



Complaints and Response Policy and Procedure for Norwegian Church Aid's Programmes

Rationale

Being accountable to rights-holders, host communities, partners and other stakeholders is core to Norwegian Church Aid's policy. As a duty-bearer, Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) is committed to principles of accountability, transparency, non-discrimination, equality and respect for our fellow humans.

As part of an ongoing process to improve our accountability NCA is committed to implement Complaints Response Mechanisms (CRM) in our programmes for individuals and organisations to raise complaints and give feedback to us.

Right-holders have a right to complain and give feedback to NCA if we do not live up our commitments. Securing the possibility for rights-holders, host communities, partners and other stakeholders to complain to NCA enables us to get feedback on what does not work, and what we need to improve on. This increases the likelihood of success in our work with communities and enhances a sense of ownership among all our stakeholders. It also reduces the potential for inefficient or misuse of the resources entrusted to us.

Scope of this policy

This policy gives the overall frames for NCA's CRMs. It complements and is linked to the NCA Incident Reporting system¹. And it is based on the ACT Alliance Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures.

Country/area level CRM will be developed for all countries where NCA works. These will be developed in coordination and cooperation with other ACT Alliance partners working in the same areas. At a project level CRMs will be developed in all projects NCA works operational and NCA will agree with partners on how rights-holders and host communities can complaint to NCA when we work with partners. NCA encourages and offers to work with partners on developing their own CRMs that they have the capacity to implement.

All CRMs will be developed in consultation with rights-holders, host communities and partners to ensure that it are adopted to the context. The CRMs must be user-friendly, safe and accessible, but it must also be simple, efficient and effective and not create undue bureaucracy. The country/area level CRMs has to be approved by Director of International Programmes.

Who can complain?

1. Women, men, girls and boys, who participate in, or benefit from, Norwegian Church Aid's humanitarian, long-term and advocacy programmes, including host communities;
2. Norwegian Church Aid's partners and their employees;
3. The donor community, supporters and members of the public.

(Norwegian Church Aid's own employees are referred to complain through the internal Incident Reporting system in the organisations R&G chapter 2.3 "Complaints handling and incident reporting in Norwegian Church Aid").

¹ NCA Incident Reporting system covers several purposes and among them it is the internal complaints mechanism for own staff.



What to complain on?

A complaint contains the specific grievance of a stakeholder who believes that a NCA has failed to meet a stated commitment.

The ACT Alliance defines a "*complaint*" as a formal expression of dissatisfaction or discontent, and/or misconduct, about someone or something. It distinguishes the term '*complaint*' from '*feedback*'. Feedback is any positive or negative informal statement of opinion about someone or something – an opinion shared for information but not with the intention of lodging a formal complaint. A complaint requires a response whereas feedback does not.

Possible complaint areas can be:

- Suspicion of or witness of misbehaviour or misconduct by a Norwegian Church Aid staff member
- Process of defining Norwegian Church Aid's public policy/advocacy position
- Norwegian Church Aid programme decisions and implementation
- Issues related to protection and security of right holders and members of the host communities
- Partner programme implementation (where the programme is funded by NCA)
- Behaviour/conduct of a partner staff member (where the programme is funded by NCA)
- Misuse of funds/fraud by Norwegian Church Aid staff or a partner organisation (where the programme is funded by NCA)

NCA will not consider and handle complains that are:

- Complaints found to be malicious accusations to meet own objectives and agendas
- To generate unnecessary bureaucracy and administration by reporting issues already discussed and decided on in line with proper procedures
- Complaints that are already the subject of legal proceedings
- Complaints regarding projects or activities not implemented by NCA or partners of NCA with NCA support.

Complaints handling procedures

The mechanism is set up to handle both sensitive and non-sensitive complaints.

In cases where it informal feedback might relevant for a complaint, NCA staff should proactively ask if the person giving this information would like to complain and if needed assist the complainant for make a complaint and/or register the complaint for the complainer.

NCA recognises that confidentiality is critical to a satisfactory outcome because it protects the privacy and safety of the complainant, the subject of complaint and other witnesses. The facts and nature of the complaint, the identity of the key participants and the investigation records are confidential. This means that access to and dissemination of information will be restricted only to a limited number of authorised people for the purpose of concluding a necessary investigation.

NCA will only allow disclosure when:

- it is required by law;
- it is required by management in the best interests of the organisation and the parties; and



- it is needed to obtain specialist help for the survivor or advice on the evidence.

NCA learning for complaints will be summaries in annual reports that are not confidential, but with out revealing any information about complainer or complainant, but focusing on NCA learning points and how we will improve our way of working. NCA does also make public an annual report on fraud cases.

