



**GRIEVANCE REDRESS MECHANISM FOR THE CLIMATE
PROOF WATER4FOOD PROJECT (W4F) IN GAMBELLA
REGION, SOUTH SUDAN**

Client: Plan International (Ethiopia)

Consultant:

BMTK Environmental Consultancy

Nifas-Silk Lafto Sub-city, Addis Ababa

Phone No. +251-911755945

E-mail: temeliku@gmail.com

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| ABBREVIATION | |
|--------------|---|
| AfDBs | African Development Bank's |
| BA | Bureau of Agriculture |
| BOWE | Bureau of Water and Energy |
| CPCU | Central Project Central Project Coordination Unit |
| EPA | Environmental Protection Authority |
| GRC | Grievance Redress Committee |
| GRM | Grievance Redress Mechanism |
| MoA | Ministry of Agriculture |
| MoWE | Ministry of Water and Energy |
| PCU | Project Coordination Unit |
| PIU | Project Implementation Unit |
| PSC | Project Steering Committee |
| W4F | Water 4 Food |

1. INTRODUCTION

A Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) is an instrument through which dispute resolution is sought and provided. It involves the receipt and processing of complaints from individuals or groups negatively affected by activities of a particular project. The Plan International and African Development Bank recognizes the right of beneficiaries and community members to give feedback and seek response from projects affecting them, processes they have been involved in and on ultimate transformation that could be taking place in the communities as a result of project activities. Such initiatives promote beneficiary accountability and transparency and responsiveness.

The Grievance Redress Mechanism provides a clear description of the formal process whereby stakeholders can submit a grievance or report an incident regarding the Water 4 Food (W4F) project, through a defined process within a predictable timeframe and receive a response and resolution (where possible) to the grievance. This process should be adhered to by the W4F Project Coordination Unit (PCU) and Project Implementation Unit (PIU) and contractors executing W4F projects upon receipt of a complaint.

2. OBJECTIVES OF GRIEVANCE REDRESS MECHANISM

This grievance management system provides a formal way to register stakeholders' concerns to be addressed in good faith and through a transparent and impartial process. This mechanism aims to:

- Establish a systematic approach to handle grievances related to the W4F Project activities.
- Provide a clear and accessible process for stakeholders to report grievances.
- Ensure that incidents, complaints, and grievances are logged and managed consistently to build trust in the legitimacy and efficiency of the procedure and system;
- Assist in the resolution of grievances between and among stakeholders, such as the various government Ministries, Regional Bureau, Woreda Offices, Kebele, communities.
- Ensure that unwanted events with negative impacts on external stakeholders are dealt with swiftly and appropriately;
- Ensure that vulnerable people can log grievances in a non-threatening and accessible way;

- Allow the implementer to identify and correct problems before they recur or escalate into more serious problems;
- Allow the implementer to monitor and track stakeholder concerns, issues, and provide feedback;
- Provide an efficient and low-cost means of resolving disputes and providing control measures where appropriate.

3. PRINCIPLE OF THE GRM

The effectiveness of the GRM Framework is guided by the following principles:

- 1) Accessibility: The GRM should be accessible to everyone and at any time. It should take into consideration potential barriers such as language, literacy, awareness, cost or fear of reprisal and seek to address them.
- 2) Predictability: GRM should be time-bound at each stage, and have specified time frames for the responses.
- 3) Fairness: All the procedures therein should be widely perceived as unbiased in regards to access of information and meaningful public participation.
- 4) Rights compatibility: The outcomes of the mechanism should be consistent with the international and national standards. It should also not restrict access to other redress mechanisms.
- 5) Transparency and accountability: The entire GRM process should be done out of public interest.
- 6) Capability: For an effective GRM, the system needs to be endowed the necessary resources, that is, technical, financial and human resources.
- 7) Feedback: It should serve as a means to channel citizen feedback to improve project outcomes for the people.

4. STRUCTURE OF THE GRM

The mechanism applies to the W4F project in addressing complaints, grievances, and issues raised by stakeholders due to perceived project impacts and/or incidents including, but not limited to, socio-economic, environmental, health, or safety aspects. Following international good practice, the REWARD project will establish a specific mechanism for dealing with grievances that as much as possible do not involve court action, by establishing a Grievance Redress Committee (GRC) at

different levels to handle and address grievances following standard procedural steps. The GRM for the W4F project will be organized under the following structures:

- The Kebele levels;
- The Woreda level;
- The Regional level;
- The National level.

