

# Reporting complaints: Feb 2024 update

This note is an update on the channels you can use to report safeguarding abuses and other kinds of concerns. It also gives an update on progress and future plans for improving safeguarding and complaints handling at Hivos.

## I. Where to report what: Quick-start guide

Please note that Hivos has a strict non-retaliation policy. This means that staff who raise concerns in good faith via any of the channels described below will not be penalised in any way for doing so.

Safeguarding violations such as sexual exploitation, harassment or abuse	<a href="mailto:safeguarding@hivos.org">safeguarding@hivos.org</a>
Problematic behaviour, discrimination or unfair treatment in the workplace	<p>Your line manager</p> <p>Your hub HR manager</p> <p>Confidential Advisors:          Akky <a href="mailto:go-confidential-counsellor@hivos.org">go-confidential-counsellor@hivos.org</a> (internal)          Esther <a href="mailto:e.van.leeuwen@gimd.nl">e.van.leeuwen@gimd.nl</a> (external)</p>
Fraud, corruption, conflict of interest, other ethical irregularities	<p><a href="mailto:fraud@hivos.org">fraud@hivos.org</a></p> <p>SeeHearSpeakUp - external whistleblowing service  <a href="mailto:report@seehearspeakup.co.uk">report@seehearspeakup.co.uk</a>  <a href="https://fileaconcern.org/hivos">https://fileaconcern.org/hivos</a></p>

## **II. Where to report what: Details of each channel**

### **A. Safeguarding abuses**

#### A1. Safeguarding Specialist

Hivos now has a dedicated Safeguarding Specialist. Hivos staff or partners can reach out to the specialist to report any safeguarding incidents that they have experienced or witnessed, particularly cases of sexual exploitation, harassment or abuse (SEAH) or other forms of serious and intentional abuse.

Your information will be kept confidential. Names and other identifying details will only be shared with those directly involved in investigating and resolving the case, not with the Executive Board or others. A secure tracking system is being put in place that allows EB to monitor that safeguarding cases are being handled in a timely and effective manner, without divulging personal details of the survivor(s) or alleged perpetrator(s).

The Safeguarding Specialist will conduct initial fact-finding and if the case merits a formal safeguarding investigation, potentially leading to disciplinary action, she will manage that process. She may also refer non-safeguarding misconduct to HR or Internal Control as appropriate.

- Email [safeguarding@hivos.org](mailto:safeguarding@hivos.org)

### **B. Other workplace grievances and conflicts**

#### B1. Your line manager

Your line manager should normally be the first person you turn to with most issues concerning problematic behaviour, discrimination or conflicts in the workplace. Your manager has a responsibility to try to solve the issue promptly and discreetly, and/or escalate the matter as appropriate according to Hivos policies. However, if your manager is personally implicated; if you do not trust them to handle your issue; or if you are unsatisfied with their response, you can go to your line manager's line manager, the hub HR manager or another of the complaint's channels described in this document.

#### B2. Your hub HR manager

You can always go to your hub HR manager instead of, or in addition to, line managers with issues such as inappropriate behaviour, unfair treatment, discrimination or workplace conflicts. The HR manager can advise on the options available for resolving your issue, and if it is necessary to initiate a formal grievance, she or he can support you to do so. However, if you have experienced or witnessed a serious safeguarding violation such as sexual exploitation, abuse or

harassment (SEAH), you should take this directly to the Safeguarding Specialist, who has expert training to handle such cases.

### B3. Confidential Advisors

The two confidential advisors, Akky and Esther, are a support for Hivos employees and consultants. (Partners or rights-holders should use one of the other channels described in this memo to raise concerns.)

Confidential Advisors are available to Hivos staff in any location who need a listening ear to share a confidential issue that makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable in the workplace. They can provide support and advice, and can often help to bring about an informal resolution through dialogue. They do not have a mandate to investigate cases or recommend disciplinary action, but they can advise you on how to escalate an issue if needed. You may choose whether to speak with Akky (internal) or Esther (external), both will treat your case as strictly confidential.

- **Internal confidential advisor:** Akky de Kort  
+31 6 28 20 79 80 or [go-confidential-counsellor@hivos.org](mailto:go-confidential-counsellor@hivos.org) or [akort@hivos.org](mailto:akort@hivos.org)
- **External confidential advisor:** Esther van Leeuwen  
+ 31 6 42 10 85 74 or [e.van.leeuwen@gimd.nl](mailto:e.van.leeuwen@gimd.nl)

## **C. Fraud and irregularities**

### C1. Complaints inbox - now Fraud and Irregularities inbox

This channel is for use by anyone (rights-holders, partners, members of the public or staff) who has directly witnessed fraud, corruption, conflict of interest and other irregularities by Hivos staff or partners. It has been renamed to clarify that it is intended for reporting financial misconduct rather than safeguarding or HR issues.

It is expected that you can and will provide evidence based on your first-hand experience of the issue reported. For that reason, we do not accept anonymous reports via this channel. Should you wish to remain anonymous, or you do not have first-hand experience of the matter at hand, then you can use one of the other channels described in this document.

This email inbox is monitored by the Deputy Internal Controller, Emmanuel Ndebele. He keeps the Executive Board informed of allegations of fraud and other irregularities. However, if a complaint concerns HR issues he will forward it to the Global Head of HR, while safeguarding reports will go to the Safeguarding Specialist for investigation.

- **Email** [fraud@hivos.org](mailto:fraud@hivos.org)
- *Going forward, this new address will replace the [complaints@hivos.org](mailto:complaints@hivos.org) address in new partner contracts, on our website etc. However, [complaints@hivos.org](mailto:complaints@hivos.org) **will still work**; emails sent here will auto-forward to the new address.*

## C2. External whistleblowing service: SeeHearSpeakUp

SeeHearSpeakUp enables anonymous reporting of ethical issues regarding Hivos or our implementing partners. It is an independent external service primarily intended for partners, rights-holders, and the public. It can also be used by Hivos staff in the event that you do not wish to use any of our internal channels.

You can send an email (and receive a response) in any language. The newly upgraded web interface, launching on 19 Feb, is also available in many different languages.

You can choose to withhold your name and contact information. This will only be shared with Hivos if you give explicit permission for SeeHearSpeakUp to do so. SeeHearSpeakUp sends reports to the Deputy Internal Controller and the Safeguarding Specialist who follow the protocol described above (Section C1) in determining who in Hivos will be informed and involved.

- **Submit a complaint online** (from 19 Feb 2024): <https://fileaconcern.org/hivos>
- **Email** [report@seehearspeakup.co.uk](mailto:report@seehearspeakup.co.uk)

## **II. Progress and next steps**

Making sure that staff have trusted and effective channels to resolve conflicts and raise complaints is one of the three priorities agreed in our DEI Action Plan.

As described above, we have already made some improvements and simplifications to reporting channels. This includes strengthening the confidentiality of safeguarding reports, clarifying the protocol for who in Hivos management receives what type of complaints, and upgrading the SeeHearSpeakUp web interface to be more user-friendly.

During 2024 we will be rolling out updated, simplified safeguarding and grievance policies and procedures. An external expert has done a review of our current policies against international best practice, and is now assisting us to improve them. Completion of this phase and introduction of updated policies is expected by mid-March. The next step will be to develop new training and awareness materials to replace the Kaya Connect course. The Safeguarding Specialist role will also be upgraded to a permanent full-time position.

This year we will also begin to identify and train dedicated Confidential Advisors for the regional hubs. In the meantime, staff in any location are able and encouraged to make use of the two confidential counsellors based in the Netherlands.

We will continue to keep you updated on progress!