

UNDP Social and Environmental Standards:

Sample Terms of Reference: Project-level Grievance Redress Mechanism

Please refer to the [UNDP Social and Environmental Standards Toolkit](#) for additional information.

I. Mandate

The mandate of the GRM will be to:

- (i) receive and address any concerns, complaints, notices of emerging conflicts, or grievances (collectively “*Grievance*”) alleging actual or potential harm to affected person(s) (the “*Claimant(s)*”) arising from Project;
- (ii) assist in resolution of Grievances between and among Project Stakeholders; as well as the various government ministries, agencies and commissions, CSOs and NGOs, and others (collectively, the “*Stakeholders*”) in the context of the Project;
- (iii) Conduct itself at all times in a flexible, collaborative, and transparent manner aimed at problem solving and consensus building.

II. Functions

The functions of the GRM will be to:

- (i) Receive, Log and Track all Grievances received;
- (ii) Provide regular status updates on Grievances to Claimants, Project Board (PB) members and other relevant Stakeholders, as applicable;
- (iii) Engage the PB members, Government institutions and other relevant Stakeholders in Grievance resolution;
- (iv) Process and propose solutions and ways forward related to specific Grievances *within a period not to exceed sixty (60) days* from receipt of the Grievance;
- (v) Identify growing trends in Grievances and recommend possible measures to avoid the same;
- (vi) Receive and service requests for, and suggest the use of, mediation or facilitation;
- (vii) Elaborate bi-annual reports, make said reports available to the public, and more generally work to maximize the disclosure of its work (including its reports, findings and outcomes);
- (viii) Ensure increased awareness, accessibility, predictability, transparency, legitimacy, and credibility of the GRM process;
- (ix) Collaborate with Partner Institutions and other NGOs, CSOs and other entities to conduct outreach initiatives to increase awareness among Stakeholders as to the existence of the GRM and how its services can be accessed;
- (x) Ensure continuing education of PB members and their respective institutions about the relevant laws and policies that they will need to be aware of to participate in the development of effective resolutions to Grievances likely to come before the GRM;
- (xi) Monitor follow up to Grievance resolutions, as appropriate.

III. Composition

The GRM will be composed of:

[Name of Implementing Partner] as the Secretariat and either:

- (a) A standing GRM Sub-Committee [made up of x, y, z PB members]

and/or

- (b) Ad hoc GRM Task Teams in response to specific requests for grievance

The GRM Sub-Committee will be balanced in composition (government and non-government) and should not include any PB members with a direct interest or role in the grievance/dispute.

IV. [Name of Implementing Partner]

In its role as GRM Secretariat, [Name of Implementing Partner] will perform the following core functions:

- Publicize the existence of the GRM and the procedure for using it;
- Receive and log requests for dispute resolution;
- Acknowledge receipt to the requestor;
- Determine eligibility;
- Forward eligible requests to the PB for review and action, and
- Track and document efforts at grievance/dispute resolution and their outcomes.

V. Project Board/GRM Sub-Committee/GRM Task Team

The Project Board/GRM Sub-Committee and/or GRM Task Team will perform the following core functions:

- Take direct action to resolve the grievance/dispute (e.g. bring the relevant parties together to discuss and resolve the issue themselves with oversight by the PB);
- Request further information to clarify the issue, and share that information with all relevant parties, or ensure that a government agency represented on the PB took an appropriate administrative action to deal with a complaint;
- Refer the grievance/dispute to independent mediation, while maintaining oversight; or
- Determine that the request was outside the scope and mandate of the PB and refer it elsewhere (e.g. Ministry of Justice and Police or to the courts).

VI. Communicating a Grievance

- (i) *Who can Submit a Grievance?*

A Grievance can be sent by any individual or group of individuals that believes it has been or will be harmed by the Project.

