

Managing Social Engagement and Grievance Redress in Practice

A Field Guide for RE Project Proponents, Community Relations Staff, and Regulators

Part A: Setting Up Your SE and GRM System

An SE and GRM system is only as strong as the people running it. Establish clear roles, assign adequate staffing, and ensure all staff - including contractors - understand their responsibilities before consultations begin.

A.1 Scale the System to the Project

Project type	Minimum SE/GRM setup
Small-scale / low-impact (rooftop solar, micro-hydro)	CLO doubles as Grievance Officer. Single intake channel. Basic grievance log. Annual review.
Medium-scale / moderate impact (land solar, wind, run-of-river hydro)	Dedicated GO. Multi-channel access. Formal log with categorization. Quarterly management review. Annual community survey.
Large-scale / significant impact (large hydro, geothermal, offshore wind, ancestral domains)	GO + specialist complaint owners. Appeals Committee. Formal SEP. Commitments Register. Monthly management review. Independent audits. Full GRM procedures document.

A.2 Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Core responsibilities	Minimum qualification
Grievance Officer (GO)	Publicizes GRM; receives, logs, acknowledges all complaints; routes to Complaint Owners; monitors timelines; reports to management.	Dedicated staff or senior CLO. In-depth GRM training. Accessible to communities.
Complaint Owner (CO)	Investigates and resolves assigned complaints; brings subject-matter expertise; engages complainant; documents findings.	Relevant technical expertise for complaint type.

Appeals Committee	Reviews unresolved complaints. Must include members not involved in original evaluation. Issues written decisions.	Min. 2 members; at least 1 with no prior involvement. External member for complex cases.
Project / Operations Manager	Approves and is accountable for the GRM; ensures resources; acts on performance reports; enforces agreements.	Project director or site manager. GRM accountability explicit in TOR.
Contractors	Receive awareness training; know to log and pass complaints to GO immediately - never resolve informally.	GRM training is a condition of engagement.

A.3 Staff Training: Two Levels

Level	Who	What is covered	When
Level 1 - Awareness	All project staff; all contractors	What the GRM is; what to do if approached (receive, note, refer to GO - never resolve informally); GO contact details.	Before work begins. Refreshed annually and when contractors change.
Level 2 - In-depth	GO; Complaint Owners; Operations Manager; Appeals Committee	Full 7-step process; categorization; documentation; confidentiality; appeals; culturally appropriate communication; GRM reporting.	Before GRM goes live. Refreshed at major revisions or key staff turnover.

Part B: Social Engagement - Skills and Methods

Social engagement builds trust and surfaces concerns before they escalate. Done well, it creates the social license that allows a project to proceed.

B.1 Stakeholder Identification and Analysis

Category	Who to include	Key question
Directly affected	People whose land, livelihood, access, or resources will be physically impacted - including along transport routes.	What will change for them, and how significantly?
Indirectly affected	Downstream water users; communities near transmission lines; businesses dependent on local ecosystems.	Could project activities reach them indirectly?
Influential stakeholders	LGU officials, barangay captains, NCIP officers, church leaders, school heads, NGOs, people's organizations.	Who has authority or credibility to shape community views?
Vulnerable groups	Women, elderly, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, landless households, indigenous peoples, fisherfolk, farmers.	Who may be less able to participate or more exposed to risks?
Interest groups / monitors	Environmental NGOs, media, academic institutions, DENR field offices, DAR, NWRB.	Who can provide useful data, advocacy, or accountability?

Influence-interest mapping: Plot stakeholders on a 2x2 matrix (high/low interest vs. high/low influence). High influence + high interest = manage closely. High influence + low interest = keep informed. Low influence + high interest = consult and involve. Low influence + low interest = monitor. Update at each project phase.

B.2 Engaging Vulnerable Groups

Group	Specific risk	Tailored approach
Women	Excluded from male-dominated meetings; disproportionate livelihood impacts.	Women-only sessions; female CLOs; schedule around caregiving; include in benefit-sharing.
Elderly / PWD	Physical barriers; inaccessible documents.	Home visits; plain-language verbal explanations; accessible venues.
Migrant / non-land-owning	Not formally recognized; fear exclusion.	Include in stakeholder mapping even if not titled; accept verbal complaints; allow third-party advocates.
Fisherfolk / farmers (non-IP)	Livelihood and resource access impacts; seasonal schedules.	Time consultations with planting/fishing seasons; hold at landing sites or market areas.
Children / youth	Long-term impacts rarely considered.	Engage through schools and youth organizations; include youth representatives.