Level I – Kebele Level

At the local level, the grievance redress mechanism is managed by the local committee based in the village. This consists of the Kebele head, the village development committee chairperson, the youth representative, the religious leader, the women representative and the Kebele head as the chairperson of the local committee. The committee's primary responsibility involves handling grievances and complaints directly at the project site, which includes communities around the project sites. They will work closely with the aggrieved stakeholders to clarify and resolve any misunderstanding that could give rise to conflicts or further complaints.

The local committee is responsible for receiving and registering grievances and complaints from the local community. Upon receiving a complaint, the committee conducts an investigation and internally reviews the grievance to determine its merits. After a thorough review, the committee proposes a resolution and communicates it to the complainant. The local GRM Committee also has the responsibility to report the grievance and the proposed resolution to the Woreda level for further action and documentation.

Level II – Woreda Level

At the Woreda level, the grievance redress mechanism constitutes members including Woreda Administrator, Water and Energy Office Head, Agriculture Office Head, Women and Social Affairs Office Head.

The Woreda GRM will handle matters that the local GRM cannot be resolved at the local level. The committee is tasked with resolving disputes and verifying the merits of grievances reported by the local-level GRM committee. Once a grievance is reviewed, the committee communicates its decisions to the complainant and provides any necessary documentation to support the resolution process.

The committee also records all grievances, categorizes them, and prioritizes those that need immediate resolution. It maintains comprehensive records, including registers, meeting minutes, and correspondence, to ensure transparency and accountability. All received complaints and the progress of remediation are documented for future reference. The Woreda committee is also responsible for forwarding complaints and grievances that it fails to resolve at the Woreda level.

Level III: Regional Level

The relevant line bureaus will designate a focal person. This focal person will serve as the lead coordinator. Consequently, the Regional GRC will consist of the Regional Focal Person, Regional Water Bureau Water and energy head, Regional Agriculture Head, Regional Women and Social Affair Head, Regional Environmental Protection Authority Head.

The Regional GRM will handle matters that the Woreda GRM cannot be resolved at the local level. The committee is tasked with resolving disputes and verifying the merits of grievances reported by the Woreda-level GRM committee. Once a grievance is reviewed, the committee communicates its decisions to the complainant and provides any necessary documentation to support the resolution process.

The committee also records all grievances, categorizes them, and prioritizes those that need immediate resolution. It maintains comprehensive records, including registers, meeting minutes, and correspondence, to ensure transparency and accountability. All received complaints and the progress of remediation are documented for future reference. The regional committee is also responsible for forwarding complaints and grievances that it fails to resolve at the Regional level.

Level IV: Federal Level

At the federal level, a Grievance Redress Committee (GRC) will be established, composed of representatives from the Ministry of Water and Energy, Ministry of Agriculture, and Federal Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), Ministry of Women and Social Affairs. This committee will serve as an appellate body to review and assess grievances that could not be resolved at the Regional Bureau level.

The committee records all grievances, categorizes them, and prioritizes those requiring immediate resolution. It maintains comprehensive documentation, including registers, meeting minutes, and

correspondence, to ensure transparency and accountability. All complaints received, along with the progress of their remediation, are carefully documented for future reference.

5. W4F GRIEVANCE REDRESS MECHANISM - PROCEDURAL STEPS

The W4F Program is committed to ensuring that all stakeholders have a clear, transparent, and effective process for addressing grievances related to its projects. Recognizing the potential for development initiatives to impact communities and individuals, the GRM has been established as a critical component of the project's commitment to accountability, transparency, and stakeholder engagement.

The purpose of this section is to outline the procedural steps for the GRM, detailing how grievances can be lodged, acknowledged, reviewed, and resolved. By providing a structured approach to grievance redress, W4F aims to ensure that all complaints are handled promptly and fairly, minimizing any negative impacts and fostering positive relationships with all stakeholders.

This mechanism not only addresses grievances but also serves as a feedback loop to improve project implementation and mitigate future issues. Through continuous monitoring, reporting, and evaluation, the GRM helps maintain high standards of environmental and social governance, ensuring that the W4F Program operates in a manner that respects and responds to the needs and concerns of the communities it serves.

Affected parties may lodge/register a grievance using the following process:

1. Receive and log/register grievance
2. Acknowledge grievance
3. Review and investigate grievance
4. Develop resolution options and prepare a response
5. Close grievance
6. Monitor, report, and evaluate

1. Receive and log/register grievance

The process of initiating a formal grievance begins when an individual comes forward with a concern or complaint. This initial step, known as Receiving and Logging/Registering the Grievance, is the critical foundation for all subsequent actions. Upon receipt, the grievance is

formally documented to create an official record. This involves capturing essential information into a secure tracking system, such as the date and time of submission, the identity of the grievant, the name of the party against whom the grievance is filed (the respondent), and a clear, concise summary of the core issue being raised. Any supporting documents or evidence submitted are also catalogued and securely attached to this new case file.

