

1. Purpose

TEAR values complaints. They can be an important source to identify and address issues of justice. Complaints can also help us with organisational learning so that we do our work better. Complaints relate to TEAR's commitment to accountability and relationships, allowing stakeholders the opportunity to have grievances heard and seek redress. Receiving and dealing with complaints offers TEAR an opportunity to restore damaged or broken relationships, or improve new and existing ones.

This policy outlines the principles and key elements to be incorporated into complaints procedures developed for the various parts of TEAR's work.

2. Scope

This policy applies to complaints made by a person or organisation about any aspect of TEAR Australia's operation in Australia and internationally. It is distinct from the grievance process for internal complaints.

3. Policy

3.1. Principles

TEAR is committed to having complaints-handling processes that can be used by TEAR supporters and other interested parties in Australia, TEAR's International Partner organisations, and the people who participate in the projects that TEAR funds. The following principles will inform the development and review of all of TEAR's complaints-handling procedures:

Accessibility: TEAR will work to make complaints processes widely accessible to stakeholders which will require developing a range of ways for raising concerns with TEAR.

Responsive communication: Complaints processes will ensure that TEAR keeps open the lines of communication with the complainant about the progress of our response.

Timely response: TEAR will seek to resolve complaints quickly and efficiently, normally within 30 days.

Confidentiality: To the extent possible, the complainant identification will be kept confidential and only disclosed to those that need to know in order to respond, or if it is relevant for organisational learning.

Reasonable response: TEAR has limited resources and will balance the use of these with the purposes of the complaints process. This may include concluding that a resolution cannot be reached within the reasonable use of TEAR's resources.

Transparency: TEAR will make clear the process for dealing with complaints to staff, and where appropriate, also share this with complainants. We will be transparent in our response to a complaint including instances where an issue may not be acted upon.

3.2. Key Elements

Key elements of complaints processes will include:

Soliciting complaints from stakeholders: To the extent possible, TEAR will be proactive in providing complaints processes and tools for stakeholders that are accessible and enable TEAR and its partners to hear from those who may otherwise feel unable to complain.

Guidance about escalation of complaints: The processes will give general direction about when and how to escalate a complaint to a more senior member of staff or Board. In general, complaints should be shared with supervisors.

Process for learning from complaints: All complaints will be recorded and filed. TEAR will seek to develop and maintain a process to gather learning from our complaints process and feed it into organisational learning systems.

Hearing the voice of Members: Given the important role that TEAR Members play in safeguarding the mission and values of TEAR, complaints by Members will be shared with the Governance Committee on a quarterly basis.

3.3. Complaints and Primary Stakeholders

TEAR views its accountability to primary stakeholders (poor or marginalised people involved in TEAR-supported projects) as taking place in the context of partnership with the local organisation it supports to work in those communities. For this reason, complaints processes for use by members of poor communities will be developed by TEAR's partner organisations. TEAR will support the development of such processes and seek to ensure that they adhere to the principles outlined in this policy while recognising the autonomy of each agency.

3.4. Escalation by Complainant

At any time a complainant can request that a more senior person deal with their complaint. They also have the option to make a complaint directly to ACFID if they believe there has been a breach of the ACFID Code of Conduct (refer to ACFID's website). If the complaint is about the actions of senior staff, people can submit complaints directly to the Board if the complainant feels the CEO hasn't addressed their concern. Issues relating to the conduct of the CEO will be overseen by the TEAR Australia Board. Complaints of this nature can be directed to chair@tear.org.au. Where complaints are received from Members of TEAR Australia, the Board will be routinely informed.

3.5. Monitoring and Review

Complaints by Members will be shared with the Governance Committee on a quarterly basis. A consolidated summary report of all complaints will be presented to the Board annually, with a particular focus given to the complaints made by Members. The report will focus on complaints that may have significant reputational or operational implications.

The implementation of the policy will be monitored by a Complaints and Learning Committee consisting of representatives from the Australian Program, International Program and the Finance and Administration Departments. The monitoring and recommendations of the committee will be reported to the TEAR Leadership Team quarterly to ensure organisational gaps and learnings are identified and addressed. Complaints that relate to our implementing partners' work are assessed in a review of partner relationships managed through International Program Team processes and are not assessed by the Complaints and Learning Committee.

4. Definitions/Terminology Clarification

A Complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, with an explicit or implied expectation of a response.

5. Related References

- ACFID Code of Conduct
- Fraud Policy and Processes
- Partnership Agreement Documents (International Program Team)
- Safeguarding Children Policy
- TEAR Australia Complaints Procedures
- TEAR Australia Grievance Policy (which deals with internal complaints by staff against other members of staff).
- TEAR Australia Transparency Policy