



# Bank Procedure

## Bank Grievance Redress Service (GRS)

### **Bank Access to Information Policy Designation**

Public

### **Catalogue Number**

OPS5.06-PROC.158

### **Issued**

1 March, 2017

### **Effective**

1 March, 2017

### **Retired**

4 May, 2021

### **Content**

This Procedure sets out instructions to Staff with regard to the Grievance Redress Service process.

### **Applicable to**

IBRD, IDA

### **Issuer**

Vice President, OPSVP

### **Sponsor**

Director, OPSPF

## SECTION I – PURPOSE AND APPLICATION

1. This Procedure sets out instructions to Staff with regard to the Grievance Redress Service process.
2. This Procedure applies to the Bank.

## SECTION II – DEFINITIONS

3. As used in this Procedure, the capitalized terms or acronyms have the meanings set out below:
  - a. **Access to Information Policy:** the Bank's Access to Information Policy, dated July 1, 2015, as amended from time to time.
  - b. **Bank:** IBRD or IDA, or both, as applicable.
  - c. **Board:** the Executive Directors of IBRD or IDA, or both, as applicable.
  - d. **Business Day:** Any day that is an official working day of the Bank. It excludes the Bank's official holidays.
  - e. **Closing Date:** the date specified in an agreement (or such later date as the Bank shall establish by notice to the loan or grant parties) after which the Bank may, by notice to the parties, terminate the right of the Borrower to withdraw from the loan or grant account.
  - f. **Complaint:** a complaint submitted to the GRS by one or more individuals, or their authorized representatives, in relation to the preparation or implementation of a Project.
  - g. **Complainant:** the individuals, or their authorized representatives, who submitted a Complaint to the GRS.
  - h. **Country Office:** a Bank office located in a country with a lending or advisory program, headed by a Country Director, Country Manager, Resident Representative, or Liaison Officer. The office has the primary responsibility for the Bank relationship with the host government in that country and the United Nations.
  - i. **ECR:** External and Corporate Relations Vice-Presidency.
  - j. **Global Practice (or GP):** a Global Practice of the Bank.
  - k. **GRM:** a project-level grievance redress mechanism.
  - l. **GRS:** the corporate Grievance Redress Service of the Bank.
  - m. **IBRD:** International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.
  - n. **IDA:** International Development Association.
  - o. **IFC:** International Finance Corporation

- p. **InfoShop**: the public information resource center of the Bank.
- q. **INT**: the Integrity Vice-Presidency of the Bank.
- r. **LEG**: the Legal Vice-Presidency of the Bank.
- s. **LEGEN**: the Environment and International Law Unit of LEG.
- t. **Management**: the President or a Manager of the Bank, or a chief officer whose functions and responsibilities include the authority to issue P&P Documents as set out by Management through terms of reference or a delegation of authority, or some or all of these persons, as applicable.
- u. **Manager**: a person identified as manager in the Bank’s human resources system.
- v. **MIGA**: Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency.
- w. **OPCS**: the Operations Policy and Country Services Vice-Presidency of the Bank.
- x. **OPSPF**: the Standards, Procurement, and Financial Management Department, OPCS.
- y. **Inspection Panel**: the IBRD/IDA Inspection Panel established on September 22, 1993, by IBRD Resolution No. 93-10 and IDA No. Resolution 93-6 of the Bank’s Board, as reviewed, clarified and supplemented by the Board on October 17, 1996 (“1996 Clarification,” as defined below), and April 20, 1999 (“1999 Clarification,” as defined below).
- z. **Project**: a Bank-supported project, which includes loans, credits, grants, trust funds, and technical assistance (TA) operations.
- aa. **Resolution**: collectively, the IBRD Resolution No. 93-10 and IDA No. Resolution 93-6 of the Bank’s Board, dated September 22, 1993, as reviewed, clarified and supplemented by the Board on October 17, 1996 in the “Review of the Resolution Establishing the Inspection Panel – 1996 Clarification of Certain Aspects of the Resolution” (“1996 Clarification”), and April 20, 1999 in the “1999 Clarification of the Board’s Second Review of the Inspection Panel” (“1999 Clarification”).
- bb. **Staff**: persons holding an appointment under Staff Rule 4.01, “Appointment”.
- cc. **TTL**: Task Team Leader working in a Project.

## SECTION III – SCOPE

### *Introduction and Background*

4. The GRS is the Bank’s corporate-level grievance redress service created to receive complaints from Project-affected people and communities who believe that a Project has caused or will cause them harm. The GRS facilitates a prompt response to grievances by providing support to TTLs to address the issues raised in a quick and effective manner.

