Social safeguards: an introduction to Grievance Mechanisms

**Tips for developing a Grievance Mechanism, based on the steps in Fauna & Flora’s** [**Grievance Mechanisms: Guidance for Programme Managers**](https://ffionline.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/leadership/livelihoods/Resources/Stakeholder%20Engagement/Guidance%20on%20Grievance%20Mechanisms.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=IOgyPc)

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| **Steps** | **Tips** |
| **1.** **Appoint one or more people** who are responsible for leading the design of the Mechanism | Form a team comprised of staff from the implementing NGO, from partners and/or other organisations working in the land/seascape where appropriate. Ensure that this team has the mandate to develop a Grievance Mechanism for a particular project/fund or for a wider conservation land/seascape. |
| **2.** **Design** the Mechanism with input and agreement from stakeholders, including partner organisations, addressing a), b), and c) below: | **Identify the stakeholders** to be consulted in the design of the Grievance Mechanism. These should include the potential users of the mechanism in **local communities**. Ensure that you engage different groups of **men and women** who will have different insights into how the Mechanism should look like and function in their particular context.  Meet with stakeholders, introduce the general idea of the Grievance Mechanism and its importance, clarify any doubts that people may have, and try to understand their expectations. Use these meetings to gather input from stakeholders into the key design parameters described in a), b) and c). |
| a) what constitutes a grievance | Agree with stakeholders what type of issues are within and outside the scope of the grievance mechanism to resolve. This is often called the **eligibility criteria** for grievances.  As a general rule, a Grievance Mechanism will deal with concerns or complaints raised by local stakeholders or their representatives about the negative impact or potential impact from conservation activities supported by specific projects or organisations within a well-defined geographical area.  [Follow the link for examples of issues within and outside the scope of the grievance mechanism](https://ffionline-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/personal/ffimangrove_fauna-flora_org/Documents/Root/Training%20course%20materials/Grievance%20Mechanisms/Examples%20of%20issues%20within%20and%20outside%20the%20scope%20of%20the%20grievance%20mechanism.docx?d=w29dc148f17144d848aefa54f9e05dbf8&csf=1&web=1&e=YkfTPs). |
| b) how grievances can be reported | Work out with stakeholders the **channels** through which grievances can be reported, ensuring that everyone can access the Mechanism. These may include phone hotlines, emails, letters, suggestion boxes; or reporting to project staff or to trusted community members. Several channels are usually needed.  Ensure that reporting channels address **barriers to access** such as literacy, language, gender norms, and location. You may need to provide options for oral reporting of grievances, translate materials into relevant local languages, designate focal points who women feel comfortable reporting a complaint to, make use of traditional community institutions to receive grievances, or arrange regular visits to remote areas to collect grievances.  Create a **Grievance Reporting Form** ([see template here](https://ffionline-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/personal/ffimangrove_fauna-flora_org/Documents/Root/Training%20course%20materials/Grievance%20Mechanisms/Example%20template%20for%20public%20grievance%20form.docx?d=wbe1d57a479724935a7a3d1d5a4d7aaf4&csf=1&web=1&e=LvH3ml)) where the complainants can include details of the issue (who, what, when) along with their contact details. Ensure the form is available in local languages where relevant, and provide assistance to individuals who struggle with literacy.  Complainants should be given assurance that the information they provide will be dealt with **confidentially**. It should also be clear that that they **will not face retaliation** for submitting a grievance. |
| c) what will happen on receipt of a grievance, including timeframes for responses | You need to develop approaches to resolve grievances that are **acceptable to stakeholders** and **culturally appropriate**. Discuss with community members how best to resolve complaints in relation to the activities supported by the project/programme. Ask how conflicts are normally resolved in local communities, and consider integrating existing conflict resolution mechanisms in the procedures for collecting and resolving project-related grievances  Ensure that the steps in the grievance procedures are clear and easy to follow, and can be understood by everyone. Define and agree with stakeholders **clear timeframes** for acknowledging (see step 5) and responding to grievances (step 8).  Once you have worked out with local stakeholders the eligibility criteria, the channels for receiving grievances, and the process for reviewing and resolving them, you can adapt [this template](https://ffionline-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/personal/ffimangrove_fauna-flora_org/Documents/Root/Training%20course%20materials/Grievance%20Mechanisms/Example%20Grievance%20Mechanism%20Manual%20-%20Standard%20Operating%20Procedure.docx?d=wb1b9ae7712914fdb9bf62bc9bc763876&csf=1&web=1&e=5fxPLB)to develop your **Grievance Mechanism Manual or Standard Operating Procedure**. Modify the roles and responsibilities, reporting channels, and workflow from lodging to closing the grievance in line with what you agreed with local stakeholders. |
| 3. **Publicise** the agreed Mechanism through locally appropriate communication channels | Ask community members what would be the best ways **to raise awareness** regarding the existence and operation of the Grievance Mechanism in their communities (for example, community meetings and notice boards, radio, social media, etc.)  Make sure that **everyone** in the local communities affected by the project/programme **is aware of the Grievance Mechanism** and **knows how to submit a concern/complaint**. You will need to explain in simple language and in culturally appropriate ways how the Grievance Mechanism operates.  Ensure that your awareness raising strategy considers and addresses locally relevant **barriers to accessing information** such as literacy, language and location. |
