

PROGRAMME FOR BELIZE

COMMUNITY/STAKEHOLDER'S GRIEVANCE POLICY

UPDATED: April 5, 2023

COMMUNITY/STAKEHOLDERS DISPUTE GRIEVANCE POLICY

Programme for Belize

Programme for Belize (Pfb) is a private, Belizean non-profit organization whose mission is to conserve the biodiversity and promote the sustainable development of Belize's natural resources through the proper management of the Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area and other lands entrusted to it.

The Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area is the flagship project of the Programme for Belize where the organization puts in practice its management principles based on the "man-and-biosphere reserve principle. While the reserve has been historically under private ownership and, therefore, there is no community rights or claims on the property, Programme for Belize has adopted a moral commitment to support sustainable community development and to cultivate an amicable relationship with the neighbouring communities to gain and maintain their support for the management and protection of the Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area.

The management regime of the Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area includes the strict preservation of 60% of the reserve and the sustainable development of the buffer zone, approximately 40% of the reserve. The management programs include protection, pine

savanna/fire management, Yellow-headed Parrot Monitoring and Protection, Carbon Sequestration/Climate Change, Fresh Water Management, Community Outreach, Sustainable Forest Management and Eco-Tourism. It is recognized that the implementation of these programs and the Programme for Belize may, at times, create concerns or impacts (positive or negative) on the neighbouring communities. Programme for Belize make serious effort to prevent or mitigate the negative impacts and to optimize the positive impacts to the communities. This grievance policy therefore provides a grievance mechanism for receiving, evaluating, and addressing grievances (complaints or concerns) from the communities that may arise from the implementation of the conservation programs or the operation of Programme for Belize, from its staff, consultants, and visitors, promptly and transparently while adhering to the management principles and guidelines of the reserve and the mission and goals of the organization.

The concerns of the communities may also include, but is not limited to, observations of illegal activities (illegal logging, illegal fishing, hunting, poaching, illegal forest clearing and encroachment, illegal drug trafficking, illegal human trafficking, trespassing) as well as unacceptable behaviour of the employees, agents, or guests of the organization.

Goal of the Community Grievance Policy

The goal of this Community Grievance Policy is to provide an accessible and transparent mechanism for receiving, evaluating, and promptly addressing grievances (complaints or concerns) from the communities. These complaints or concerns may arise from the implementation of the conservation programs or the operation of the organization, from its staff, consultants or visitors/guests of Programme for Belize.

The Community Grievance Policy aims to ensure that:

1. All complaints and concerns of the communities are considered seriously and dealt fairly, promptly, and consistently.
2. Communities/persons reporting grievances feel that their complaints and concerns are addressed and taken seriously.
3. Communities/persons reporting grievances do not experience any retaliation or victimization by any staff, visitor or agent of the organization.

Community Engagement:

The first step in addressing community concerns and complaints is through the engagement with the communities where representatives are encouraged to voice and share their concerns and complaints before these escalate. This will be done in the following manner:

1. Station Managers Meeting with Community Leaders

Programme for Belize has two field stations within the Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area: La Milpa Lodge and Research Centre and the Hill Bank Field Station. Each of these field stations has a station manager.

La Milpa Station Manager is tasked to meet at least once every three months with the Leader or the Leaders of Blue Creek Village, San Felipe Village and August Pine Ridge Village to find out if these communities have any complaints or concerns regarding the management and protection of the reserve and the operation of Programme for Belize.

Similarly, the Hill Bank Station Manager is required to meet at least once every quarter with Leader or the Leaders of Indian Church

Village, San Carlos Village, San Felipe Village, Rancho Dolores, St. Paul's Bank, Lemonal, Isabella Bank, Bermudian Landing and the Community Baboon Sanctuary to find out if these communities have any complaints or concerns regarding the management and protection of the reserve and the operation of Programme for Belize.

These meetings should also be used as an opportunity to determine or explore any opportunity, that may arise, for collaboration that forwards the mission of Programme for Belize and supports the sustainable economic development of the neighbouring communities.

Once a complaint or concern has been raised by a community, the Station Manager should provide a response. The Station Manager should then submit an official report of the complaint or concern to the Executive Director and the response provided to the community. The Station Manager should also indicate if the community considered the response satisfactory or if follow-up is necessary. The complaint/concern and the response provided will be recorded in the Community Grievance Records.

2. Community/Stakeholders' Meetings

These are meetings which are to be held with the communities or stakeholders meeting regarding the general management of the Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area. Programme for Belize will make every effort to at least host one meeting annually to present the work of the organization. During these meetings, the communities will be encouraged to raise their concerns or complaints. To the extent possible, the Programme for Belize staff leading the meeting will try to address or respond to the concern/complain. However, if the issue cannot be addressed or

responded properly at the meeting, the PfB staff leading the meeting will submit a report of the concern/complaint to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will follow up on the complaint/concern, may request additional information, and thereafter address and respond to the issue. If the complaint cannot be adequately addressed by the Executive Director, the matter will be taken to the Chairman and/or the Board of Directors if necessary.

The complaint/concern and the response given will be recorded on the Community Grievance records.

3. Programme Managers Meetings with the Communities

The different conservation programs sometimes requires Programme for Belize to have meetings with one or various communities. During these meetings, the Program Managers should encourage the communities to raise any concerns or complaints they may have regarding the management and protection of the reserve or the operation of Programme for Belize. The protection program and the fire management program, for example, require constant engagement and dialogue with some of the communities which provides an opportunity for the communities to raise any concern or complaint they may have.