NCA does not encourage the submission of anonymous complaints, as it is difficult to effectively investigate them. NCA recognises our responsibility to create a safe and abuse-free environment and in doing so, will deal with anonymous complaints seriously because of the potential for future abuse and harm. Therefore, every possible effort will be made to investigate the allegation and satisfactorily address any evidence of abuse, misconduct or malpractice, only if there is sufficient information to be able to investigate. All NCA employees are requested to report allegations, concerns and suspicion of breaches relate to abuse, exploitation and fraud and corruption. Deliberate non-disclosure will lead to disciplinary action².

Norwegian Church Aid has a policy of non-retaliation in response to complaints made against us or our partners.

Should a subsequent investigation reveal a complaint to be malicious – an accusation that the complainant knows to be false - any investigation underway must be stopped immediately and the subject of complaint cleared. If a malicious complaint is made by an NCA employee, disciplinary measures will be taken in line with NCA policies and procedures.

Investigation and action must be carefully planned and thought through, to avoid harming individuals' rights, both those raising the alert and those alleged to be involved in any non-compliance.

One person will be appointed as a complaints handling hub at each NCA office responsible for coordinating CRM. While management of complains follows the regular line of responsibilities in NCA, investigations of complaints are done according to the "Investigation guidelines for incident reporting and complaints in NCA". Complaints management and investigations at NCA Head Office will follow the Incident Reporting system. The mandate for complaints handling hub is to compile statistics, monitor the status of individual incidents and secure necessary organizational learning.

Sensitive complaints

Norwegian Church Aid will consider a sensitive complaint to be any complaint concerning the following:

- Behaviour/conduct of a Norwegian Church Aid staff member
- Behaviour/conduct of a partner staff member (where the programme is funded by NCA)
- Allegations of corruption
- Allegations of sexual exportation
- A complaint on an issue posing serious reputational risk to Norwegian Church Aid

² ACT Alliance Code of Conduct – For the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and corruption and abuse of power.



Where a complaint is identified as sensitive, it will be handled confidentially with only a limited number of persons involved in the investigation process. Any NCA employee receiving a complaint that can be considered as sensitive must submit an Incident Report to Head Office according to the routines for Incident Reporting. This should be done immediately for information and possible follow up depending on the content of the complaint and the capacity at the affected NCA office.

Non-sensitive complaints

NCA promotes accountable and transparent ways of working with all stakeholders. Employers are encouraged to address non-sensitive concerns and feedback informally where possible. Non-sensitive concerns or grievances should be raised and discussed with responsible employees as close to the activity as possible so that informal discussion can resolve the issue quickly and effectively. It is the intent of this policy that a grievance should be resolved at the operational level as a critical first step preferably with the immediate supervisor or line-manager.

A formal complaint from a stakeholder coming through any of NCA CMRs and identified as non-sensitive it will be forwarded on to the relevant NCA Country/Area Representative who will be responsible for deciding upon the process for handling the complaint (unless the Representative is the subject of the complaint in which case it should be passed to his/her manager). The Representative can choose to delegate the authority to investigate the complaint to others. Where a complaint has been lodged against a member of Norwegian Church Aid's staff, that member of staff cannot be responsible for handling that complaint and it must be submitted to their line manager.

Non-sensitive complaints about an NCA partner will as far as possible for NCA³ be forwarded to the relevant focal point for complaints or senior management of the organisation, if they have a CRM in place. NCA will follow up to ensure that the complaints will be handled and that the complainant gets feedback according to the partners' complaints procedures.

Feedback to the complainant

The reporter shall receive feedback that the report has been received without unnecessary delay and feedback about whether the incident will be investigated at least within two weeks.

Appeal

If the complainant does not accept the outcome of the complaint, he/she can appeal the outcome to the next level of the complaints handling system, up to two times and with the highest level of complaints being the Head of the Human Resources Department. As a member of Humanisation Accountability Partnership (HAP) and ACT, complaints about NCA can also be sent to these organisations.

Reporting and learning

Country/area offices with established CRMs will periodically report⁴ to HO of how many and what kind of complaints they have handled, how they have been responded to and lessons learned through period of reporting. This will give input to a global annual report on complaints for internal learning and periodic reviewing this policy and NCA CRMs at different levels.

Filing of complaints

³ The Norwegian Data Protection Law limits NCA from sending sensitive information about individuals from Norway to some countries. In these cases NCA will try to guide the complainer on how the complaint can be addressed to the right partner.

⁴ Three times a year include in their periodic report



Groundless complaints will be deleted as soon as possible.

Completed complaints will be kept for annual learning and statistical purposes, but any names or other information making it possible to identify the complainer or the subject for the complaint will be deleted as soon as a complaint is solved and the people involved have been given a response about the complaint.

Contact information for Complaints at Norwegian Church Aid Head Office

Please use the e-mail address: Complaint@nca.no

For sensitive complaints we do not recommend to send these by e-mail, but rather use the form at our home page <https://response.questback.com/kirkensndhjelp/xou6bpmolg/>

Complaints sent to this address at HO will be read by the focal point for complaints and HR Director who will be reasonable for forwarding the complaints for further processing according to this policy for complaints handling.

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