| 4. **Receive** and **register**  grievances in a Grievance Register/Log | Designate a **grievance focal point** responsible for the overall coordination/management of the Grievance Mechanism, including receiving, registering, categorising and assigning grievances to the appropriate resolution channel.  Create a **Grievance Register/log** to document grievances and their resolution. This facilitates systematic handling of grievances and reporting to stakeholders. The Register can be a simple spreadsheet. [Follow this link for a template you can adapt to your specific needs.](https://ffionline-my.sharepoint.com/personal/ffimangrove_fauna-flora_org/Documents/Root/Training%20course%20materials/Grievance%20Mechanisms/Grievance%20Mechanism%20Register%20-%20Log%20Template.xlsx)  Note that **all grievances received should be logged**, irrespectively of whether they are eligible to be resolved by the Grievance Mechanism or not.  Access to the Grievance Register/log should be limited to the Grievance Mechanism focal person and other key staff (e.g. project manager, country director, programme manager) to **ensure discretion and confidentiality** in handling grievances.  Ensure that the data collected as part of the Grievance Mechanism complies with Fauna & Flora’s [Data Protection Policy](https://ffionline.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/governance/Shared%20Documents/P+Ps/Data%20Protection%20Policy.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=csrHda), and [Data Management and Retention Policy and Procedure](https://ffionline.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/governance/Shared%20Documents/P+Ps/Data%20Management%20%26%20Retention%20Policy.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=P6253u) as well as applicable national legislation in the project country. As a minimum, you should **ensure that data is stored securely** and is only accessible to the individuals involved in registering, reviewing and resolving grievances. |
| 5. **Acknowledge** receipt with the complainant through their preferred method of communication | This can be, for example, through a follow-up personal meeting, phone call, email or letter (as appropriate) and should be done within a reasonable timeframe. Usually, **grievances should be acknowledged within 5-10 days of receipt**. Acknowledgement should specify what the complainant can expect from the process, including a clear timeframe for receiving a response.  Consider creating a simple customisable letter for the grievance focal point to use when acknowledging receipt of the grievance containing the information above (**what to expect, and timeframe for receiving a response**). |
| 6. **Review** the grievance to determine if it is eligible, categorise it according to issue raised or level of risk/impact (low/high), and assign it to the appropriate person for further investigation/resolution | Once received, the focal point in charge of coordinating/managing the Grievance Mechanism will assess the grievance to **determine its eligibility** according to criteria developed with stakeholders in 2.a)  **Categorise grievances** according to the kind of issue raised or their level or risk/impact. This will help to assign the grievance to the person or persons in charge of resolving it.  **Develop clear guidance on who to assign the grievance for resolution** according to clear criteria, for example regarding the kind of issue raised or its level or risk/impact. This will involve deciding the issues that can be resolved locally by the project team, or that need to be **escalated** (e.g. to the country director, program manager, independent third-party mediator). |
| 7. **Develop a resolution** appropriate to the complaint and the context | Ensure that the individuals or body assigned to resolving the grievance is **empowered** to do so. They should have the ability to make decisions on how to investigate the complaint, engage with the complainant to identify an acceptable resolution, and solicit input from additional staff or experts if necessary. |
| 8. **Respond** to the complainant with details of resolution options | Make sure that details of the resolution provided to the complainant are **documented in the Grievance Register/Log.** Include information about how the grievance was investigated, the reasoning behind the resolution found to the issue raised, and relevant support documentation (e.g. minutes of meetings and conversations, copies of letters, emails, evidence of the impact/issue). |
| 9. **Implement actions** to resolve the grievance, and record in Grievance Register/Log | Specify an **appeals process** for when the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution proposed or its implementation. |
| 10.**Record** complainant’s response in Log; **close-off the grievance** once resolved to mutual satisfaction |
| 11. **Monitor**, **evaluate** and, if necessary, **adapt** the Mechanism, including annual review with affected communities and other local stakeholders | The mechanism should be **reviewed with local stakeholders** after six months of first implementation and regularly thereafter (e.g. annually) to ensure it’s fit for purpose.  If no grievances have been registered and addressed, this should not be taken as evidence that there are no issues. You will need to **check that local stakeholders understand and trust the mechanism**, and that there no issues preventing access.  Ensure that there is **regular evaluation** of the types of complaints received, response times, offers of resolution, and acceptance and complaints resolved vs. appealed. Some donors require monitoring and reporting of the Grievance Mechanism  It is also good practice to **report regularly to local stakeholders** in ways that are sensitive to the need for discretion and confidentiality in handling grievances. A list of basic indicators commonly used to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of a Grievance Mechanism can be found [here.](https://ffionline-my.sharepoint.com/personal/ffimangrove_fauna-flora_org/Documents/Root/Training%20course%20materials/Grievance%20Mechanisms/Grievance%20Mechanism%20common%20M&E%20indicators.docx)  Develop ways to ensure that monitoring and evaluation feeds into **learning and adaptive management**, for example by making recommendations for actions needed to prevent or limit the re-occurrence of grievances. This will involve **regular feedback** to the wider project team and inclusion in project reviews. |