If a Grievance is to be lodged by a different individual or organization on behalf of those said to be affected, the Claimant must identify the individual and/or people on behalf of who the Grievance is submitted and provide written confirmation by the individual and/or people represented that they are giving the Claimant the authority to present the Grievance on their behalf. The GRM will take reasonable steps to verify this authority.

(ii) *How is the Grievance Communicated?*

The GRM shall maintain a flexible approach with respect to receiving Grievances in light of known local constraints with respect to communications and access to resources for some Stakeholders. A Grievance can be transmitted to the GRM by any means available (i.e. by email, letter, phone call, meeting, SMS, etc.). The contact information is the following:

[Implementing Partner to add address, phone number, fax, etc.]

To facilitate communications with and between the GRM and potential Claimants, the GRM will receive support from the PB members' institutions, local government and civil society organizations

(iii) *What information should be included in a Grievance?*

The Grievance should include the following information:

- (a) the name of the individual or individuals making the Complaint (the "Claimant");
- (b) a means for contacting the Claimant (email, phone, address, other);
- (c) if the submission is on behalf of those alleging a potential or actual harm, the identity of those on whose behalf the Grievance is made, and written confirmation by those represented of the Claimant's authority to lodge the Grievance on their behalf;
- (d) the description of the potential or actual harm;
- (e) Claimant's statement of the risk of harm or actual harm (description of the risk/harm and those affected, names of the individual(s) or institutions responsible for the risk/harm, the location(s) and date(s) of harmful activity);
- (f) what has been done by Claimant thus far to resolve the matter;
- (g) whether the Claimant wishes that their identity is kept confidential; and
- (h) the specific help requested from the GRM.

However, complainants are not required to provide all of the information listed above. Initially, the complainant need only provide enough information to determine eligibility. If insufficient information is provided, the GRM has an obligation to make a substantial, good faith effort to contact the complainant to request whatever additional information is needed to determine eligibility, and if eligible, to develop a proposed response.

VII. Logging, Acknowledgment, and Tracking

All Grievances and reports of conflict will be received, assigned a tracking number, acknowledged to Claimant, recorded electronically, and subject to periodic updates to the Claimant as well as the office file.

Within one (1) week from the receipt of a Grievance, the GRM will send a *written* acknowledgement to Claimant of the Grievance received with the assigned tracking number.¹

Each Grievance file will contain, at a minimum:

- i. the date of the request as received;
- ii. the date the written acknowledgment was sent (and oral acknowledgment if also done);

¹ Oral acknowledgments can be used for expediency (and also recorded), but must be followed by a written acknowledgment.

- iii. the dates and nature of all other communications or meetings with the Claimant and other relevant Stakeholders;
- iv. any requests, offers of, or engagements of a Mediator or Facilitator;
- v. the date and records related to the proposed solution/way forward;
- vi. the acceptance or objections of the Claimant (or other Stakeholders);
- vii. the proposed next steps if objections arose;
- viii. the alternative solution if renewed dialogues were pursued;
- ix. notes regarding implementation; and
- x. any conclusions and recommendations arising from monitoring and follow up.

IX. Maintaining Communication and Status Updates

Files for each Grievance will be available for review by the Claimant and other Stakeholders involved in the Grievance, or their designated representative(s). Appropriate steps will be taken to maintain the confidentiality of the Claimant if previously requested.

The GRM will provide periodic updates to the Claimant regarding the status and current actions to resolve the Grievance. Not including the acknowledgment of receipt of the Grievance, such updates will occur within reasonable intervals (not greater than every thirty (30) days).

X. Investigation and Consensus Building

Within one (1) week of receiving a Grievance, [Implementing Partner] will notify the **PB/GRM Sub-Committee (GRM SC)/GRM Task Team (GRM TT)** and any other relevant institutions of the receipt of the Grievance.

[IF THE PB, RATHER THAN A PRE-DESIGNATED GRM SC OR GRM TT IS THE PRIMARY BODY RECEIVING COMPLAINTS: The PB will identify a specific team of individuals drawn from the PB and/or their respective institutions to develop a response to the Grievance. The names of these individuals will be made available to the Claimant.]

