

C. Accountability and Grievance Mechanism (AGM)

Introduction:

CI-Liberia will ensure that the stakeholders are well informed, clearly understand the contents of the Accountability and Grievance Mechanism (AGM) throughout the implementation of the project at no cost to them. Potentially affected stakeholders will be informed by PMU about available entry points for submitting their concerns, inquiries, complaints or seeking clarifications regarding the implementation of the CBIT project using several methods. These include information booths, Stakeholder liaison officer to schedule regular visits to stakeholders, phone hotlines and open-door policies at PMU. Awareness creation of the AGM will be communicated early to the potentially affected stakeholders under the Information disclosure activity of the stakeholder engagement process. Where needed, CI and EPA will strengthen the Implementing Partners' capacities to address Project-related grievances.

Accountability and Grievance by Project Component area

Component 1

Under this component, Outcomes 1.3 and 1.4 will entail stakeholder engagement and defining roles and responsibilities for implementation of the NDC. The diversity of actors involved at this stage may create anxiety and the need for clear modes of engagement for each activity and the definition of roles and responsibilities. Grievances arising from the sectors will be received by the Focal Points at the CBIT Hubs and EPA and screened for eligibility and assessed based on the CI-GEF guidelines.

Component 2

Component 2 involves capacity building for a wide spectrum of stakeholders and provision of GHG equipment. Grievances may arise from the selection of participants by the CBIT Hubs for the trainings and exposure trips outside the country, with some level of dissatisfaction registered by beneficiaries. In this case the CBIT secretariat Project Manager will receive and assess the grievance for redress in accordance with the CI-GEF guidelines.

Component 3

This component will involve aggregation of sectoral data, some of which will come from non-state actors. Issues of sharing data may arise because key stakeholder groups are not contacted, or with the ways of information-sharing. The PSC will receive the grievance and advise/address based on the policy context such as the Freedom of Information Act and guided by the CI-GEF guidelines.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND GRIEVANCE MECHANISM (AGM)	
DEFINITIONS	
Grievance	An issue, concern, problem or claim (perceived or actual) that an individual or community group wants addressed by the company in a formal manner (e.g. sharing of MRV data).
Grievance Mechanism	Refers to formalised ways to accept, assess, resolve or transform complaints pertaining to the performance or behaviour of the project or its staff, or stakeholders. This includes adverse economic, environmental and social impacts.
Internal stakeholders	Groups or individuals within the project who work directly within the project, such as staff of the PMU and the CBIT Sectoral Hubs, and members the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and the GHG Technical Committee.
External stakeholders	Groups or individuals outside the project who are not directly employed or contracted by the CBIT project but are affected in some way from the decisions of the project, such as the

	Grantees (the sectoral institutions, government agencies, universities, private sector, community organisations and CSOs).
DESCRIPTION	<p>Grievance Redress Mechanism is recognised as a critical tool for promoting transparency and accountability in projects.</p> <p>The grievance mechanism policy is a system by which inquiries, complaints or clarifications regarding the project are received, responded to, problems with implementation are resolved, and complaints and grievances are addressed efficiently and effectively. This policy, therefore, will guide the CBIT project and will be adhered to during the project life.</p> <p>The following questions will help the teams assess whether the Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) associated with the CBIT project is functioning up to its full potential. If the answer to any of these questions is no, PMU should consider improving the project’s GRM.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ does the project have clear, formal, and transparent internal mechanisms (e.g. a grievance redress unit, grievance redress committees, designated grievance redress officers) and rules for addressing grievances? ▪ do project officials responsible for grievance redress have the authority to take or demand remedial action? ▪ are officials responsible for grievance redress obliged to take action on all grievances? ▪ do project-affected people feel that they can lodge grievances without fear of retaliation? ▪ are project beneficiaries aware of their right to file a grievance and of the grievance redress process in general? ▪ are there internal processes in place to record, track, and monitor the grievances and the action taken on them? ▪ does the GRM provide timely feedback (written or otherwise) to the petitioner on actions taken? ▪ is there an appeal process in place that GRM users can access if they are not satisfied with how their grievance has been resolved? <p>An effective GRMs has the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Being available to all stakeholders for them to use; ▪ multiple grievance uptake locations and multiple channels for receiving grievances; ▪ fixed service standards for grievance resolution; ▪ clear processing guidelines; and ▪ an effective and timely grievance response system to inform complainants of the action taken <p>NDC transparency system Stakeholders must be made aware of existence of GRM through dissemination activities such as project brochures, emails, website publications and through verbal interactions during the CBIT project deliberations and stakeholder consultation workshops.</p>
PURPOSE	<p>The AGM is meant to have several purposes during the project implementation as outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsive to the needs of beneficiaries and to address and resolve their grievances; • Serving as a conduit for soliciting inquiries, inviting suggestions, and increasing stakeholder participation; • Collecting information that can be used to improve operational performance; • Enhancing the project’s legitimacy among stakeholders; • Promoting transparency and accountability; • Deterring fraud and corruption and mitigate project risks.
	<p>By having the policy in place, the following advantages will accrue for the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBIT project staff will have a chance to gather practical suggestions/feedback that allows them to be more accountable, transparent, and responsive to beneficiaries during project implementation.