To the extent possible, the Program Manager or the Programme for Belize staff leading the meeting should try to address and respond to the community complaint/concern and a report submitted to the Executive Director about the complaint/concern and the response given. If an adequate response cannot be given, the Programme for Belize staff must submit the complaint/concern to the Executive Director together with a report of how it was addressed and whether

the response was adequate or not. The Executive Director will then follow up and address the complaint/concern.

A record of the complaint/concern and how it was addressed/responded will be recorded on the Community Grievance Records.

Reporting Community Grievances

Option 1.

As mentioned above, the communities are encouraged to report their concerns during PfB-Community engagement meetings which could be on (i) Station Manager's Meeting with Community Leaders; (ii) Community/Stakeholders' Meetings; or (iii) Program/Project Meetings with Communities. However, since these meetings may not be frequently, the communities who have any concern or complaint should send their complaints directly to the Station Managers or to the designated Programme for Belize Community Grievance Representative:

The designated Programme for Belize Community Grievance Representatives:

- Ramon Pacheco, Manager, Admin and Planning, adminmanager@pfbelize.org, Tel: 227-5616
- Edilberto Romero, Executive Director, execdirector@pfbelize.org, Tel: 227-1020

Option 2.

The community person wishing to make a report may also contact any other Programme for Belize Senior Staff or Management Staff they feel comfortable contacting, inside or outside of the organization, and ask them to report on their behalf.

The Programme for Belize senior staff or management staff will complete the community grievance report form and submit to the PfB Community Grievance Representative.

Option 3.

The community or community representative or individual can report directly to Programme for Belize by completing the community grievance reporting form, anonymously or named.

Programme for Belize's Executive Director, or his designate, will investigate the complaint/concern and may contact the person taking the report if additional information is needed.

To Address and report a community grievance, Programme for Belize has the following procedure outlined below.

Procedure for Addressing Community Grievances

After a community grievance is reported:

1. If the community grievance is reported during a Programme for Belize Community Engagement meeting or event, the Station Manager or the Programme for Belize staff leading the meeting or event will try to address the concern or complaint immediately during the meeting or event. If the complaint/concern cannot be satisfactorily addressed during the meeting or event, the staff will report the grievance to the Community Grievance Representative or to the Executive Director and complete the Community Grievance Reporting Form.
2. Once a grievance report has been submitted, the Community Grievance Representative will contact the person making the report, within 3 to 5 days, understand the grievance, reinforce our values, and decide on an appropriate course of action.
3. The next steps may include:
 - Conduct a prompt investigation to clearly understand the grievance reported.
 - Speak one-on-one with the staff, agent or guest causing the grievance and determine a corrective action plan.
 - Contact the person/community reporting the grievance and inform them of the corrective action plan.
 - Hold a mediation session or other conflict resolution between Programme for Belize and the aggrieved community.
 - Involve a third-party person trained in conflict resolution, specifically around the nature of the grievance.

- The community representative, by writing to the Executive Director, may also request that the grievance be presented at the next Board of Directors Meeting for discussion and resolution.
 - Dismissing the subject of grievance from Programme for Belize's programs and events.
 - Training or education for the subject or staff on the values and policies of Programme for Belize
 - Updating Programme for Belize's policies and practices to prevent similar grievances.
4. The Executive Director may report to and contact the Chairman and/or the Board of Directors, if necessary, to provide guidance toward an appropriate solution to the grievance.
 5. The Executive Director may contact an attorney-at-law, if necessary, to provide guidance towards an appropriate solution to the grievance.
 6. If the community grievance is reported anonymously, the Programme for Belize Community Grievance Representative will determine the best course of action with the information provided.
 7. If the grievance has not already been reported on the form, the Programme for Belize representative will record the grievance and any action taken on the community grievance reporting form.
 8. If the grievance is already reported on the form, the Programme for Belize representative will send to the Executive Director the Programme for Belize response and the result of the action. The

Executive Director will record the response on the community Grievance Reporting Form response page.

Tracking and Recording Information

The Programme for Belize will maintain a record of reported grievances and actions taken to hold the organization accountable to addressing grievances and continuously learning and growing as an organization.

1. All reported grievances must be recorded in the Community Grievance Reporting Form. This includes reporting from:
 - The community and person reported/experienced the grievance
 - Witnesses to the community grievance.
 - The Programme for Belize staff or manager contacted about reporting the community grievance on behalf of a community or person who completed the community grievance reporting form.
2. The Executive Director will receive email notification when the form is completed.
3. The Executive Director is responsible for ensuring that any action taken by the Programme for Belize is recorded on the reporting form response spreadsheet.

4. Confidentiality, Access to Information and Protection from Retaliation

1. All community grievance reports will be treated as confidential to the extent possible while addressing the grievance.
2. Community grievances reported via the community grievance reporting form will be shared with the Community Grievance Representative and the Executive Director, and other persons as appropriate to address the grievance.
3. Records of community grievances caused by a staff will be placed in their personnel file.
4. Threats, other forms of intimidation, and retaliation against a person reporting a grievance or any other party involved in implementing the grievance policy are violations of the policy and may be grounds for disciplinary actions.

Amendments

This policy may be amended in whole or in part, at any time, at the discretion of the organization, with the approval of the Board of Directors, in order to ensure the smooth operation of its activities and the protection of the Rio Bravo Conservation and Management Area.

Approved by:

Edilberto Romero
Executive Director
April 5, 2023.