The designated PB members/GRM SC/GRM TT will promptly engage the Claimant and any other relevant Stakeholders deemed appropriate, to gather all necessary information regarding the Grievance.

Through the PB members/GRM SC/GRM TT, the GRM will have the authority to request from relevant Government institutions any information (documents or otherwise) relevant to resolving the Grievance and avoiding future Grievances of the same nature.

As necessary, the PB members/GRM SC/GRM TT will convene one or more meetings with relevant individuals and institutions in [national capital], or elsewhere in [name of country] as needed.

The objective of all investigative activities is to develop a thorough understanding of the issues and concerns raised in the Grievance and facilitate consensus around a proposed solution and way forward.

The PB members/GRM SC/GRM TT will procure the cooperation of their respective staff with the investigation.

At any point during the investigation, the PB members/GRM SC/GRM TT may determine that an onsite field investigation is necessary to properly understand the Grievance and develop an effective proposed solution and way forward.

XI. Seeking Advisory Opinion and/or Technical Assistance

At any point after receiving a Grievance and through to implementation of the proposed solution and way forward, the PB members/GRM SC/GRM TT may seek the technical assistance and/or an advisory opinion from any entity or individual in [country] or internationally which may reasonably be believed to be of assistance.

XII. Making Proposed Actions and Solutions Public and Overseeing Implementation

The PB members/GRM SC/GRM TT will communicate to the Claimant one or more proposed actions or resolutions and clearly articulate the reasons and basis for proposed way forward.

If the Claimant does not accept the resolution, the PB members/GRM SC/GRM TT will engage with the Claimant to provide alternative options.

If the Claimant accepts the proposed solution and way forward, the GRM will continue to monitor the implementation directly and through the receipt of communications from the Claimant and other relevant parties. As necessary, the GRM may solicit information from the relevant parties and initiate renewed dialogue where appropriate.

In all communications with the Claimant and other stakeholders, the GRM will be guided by its problem-solving role, non-coercive principles and process, and the voluntary, good faith nature of the interaction with the Claimant and other stakeholders.

XII. Monitoring and Evaluation

Bi-annually, the GRM will make available to the public, a report describing the work of the GRM, listing the number and nature of the Grievances received and processed in the past six months, a date and description of the Grievances received, resolutions, referrals and ongoing efforts at resolution, and status of implementation of ongoing resolutions. The level of detail provided with regard to any individual Grievance will depend on the sensitivity of the issues and Stakeholder concerns about confidentiality, while providing appropriate transparency about the activities of the GRM. The report will also highlight key trends in emerging conflicts, Grievances, and dispute resolution, and make recommendations regarding:

- (i) measures that can be taken by the Government to avoid future harms and Grievances; and
- (ii) improvements to the GRM that would enhance its effectiveness, accessibility, predictability, transparency, legitimacy, credibility, and capacity.

XIII. Mediation

For the option of independent mediation, mediators on the roster/panel should have at least the following qualifications:

- professional experience and expertise in impartial mediation;
- knowledge of [project type and activities in the country] and the region, including an understanding of indigenous and tribal culture and practices;
- [national and local language, as appropriate] proficiency;
- availability in principle for assignments of up to 20 days; and
- willingness to declare all relationships and interests that may affect their ability to act as impartial mediators in particular cases.

If mediation succeeded in resolving the dispute or grievance, the outcome will be documented by [Implementing Partner] and reviewed by the Task Team. If it is unsuccessful, stakeholders will have the option to return to the PB members/GRM SC/GRM TT for assistance.

XIV. Without Prejudice

The existence and use of this GRM is without prejudice to any existing rights under any other complaint mechanisms that an individual or group of individuals may otherwise have access to under national or international law or the rules and regulations of other institutions, agencies or commissions.