2. Acknowledge grievance

Following the formal logging of a complaint, the crucial step of acknowledging the grievance is undertaken. This process involves formally notifying the grievant that their submission has been successfully received and registered by the organization. The acknowledgment, typically communicated in writing via email or letter, serves multiple important purposes. It provides immediate reassurance to the individual that their concern is being taken seriously and has entered the official system. This communication will include the unique reference number assigned to the case, which the grievant should use in all future correspondence. Furthermore, it outlines the subsequent steps in the grievance procedure, sets realistic expectations for timelines, and often provides the contact information of the person.

3. Review and investigate grievance

Following the acknowledgment, the grievance proceeds to the core of the resolution process: the thorough review and investigation phase. This critical stage involves a systematic and impartial examination of the complaint to establish the facts and understand the context from all perspectives. The appointed investigator begins by meticulously reviewing the initial submission and any attached evidence. This is followed by a fact-finding mission, which typically includes gathering additional documentation, conducting confidential interviews with the grievant, the respondent, and any relevant witnesses, and examining pertinent policies, communications, or records. The objective of this meticulous process is to move from allegations to evidence-based findings. The investigator analyzes the collected information for consistency, credibility, and relevance to determine whether the grievance is substantiated, partially substantiated, or unsubstantiated.

4. Develop resolution options and prepare a response

Upon concluding the investigation and establishing the facts of the case, the process moves to the critical stage of developing resolution options and preparing a formal response. This phase is dedicated to determining a fair and appropriate outcome based on the investigation's findings. The responsible party or committee brainstorms and evaluates a range of potential remedial actions, which may include a formal apology, mediation between the involved parties, a change in policy or procedure, specific training mandates, a formal warning, or, in severe cases, more significant disciplinary or restorative measures. These options are carefully weighed for their fairness, effectiveness, feasibility, and alignment with organizational policies. Once a course of action is selected, a comprehensive response is meticulously prepared. This formal document is addressed to the grievant and summarizes the nature of the grievance, the key findings of the investigation, the rationale behind the decision, and a detailed outline of the resolution steps to be taken.

5. Closure Grievance

A pivotal stage within the grievance procedure is the formal closure of the case. This phase is initiated after all agreed-upon resolution actions have been fully implemented and verified, and the formal response has been delivered to and acknowledged by the grievant. Closing a grievance is not merely an administrative task; it is an essential confirmatory process that ensures accountability and completeness for the specific issue raised. It involves a final review to guarantee that every element of the resolution has been executed as decided, that all communications are logged, and that the official record is comprehensive and accurate.

6. Monitor, report, and evaluate

Operating as a critical, overarching function rather than a single terminal stage, the processes of monitoring, reporting, and evaluation are integral to the entire grievance mechanism and its continuous improvement. After a resolution is implemented and a case is closed, the organization must actively monitor the situation to ensure the agreed-upon actions are sustained and effective, and that no retaliation occurs. Concurrently, reporting involves synthesizing anonymized data from all grievances into periodic reports for leadership and stakeholders. These reports highlight trends, common issues, recurrence rates, and the overall effectiveness of the resolution process,

transforming individual cases into strategic organizational intelligence. Finally, evaluation is the deliberate analysis of this aggregated data and the performance of the procedure itself.

