

HIVOS GRIEVANCE POLICY

2026

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INTRODUCTION

Occasional dissatisfaction, frustration and conflicts can happen in any work environment. It's important not to ignore them, and it's equally important to address them thoroughly. Creating a conducive environment for clear and open conversations, recognizing resistance from employees and managers, and facilitating a gradual increase of trust are paramount steps to ensure that grievances are not only a flag for something that has gone wrong, but also an opportunity to learn and assess our behaviors and our actions.

It's important to underline here that, in the context of this policy, a grievance is considered to be a situation of discomfort stemming from a personal or professional conflict, which has not escalated to psychological, verbal, physical, sexual violence; financial misconduct, etc. Instances of grave misconduct (e.g. Use of physical violence; Child abuse; Sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse; Fraud and bribery, etc.) are addressed in more detail in the relevant policies addressing the different subjects, such as the Code of Conduct, the Safeguarding Policy, etc.

The rationale behind this grievance policy is to address and course correct behaviors that, if continued or escalated, may have a detrimental impact on a team member (or group of people). In the spirit of building trust good faith is always assumed, and therefore the first step towards a conflict mediation always hinges on the transparent communication between the aggrieved party and the person who has aggrieved them. Only at a later stage, and if this doesn't lead to successful conflict resolution, a third party may be brought in to weigh in on the situation and either facilitate a mediation or administer a sanction.

OBJECTIVE

We aim to foster a space where things that make us uncomfortable can be discussed openly, for the benefit of everyone directly or indirectly involved, and to create a safer and more conducive space for all.

The objective of the grievance policy is to create a conducive environment within Hivos and to deescalate and defuse behaviors that, if continued, could have a detrimental effect on the people involved and on teams.

WHO THE POLICY APPLIES TO

This policy applies to all employees and partners of the organization.

From an operational perspective, Hivos employees should address the issue directly with their supervisor (more on this below), whereas people from outside the organization who would like to raise a concern about someone at Hivos or someone working for a Hivos partner, should do so with any person working for Hivos they feel comfortable speaking to.

Why should partners raise a grievance, and who they should raise it to? Like we may encounter difficulties in communicating within Hivos, our stakeholders may feel the same way and they deserve a way to express this. We may have an approach to grievances that is unusual (i.e. not going straight to reporting), but we chose this approach because we believe in our people and want to foster a better approach to conflict management, one that starts with people talking rather than someone reporting someone else.

This may not be applicable to stakeholders, who may come from vastly different organizations and backgrounds. This doesn't mean they may not feel the same way about bringing a grievance to Hivos, but they may not have access to the same resources Hivos is committed to providing its staff.

Therefore, stakeholders are still encouraged to present grievances with the "Hivos method" (i.e. reach anyone they are comfortable with at Hivos to get guidance on how to best address their grievance) but will also have access to a grievance mailbox to reach out to if needed. It is Hivos' responsibility to support partners and stakeholders in identifying that is a grievance and what pertains to a different area, such as safeguarding or fraud.

EXISTING SUPPORT STRUCTURE

Hivos is aware that not everyone has the ability or the instruments to engage in a complex conversation that highlights someone's shortcomings and how to address them. This can be even harder if the person whose behavior or decision we wish to discuss, is our manager. The inability to address concerns and to manage diverging opinions which have an impact on the work and life of a person, even if they are not expressed in a belligerent fashion, can lead to conflict escalation, and have a spillover effect over time.

To provide support for this, there are people at Hivos who are trained to practice active listening and to provide general guidance on how to address uncomfortable situations or professional conflicts. Further, there are the Safeguarding focal points (and their alternates/Hub confidential adviser) in every Hub, and the Confidential Adviser based in the Netherlands.

This is not part of the grievance process per se, but it's something to consider as additional support when putting forwards a grievance.

The type of grievances that are receivable under this policy are:

- **Grievances between Hivos staff, across the organization** – whether within a team or people from different teams
For example: I find a colleague's remarks sexist and inappropriate; I am frustrated that someone in my team keeps setting up meetings without checking whether I'm available.
- **Grievances between an employee(s) and their supervisor**
For example: I got my performance review and I think I was evaluated unfairly because my manager didn't consider the support I provide outside of my strict job description.
- **Grievances against employees of a partner organization**
For example: During a trip I noticed that the partner who is usually great with us was shouting at his junior employees.
- **Grievances by an employee(s) of a partner organization against a Hivos employee(s)**
For example: Company ABC remarked that a Hivos team member consistently drinks too much at events and behaves inappropriately with colleagues and stakeholders.

