



GoodWeave International - Certification Division Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) Complaints and Appeals

Version 1.1, March 2020

1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to describe the procedure for dealing with complaints and appeals within the Certification Division. This includes formal and informal complaints and appeals received by the Certification Division and/or GoodWeave country offices in relation to certification. It does not include complaints related to GoodWeave standards.

The procedure is designed to complement the more generalized GWI SOP Complaints and Appeals, in line with the requirements of the ISEAL Codes of Good Practice¹ and ISO/IEC Guide 17065.

Definitions

- 'GWI-Certification Division (GWI-CD)' is the certification body for GWI. The 'Certification Committee (CC)' is its decision-making mechanism.
- An appeal is a formal or informal expression of dissatisfaction by an affected party about a decision regarding licensing or certification.
- A complaint is a formal or informal expression of dissatisfaction by a third party related to the operation of the certification system.
- 'Secretariat,' 'Board' and 'Executive Leadership Team (ELT)' are used in reference to GWI.
- The 'website' referred to below is www.GoodWeave.org.

2. Types of Complaints and Appeals

GWI-CD strives to operate its certification program with due diligence. However, an important part of due diligence is careful and complete management of complaints and appeals such as:

¹ ISEAL is the International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance, which develops guidance and helps strengthen the effectiveness and impact of social and environmental voluntary standard systems.

- Complaints and appeals regarding certification decisions,
- Complaints regarding the conduct of personnel,
- Complaints regarding the audit/inspection procedures, and
- Complaints regarding GoodWeave licensees.

In order for GWI-CD to act on a complaint or appeal, the subject of the complaint must be under its authority such as: disregard of policies, standards or operating procedures, arbitrary judgements, non-professional behavior, unethical behavior, discrimination, un-timeliness, violation of conflict of interest, or breach of confidentiality.

Complaints and appeals may be formal or informal. Many of the staff and personnel of GoodWeave programs and affiliates in producer and consumer countries interact regularly with licensees and other stakeholders of the GoodWeave system. Through these routine interactions they may from time to time receive verbal or written feedback that could be considered as informal complaints. The following procedures will help to determine if and when such situations should be entered into the complaints and appeals process.

3. General Procedures

3.1. Identify touch-points and capture feedback

GWI-CD may receive complaints or appeals directly from stakeholders. Additionally, GoodWeave programs and affiliates have regular communication channels with licensees, subcontractors, workers, and other stakeholders, which are formal as well as informal. Each country and/or regional office should first identify the various touch-points where these interactions typically take place and appropriate methods for capturing any feedback received. Recording feedback does not need to be onerous, but should be appropriate to the type and frequency of the communications. The country office management should ensure personnel involved are informed of their roles and responsibilities in capturing/documenting this information.

3.2. Screening

The management or designated personnel of the country/regional office should screen any feedback received and determine whether it falls into the category of a complaint or appeal.

- **Complaints** may be lodged by any interested party that is not satisfied with operations or decisions relating to inspection and certification.
- **Appeals** may only be brought forward by a party about which a licensing or certification decision was made.

3.3 Reporting

The management or designated personnel should assess the nature of the complaint or appeal and determine whether it is an issue that needs to be escalated to the GWI-CD Director. Minor issues that can be easily resolved by the country office without needing the involvement of the Certification Committee may be handled directly without further escalating it to the GWI-CD Director. Any such minor complaints that can be resolved at the country level only need to be documented and reviewed during the subsequent internal audit or management/system review. Significant issues that could affect certification should be reported to the GWI-CD Director for further action. This includes:

- Any formal complaints submitted in writing and which are requested to be included in a formal complaints process;
- Any appeals of certification decisions or inspection findings which are supported by reasonable evidence that would merit consideration by the CC; and
- Any other major issues relating certification decisions, inspection findings, or those which cannot be resolved by the country office without the involvement of GWI or with a decision of the Certification Committee.

When in doubt about whether a particular issue should be handled by the country office or escalated to the Certification Committee, the GWI-CD Director should be consulted. In case the GWI-CD receives a complaint or appeal directly from any stakeholders, it will be referred to the respective country management for resolving the issue. In such cases, the country management may inform GWI-CD as to what action was taken to resolve the issue.

3.4 Review by the Certification Committee

The GWI-CD Director first reviews any complaints or appeals that have been escalated from the country offices. In consultation with the country office, the Director determines if there is a possibility of resolving a complaint without requiring the involvement of the Certification Committee, in which case measures for its resolution may be proposed to the country office. If necessary, the GWI Secretariat may also be consulted on resolving the complaint. Otherwise, if this is not possible, then the Director prepares a report to the Certification Committee for consideration along with recommendations, if any.

The Certification Committee may request additional information in order to make a determination in a particular case. The GWI-CD Director should work closely with the country office to seek any such information needed for a decision. If the issue falls outside the remit of the Certification Committee, or if it is otherwise unable to make a decision for any reason, then it may decide to forward the case

to another arm of the GoodWeave system, e.g. the Executive Leadership Team, Board, etc. as appropriate to the situation.

3.5 Decision

The Certification Committee determines whether the complaint or appeal is valid and what actions should be taken for its resolution. This may result in reversing a previous certification decision, or re-affirming a previous decision as still valid. Once a decision has been made the country office that originally received the complaint or appeal shall take necessary steps to inform the affected parties of the outcome. This includes the party submitting the complaint or appeal, as well as the subject of the complaint or appeal.

All decisions related to the status of an applicant or licensee remain in force until the complaint or appeal is settled.

4. Documentation

Each country office maintains records of complaints and appeals and their resolution. Records relating to any cases escalated to the GWI-CD Director and Certification Committee are also saved in the GWI-CD files. Records should include the specifics of the case, dates, any decisions and corrective actions taken as a result of the case, and kept for at least five years. Electronic copies are kept as existing and back-ups are made as often as deemed necessary.

The GWI Confidentiality Policy should be followed to ensure records are handled properly.

5. Designated Personnel

The following individuals are designated as the primary points of contact with respect to processing complaints and appeals from each of the respective entities within the GoodWeave certification system.

GWI Certification Division	Mathew John, Director mathew@goodweave.net
GoodWeave India	Pratap Chandra Das pratap@goodweave.net
GoodWeave Nepal	Samjhana Pradhan samjhana@goodweavenepal.org