B.3 Meaningful Consultations

Before

- Define the purpose: what decisions will this consultation inform? What is still undecided?
- Disclose information in advance in accessible formats - plain language, local dialect, visual aids.
- Consult community leaders on format, timing, and venue. A barangay hall during a school day may exclude women and workers.
- Map who needs to attend and ensure invitations reach marginalized groups.

During

- Explain clearly what the consultation is for and how input will be used.
- Allow time for questions before seeking input.
- Use facilitation methods that draw out quieter voices: small groups, written inputs, separate sessions.
- Document all concerns raised - not just those the team considers significant.
- Never close a consultation by declaring concerns resolved without documented follow-up commitments.

After

- Share a written summary of issues raised and the project's response - required under DAO 2017-15.
- Record engagement in the Stakeholder Interaction Log
- Enter any community commitment in the Commitments Register

B.4 Information Disclosure

Challenge	Good practice solution
Complex technical documents (EIS, EMPs)	Prepare a 1–2 page community-language summary with visual illustrations of footprint and key impacts.
Low literacy	Use maps, timelines, and illustrated impact diagrams. Supplement with verbal explanations.
Remote communities	Bring materials to community; post in public spaces; use community radio where available.
Rapidly changing information	Establish a predictable disclosure schedule; inform communities of scope changes before regulatory submissions.

B.5 Reporting Back to Communities

After every formal consultation, prepare and distribute a written summary of issues raised and the project's response. This is required under DAO 2017-15.

At regular intervals during construction and operations, report on: environmental and social commitment compliance; grievances received and resolved; project changes affecting communities.

The Multi-partite Monitoring Team (MMT) under PD 1586 is a formal channel - but supplement with direct community communications in the local language.

B.6 When Consultation Becomes Negotiation

Consultation informs. Negotiation reaches agreement on specific issues - compensation, benefit-sharing, access rights, mitigation.

- Do not begin negotiation until basic trust is established through prior consultation.
- Focus on interests, not positions ask what outcome the community needs, not just what they demand.
- Document all agreements in writing in the Commitments Register. Verbal commitments create conflict.
- For ancestral domains, negotiation operates within the FPIC framework under NCIP guidance - the MOA is the instrument.
- Senior management must be visibly present or represented in significant negotiations.

Part C: Sample GRM Process

A complete grievance resolution process from receipt to post-closure follow-up. Applies across all project phases.

Step	Purpose	Key output	Timeframe
1 - Receive	Accept and enter complaint in system	Grievance log entry; reference number	Same day
2 - Acknowledge	Confirm receipt and explain next steps	Acknowledgement letter	3–5 business days
3 - Evaluate	Categorise, assign, investigate	Investigation findings; resolution approach	10–15 days (simple); 30 days (complex)
4 - Offer Resolution	Present proposed resolution to complainant	Resolution offer; documented	5 days after evaluation
5 - Implement	Carry out agreed resolution	Completed action; evidence documented	As agreed; tracked
6 - Close and Monitor	Formally close complaint; record outcome	Closure notice; log updated	When resolution complete
7 - Follow-up and Learn	Check satisfaction; feed data to management	Satisfaction check; quarterly GRM report	30–60 days post-closure

Step-by-Step Notes

Step 1: Receive

- Accept complaints through any channel - in person, phone, written, CLO, barangay official, or MMT. Every complaint must be entered in the Grievance Log (Template F.1).
- Verbal complaints must be recorded by receiving staff and entered in the log - they are fully valid.
- If received by a contractor or site worker, pass to the GO the same day. No informal resolution.

Step 2: Acknowledge

- Send acknowledgement within 3–5 business days. Include: reference number, brief process description, response timeline, GO contact details.
- If the complainant is not literate or has no fixed address, deliver acknowledgement verbally and record date and method.
- If the timeline cannot be met, contact the complainant before the deadline with a revised date.