POLICY SCOPE

The grievances covered by this policy are:

- 1. Bullying, discrimination and workplace harassment, including microaggressions –**
These are tangible actions that have an immediate effect on a person's mental health and ability to work in a certain environment and which can be occasional or be repeated over time. It may happen to forget to copy someone in a group email or make a comment about one's work in front of other colleagues, but addressing it early on prevents the distress of going through it repeatedly and helps the other person see how their oversight or behaviour can affect others.
For example: Being systematically excluded from meetings relevant to one's work; not being given key information to perform one's role; being mocked or belittled on a regular basis, including in front of other colleagues. They can also be actions or remarks that can be rude or condescending about one's gender identity and/or sexual orientation, ethnic group, age, disability or HIV status, etc.; Inappropriate use of the tone of voice when speaking to colleagues; Culturally inappropriate language; etc.
- 2. Professional conflicts –**
A single or long-lasting situation of conflict and/or distrust emerging from a work-related issue which hinders a person's well-being and the smooth performing of work duties.
For example: Some people's voices are louder, due to gender, age, seniority in the organization, position, etc. and they may not be aware of their position and their privilege and use it - inadvertently or willingly – to invalidate other people's opinions.
- 3. Disagreements between colleagues and/or with supervisors –**
Related to workload, performance review, exceptional requests, recognition of effort, request for transparency when assessing one's work, etc.
For example: Receiving consistently negative feedback on one's work may stem from the supervisor's desire to help someone grow professionally, but on the other hand can have a substantial impact on a person's motivation and on the quality of their work, as well as on their mental health.

The areas which this policy does not cover are:

- 1. Emergency situations –** for which the relevant national authorities should be contacted immediately
- 2. Safeguarding concerns** (SEAH; Physical violence; Child abuse; Human trafficking; and Modern Slavery), for which the #NotMe platform should be used
- 3. Concerns regarding the misuse of funding** (such as fraud; embezzlement of funds; kickbacks; etc.) for which the appropriate reporting tool should be used.

ETHICAL PILLARS

Duty of care – Every grievance is taken seriously and addressed promptly. The good faith of the aggrieved employee is always assumed, and each person is met with neutrality and without judgment.

No retaliation – Hivos strictly prohibits retaliation against individuals who raise a grievance in good faith.

Solution that best fits – The first aim of the process is ensuring that a mutually beneficial solution is reached: for this reason, all parties involved must be aware that the solution that best fits will often be a middle ground between two or more requests, rather than an arbitration in favor of one or the other.

Shared responsibilities – It is understood that maintaining the ethical health of the organization is the responsibility of all people directly affected by it, therefore:

- **Employees** must raise concerns respectfully and promptly to their supervisor. When possible, the first entry point should always be the supervisor, and only when this is not an option the employee should address their supervisor's manager or with HR, explaining also why they couldn't address the issue directly with the person.
NOTE: It is acknowledged that there may be an issue of trust, but the aim of creating a framework for conducting conflict resolution can only be achieved if, from all sides and with support from Hivos to prevent any form of retaliation, there is willingness to address concerns openly.
- **Managers** are in charge of receiving the concern and addressing it as they see fit, with respect and swiftness. To ensure every manager is equipped for this, training sessions will be held, with support from HR. Managers are also expected to acknowledge when an issue is beyond their ability to resolve it and escalate it. Managers have a crucial role in role modelling, they must be aware of it and act accordingly, by recognizing their limitations and by actively seeking and welcoming feedback.
- **People and Culture team, and senior leadership** will ensure the fair implementation of the grievance policy and address systemic issues that are raised and/or identified. The People and Culture team and the Management Team also have a strong role modelling responsibility.

What if grievance is against someone in the People and Culture Team, the Management Team or against someone in the Executive Board?

Earlier in this paragraph, under "Shared responsibility" it is explained that people can bring up a grievance directly to the person who has aggrieved them, to the person's manager or to HR. Any grievance against someone in the People and Culture team can be brought up with the Global Head of People and Culture. Any grievance against a member of the Management Team or the Executive Board, can be taken up directly with them, or discussed with the aggrieved person's supervisor to define a course of action that is suitable to the situation and acceptable for the aggrieved.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND NON-RETALIATION

Every grievance management process should remain confidential by default, unless both parties involved choose otherwise (if for instance more parties are involved and all people involved believe that the process could be a learning opportunity).

However, Hivos believes that much can be learned from successful conflict management, and therefore, some processes can be used to portray best practices in addressing grievances, once they have been anonymized and the parties involved cannot be identified.

When different people are involved (e.g. more than one person has complained to and about another staff member) it is advisable to share the outcome of a grievance process with one's team to define good practices or identify potential pitfalls that anyone may encounter, it's equally important to avoid weaponizing the process against one of the parties involved.