ADVANTAGES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trust is built with government and other project stakeholders when all grievances are resolved and the process on how the grievances were addressed are made public and available to all. Data collected based on grievances received helps the project management with insights on the effectiveness of the implementation. Proper and effective GMP will help in identifying problems before they become serious or widespread within the project and affect its implementation.
RISKS	<p>The following are possible risks associated with the GRM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If complaints and queries are not responded to in a timely manner and fails to produce results, beneficiaries or stakeholders may not take the GRM seriously and might not be willing to provide their feedback in future. Without proper access to and means of providing their grievances, some stakeholders might face numerous barriers in accessing mechanisms for providing their grievances. Stakeholders may not voice grievances because of lack knowledge about their rights, mistrust government and fear retribution, transaction costs and cultural constraints. Without providing enough feedback on how their grievances have been dealt with and the measures the project have put in place, stakeholders can sabotage the project.
GRM Framework	<p>The structure that GRMs will take has been adapted from World Bank guideline and its recommended that the grievance redress system be centralized for easy of addressing grievances. The GRM will follow cascade organizational, principles, people, processes and analysis.</p> <p>Organizational Commitment</p> <p>The Transparency project’s management and staff recognize and value the grievance process as a means of strengthening public trust, improving public relations, and enhancing accountability and transparency. Grievance redress functions will be integrated into the project’s core activities and project staffs’ job descriptions. Regular review of grievances data and trends will be conducted at project management meetings.</p> <p>Principles</p> <p>The following six core principles of grievance mechanism will be used to guide the practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fairness. Grievances are treated confidentially, assessed impartially, and handled transparently. Objectiveness and independence. The GRM will operates independently of all interested parties to guarantee fair, objective, and impartial treatment to each case. GRM officials have adequate means and powers to investigate grievances and their decisions will be receiving the support of senior officials. Simplicity and accessibility. Procedures to file grievances and seek action will be kept simple enough for project stakeholders and beneficiaries to easily understand them. The following means for filing a grievance will be followed; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i.) Dedicated telephone number (preferably toll-free)- stakeholders can call the CBIT Secretariat office on +231886518635 and speak to Stakeholder liaison Officer to report their issues ii.) Dedicated e-mail address- grievances can be sent to natpolo2000@yahoo.com or nblama@epa.gov.lr iii.) Postal address (with contact person outlined) – grievances can be sent to: Stakeholder Liaison Officer, Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia (EPA) 4th Street, Tubman Boulevard, Sinkor P.O. Box 4024 Monrovia, Liberia iv.) Face to face - stakeholders can voice their grievance to any PMU staff who will then forward to the correct office for recording v.) Grievance to be done either in English or local language and GRM staff to translate accordingly vi.) No standard form for reporting or filing grievance

