



SECU Social & Environmental Compliance Unit  
DRU Dispute Resolution Unit



Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.

**UNDP's  
Social and  
Environmental  
Compliance Review  
and  
Dispute Resolution  
Process**

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If you believe a UNDP-supported project or programme has or is likely to harm you, your community, or the environment, you may request help from us – the Social and Environmental Compliance Unit or the Dispute Resolution Unit.



## Hearing Communities and Increasing Development Effectiveness

### What is UNDP's Social and Environmental Compliance Review and Dispute Resolution Process?

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Robert Grossman

In 2014 the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will roll-out the interim phase of the Social and Environmental Compliance Review and Dispute Resolution Process. The interim phase will apply to projects funded by the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) in Cambodia, Honduras, Papua New Guinea and Suriname. A few other countries are currently under consideration as well.

UNDP has created two approaches to respond to concerns related to UNDP-supported projects and programmes.

The Social and Environmental Compliance Unit (SECU) responds to concerns from individuals and communities that UNDP is not meeting its social and environmental commitments and may be harming communities. SECU can investigate these concerns and recommend measures to ensure UNDP complies with its social and environmental commitments.

The Dispute Resolution Process helps project and program-affected people, UNDP's partners (governments, NGOs, businesses), and other stakeholders jointly address grievances or concerns related to UNDP-supported projects or programmes. These concerns may or may not relate to social or environmental commitments made by UNDP. In most cases, UNDP's Country Offices take the lead in addressing grievances and resolving disputes. A Dispute Resolution Unit (DRU) at UNDP headquarters provides support and oversight, and will lead the process when UNDP Country Offices cannot.

Affected people have a choice: They can ask SECU to pursue a compliance review examining UNDP's compliance with UNDP social and environmental commitments, or they can attempt to resolve complaints and disputes through the Dispute Resolution Process.

# Social and Environmental Compliance Unit's Role – Responding to Concerns Relating to UNDP Social and Environmental Commitments

UNDP established SECU in 2013 to ensure accountability to individuals and communities. SECU responds to complaints that UNDP may not be meeting its social and environmental commitments.

## Interim Policy Basis

Noting that UNDP's Social and Environmental Standards (SES) are currently under review and should achieve final approval in Spring 2014, in the interim phase the policy basis for assessing compliance will be as follows:

- UNDP's social and environmental policies and procedures, as outlined in the [Programme and Operations Policy and Procedure](#) (POPP) and the [Environmental and Social Screening Procedure](#) (ESSP); and
- Social and environmental commitments made by UNDP in the context of the specific funding programme or project (including e.g. the [FCPF Common Approach](#)).

## Who May File a Complaint?

Any person or community who believes the environment or their wellbeing may be affected by a UNDP-supported project or programme may file a complaint. A representative, such as a civil society organization, may also file a complaint on behalf of affected communities. People who file complaints may request that SECU protect their names and identities.

## How Does the Compliance Review Work?

SECU assesses each complaint in an independent, impartial, and transparent manner, following a specific procedure for every case:

- First, SECU determines if the complaint can be accepted by asking the following questions: Does it relate to a project or programme that is receiving financial or other support from UNDP? Is it submitted by, or on behalf of, people affected by the activity? Does it raise issues relating to compliance with UNDP's social and environmental commitments?
- SECU will then investigate whether UNDP is meeting its social and environmental commitments, and recommend measures UNDP can take to meet commitments that have not been met. A report with this information will be provided to project-affected people and made public.







## How to File a Complaint to SECU

- The UNDP Administrator will decide what, if any, measures need to be taken to ensure that UNDP is meeting its commitments. SECU will monitor compliance with any measures recommended by the UNDP Administrator.

### What to include in a Complaint:

There are no strict format or language requirements. It is helpful if complaints include the following information:

- Complainant's name, address, and other contact information
- Whether the complainants want to keep their identity confidential (stating reasons)
- Name, location, and nature of the UNDP project or programme
- How the complainants believe they have been, or are likely to be, adversely affected by social and/or environmental impact of the project or programme
- If a third party, including, for example, a civil society organization, submits a complaint, the complaint should include evidence that the third party is working on behalf of the affected individual or community.

### Where to file the Complaint:

Complaints may be submitted through SECU's online request form, email, toll-free telephone hotline (in any language), mail, and fax. Complaints may be submitted directly to SECU, or at any UNDP country office or regional bureau. Anonymous complaints will not be accepted, but identities will be protected upon request.

**Contact the Social and Environmental Compliance Unit at [secuhotline@undp.org](mailto:secuhotline@undp.org)**

## The Dispute Resolution Process – Helping Parties Resolve Complaints and Disagreements

The Dispute Resolution Process helps project and program-affected people, government and international sponsors, and other stakeholders jointly address concerns. Dispute resolution requires the voluntary, active participation of stakeholders. The process relies primarily on dispute resolution mechanisms led by UNDP Country Offices. The Dispute Resolution Unit, established at UNDP Headquarters, provides oversight and support to local efforts, and will lead the Dispute Resolution Process when concerns cannot be addressed at the local level.