Non-retaliation - A grievance cannot be brought forward anonymously and/or without supporting evidence, as a form of retaliation. It is also prohibited to display retaliatory behavior against people for bringing forward a grievance.

GRIEVANCE PROCESS

This process is grounded in the principle that:

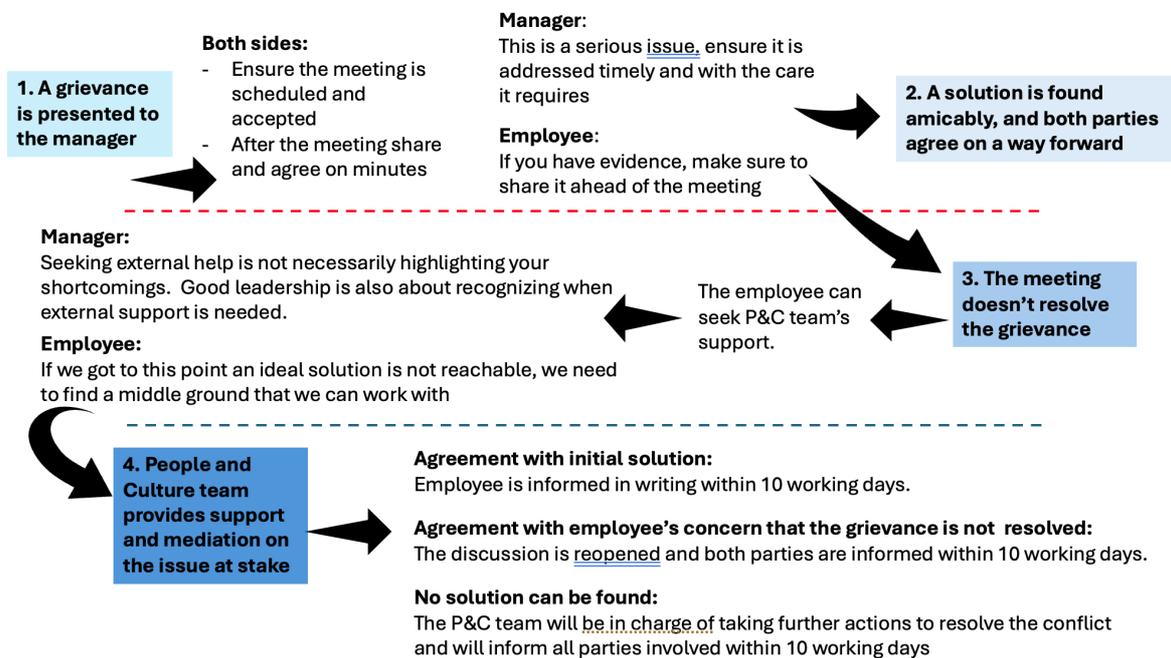
- a) Insofar as it is possible, we seek to resolve conflict amicably.
- b) Hivos exercises its duty of care towards all people, and the first entry point to raise a concern or seek guidance should be a person's manager.
- c) All people in a managerial position will be given adequate spaces for awareness raising and on-demand guidance in order to exercise duty of care. Over time the ability to deal with complex interactions will also become an indicator of performance.

From a practical point of view, the process should follow the following path:

- **Step 1:** The aggrieved employee requests a meeting with their manager (or if this is not possible their manager's manager) to discuss their concern.
 - Requirement for both sides: Ensure that that the meeting is formally scheduled in your calendars and notes are duly shared after it has taken place.
 - Requirement for the manager (or the manager's manager): Even if this is not a situation in which a person is in imminent danger, it is serious. Make sure you plan the meeting within an acceptable time frame.
 - Requirement for the employee: If you are presenting a case (misbehavior, discrimination, conflict) for which you have evidence, make sure you present it in the first meeting or give access to it to your manager ahead of the meeting (e.g. send via email, share file in Share Point, etc.).
- **Step 2:** If the meeting doesn't resolve the grievance, the employee can seek HR's support.
 - Requirement for the manager: In spite of one's best effort the employee doesn't consider the issue resolved. The intervention of HR is aimed at helping, managers shouldn't stall it or try to avoid it.
 - Requirement for the employee: Only in extreme cases conflict resolution is about deciding who is wrong and who is right, while it is more commonly aimed at finding a common ground where compromises can be made. It's the employee's right to seek HR's help if they don't think the matter is resolved, but there should be no expectation that HR takes a side. Some of the members of the People and Culture team have received a coaching certificate, and they will support providing managers with the necessary training on how to address complex situations and on conflict resolution.

