

# Feedback and Complaint Handling Mechanism



Part of the General  
Code of Conduct  
Framework

## 1. Purpose and Scope

Forests of the World (FoW) strives to protect and care for people we come into contact with including our staff, volunteers, partners and beneficiary communities at all levels and from all places. Contacting FoW regarding feedback or a complaint must be easy, safe and reliable, which is what this mechanism helps us ensure.

This document outlines how feedback and complaints related to FoW's General Code of Conduct Framework and associated documents can be submitted to FoW, and how one can expect FoW to respond when we receive feedback or a complaint.

### 1.1. Feedback and complaints covered

This document applies to the work carried out by FoW and the work FoW is involved in. Feedback or complaints may relate to:

- Compliance with our General Code of Conduct Framework
- Compliance with our Ethical Code of Conduct
- Compliance with our Anti-Corruption Policy
- Compliance with our Environmental Policy

FoW welcomes both positive and negative feedback.

## 1. RESPONSIBILITY

FoW's Secretary General holds overall accountability for this mechanism and its implementation and is likewise responsible for ensuring that the complaints procedure is reviewed and updated every year or more frequently based on lessons learned or when there are changes to the Feedback and Complaint Unit.

As part of the FoW working culture, we consider it the duty of the individual to react to matters that violate our General Code of Conduct Framework and subsequent documents, and FoW staff, volunteers and representatives are encouraged to report any such breaches.

The Board will always be informed about feedback or complaints, however information shared with the Board must adhere to 3.1.

### 1.2. Feedback and Complaint Unit

Within FoW there is a Feedback and Complaint Unit consisting of the Secretary General, a board member and the staff representative, taking care to avoid conflicts of interest. If a member of the Feedback and Complaint Unit is considered to be biased in relation to a case, a suitable replacement will be found.

The Feedback and Complaint Unit operates for the duration of the individual feedback or complaint processing, and is responsible for investigating the feedback or complaint and reporting back to the involved parties and the Board. Resources are allocated to the investigative process in proportion to the nature, scope and severity of the feedback or complaint.



When it is necessary to investigate feedback or a complaint, the Feedback and Complaint Unit may involve other parties:

- Another employee representative may be involved to facilitate dialogue in connection with reports/complaints concerning employees;

In special cases, the Feedback and Complaint Unit may contract an external expert or similar to ensure the best possible decision-making basis.

## 2. COVERAGE

Any person or entity may submit feedback or a complaint to FoW as long as it corresponds with point 1.1. It is possible to send feedback or a complaint anonymously as described in 3.1.

### 2.1 Confidentiality and Anonymity

FoW welcomes all feedback and complaints and will handle them with strict confidentiality. We are committed to protecting the privacy and safety of those who submit feedback or complaints to us, as well as anyone else named or otherwise mentioned herein.

All information received will be treated in confidence by the recipient and the Feedback and Complaint Unit, and will not be shared with anyone, who is not directly involved in the investigation of the complaint, unless this is accepted and approved by the complainant. It is possible to submit feedback or complaints to an individual member of the Feedback and Complaint Unit, if the complainant feels more comfortable with this process or does not wish specific members of the Unit to know about the feedback or complaint. This is outlined in section 4.

When sharing information with our Board, all identifying information relating to the person submitting the feedback or complaint, including names, contact information, and information about connection to FoW will be removed – unless otherwise accepted by the complainant.

It is possible to submit feedback or complaints anonymously. However, this may limit the extent to which FoW are able to act effectively, particularly if contact details are not provided. FoW will make sure in all cases to take the information we receive into consideration and depending on the severity of the case act accordingly.

### 2.2 Protection measures

FoW respects the rights of the person submitting information and other individuals, who may become involved in the process, and we seek to treat people with respect and dignity.



A person submitting feedback or a complaint as well as other parties involved in the complaint will be offered professional help, if deemed necessary. Furthermore, all parties involved are allowed to choose a confidant, who can partake throughout the process.

In the event of sexual violence or abuse of power at FoW, the parties involved will be offered qualified emergency counselling as quickly as possible. It is likewise possible to receive advice, psychological counselling or similar paid by FoW if the incidents have caused a need for this.

### **3. SUBMITTING FEEDBACK OR A COMPLAINT**

FoW strive to make it as easy and safe as possible to submit feedback or complaints, which is why we operate with multiple channels through which they can be submitted:

Online: <https://www.forestsoftheworld.org/complaints>

When contacting FoW through our online channel, the complaint will be received by all members of the Feedback and Complaint Unit

Email the Feedback and Complaint Unit: [complaintunit@verdensskove.org](mailto:complaintunit@verdensskove.org)

Note that if you do not want all members of the Feedback and Complaint Unit to receive your information, you can contact a member individually.