5. The GRS seeks to ensure the Bank's responsiveness and accountability by working together with Project-affected communities to identify problems and solutions, and promptly reviewing and responding to grievances. The GRS represents a collaborative problem-solving effort, the ultimate goal of which is to reach a long-lasting solution that addresses stakeholders' concerns. It is an effective tool for early identification, assessment and resolution of complaints about Projects.
6. The GRS is led by Management through OPCS.

### ***Submission of a Complaint to the GRS***

7. *Complainants.* A complaint is submitted by one or more individuals, or their representatives, who believe they are directly and adversely affected by an active (i.e., not closed) Bank-supported Project.
8. *Identity of Complainants.* The complaint identifies the individual(s) submitting the complaint, and whether they are Project-affected individual(s) and/or a community or authorized representative.
9. *Confidentiality.* If the Complainant(s) ask(s) that their identity be kept confidential, the request for confidentiality is submitted with the complaint. If not specified in the complaint, the GRS asks the Complainant(s) if confidentiality is requested. The GRS maintains confidentiality of personal or classified information as requested by the Complainant(s).
10. *Authorized Representatives.* If the Complainant(s) submit(s) a complaint through an authorized representative, the authorized representative includes his/her name and contact details and signs the complaint. The authorized representative also provides written proof (such as a signed letter by the Complainant(s)) of his/her authority to represent and act on behalf of the Complainant(s) in relation to the complaint. The GRS communicates directly with the authorized representative, as necessary and appropriate, and keeps the authorized representative and/or Complainant(s) informed about the status of the complaint. Complainant(s) may also submit the complaint on their own behalf and appoint a contact person or persons for further communications regarding the complaint.
11. *Anonymous complaints.* Anonymous complaints are not processed by the GRS. However, if an anonymous complaint contains relevant information about specific Project-related issues, the GRS may forward it to the TTL for information and follow-up, where appropriate.
12. A complaint may be referred to the GRS as provided below in paragraph 42.
13. Complaint(s) to the GRS are submitted directly by affected people in one of the ways outlined below.
  - Via email: [grievances@worldbank.org](mailto:grievances@worldbank.org)
  - Via fax: +1-202-614-7313

- Via mail:  
 The World Bank  
**Grievance Redress Service (GRS)**  
 MSN MC 10-1018  
 1818 H St NW  
 Washington, DC 20433, USA
- Via the Bank Country Offices.

14. *Complaints received by Bank Staff.* All formal complaints received by Bank Staff from Project-affected people or their authorized representatives or through referral from other Bank units (e.g., IPN, INT), shall be promptly referred to the GRS if they meet one or more of the following criteria: (i) concern high risk Projects, (ii) raise issues of compliance with the Bank's operational policies and procedures, or (iii) allege that a Bank-supported Project has caused or will cause harm to people or the environment.
15. All complaints received by the GRS in the ways outlined above are processed following the GRS procedures detailed in the next paragraphs.
16. *Procurement-related complaints.* Procurement-related complaints are excluded from this Procedure, but governed by the "World Bank Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers" (Regulations). According to these Regulations, procurement-related complaints must be submitted directly to the Borrower. If such complaints are sent to the GRS, they will be forwarded to the appropriate Bank Staff and addressed in line with the cited Procurement Regulations.

### ***Format and Language of a Complaint***

17. Complaints are submitted in either an official language of the country in which the Project is being prepared or implemented, or in the language of the Complainant(s). The GRS correspondence with the Complainant(s) is in English and, where required, in the language of the complaint. In the event of any discrepancy between the two versions, the English version prevails. Processing complaints in languages other than English may encounter translation delays leading to longer time lines. Complainant(s) will be informed of any incurred delay.
18. Complaints include the following information: (a) identity of Complainant(s) and any representatives; and (b) information as detailed in paras. 19 – 20 below. Complainants use the complaint form available on the GRS website or any format of their choosing.

### ***Content of a Complaint: Required Information***

19. *Subject matter of a complaint.* The complaint alleges actual or potential harm resulting from a Bank-supported Project, regardless of whether the issues raised fall under the Bank's Operational Policies and Procedures. Complaints raise *operational* matters but need not raise matters of non-compliance with policies.
20. *Substance of a complaint.* The complaint states the adverse impact(s) allegedly caused or likely to be caused by the Project. The adverse impact(s) is/are supported by available

documentation and correspondence, where possible and appropriate, or provided at a later date upon the GRS's request. The complaint, if possible, also indicates a desired outcome, i.e., how the complaint may be resolved.