6. Grievance Handling Process

Table 1: Steps in the Grievance Redress Process

| Steps | Process | Description | Completion time frame | Responsible Body or Person |
|-------|--|--|---|--|
| 1 | Receiving the complaint | Document the date of reception, complainant's name, complaint details, and notify the GRC | 1 day | Secretary to GRC at the Kebele level |
| 2 | Acknowledgement of grievance | By letter, email, or phone | 1 day | By the secretary of the GRC |
| 3 | Evaluate and establish the legitimacy of the grievance | Conduct a site visit; listen to the complainant or community; evaluate the validity | 3 days | Kebele GRC |
| 4 | Carry out and oversee a redress action | Upon validation of the complaint, resolve the issue | 10 days | The relevant Kebele GRC |
| 5 | If the issue remains unresolved after 15 days, escalate it to Woreda GRC | The GRC assesses the redress processes and outcomes, proposing an intervention solution. Site visits and discussions with the complainant or community will provide additional details | Within 15 days of receiving the complaint from Kebele | The relevant Woreda GRC |
| 6 | If the issue remains unresolved after 15 days, escalate it to Regional GRC | The GRC assesses the redress processes and outcomes, proposing an intervention solution. Site visits and discussions with the complainant or community will provide additional details | Within 15 days of receiving the complaint from Woreda | The Regional GRC (BoWE, BoA, EPA, Regional Plan International) |
| 7 | If the issue remains unresolved after 15 days, escalate it to Federal GRC | The GRC assesses the redress steps and conclusions, provide an intervention solution | Within 10 days of receiving the complaint from Region | The relevant Federal GRC (MoWE, MoA, EPA, Plan International) |
| 8 | Judicial adjudication | Pursue the complaint in a court of law | No fixed time | complaint |

The complaints recorded, resolved, and referred will be reported quarterly with the environmental and social implementation performance report to the African Development Bank and Plan International and other relevant stakeholders.

7. Labour Related Grievances

The effective management of workplace and employment conflicts, as well as Gender-based violence (GBV), is crucial for the project. Any project worker who has a complaint or grievance has the right to raise it and seek appropriate resolution through the Worker Grievance Mechanism (WGM) specifically established for this purpose. In this project, a grievance mechanism will be implemented to address the concerns of all workers, including both direct employees and contracted workers. During the recruitment process, workers will be informed about the GRM and the protective measures in place to prevent retaliation for using it.

The project also recognizes the vulnerability of the target communities by the labor influx, beneficiaries, and the different types of workers to be involved or people affected by the project activities. The Grievance Redress Mechanism for addressing and managing workplace and employment-related conflicts or complaints as well as GBV is crucial for Water4Food. Project worker with any complaint or grievance has the right to present it and obtain proper redress through the Grievance Redress Mechanism established by the project. This GRM will provide service to all the direct and contracted workers, their complaints can also be accepted through the physical options accessible, the suggestion box, being anonymous. The redress process for labor related GRM will follow its own procedures as other grievances or complaints are managed and in a transparent and understandable way and provide timely feedback with the language they can understand without any retribution and will operate in an independent and objective manner.

The PIU will ensure that all project-related workers including those engaged by the contractors will have the right to report and remove themselves from dangerous work situations without being subjected to reprisal or negative actions. According to the provisions in the Ethiopian Labor Proclamation 1156/2019, it is unlawful for an employer to (a) impede the worker in any manner in the exercise of his/her rights or take any measures against him/her because he/she exercises his/her right, (b) discrimination against female workers, in a matter of remuneration, on the ground of their sex (c) terminate a contract of employment contrary to the provision in the labor proclamation, (d) coerce any worker by force or any of the manner to join or to cease to be a

member of a trade union or vote for or against any given candidate in the election for a trade union, (e) require any worker to execute any work which is hazardous to his life, (f)discrimination between workers on the basis of nationality, sex, religion, political outlook or any other conditions. The workers will be informed of the GRM at the time of recruitment and on how to access it and the options presented in the GRM procedures and the measures put in place to protect them against reprisal for its use. All the project activities supported by W4F and the contractors who engage workers will undergo periodical monitoring by PIU for their compliance with all the stated rights of employees concerning rest, wages, leaves (annual, sick, family events, special purpose, and maternity leave), benefits in the case of employment injury, probation of child and forced labor, occupational health and working condition.

Efforts will be made to ensure that the GRM is easily accessible to all project workers. Additionally, a dedicated worker's grievance mechanism will be established for on-site workers, such as daily laborers hired from the local community in project sites.

8. CAPACITY BUILDING OF GRIEVANCE REDRESS MECHANISM

Capacity building of GRMs involves enhancing the skills, resources, and processes necessary to effectively address complaints and concerns raised by stakeholders. This process typically includes training personnel on conflict resolution, improving communication strategies, and ensuring that the mechanisms are accessible and user-friendly. By strengthening these systems, organizations can foster greater trust and transparency, enabling stakeholders to voice their issues confidently. Additionally, effective GRMs can lead to timely resolutions, ultimately improving service delivery and stakeholder satisfaction. Capacity building ensures that GRMs not only handle grievances efficiently but also contribute to a culture of accountability and responsiveness within organizations.

Initially, the PIU will provide a comprehensive briefing to all project office staff, the Project Steering Committee (PSC), consultants, and contractors. They will explain the GRM and the GBV complaints mechanism of the project, outlining the procedures and formats to be used, including reporting protocols.

