint, nor does it require a formal response.

4. Confidentiality

Confidentiality will contribute to creating an environment in which people feel able to raise concerns, therefore information regarding complaints will be considered confidential and shared only on a need to know basis. The identity of an individual making a complaint will be kept confidential so long as it does not hinder or frustrate any investigation.

5. Recording and Monitoring Complaints

Practical Action will analyse and report on the types of complaints received through this framework to the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee and Organisational Committee. They will provide oversight and assurance that we are responding to complaints, adapting and evolving our practices as necessary. As a minimum, trustees will also be advised of any significant issues raised.

6. Complaints about other organisations

If Practical Action receives a complaint through this framework about the activities of another organisation, this concern will be referred to a senior manager of the relevant organisation.

7. Mechanisms for raising a complaint

Practical Action understands that raising a complaint can sometimes be difficult and this document aims to provide a supporting framework through which issues can be raised.

The first section suggests addressing the issue informally and without need for formal process. Where this informal approach does not resolve the issue or (due to the nature of the issue) it is not considered appropriate, this framework will guide individuals towards the most suitable formal policy/process that will enable issues to be dealt with in the most effective way.

Individuals who remain unclear about which policy to use may discuss the matter with their Line Manager or People and Culture contact. Alternatively, we encourage individuals to refer to the Global Complaints (Whistleblowing) policy as any complaint made through this service will be passed onto Practical Action and a decision will be made on the most appropriate route to manage the complaint. Practical Action are committed to hearing genuine concerns, regardless of the mechanism through which they are raised.

8. Informal resolution of complaints

Where possible, dealing with a complaint informally is the best way to sort out a problem. Individuals can do this by meeting with their line manager, or the relevant individual, to explain concerns and discuss suggestions that might help resolve the problem. If an individual feels that they cannot speak with their immediate manager, then they can speak to a member of the People and Culture team.

Some more serious issues cannot be resolved informally e.g. bullying or harassment cases, or where a complaint relates to the line manager. Where informal resolution is not possible, or appropriate, individuals should refer to the most relevant formal process detailed below:

9. Formal resolution of complaints

<p>Grievance Policy</p>	<p>If an employee of Practical Action is unhappy about working conditions, arrangements or relationships with colleagues, a formal grievance can be raised via the internal Grievance Procedure.</p> <p>The Grievance Policy can be found on NETconsent.</p>
<p>Diversity & Dignity at Work Policy</p>	<p>If an individual has a concern about unwanted behaviour such as harassment or bullying, they can raise a formal complaint in line with the grievance policy. Please contact your People and Culture contact for guidance. All complaints relating to dignity at work will be handled sensitively.</p> <p>The Global Diversity & Dignity at Work Policy can be found on NETconsent.</p>
<p>Safeguarding Policy</p>	<p>If an individual has a concern about the physical or psychological abuse or sexual exploitation of a child or vulnerable adult, they should refer to the Safeguarding Policy which can be found on NETconsent.</p>
<p>Global Complaints (Whistleblowing) Policy</p>	<p>If an individual has a concern about illegal, immoral, irregular, dangerous or unethical activity under Practical Action’s control which could cover a broad range of matters, including mismanagement, terrorist activities or health and safety failures etc., they can report this via the organisational designated confidential service designed to deal with complaints. Complaints may also be raised where they are of a serious nature, or where it is not appropriate to raise with the individuals line manager, or if the individual is not a staff member of Practical Action.</p> <p>The Global Complaints (Whistleblowing) Policy can be found on NETconsent.</p>
<p>Protecting Practical Action from Financial Crime Policy</p>	<p>If an individual has a concern about irregularities or illegal activities characterised by intentional dishonesty or deception, whether or not there is personal benefit to the fraudster, they should refer to policy Protecting Practical Action from Financial Crime on NETconsent. This includes concerns relating to the offering or acceptance of bribes and money laundering.</p>

Fundraising Complaints Procedure	<p>If an individual has a concern about any fundraising activity or material carried out/produced by Practical Action in pursuit of its fundraising, a complaint can be made via the fundraising procedure by contacting the UK Supporter Services unit.</p> <p><i>Please note that this process only applies for UK fundraising complaints.</i></p> <p>The fundraising complaints procedure can be found on NETconsent.</p>
General Complaints Procedure	<p>If an individual has any other concern about an aspect of the operation, activities, management or governance of Practical Action not covered by the policies above, a general complaint can be made to the Chief Executive at:</p> <p>Practical Action Chief Executives Office The Robbins Building 25 Albert Street Rugby Warwickshire CV21 2SD</p> <p>ceo.complaints@practicalaction.org.uk</p>