Step 3: Evaluate

The GO categorises and assigns a Complaint Owner:

Category	Examples	Typical Owner
Environmental	Dust, noise, vibration, water quality, vegetation loss	Environmental Officer / EMO
Land and property	Crop damage, boundary disputes, access restriction	Land/Resettlement Officer
Livelihood / economic	Fishing access, pasture, business disruption	Community Relations / Social Officer
Health and safety	Construction accidents, traffic, contractor behavior	HSE Officer
Social / cultural	Cultural site disturbance, discrimination	Community Relations / GO
Process / information	Inadequate consultation, disclosure, permits	GO (escalate as needed)
IP rights	FPIC, ancestral domain, MOA compliance	GO + NCIP coordination
Contractor conduct	Worker behavior, local hiring, working hours	Operations / HR Manager

Evaluation must be free of bias. The GO must not serve as the sole judge for substantive complaints.

Step 4: Offer Resolution

- Present the proposed resolution in person where possible - this demonstrates respect and allows questions.
- The offer should restore the complainant to their position before the harm, where possible.
- All offers must be documented in writing with supporting evidence.
- If the complainant rejects the offer, document their objections, issue a Notice of Right to Appeal (Template F.6), and refer to the Appeals Committee.

Step 5: Implement

- Document all implementation steps in the grievance log - contracts, completion evidence, payments.
- On completion, seek confirmation from the complainant using Template F.5. If they are unwilling to sign, document completed actions in a summary letter.
- If delayed, inform the complainant before the deadline passes. Unexplained delays are the most common cause of re-escalation.

Step 6: Close and Monitor

- Close when: (a) resolution is implemented and confirmed, or (b) Appeals Committee has finalised its decision and no further productive action is possible.
- Send closure notice (Template F.7); update the log; file all documentation.
- Do not close while the complainant still disputes the outcome - exhaust the appeals process first.

Step 7: Follow-up and Learn

- Satisfaction check (30–60 days post-closure): brief follow-up with complainant. For communities with multiple complaints, use a periodic survey (Template F.8).
- Quarterly GRM report to management: complaints by category, average response time, resolution rate, appeals, satisfaction ratings, systemic issues.
- Complaints are a positive signal of engagement - not a mark of failure.

Part D: Making the GRM Accessible

A GRM that is legally compliant but practically inaccessible will not receive grievances - meaning concerns escalate undetected.

D.1 Multi-Channel Access Design

Channel type	Examples	Best suited for	Confidentiality
In-person / direct	CLO; GO office; barangay hall	Face-to-face preferred; complex complaints	Confidential - name known to GO
Remote / written	Complaint box; suggestion box	Anonymous complaints; those fearing being seen at project office	Anonymous if desired
Remote / technology	Hotline; SMS; email; web form	Remote areas; working people	Confidential or anonymous
Third-party	Barangay captain; NGO; church leader	Low-trust communities; non-literate; fear of reprisal	Confidential - third party not required to disclose identity
Community forums	MMT meetings; barangay assemblies	Group concerns; non-sensitive issues	Semi-public

A GRM access point is inaccessible if it: requires passing through security; is only on restricted project property; is only open during work hours when communities are farming or fishing; or is only conducted in English or Filipino when the local language is different.

D.2 Language and Literacy

- All GRM materials must be available in the local language or dialect of the affected community.
- For low-literacy communities, provide pictographic materials and train CLOs to explain the process verbally.
- Oral and verbal complaints must be accepted. Receiving staff record the complaint on behalf of the complainant.
- For indigenous communities, follow NCIP FPIC disclosure requirements - materials must be in a language and form understandable to the community.

D.3 Periodic Awareness Check

Periodically verify that communities know about the GRM by asking: 'If you had a concern about the project, where would you go?' If they cannot name an entry point, the GRM is not adequately publicised. Use informal awareness polls at community meetings or through CLO visits.

Part E: Safeguards and GRM Governance

E.1 Confidentiality and Anonymity

- Complainant identity is accessible only to the GO and the Complaint Owner - not to site management, contractors, or security staff.
- Anonymous complaints are valid and must be logged and investigated.
- Collect only the personal information necessary to address the complaint.
- Any personal information shared with third parties must be disclosed to the complainant in advance.

