



**ENGINEERS
WITHOUT
BORDERS/NZ**

Complaints Handling Policy

Version Control

Version	Purpose	Prepared by	Date	Approved by	Date
1	Draft for Board Review	Carys Everett	15 October 2018	Robert Cardwell	23 October 2018

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1 PURPOSE

This policy has been developed to ensure that EWBNZ has a robust approach to handling complaints and is receptive to opportunities for continuous improvement in all areas of our work.

A clear and well known complaint handling process ensures stakeholders are able to express their concerns with the assurance that issues will be addressed. This policy aims to actively promote a culture that learns from feedback and recognises the importance of achieving the highest standard we can in every area of our work.

The purpose of this policy is to:

1. provide all stakeholders and the general public with a clear and accessible complaints process;
2. provide guidance on how to best handle complaints;
3. recognise the importance of listening and responding to concerns and complaints;
4. ensure complaints are dealt with in a prompt, thorough, fair and understanding manner; and
5. ensure that learnings from complaints can be effectively implemented where appropriate.

2 POLICY

EWBNZ recognises the importance of being accountable to the communities we serve.

EWBNZ is committed to ensuring that all complaints are taken seriously and followed up in a timely manner. Complaints will be seen as a way of encouraging the organisation to improve the services it offers. Everyone has a right to expect a good service from EWBNZ and can make a complaint.

EWBNZ has adopted the following principles for our complaint policy and procedures:

1. Accessibility – we will clearly publicise information on our website and to stakeholders about how to make a complaint to EWBNZ. We will ensure that our complaint handling process is as accessible as we can practically make it to all complainants. We recognise the right of every individual connected to our programmes to raise issues of concern about other beneficiaries, employees or the services and programmes provided
2. Respect - we will treat people respectfully, and will fully inform and support them in exercising their rights to make a complaint without fear of reappraisal
3. Responsiveness – we will make every effort to respond to any complaints according to our agreed timeframes.
4. Objectivity – we will address all complaints in an equitable, fair and unbiased manner using evidence submitted by both the complainant and our personnel through the complaint handling process.
5. Charges – access to the complaint handling process is free of charge to complainants.
6. Confidentiality – we will observe strict confidentiality in complaint handling. Confidentiality and privacy will be made clear to complainants.
7. Accountability – we will ensure that accountability for and reporting on the actions and decisions with respect to complaint handling is clearly established.



8. Continual improvement – continual improvement of the complaint handling process and the quality of services is one of our permanent objectives.

2.1.1 Definitions

This Complaints Handling Policy is aligned with the International Standards Organisation (ISO) standard on complaint handling. For the purposes of this Policy, “complaint” means an expression of dissatisfaction made to an organisation, related to its products, services or personnel, or the complaint handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

Complainant means a person, organisation or its representative, making a complaint.

Inquiry means a request for information or an explanation

Feedback means opinions, comments, suggestions and expressions of interest in the products or the complaint handling process

3 SCOPE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This policy applies to all EWB NZ programmes and EWB NZ sanctioned activities, regardless of location.

This policy applies to any complaint, regardless of who makes it. A complaint may be made by a person to whom we deliver services or goods or who is affected by our services or goods, a partner, a local organisation with which we work, our employees, volunteers, donors or a member of the public.

This policy applied to complaints of any nature relating to our paid employees, volunteers, partners, contracted service providers or anyone else acting on our behalf.

3.1.1 Board Responsibilities

The Board has ultimate responsibility for the handling of complaints and is responsible for ensuring that appropriate and effective internal control systems are in place and that complaints are resolved satisfactorily.

3.1.2 Executive Director Responsibilities

The Executive Director is responsible for:

- administering and overseeing the Complaints Handling Policy and procedures;
- ensuring that the formal complaints registered are tabled at the Board meetings especially those that have implications at the organisational and strategic levels;
- ensuring that formal complaints are properly investigated and a resolution reached;
- providing a written response to the complainant;
- ensuring lessons are learnt and assisting relevant staff to prevent and/or avoid any future occurrence;
- providing support for employees and volunteers in handling complaints; and
- ensuring that all employees and volunteers are aware of organisational policies.

3.1.3 Management Team Responsibilities

The Management Team will:

- facilitate the resolution of complaints;
- promote a culture of encouraging and reporting complaints;
- educate and train all employees and volunteers about complaint handling; and
- maintain the Complaints Register and provide regular updates to the Executive Director.