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsiveness and efficiency. The CBIT project will develop specified timelines for responding to grievances received. These timelines will form part of the monitoring and evaluation performance of the project. • Speed and proportionality. All grievances, simple or complex, are addressed and resolved as quickly as possible. The action taken on the grievance or suggestion is swift, decisive, and constructive. • Participatory and social inclusion. The CBIT project will encourage people and all stakeholders to provide their feedback on the project. Special attention is given to ensure that stakeholders, including the non-state actors and those with special needs, can access the GRM. • People <i>The CBIT project will train some staff who will be tasked with addressing the grievances so that they can effectively carry out their roles. The training will cover, gathering feedback, analysing them, discussing them with management and providing feedback.</i> <p>Processes <i>Grievance redress processes play an important role in CBIT project activities and by following it, it will help in smoothing out the grievances being addressed.</i></p> <p>Analysis <i>Project management will regularly analyse reports and other monitoring and evaluation data on grievances generated by the GRM teams. The management will then make appropriate project decisions based on data received.</i></p>						
<p>GMP STEPS</p>	<p>The grievance redress process to be followed by the project will comprise six steps as outlined below:</p> <p>Uptake The project stage will involve the project receiving the grievances through email, SMS, telephone, postal or office report and documenting them. The uptake stage will be centralized for ease of operations and it's recommended that the CBIT Secretariat be responsible for hosting this process.</p> <p>Action: <i>Receive grievance and complete a Grievance Log Form (see Appendix 1) and pass it to stakeholder liaison officer for processing.</i></p> <p>Sorting and Processing At this stage, all grievances received are processed, categorised, assigned priority and routed to the appropriate entity. There will be a standardized system for grievances logging. All grievances will be filed systematically in hard copy with a soft copy file accompanying it.</p> <p>Some of them will require simple explanations which can be done instantly and if the person raising the grievance is satisfied, the grievance is documented and closed. For those that require more extensive investigations, they will be reassigned to actors at higher levels of management. Top management of the project will be responsible for monitoring the complaints- handling performance of grievances.</p> <p>Action: <i>The stakeholder liaison officer is responsible for assigning a project staff officer a grievance to liaise with the external stakeholder/s and work on a resolution. Grievances will be screened depending the level of severity in order to determine which staff will address it and how the grievance is approached as shown below:</i></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="430 1816 1404 1879"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Description</th> <th>Project staff officer</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>When an answer can be provided</td> <td>Stakeholder liaison Officer</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Description	Project staff officer		When an answer can be provided	Stakeholder liaison Officer
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Level 1	immediately	
Level 2	One off grievances that will not affect the reputation of project.	Supervisor level or above
Level 3	Repeated, extensive and high profile grievances that may jeopardise the reputation of the project	CBIT Secretariat level

Acknowledgment and Follow-up

Upon receiving the complaint, the GRM should acknowledge its receipt in a communication that outlines the grievance process; provides contact details and, if possible, the name of the contact person who is responsible for handling the grievance; and notes how long it is likely to take to resolve the grievance. Complainants should then receive periodic updates on the status of their grievances. It's recommended that the all complaints be acted upon in less than 1 month.

***Action:** A grievance will be acknowledged, by the project staff officer within five working days of a grievance being submitted. Communication will be made either verbally or in written form. The acknowledgement of a grievance should include a summary of the grievance, method that will be taken to resolve the grievance and an estimated timeframe in which the grievance will be resolved. If required, the acknowledgment provides an opportunity to ask for any additional information or to clarify any issues. The maximum timeframe for resolving any grievance which has been reported is one month. In cases where the time frame is not met, reasons for not resolving the grievance should be provided to the complainant and the matter reported to grievance committee.*

Verification, investigation, and action

Upon receiving the grievance, the issue will be investigated by gathering more information about the issue to determine its validity and resolving the grievance. The merit of grievances should be judged objectively based on the design of the project and its expected output.

For those grievances that are straightforward (e.g. queries, suggestions) they will be resolved quickly by contacting the complainant and informing them about the outcome of the grievance. CBIT Project staff should ensure that investigators are neutral and do not have any stake in the outcome of the investigation.

***Action:** The grievance owner is responsible for investigating the grievance. The investigation may require site visits, consulting staff, contacting external stakeholders etc. Records of meetings, discussions and activities all need to be recorded during the investigation. Information gathered during the investigation will be analysed and will assist in determining how the grievance is handled and what steps need to be taken in order to resolve the grievance.*

Monitoring and evaluation

In this stage, grievance reported are tracked and assessed on the extent to which progress in resolving them is made. The tracking of the grievances is meant to ensure that the reported cases are dealt in a timely manner and resolved in order to that the project operations is not affected.

Evaluation of grievances involves analysing grievance data and using it to make policy and/or process changes to minimise similar grievances in the future. Therefore, reports on grievances data and trends (e.g. average time to resolve grievances, percentage of complainants satisfied with action taken, number of grievances resolved at first point of contact) should be submitted regularly.