### **Scope of Complaints**

21. Complaints are processed by GRS if they meet the following criteria:

- The Project is active, i.e., the Project has not yet reached its Closing Date;
- The complaint is filed by individual(s) and/or communities who are directly and adversely affected by the Project, or their authorized representative;
- The complaint alleges that the Project has caused or will cause harm to the individual(s) and or communities submitting the complaint.

22. The following are *excluded*:

- Complaints pertaining to IFC- and MIGA-supported projects;
- Issues pertaining to fraud and/or corruption in a Bank-financed Project;
- Issues related to Staff grievances with the Bank and/or grievances between agencies implementing the Project and its employees, or grievances of individuals regarding their pursuit of employment with such agencies or the Bank;
- Complaints that are frivolous.

23. *Project-level GRM*. If a complaint pertains to a Project with an existing Project-level GRM, the GRS make the Complainant(s) aware of its existence. An existing Project-level GRM and/or a complaint to such Project-level GRM do not preclude the GRS from processing a complaint it receives. It is the decision of the Complainant(s) to withdraw or continue with a Project-level GRM and/or the GRS process.

24. *Complaints submitted to the GRS and the Panel*. If Complainant(s) file(s) a complaint on a Project with the GRS and the Panel at the same time, or submit(s) it to the GRS after the Panel process has been initiated, the GRS reviews the complaint and discusses with the Complainant(s) and with the Panel how to proceed. The GRS does not process complaints pertaining to issues that have been subject to an investigation by the Inspection Panel.

### **Complaint Processing**

25. *Registration of complaint*. After receipt of a complaint, the GRS immediately registers it in the Complaints Register.

26. Within two business days of receipt of the complaint, the following action is taken by the GRS Staff:

- *Notification of receipt.* The GRS notifies the Complainant(s) of receipt of the complaint. The GRS has the option to request additional information from the Complainant(s) at the time of notification.
- *Classification of complaint.* The GRS determines whether the complaint meets the criteria set out in this Procedure. If the complaint is related to procurement, the GRS forwards the complaint to the responsible Procurement Manager, following the procedural instructions set out in this Procedure.
- *Notification to Bank Staff.* If the complaint meets the criteria in this Procedure, the GRS notifies the following regarding receipt of the complaint: the TTL and other relevant Bank Staff including the Country Management Unit, Global Practice Manager and Practice Director, the Director of Social Development, the Legal Vice-Presidency, External and Corporate Relations Manager and others as appropriate.

27. *Evaluation.* Within 10 business days of receipt of a complaint, the GRS reviews and evaluates the complaint and decides, in consultation with relevant Staff, whether to process the complaint.

28. *Request for additional information.* During the 10-day assessment period, the GRS has the option to request further information from the Complainant(s). If no response is received from the Complainant(s) within 10 business days of the request, the GRS contacts the Complainant(s) again. If no response is received within 10 business days of the second request, the GRS considers closing the complaint. If the complaint is closed, and the complaint contains specific information about Project-related issues, the TTL may take action where appropriate.

29. *Notification to Complainant(s).* The GRS notifies the Complainant(s) regarding the status of the complaint. If the complaint does not proceed to the next phase, the GRS notifies the Complainant(s) of any decision not to proceed and the reasons for it. The GRS then closes the complaint. If the complaint process continues, the GRS follows the steps below.

### ***Formulation of Proposal and Implementation***

30. *Formulation of Proposal.* Once the GRS processes a complaint that meets the criteria set out in this Procedure, the GRS opens a formulation of proposal phase. The GRS and the TTL review the issues raised and discuss options to address the identified concerns. The GRS contacts the Complainant(s) to review the concerns and possible actions to address the complaint.

31. The TTL, with support and advice from the GRS, formulates a proposal to address the issues raised in the complaint. Where relevant and appropriate, the GRS also seeks advice from OPCS, LEGEN, relevant GPs, Cross-Cutting Solutions Areas, ECR and the Region. The TTL, the Country Management Unit (CMU) and the GRS clear the proposal to be presented to the Complainant(s). Throughout this process, the GRS maintains dialogue with the Complainant(s).

32. *Proposal to Complainant(s).* Within 30 business days from the notification to the Complainant(s) of the GRS's decision to process the complaint, the GRS sends the Bank's

proposal to the Complainant(s). The proposal includes an action plan with a timeframe for its implementation. The GRS consults with and seeks the input of the Complainant(s) on the proposal.