3.1.4 Employee and Volunteer Responsibilities

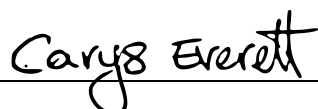
All employees and volunteers (including Management Team, Executive Director and Board) have individual responsibility for health and safety, and must:

- ensure that anyone wishing to make a formal complaint about EWBNZ's programmes and/or ways of working is able to do so in an accessible way; and
- familiarise themselves with this policy, and comply with all requirements;
- ensure that any complaints received are recorded and handled appropriately; and
- provide an environment that is supportive of complaints reporting and investigation.

4 APPROVAL

Policy prepared by:

Policy approved by:



Name: Carys Everett

Name: Rob Cardwell

Position: Executive Director

Position: Board Chair

Date: 15 October 2018

Date: 23 October 2018

5 PROCEDURE

EWBNZ commits to take proactive steps to handling complaints and ensuring continuous improvement from complaints and our complaints handling procedures by:

- Clear and simple mechanisms for people to make a complaint to EWBNZ
- Clear, transparent and timely formal complaint handling procedures, including appeals process and escalation
- Recording and reporting of all complaints
- Implementation of lessons learnt from complaints where appropriate
- Accessible communication of complaints handling procedures

5.1.1 Receiving a Complaint

Complaints should be resolved as close as possible to its point of origin (the event or source of the grievance) and if appropriate, informally by verbal discussion and agreement.

EWBNZ accepts complaints made:

- Verbally (in person or by telephone) or in writing (by post, email or via our website)
- By affected complainant or by a friend or advocate of the complainant on their behalf

When initially receiving complaints, the following steps should be followed:

1. Complainants must be treated with respect. Employees and volunteers receiving complaints must listen, accept the complaint, confirm understanding and desired outcome, be courteous and committed to solving the complaint.
2. Complainants should always be told that EWBNZ values all feedback and our intention is to resolve a complaint to the satisfaction of all parties.
3. If complaints can be resolved quickly, and if appropriate, informally by verbal discussion and agreement, employees and volunteers are encouraged to do so. Persons to whom a complaint is made can offer any solutions consistent with their normal level of authority. Where the likely solutions appear to require approval from a higher authority, the complaint must be referred to that person.
4. Confirm with the complainant that they are completely satisfied with the information and/or resolution provided.
5. The formal complaints procedure should be used where an informal resolution has been unsuccessful or it would not be in the best interests of the complainant for the matter to be dealt with informally.
6. All complaints (formal and informal) must be recorded on the Complaints Register - included in Appendix A.

5.1.2 Formal Complaints

How to make a formal complaint?

Where a formal complaint is appropriate, the complainant will be asked to lodge this in writing with the Executive Director. Where the complaint directly relates to the Executive Director, this should be sent to the Board Chair. EWBNZ will assist complainants to document the formal complaint if this is appropriate and necessary. We will take special care to facilitate complaints from vulnerable populations including children and marginalised groups.

A written complaint must contain:

- a clear statement of the grounds for the complaint and supporting documentation or evidence where appropriate;
- desired outcome;
- the name and contact details of the complainant; and
- date of the complaint

Acknowledgement of Complaint

Any employee or volunteer who receives a formal written complaint must forward the complaint immediately to the Executive Director (or Board Chair). It is then at the Executive Director's (or Board Chair's) sole discretion, to delegate the handling of the complaint to another employee or volunteer or not. The Executive Director (or Board Chair) is responsible for ensuring that no material conflict of interest exists with anyone involved in handling the complaint.

EWBNZ will send written acknowledgment to the complainant within five working days of receiving the complaint. The acknowledgement should include:

- the course of action that will follow (e.g. if the complaint is out of our jurisdiction, or if the complaint is to be investigated);
- reassurance that their complaint will be treated with objectivity and confidentiality;
- the proposed timeframe in which the complaint will be investigated (if appropriate) and a response given; and
- advice of the opportunity to be supported or represented by a person of their choosing.

Complaint Investigation

EWBNZ employees and volunteers have a responsibility to act on complaints promptly. EWBNZ will treat all concerns raised seriously and ensure that all parties will be treated fairly. All discussions and concerns will be documented through the EWBNZ complaints register. All complaints will be handled professionally, confidentially, and expeditiously. Confidentiality of information is respected in accordance with professional ethics, internal policies and legal obligations. EWBNZ will seek



permission from those involved to share information (anonymously or otherwise). Any complaints reported will be used as an opportunity to review and improve our practices, procedures and policy.

Only the Board Chair or other delegated person will speak to the Media about any complaints.

Within five working days of receiving the complaint, EWBNZ will begin an investigation into the complaint. EWBNZ will make every reasonable effort to investigate all the relevant circumstances and information surrounding a complaint. The level of investigation will be commensurate with the seriousness and frequency of the complaint, and the complaint-handler will decide on what action is required.