- **Step 3:** HR waxes in on the issue and reviews the documents both the manager and the employee have produced, and may have conversations with both.
 - If this process agrees with the resolution offered by the manager the employee is informed in writing within 10 working days.
 - If this process agrees with the perspective of the employee, the discussion is reopened and both parties are informed within 10 working days.
 - If a resolution cannot be found between the employee and the manager, or if other actors are involved (e.g. if the employee has complained with their own manager about the behavior of an employee who has a different line manager), HR will be in charge of taking further actions to resolve the conflict and will inform all parties involved within 10 working days.

Here is a swim lane diagram illustrating the conflict resolution process. Each lane represents a key step in the process, and the process steps are aligned with each party's respective responsibilities.



CULTURE TRANSFORMATION

This grievance policy comes with a strong degree of “novelty”: from reporting misbehavior and sanctioning misconduct, to working on the root causes to prevent conflict from escalating, by speaking and resolving tensions, with limited or no external influence.

This change doesn't happen overnight, and it would be utopistic to believe it can be “taught” in a training session.

Shifting from a process-based conflict resolution approach (detect-report-delegate solution), to viewing any friction as an opportunity for growth of all parties involved it's a radical shift organizational culture.

We believe it's an important shift: one that over time will contribute to creating a more robust environment of trust and psychological safety, and most importantly one that hinges on everyone's buy-in.

Working in a multicultural environment also means that every person working at Hivos has a different way to address conflict, which is the product of their culture of origin, their upbringing, and their experiences. There is no expectation that everyone Hivos will instantly know what to do, and therefore Hivos will propose some conflict resolution learning opportunities, via LinkedIn learning, as well as virtual practical sessions with trained staff. And in this context contribution from all staff are welcome and strongly encouraged, either in the form of case studies (which can be anonymous) or as cultural training or as basic coaching and mediation technique.

The support of Open Up is also available to all Hivos staff, and it includes guidance on how to navigate difficult conversations and complex situations.

Culture transformation takes a village, so it will also be a continuous effort to find the most culturally appropriate and inclusive ways to acknowledge and resolve conflicts.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A SOLUTION IS NOT FOUND

Despite everyone's best efforts, there are many reasons why a solution may not be found – or it may be found but not be durable.

For example: The person whose behavior has caused a grievance is convinced their behavior is acceptable and is unwilling to change it; The aggrieved party's request for reparations is unreasonable; The conflict appears resolved but resurfaces regularly, creating generalized discomfort.

In cases where a solution cannot be found through communication between two parties or with mediation from a third party, there are two options:

Option 1: The grievance has escalated (or is at risk of escalating) to a serious offence

In this case the grievance becomes automatically a misconduct report and investigated by the relevant manager.

For example: A manager has been told by colleagues that under no circumstances they can use the office petrol card for their own car. Failing to change the behavior will lead to an automatic report of fraud.

Example 2: A team member has been told by other colleagues and their manager that their comments about female colleagues' appearance are inappropriate and they persist, defending their right to appreciate a colleague. This will be an automatic report of sexual harassment.

Option 2: The grievance is of an HR nature

In this case HR (Hub and Global) will be involved to investigate the nature and the extent of the grievance and what actions will have to be taken.

For example: I have worked hard and overtime to support other colleagues who were struggling, at the end of the year I get a negative performance review because I didn't meet my targets, but I explain to my manager that my contribution should not only be assessed on my target but also on all the other tasks I performed and my attitude towards other colleagues. My manager doesn't see why I should be deemed as a good employee for things that are not part of my job description. HR can be asked to weigh in on this, from the broader picture of Hivos vision and strategy.

ANNEX 1 – SCENARIO I

When speaking to their manager about a project activity, Ignacio and Kholisa notice his frustration. The more he gets frustrated the more he raises his voice, until at one point he blurts out “I cannot work with these idiots!”.

It’s clear that Addisu is not talking about them two, but they still feel uncomfortable as they know the people he is referring to quite well, they are their colleagues!

Option 1: Ignacio and Kholisa don’t say anything, in the end Addisu wasn’t referring to them, why should they risk making him angry again for someone else?

Option 2: Even if the “idiots” Addisu referred to are not them, Kholisa thinks it’s a poor display of leadership to belittle colleagues behind their backs. She is not very self confident, but still asks Addisu for a meeting and tells him:

“The other day you were frustrated, we all worked late and yes, a mistake wasn’t made by us, but we still had to fix it. But calling someone from our team an idiot in front of me and Ignacio was unfair, for two reasons:

1. Mistakes can happen to anyone and now that I’ve heard you say it, I will always think that as soon as I make a mistake in your eyes I will also be an idiot; and
2. Perhaps it wasn’t your intention, but diminishing someone in front of me and Ignacio may create the false belief that we, the three of us, are better than the rest of the team. And this fuels exclusion and marginalization.

I don’t want to tell you this to blame you, but to hold you accountable because I value you as a manager.”