Awareness campaigns will be launched to inform project stakeholders about the availability of the GRM. Various communication channels and mediums will be utilized for these campaigns.

Additionally, the GRM will be published on the Plan International and AfDBs website, as well as the websites or Facebook pages of implementing partners and the project itself. To enhance visibility, project site boards will be installed at Gambella Sector institution and Plan International, clearly indicating the existence of the mechanism. These boards will provide contact information such as phone numbers, email addresses, and physical addresses for further inquiries. If necessary, the GRM will be translated into local languages to ensure understanding and accessibility.

Workers at project sites will be informed about the Workers Grievance Mechanism that will be established by the project. Regular training and capacity building activities will be conducted to ensure that all stakeholders are familiar with the GRM and its effective implementation. Ongoing monitoring will also be carried out to assess the effectiveness of the grievance handling process.

9. Periodic Review and Documentation / Operational Budget

A periodic review of the GRM will be conducted by the W4F Project to monitor its functionality and document its efficacy. This evaluation will focus particularly on the project's capacity to prevent and resolve grievances. The operational budget for the GRM, which encompasses costs related to complaint resolution such as meetings, consultations, communications, and information dissemination, will be funded by W4F project and is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Cost Breakdown for GRM Activities

| GRM Activities | Unit Cost in USD | Total in USD |
|--|------------------|--------------------|
| Engagement and training of the Four GRC | 3,000 | 12,000 |
| Information dissemination and sensitization of the GRM | 3,000 | 12,000 |
| Secretarial costs (for producing complaint forms and reports | 1,000 | 4,000 |
| Communication costs | 2,000 | 8,000 |
| Travel, verification, and investigation costs | 1500 | 18,000 (one Year) |
| Total | | 56,000 |

10. Monitoring the Grievance Process

The grievance management system provides a formal mechanism for stakeholders to register concerns and for these to be addressed transparently, impartially, and in good faith. Effective monitoring of grievances is essential to identify any escalating conflicts or disputes early and ensure they are resolved promptly. The W4F Project Central Project Coordination Unit (CPCU) will review the grievance mechanism and its effectiveness bi-annually. Based on the review outcomes, necessary amendments will be made, and the updated mechanism will be disclosed to the various GRC in a formal meeting.

11. Roles and Responsibilities

Effective management and monitoring of grievances require clear roles and responsibilities. Below is a detailed outline of these roles:

Table 3: Roles and Responsibility of GRM

| Role | Responsibility |
|---|--|
| Grievance Redress committee (Local, Regional and Federal Level committee) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Receive and record formal grievances in a grievance form provided.• Depending on the complexity of the grievance, the committee shall review and analyze the grievance at various levels.• Provide resolution and feedback to the complainant within the stipulated timeframe. |
| W4F CPCU/PIU | The GRC shall report the grievances in the registry to the W4F CPCU/PIU on a bi-annual basis |

Annex

A. Sample Grievance Logs

I. Registration Form

| | | | |
|--|------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Contact Details of Compliant | Name | | |
| | Address: | | |
| | Telephone: | | |
| | E-mail: | | |
| How would you prefer to be contacted? | In Person | By Phone | By E-mail |
| Details of your comments, grievance, recommendation. | | | |
| Please describe the problem, how it happened, when, where and how many times, as relevant? | | | |
| What are the complainant's suggestions to resolve the grievance? | | | |
| Details of how Grievance Submitted | In Person: | | |
| | In Writing: | | |
| | By Phone: | | |
| | Other: | | |
| Signature of Complainant(s) | | Date: | |
| Name of Person Receiving Complaint | | Date Logged: | |

II. Compliant Report Form

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Contact Details of Complainant | Name: | |
| | Address: | |
| | Tel: | |
| | E-mail: | |
| Grievance Number | | |
| Summary of Grievance | | |
| Is the Complaint Project Related? | No | |
| | Justification: Communication to Stakeholder (information, form and date): Acceptance by Stakeholder: Yes _____ No _____ Yes Cause: No Justification: Communication to Stakeholder (information, form and date): Acceptance by Stakeholder: Yes _____ No _____ Yes Cause: | |
| Agreement Reached to Resolve Grievance | Yes _____ No _____ Form of the agreement Next Steps | |
| Next Steps (either to implement resolution or resolve grievances with | | |

| | | |
|---|--|--------------------|
| dates and responsible parties) | | |
| Signature of Complainant(s) | | Date |
| Signature of Grievance Committee | | Date Logged |