33. The GRS makes every effort to ensure that all information relevant and necessary to formulate a proposal is available within the timeframe outlined in the previous paragraph. In exceptional cases, e.g., for complex complaints or complaints supported by a large number of documents, the GRS has the option to extend the time limit of 60 business days. The GRS informs the Complainant(s) of any extension in a timely manner and explains the reasons for it.
34. *Agreement by Complainant(s)*. If the proposal is accepted by the Complainant(s), the TTL implements it according to the process and timeframe set forth in the proposal. The GRS and the Complainant(s) agree on the proposal within 30 business days after the initial proposal has been presented to the Complainant(s). Any time beyond the 30 business days occurs with the agreement of the GRS and the Complainant(s) based on extraneous circumstances.
35. *Rejection by Complainant(s)*. If the proposal is rejected by the Complainant(s) and/or the complaint cannot be resolved through the process outlined in this Procedure, the GRS informs the Complainant(s) that no resolution can be reached and closes the complaint.

### ***Implementation of Proposal***

36. *Implementation*. Once a proposal is accepted by the Complainant(s), the TTL promptly starts implementing it. The proposed timeframe depends on the nature of the actions. The GRS and the TTL inform the Complainant(s) in advance and explain the scope of the action plan and the timeframe.
37. The TTL keeps the GRS and the Complainant(s) up to date on the status and progress of the implementation of the proposal until the actions are complete. The TTL requests support and advice from the GRS as needed.
38. *Monitoring*. The GRS coordinates with the TTL to monitor the implementation of the actions within the agreed timeframe. The GRS also maintains communication with the complainant(s) until the actions are complete. The GRS prepares an annual monitoring report that is publicly available on the Bank's website and which includes a list of complaints and the status of implementation of any complaint proposals. This will not contain any information on complainants.

### ***Process Conclusion***

39. *Resolution*. The GRS closes the complaint when there is agreement between the TTL and the Complainant(s) that the actions in the proposal are satisfactorily implemented.
40. *No satisfactory resolution*. If the Complainant(s) believe that the actions have not been satisfactorily implemented, the GRS and TTL engage with the Complainant(s) to determine whether and how to achieve a satisfactory outcome. If such additional engagement does not lead to a further agreement, the GRS will close the complaint.

## SECTION IV – EXCEPTION

N/A

## SECTION V – WAIVER

41. A waiver of a provision of this Procedure may be granted by the Vice President, OPCS, consistent with the applicable provisions of the Bank Procedure “Operational Policy Waivers and Waivers of Operational Requirements”.

## SECTION VI – OTHER PROVISIONS

### ***Information Sharing with Complainants***

42. The GRS shares with the Complainant(s) all information relevant to the case, including updates on the status and progress of the complaint process, to the extent possible and consistent with the Access to Information Policy. Once the GRS closes the complaint, the GRS prepares a summary of the complaint, excluding the Complainants’ personal information, and makes it available on the Bank’s website.

43. The GRS maintains communications with the Complainant(s) throughout the process.

### ***Information Dissemination and Outreach***

44. The GRS is advertised through Project Documents and the Bank’s external and internal websites. This Procedure is made available in all official languages of the Bank.

45. An information leaflet with a complaint form is also made available through Country Offices and distributed at outreach events.

46. A dedicated GRS page on the Bank’s external website provides information to Project-affected people and a form for submitting complaints (<http://www.worldbank.org/grs>). The website also hosts materials that may be relevant and helpful to potential Complainants.

47. A dedicated GRS page on the Bank’s intranet provides materials and guidance to support TTLs in handling Project-related complaints (<http://grs>).

### ***Publication and Reporting***

48. The Complaints Register is published on the Bank’s website and regularly updated. The Register contains information on the relevant Project (name, number and country); specific details of the complaint and the Complainant(s) names are not included.

49. The GRS is responsible for external communications regarding complaints.

50. The GRS prepares an annual report and analysis of complaints submitted to the GRS, which are also used to improve the operating procedures as appropriate.

## **SECTION VIII – EFFECTIVE DATE**

This Procedure is effective as of the date on its cover page.

## **SECTION IX – ISSUER**

The Issuer of this Procedure is the OPCS Vice President.

## **SECTION X – SPONSOR**

The Sponsor of this Procedure is the OPSPF Director.

## **SECTION XI – RELATED DOCUMENTS**

51. Bank Policy “Operational Policy Waivers”, Catalogue Number OPCS5.06-POL.01, dated April 7, 2014.
52. Bank Procedure “Operational Policy Waivers and Waivers of Operational Requirements,” Catalogue Number OPCS5.06-PRO.01, dated April 7, 2014.

## **ANNEX**

N/A

Questions regarding this Procedure should be addressed to the Sponsor.
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