E.2 Preventing Retaliation

- Management must publicly communicate that the project encourages complaints and that no complainant will face negative consequences.
- After significant complaints, have an independent person conduct a brief interview to check whether the complainant was treated fairly and experienced any negative consequences.
- Periodically audit GRM outcomes - checking whether certain groups are under-represented, which may indicate fear of using the mechanism.

E.3 The Appeals Process

Stage	Action	Timeframe
Resolution rejected	Complainant informs GO verbally or in writing of rejection	-
Appeals Committee convened	GO notifies Committee and provides full complaint documentation	5 business days after rejection
Committee review	Reviews documentation; may request additional evidence or meet complainant	15 business days of convening
Committee decision	Issues written decision: uphold, modify, or propose alternative	5 days after review
Communicate and close	Decision sent to complainant in writing with reasoning. If still rejected, GRM is exhausted - inform complainant of external remedies.	3 days after decision

Committee composition must be free of conflicts of interest. Minimum: one senior project official not involved in the original complaint + one community representative or neutral third party. Include an external mediator for contentious matters.

E.4 Access to External Remedies

Notice to complainants - include in GRM materials and acknowledgement letter: Participating in this grievance mechanism does not limit your right to seek remedy through government agencies, regulatory bodies, or the courts. You may at any time file a complaint with the DENR-EMB, NCIP, Energy Regulatory Commission, LGU, or the courts.

E.5 Management Accountability

- Quarterly GRM report must go to senior management, not only the community relations team.
- Management meetings must include a standing GRM agenda item.
- Repeat complaints (noise, dust, contractor behaviour) must trigger an operational review - not just individual complaint resolution.
- Include GRM performance in management performance reviews.

Part F: Templates

Adapt all templates to the project context. Translate into the local language before distribution.

F.1 - Grievance Log

Field	Entry
Reference number	[Auto-assign: PROJECT-YYYY-NNN]
Date received / Received by Channel of receipt	In person / Phone / SMS / Written / CLO / Third party / MMT
Complainant name	[Or: Anonymous]
Contact details / Location / Barangay	
Complaint description	
Category	Environmental / Land & Property / Livelihood / H&S / Social & Cultural / Process / IP Rights / Contractor
Grievance Officer / Complaint Owner assigned Date acknowledged / Date of GO response Investigation summary	
Resolution proposed / Date offered Complainant response	Accepted / Rejected / No response
Appeal filed? / Appeals Committee decision	Yes / No
Implementation status Date of closure / Satisfaction check outcome	In progress / Completed / Closed without resolution
Follow-up date / Notes	

F.2 - Complaint Acknowledgement Letter

[Letterhead - Project name and address]

[Date]

Re: Complaint Reference Number [PROJECT-YYYY-NNN]

Dear [name / community member],

[Project name] acknowledges receipt of your complaint on [date received]. Your complaint reference number is [PROJECT-YYYY-NNN] - please use this in all future communications. We will review your complaint and contact you within [10/15/30] business days.

If we need more information, the Grievance Officer will be in touch.

Note: Using this mechanism does not limit your right to raise your concern with appropriate government body, or to seek legal remedies at any time.

Grievance Officer: [name] | Phone/SMS: [number] | Email: [address]

Sincerely,
[Senior management representative]

F.3 - Stakeholder Interaction Log

Date	Stakeholder / group	Method	Issues / concerns raised	Project response / commitments	Follow-up	Done?
		Consultation / Meeting / Site visit / Phone / Written				

F.4 - Commitments Register

Ref	Commitment made	Source (ECC / consultation / MOA)	Responsible party	Target date	Status	Evidence / Date verified
CR-001					Pending / In progress / Complete	

F.5 - Resolution Satisfaction Form

Complaint Reference Number: _____

I, [name / anonymous], confirm that the resolution agreed for complaint [reference number] has been implemented as follows: [Description]

I am: Satisfied Not fully satisfied Reason (if not satisfied): _____

Signature / Thumb mark: _____

Date: _____

Witnessed by (name): _____

Note: Signing confirms implementation. It does not prevent you from filing further complaints or seeking other remedies.