Members of the Feedback and Complaint Unit:

- Secretary General
- A member of the board
- Staff Representative

[See current members here.](#)

By post:

att: Feedback and Complaint Unit

Verdens Skove

Vestergade 12

DK-1456 Copenhagen

You may also submit your feedback or complaint directly to one of Forests of the World's employees - either in writing or in person - who will ensure that the feedback or complaint is forwarded to the Feedback and Complaint Unit as per your instructions.

#### **3.1 Information requested**

When submitting feedback or a complaint please provide the following:

- A description of the issue or incident. If your feedback or complaint concerns or involves other persons, it would be helpful if name(s) can be provided. It is not an essential requirement and we understand if this is not possible.
- Any steps already taken related to the feedback or complaint. This could include previous communication that you may have had with Forests of the World.
- Whether you would like your identity only to be known to the complaint unit or whether it would be possible for Forests of the World to disclose your identity to other relevant parties and under which circumstances this might be acceptable. If you do not specify this in your complaint, we will not share any personal information including your identity outside the Feedback and Complaint Unit. Forests of the World encourages you to disclose your identity to at least one member of our Feedback and Complaint Unit, who can confirm your identity in case of investigation.
- If you have a confidant that you would like us to engage with on your behalf whether you have submitted a fully anonymous complaint or not, please provide contact details.

## 4. FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINT HANDLING

FoW wants to provide a safe and secure process that makes any person feel comfortable submitting feedback or a complaint, therefore we have created a Feedback and Complaint Unit responsible for managing all feedback and complaints as described in 2.1.

As a point of departure, we will follow the below steps related to non-anonymous feedback or complaints:

- **Acknowledgement:** When feedback or the complaint is received by FoW, the complainant will receive a confirmation within 1-2 working days explaining the possible steps FoW may take. After the initial acknowledgement, the complainant will be contacted by the Feedback and Complaint Unit, who will elaborate on the process and ensure that the complainant feels comfortable with the continuous process. Before action is taken, however, the feedback or complaint needs to be recorded or written down and validated by the person submitting feedback or complaints, still respecting full confidentiality, if this has been requested initially.
- **Dialogue:** FoW encourages dialogue and conversation, which is why we always seek to solve problems through dialogue first and foremost. The Feedback and Complaint Unit will seek to manage a dialogue between the parties involved in the incident to the extent possible. Firstly, by engaging with the persons



sending feedback or a complaint and exploring the options for resolution-focused dialogue and understanding.

- **Investigation:** If needed, FoW will investigate the feedback or complaint further, and possibly involve relevant parties such as FoW employees, volunteers, partners, donors or external experts - depending on the nature of the case, to ensure an impartial approach to the case. The investigation may mean returning to the complainant one or several times with further questions for clarification, depending on the complexity of the complaint and number of parties involved.
- **Outcome:** When the investigation is finalised, the complainant will receive a summary of the conclusions and information of any further actions taken by FoW. Experiences and lessons learned will be used to improve the process.

## 5. CONSEQUENCES OF FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS

Breaches or violations of the provisions and intentions of this mechanism will be met with a response proportionate to their nature, scope and severity - ranging from warnings and reprimands to actual sanctions. FoW may impose various types of sanctions against persons, companies or organisations that have seriously violated our Code of Conduct and subjacent documents, e.g. disciplinary measures against their own employees and contracting parties (warning/dismissal or exclusion), suspend membership for member organisations, (immediate) termination of agreements with grant holders and suppliers, file a police report in criminal matters. FoW can claim compensation for damage suffered.

There will be no sanctions against persons submitting wrong information, if the feedback or complaint proves to be unfounded after investigation, FoW may take action similar to the abovementioned sanctions against persons, who are proven to have made deliberately false accusations.

## 6. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

This document is implemented in relation to our General Code of Conduct Framework and as a feedback and complaint handling mechanism on the website, and constituted in and monitored by the Feedback and Complaint Unit.

### 6.1 External communication

FoW communicates at a general level (number and character) to the public about feedback and complaints received that have led to case processing and a decision. FoW balances the various legal and ethical considerations in its communication, taking personal data processing regulations into account.

## 7. REVIEW

The Complaint Handling Mechanism is reviewed along with the General Code of Conduct Framework every year. Whenever FoW receives a feedback or complaint, any potential lessons learned will be incorporated in subsequent reviews of this document.

Date for latest update	Changes made	Responsible
December 2020	First version adopted	
February 2024	Minor changes to the wording	ANH