If a complaint is brought against an EWBNZ employee or volunteer, any investigation will be conducted in accordance with EWBNZ's disciplinary procedure. Where the complaint is against a non-employee or volunteer who is representing EWBNZ in an authorised capacity, the investigation will be conducted under the Complaints Handling Procedure.

Where an individual employee is under investigation by an external authority(ies), they will be encouraged to seek independent support and advice as appropriate.

EWBNZ will conduct a thorough investigation that:

- reviews the cause and context of the complaint, including any contributing factors;
- identifies any actions that could have prevented the complaint from occurring;
- identifies recommended actions to prevent the complaint from reoccurring; and
- identified any lessons learnt that can be shared.

An investigation process may involve:

- establishing further facts and information;
- conducting interviews with those involved;
- taking advice from external experts;
- taking legal and/or human resources advice; and
- undertaking internal audit processes.

EWBNZ will seek to complete the investigation into the complaint within 10 working days of starting the investigation (i.e. within 15 working days of receiving the complaint).

The Executive Director (or delegate) will call upon the Board when considering the legal, contractual and/or reputational implications of the complaint received as required.

Resolution

In the written response to the complainant, EWBNZ will outline any actions or proposals to resolve the complaint and offer the opportunity of further information/clarification if appropriate. Potential recommendations to address the complaint include:

- Dismiss the complaint;
- Review and implement any necessary corrective changes at EWBNZ;
- Initiate an inquiry or a more detailed investigation;
- Refer the complainant to a more appropriate forum

Where more time is needed to investigate the complaint, EWBNZ will negotiate a revised timeframe with the complainant and keep them fully informed of progress in writing.

Appeals

Where the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation into their complaint, they may appeal in the first instance to the Executive Director (or Board Chair) who may convene and independent committee to review the complaints handling process and outcome.

Such an appeal should be made in writing immediately upon receipt of the advice of the decision that the complainant wishes to contest. The statement must contain a clear outline of the grounds for the appeal, supporting documentation, and copies of any correspondence from the coordinator of the complaint.

If such a dispute is unresolvable, EWBNZ will refer the complainant to the appropriate authority, e.g. Code of Conduct Committee of the Council for International Development or Engineering New Zealand as appropriate.

5.1.3 Complaint Recording

When receiving a complaint, either informal or formal, the following information needs to be recorded on the Complaints Register:

- The name of the complainant.
- The date and location the complaint is received.
- The name of the person receiving the complaint.
- A brief description of the complaint and the desired outcome.
- A brief description of the actions taken following the complaint, including the proposed resolution.
- Whether the complaint has been resolved satisfactorily or whether further actions are required.

All new complaints, and progress on complaints being investigated, will be reported to the Management Team and Board at the next scheduled meeting. Any complaints deemed serious will be escalated to the Executive Director and/or Board at the earliest opportunity.

5.1.4 Outcomes



EWBNZ views complaints as an opportunity to improve our work and ensure continuous improvement. EWBNZ will implement any necessary corrective measures and recommendations from the complaints handling process.

Where appropriate we will consult with the Council for International Development and/or other relevant regulatory authorities.

On a continuing basis we will monitor the effectiveness of our complaint handling and make improvements as appropriate. All complaints registered will end with a reflection of the process undertaken and outcomes achieved. This exercise aims to identify the origins of the issues raised and support the design of measures needed to repair and improve EWBNZ development practice.

5.1.5 Accessibility and Confidentiality

EWBNZ will inform the general public about how to make a complaint through its website and publications. We will explain our procedures for handling complaints including:

- how complaints can be made
- information to be provided by the complainant
- the process for handling complaints
- the complainant's options for remedy, including external means

EWBNZ will not reveal a complainant's name or personal details to anyone outside the organisation without the complainant's permission. All details of the complaint will remain confidential, unless it is a requirement of the law or EWBNZ's Child Protection Policy obligations to disclose or report the information; however, this will not preclude EWBNZ obtaining legal advice.

6 REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION

The procedures below ensure that this policy is implemented appropriately, reviewed regularly and compliance is monitored.

1. EWBNZ will review this policy and procedures on a regular basis, at least every three years, and after any formal complaint.
2. Confirmation of internal compliance with this policy will be undertaken at least once annually.
3. Introduction of the policy will be included in the induction process, to be read by all new employees (including volunteers).
4. A workshop will be regularly organised to present the policy to employees (including volunteers) and keep them updated on any changes.

7 RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

- CID Code of Conduct
- EWBNZ Code of Conduct



8 APPENDIX A: COMPLAINTS REGISTER