F.6 - Notice of Right to Appeal

Complaint Reference Number: _____

You have indicated that you do not accept the proposed resolution. You have the right to appeal to the Appeals Committee. To file an appeal: notify the Grievance Officer verbally or in writing. The Committee will convene within 5 business days and issue a written decision within 20 business days.

The Committee will include people not previously involved in your complaint.

If you are not satisfied with the Committee decision, you remain free to raise your concern with the appropriate government body, or to seek legal remedies.

Contact GO to file:

[name] | [phone] | [email]

F.8 - GRM Self-Assessment Checklist

#	Question	Yes	No	Partial	Action needed
1	Does the project have a documented system for receiving and recording complaints?				
2	Is a named individual responsible for GRM day-to-day operations?				
3	Does the GRM include multiple access channels suited to the community (in-person, hotline, box, third party)?				
4	Are all channels accessible without entering company property or passing security?				
5	Are all GRM materials available in the local language or dialect?				
6	Do complainants receive written acknowledgement within 3–5 business days?				

7	Is a complaints log maintained with categorization, assignment, and status tracking?				
8	Is there a clear appeals process involving people not previously involved in the complaint?				
9	Are complainants informed that using the GRM does not limit external remedy rights?				
10	Does management receive GRM performance data at least quarterly?				
11	Has the community been surveyed to determine GRM awareness?				

F.9 - GRM Performance Indicators

Indicator	How to measure	Target	This quarter	Trend
Total complaints received	Count from grievance log	-		
Complaints by category	Count per category	-		
Avg. time to acknowledgement (days)	Mean of (acknowledged – received)	3–5 days		
Avg. time to resolution (days)	Mean of (closed – received)	<30 simple; <60 complex		
% resolved within target timeframe	$(\text{On time} / \text{total resolved}) \times 100$	>80%		
% escalated to appeals	$(\text{Appeals} / \text{total resolved}) \times 100$	Track trend		
Complainant satisfaction rate	% satisfied from follow-up checks	>70%		
Repeat complaints (same issue)	Count from log	Decreasing		
GRM community awareness rate	% who can name a GRM entry point (survey)	>70%		

F.10 - Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) Outline

Section	Content required
1. Project overview	Description of project, location, key environmental and social impacts.
2. Stakeholder identification	Full list of stakeholder groups (see B.1); directly affected, vulnerable, and influential parties noted.
3. Summary of prior engagement	What engagement has occurred; key concerns raised; project responses.
4. Engagement strategy by stakeholder group	For each key group: objectives, methods, key messages, frequency, responsible person.
5. Schedule of activities	Timeline of consultations, disclosure events, MMT meetings, reporting - linked to project phases.
6. Resources and responsibilities	Budget; who is responsible; how SE team is structured.
7. GRM description	Summary of mechanism: channels, process, roles, timelines. Cross-reference to GRM procedures document.
8. Monitoring and reporting	How SE effectiveness will be monitored; satisfaction indicators; reporting to management and communities.
9. Feedback to date	Summary table of issues from prior engagement and project responses - updated regularly.

F.11 - Community Satisfaction Survey

Instructions:

Ask each question verbally. Record response. Do not prompt. Participation is voluntary and anonymous.

Section 1 - GRM Awareness

Q1. Do you know that the project has a process for raising concerns or complaints? Yes / No / Not sure

Q2. If you had a concern, where would you go? (Open - do not prompt)

Section 2 - Engagement experience

Q3. Have you attended any project community consultation in the past year? Yes / No

Q4. (If yes) Did you feel your concerns were heard and taken seriously? Yes / Somewhat / No

Q5. Did you receive information back from the project on how your concerns were addressed? Yes / No

Section 3 - GRM experience (complainants only)

Q6. Have you filed a complaint with the project? Yes / No [If No, skip to Q10]

Q7. Were you informed of what would happen with your complaint? Yes / No

Q8. Were you contacted within a reasonable time? Yes / No / Don't know

Q9. Are you satisfied with how your complaint was handled? Very satisfied / Satisfied / Not satisfied / Very unsatisfied

Section 4 - Trust and access

Q10. Do you feel comfortable raising a concern without fear of consequences? Yes / Somewhat / No

Q11. What would be the main reason you would hesitate to raise a concern? (Open)