



Chapter 1: Management

1.5 Grievance Mechanism

What does grievance mean?

A grievance is a **complaint about the Certificate Holder's actions** that have negatively affected someone. Grievances can relate to social, environmental, or technical issues or Certificate Holder rules and policies. The complaint **can be made by anyone**, whether they are part of the operation or not.

There are leaks on the roof of our worker housing

I was sexually harassed by my supervisor

The internal inspector who came to my farm doesn't have a clue about the Standard

The company dumped its waste onto our community land

I cannot participate in member trainings because of the distance

The quality of the product delivered by the farm was very low

We haven't been paid according to our contract

I saw children working at your farm during school hours

What is a grievance mechanism?

The process for raising and handling complaints:



**Submission of
complaint**

Treatment

Remediation



Monitoring



Why is it important?

- Ensures complaints are handled professionally and transparently
- Builds trust and respect
- Helps find solutions and prevent future issues
- Supports continuous improvement
- Acts as an early warning for human rights issues

1.5 Grievance Mechanism

No.	Base requirement	Group certification			Ind. cert.
		S-farms	L-farms	Group mgt.	S/L
1.5.1	<p>A Grievance Mechanism is in place that enables individuals, workers, <u>communities</u>, or civil society, including whistle-blowers, to raise complaints about the <u>Certificate Holder's</u> activities. Complaints can relate to any part of the Standard, including technical, social, or economic issues. The grievance mechanism may be provided by the Certificate Holder or by a third party.</p> <p>The Grievance Mechanism (see requirement 1.1.1) includes at least the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Representatives for group members or workers are part of the committee• Submissions in any language and accessible to persons without reading skills or internet access.• Acceptance of anonymous grievances with <u>confidentiality</u>.• <u>Remediation</u> of human and labor rights issues per the <u>Remediation Protocol</u>.• Documentation and timely sharing of grievances and actions taken with affected persons.• Protection against retribution for persons submitting grievances. <p><i>Please see A-08-SCRL-B-CH –Social Annex</i></p> <p><i>Please see SA-G-SD-6 Guidance Document E: Grievance Mechanism</i></p>				

Read the requirement and its applicability before you move on to the next page

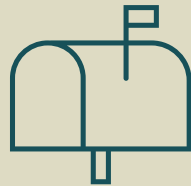
1.5.1

How do you implement a grievance mechanism?

As farm group manager or manager of an individually certified farm you are responsible for establishing the grievance mechanism. What are the steps?



1. Set up a Grievance Committee



2. Set up accessible, anonymous, and confidential ways for people to report grievances



3. Remediate submitted grievances

*Please see: Social Annex
Guidance Document: Grievance Mechanism*

1.5.1



Set up a grievance committee

Select committee members that:

- Include at least one worker / group member representative
- Are trusted by the workers or members
- Are seen as impartial (unbiased or objective)
- Are approachable and easy to contact for everyone
- Understand gender roles and include both women and men

Recommended:

- Are knowledgeable about certificate holder activities and local communities
- Are knowledgeable about Assess and Address, gender, and typical grievance topics

Case scenario

Luis manages a coffee plantation and has set up a grievance committee.



The committee includes the office manager Ian, the factory manager Sebastian, and the field manager Matias.

All three managers have received training on the grievance mechanism.

They have decision-making power and are trusted by the workers.

The workers can submit their grievances through their respective managers.



?

Did Luis set up the committee according to the requirements?

Think about the answer before you move on to the next page

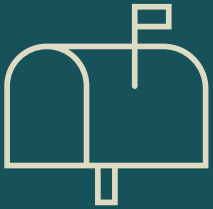
Case scenario - Solution



No, the grievance committee that Luis has set up doesn't fulfil all required characteristics. It consists only of managers and **does not have a worker representative**. It also **only consists of men** and does not have a woman representative.



1.5.1



Establish channels for the submission of grievances

Examples of how the committee can enable submissions in practical ways that **everyone can access**:

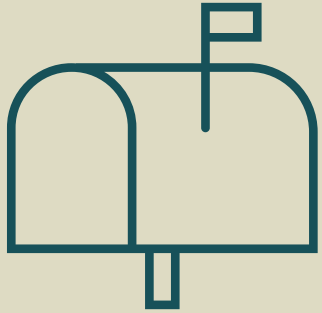
- Complaints and suggestions box in busy areas
- Grievance form in local languages (post, email, website, in person)
- Verbally to a committee member
- Verbally through a local women's group or the Gender Committee
- By phone (call or SMS) to an independent hotline
- Talking to a supervisor or manager at the workplace
- During a workplace, community meeting, or training session

Ensure channels are available for people who cannot read or write.

Remember, one kind of submission channel will not be enough to cover the needs of all.

Case scenario

Luis has now made sure that the grievance committee is composed as required.



As a next step in setting up the grievance mechanism, the committee has placed a complaint box at the entrance of Luis' office on the farm grounds for workers to submit grievances. All workers have been informed about the complaint box and can use it to submit their grievances.



?

Has the committee done enough to establish a submission channel for complaints?

Think about the answer before you move on to the next page

Case scenario - Solution

No, the committee has not done enough. A complaint box alone is not enough. It is also visible to everyone, and some workers may feel unsafe or unable to use it.

The committee needs use multiple channels for workers to submit grievances in order to address their needs, such as verbal submissions, phone calls, talking to supervisors, and during meetings. These options ensure all workers can submit grievances comfortably.



1.5.1

Remediate submitted grievances



Remediation refers to any action or process that supports people, who have been harmed, to recover, and helps prevent any abuse or difficulty from happening again.

1.5.1

Remediate submitted grievances

Key steps:

1. Receive and acknowledge the grievance complaint
2. Safeguarding and human rights cases
3. Review the grievance complaint to check if it is valid for further investigation
4. Investigate to understand what has happened
5. Communicate findings
6. Agree a remediation plan
7. Implement and monitor the remediation plan
8. Communicate progress
9. Continuous improvement

Within 1-2 days

Within 5 working days

Within 4 weeks

Within 5 days of investigation completion

Within 1-2 weeks after findings shared

Short term actions: within 12 weeks

Long term actions: up to 52 weeks

Ongoing

After case is closed

1.5.1



Remediate submitted grievances

Key steps:

1. Receive and acknowledge the grievance complaint
- 2. Safeguarding and human rights cases**
3. Review the grievance complaint to check it is admissible
4. Investigate what has happened

If the case is related to **human rights**, the committee follows the **Rainforest Alliance Remediation Protocol**. They work with the **Assess and Address Committee** and the **Gender Committee**, ensuring the safety of those involved and getting their consent

1.5.1



Remediate submitted grievances

Key steps:

1. Receive and acknowledge the grievance complaint
2. Safeguarding and human rights cases
3. Review the grievance complaint to check it is admissible
- 4. Investigate to establish what has happened**
5. Communicate findings

First conduct a **severity test** by asking:

- Is the case life-threatening?
- Can it cause lasting impact?
- Is it a systemic issue with multiple cases?
- Did management or staff know about it and continue/approve it?

If the answer to any of these is yes, the **case is critical and may need Rainforest Alliance and Certification Body involvement**. Critical cases must be **assessed for criminality**. If considered criminal, inform local authorities with the victim's consent and without risking their safety.

1.5.1

The grievance mechanism needs to make sure that:

- Anonymous grievances are accepted
- Confidentiality is protected
- Human and labor rights issues are remediated per the Remediation Protocol
- The cases are documented, and grievances and actions taken are shared timely with the affected persons
- The persons submitting grievances are protected against retribution





**RAINFOREST
ALLIANCE**

rainforest-alliance.org