The Dispute Resolution Process can help affected people, government agencies and other project and program stakeholders to start or restart dialogue, facilitate discussions, mediate disputes, enhance understanding of the facts, and undertake other activities that might help resolve disputes.

### Who May Request Dispute Resolution?

#### How Does the Dispute Resolution Process Work?

Any person or community potentially affected by a UNDP-supported project or programme may file a request for access to and support from the Dispute Resolution Process. The request must relate to a UNDP-supported project or programme, and identify how the Requestors have been, or may be, adversely affected by the UNDP project or programme. If a person or community has a concern about the ability of the UNDP Country Office to respond fairly and effectively to the request, they have the option to file the request directly with the Dispute Resolution Unit at UNDP Headquarters in New York. Requests can be sent to the DRU through the Internet or through the mail.

Normally, a Country Office Designee will review requests for dispute resolution, and share them with the DRU for additional input. When requests are filed through the DRU, the DRU will review any concerns raised about the involvement of the Country Office, and decide how best to proceed with the process.

- **The Country Office Designee (and/or the DRU) will first determine, by asking the following questions, if the request is appropriate for the Dispute Resolution Process:**
  - Does the request relate to a UNDP-supported project or programme?
  - Have the requestors provided enough information to establish the possibility that they may be, or may have been, adversely affected by the project or programme?
  - Have they stated an interest in resolving the complaint or dispute by working with other stakeholders?



Photo credit: UN Photo

- If the request appears to be eligible, the appropriate UNDP dispute resolution staff will then assess the potential for a dispute resolution process to succeed. The UNDP staff may
  - Contact the requestor directly to learn more about the situation and issues that have led to the request;
  - Contact other stakeholders within UNDP and among programme and project partners, to ask about issues raised in the request and ways to resolve those issues (maintaining confidentiality of the requestor's identity if so requested)
  - Suggest specific actions to UNDP and other stakeholders, if it appears that the complaint or dispute may be relatively easy for the stakeholders to resolve.
- If the assessment suggests the need for a process of dialogue and negotiation among the requestor and other stakeholders, the UNDP lead staff will propose such a process, and seek agreement among the primary stakeholders - including the requestors, affected people, project sponsors, host government, and UNDP – on how to proceed. The process will be tailored to the needs of the requestors and stakeholders.
- The Dispute Resolution Process will continue as long as the stakeholders believe it is beneficial, or until agreement is reached. One or more stakeholders may decide not to proceed while the process continues. If stakeholders leave, UNDP will decide if and when the process will end.
- When agreement is reached among all participating stakeholders, the lead office will submit a report describing this agreement to UNDP staff, the UNDP Administrator, and all participating stakeholders.
- A plan for monitoring the implementation of the agreement will be part of an agreement, and UNDP will issue a monitoring report at least annually.

## How to File a Request for the Dispute Resolution Process

### What to include in a Request:

There are no strict format or language requirements. It is helpful if the request includes the following information:

- Name, address, telephone number, and other contact information
- Whether the Requestors wish to keep their identity confidential during the initial assessment – the requestors may not remain anonymous while engaged in the Dispute Resolution Process
- Name, location, and nature of the UNDP project or programme
- How the Requestors believe they have been, or are likely to be, adversely affected by the UNDP-supported project or programme
- A description of other efforts, including other dispute resolution processes, the Requestors have undertaken to resolve their concerns
- The requestors' interest in working with other stakeholders to resolve their concerns
- If a third party, such as a civil society organization, is filing a request on behalf of an affected individual or community, the request should include evidence the third party is working on behalf of the individual or community.

### Where to File the Request:

Requests may be made through the UNDP Country Office in the country where the requestor lives, or through the UNDP Dispute Resolution Unit at UNDP Headquarters in New York. Requests can be made through an online request form, email, toll-free telephone hotline (in any language), mail, fax, or an in-person meeting with the Country Office Designee, or the Dispute Resolution Unit.

### Contact the Dispute Resolution Unit at:

[dispute.resolution@undp.org](mailto:dispute.resolution@undp.org)

### For more information, see the below references:

[Guidance Note: Environmental and Social Screening Procedure for UNDP Projects](#)

[Revised Proposal for Environmental and Social Compliance Review and Dispute Resolution Processes](#)

[Draft Standard Operating Procedures \(SOPs\) for UNDP Social and Environmental Compliance Unit \(SECU\)](#)

[Guidance Note: UNDP's Dispute Resolution Process – Roles and Responsibilities](#)

FCPF/UN-REDD Guidance Note for REDD+ Countries: Establishing and Strengthening Grievance Resolution Mechanism ([English](#) | [Spanish](#))







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