Senior project management should monitor grievance resolution data and grievance trends in their

	<p>progress review meetings and should randomly call complainants from different areas and groups to get feed- back on whether the GRM is functioning effectively.</p> <p>Action: <i>The project staff will make contact with the external stakeholder after the grievance is resolved to determine if the resolution of the grievance was success or not. This should be done within a reasonable period of time.</i></p> <p><i>The grievance committee will receive quarterly updates on stakeholder grievances from Stakeholder Liaison Officer. Information outlining the number of grievances, time to resolution and outcomes of grievances will be communicated. The quarterly updates should include the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>i.) Number of conflict and complaint cases reported to the project’s Accountability and Grievance Mechanism</i> <i>ii.) Percentage of conflict and complaint cases reported to the project’s Accountability and Grievance Mechanism that have been resolved</i> <i>iii.) Number of grievances which were reported and resolved</i> <i>iv.) Number of grievances which was not been resolved within the mandatory timeframe of 30 days and reasons as to why they grievance was not resolved in time</i> <p>Provide Feedback</p> <p>The final step involves informing those who raised the complaint and the public at large about the issues which were brought up, results of their investigations and the actions taken. This process will ensure that trust is increased or maintained.</p> <p>The feedback can be provided by contacting the complainant directly (if his or her identity is known) and/or posting the results of cases in internal memos or leaflets which are sent to stakeholders.</p> <p>The project should also inform GRM users about their right to an appeal if they are dissatisfied with the decision.</p> <p>Action: <i>Stakeholder Liaison Officer will contact stakeholders who have raised grievances and inform them about the outcome of their grievances within a month</i></p> <p>Storing of Grievances</p> <p>All records, including grievance forms, investigation notes, interviews and minutes of meetings will be securely filed in CBIT Secretariat office to ensure privacy and confidentiality is maintained for all parties involved.</p>
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Roles and Responsibilities	
Position Title	Responsibility
Stakeholder Liaison Officer	Receive grievances and assign a grievance owner. Makes sure the grievance mechanism procedure is being adhered to and followed correctly. Maintains grievance register and monitor any correspondence. Monitor grievances/trends over time and report findings to the Sustainability Committee. Raise internal awareness of the grievance mechanism among employees and contractors.
Project Staff Officer (grievance owner)	Project staff who has been assigned the responsibility to investigate the grievance and liaising with the external stakeholder/s. Developing resolutions and actions to rectify any issues. Follow up and track progress of grievance. Document any interactions with external stakeholders.
Employees	Receive grievances in person. Report grievance to the Stakeholder Liaison Officer by lodging the Grievance Log Form. May provide information and assistance in developing a response and close out of a grievance.

Accountability and Grievance Compliance Mechanism

Compliance to safeguards is important because it could lead to improving the outcomes of the CBIT project activities. The grievances are likely to differ by component.

As a first step, grievances should be received by the designated office, who will be required to respond to them in writing within 15 calendar days of receipt. Claims should be filed, included in project monitoring, and a full copy of the grievance must in turn be forwarded to the CBIT Secretariat. If the claimant is not satisfied with the response, the grievance may be submitted to Conservation International who will respond within 15 calendar days of receipt, and claims will be filed and included in project monitoring. Grievances to CI should be submitted as follows:

- i.) Dedicated GCO office and the ethics hotline – aggrieved stakeholders can call the on **+231880987581** and speak to GCO Officer to report their issues;
- ii.) Dedicated e-mail address - grievances can be sent to, **pmulbah@conservation.org** or **pgmulbah.sads04@gmail.com**
- iii.) Postal address (Dr. Peter Mulbah) House#1 Johnson Compound, Congo Town, Tubman Boulevard, Adjacent to Musu’s Spot Opposite Total Filling Station P.O. Box 2074, Monrovia, Liberia

If this process does not result in resolution of the grievance, the grievant may file a claim through CI’s EthicsPoint Hotline at <https://secure.ethicspoint.com>

Through EthicsPoint, CI will respond within 15 calendar days of receipt, and claims will be filed and included in project monitoring processes.

Alternatively, the grievant may file a claim with the Director of Compliance (DOC) who is responsible for the CI Accountability and Grievance Mechanism and who can be reached at:

Mailing address:	Director of Compliance Conservation International 2011 Crystal Drive, Suite 500 Arlington, VA 22202, USA.
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