

# International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD)

## IFAD Enhanced Complaints Procedure

This profile was prepared using publicly available sources.

*Founded in 1974 and operational since 1977, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is a specialized agency of the United Nations and an international financial institution dedicated to mobilizing resources for agriculture and rural development in developing countries. It provides financial and technical support for related projects, funded through Member State contributions, loan repayments, investment income, and borrowing.<sup>1 2</sup> IFAD's Complaints Procedure, established in 2015, enables individuals or communities to raise concerns regarding non-compliance with its Social, Environmental, and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP). In 2022, IFAD introduced an **Enhanced Complaints Procedure** for projects approved on or after 1 September 2021, aimed at improving independence, transparency, and guidance for co-financed initiatives. As a result, two complaint procedures now operate in parallel—one for projects governed by SECAP 2015/2017 and another for those subject to SECAP 2021.<sup>3 4</sup> For the purpose of this profile only the Enhanced Complaints Procedure is discussed.*

## STANDARDS AND SAFEGUARDS

IFAD's grievance mechanisms are grounded in its internal **Social, Environmental, and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP)**, which apply to all IFAD-funded activities. SECAP defines IFAD's mainstreaming themes—youth, gender, nutrition, environment, and climate—and includes nine environmental and social standards addressing key areas such as biodiversity, Indigenous Peoples, labor, resettlement, and climate change. Although tailored to IFAD's rural development mandate, the procedures are aligned with international principles followed by UN agencies, multilateral development banks, and other development partners.<sup>5 6</sup>

## LAND TENURE

Land tenure rights are explicitly addressed in SECAP, particularly under **Standard 7** on resettlement. IFAD adheres to the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT), which require the recognition of legitimate tenure rights, the avoidance of involuntary resettlement, and the application of principles such as Free, Prior and Informed Consent and fair compensation—including for

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<sup>1</sup> IFAD. n.d. IFAD's history. <https://www.ifad.org/en/history>.

<sup>2</sup> IFAD. n.d. Finance. <https://www.ifad.org/en/finance>.

<sup>3</sup> IFAD. 2023. IFAD Complaints Procedures. [https://www.ifad.org/documents/38711624/39623033/Complaints+Procedure\\_DIGITAL\\_ENG.pdf/e860e0e4-51b2-4ae5-95e5-fd3fc2eab579?t=1691673122174](https://www.ifad.org/documents/38711624/39623033/Complaints+Procedure_DIGITAL_ENG.pdf/e860e0e4-51b2-4ae5-95e5-fd3fc2eab579?t=1691673122174).

<sup>4</sup> IFAD. 2022. Enhanced Complaints Procedure for alleged Non-Compliance with IFAD's Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP). <https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/136/docs/EB-2022-136-R-27.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> IFAD. n.d. SECAP complaints and incidents. <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/new-ifad.org/social-environment-assessment-procedures/complaints-and-incidents>.

<sup>6</sup> IFAD. 2021. Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures VOLUME 1. [https://www.ifad.org/documents/38711624/44600056/secap2021\\_01.pdf/31edfeff-f70c-67b0-994a-d0ec4630dd81?t=1644422496395](https://www.ifad.org/documents/38711624/44600056/secap2021_01.pdf/31edfeff-f70c-67b0-994a-d0ec4630dd81?t=1644422496395).

individuals without formal land titles. Related grievances may be submitted under the Enhanced Complaints Procedure if linked to non-compliance with SECAP. Where tenure rights are violated, the Enhanced Complaints Procedure requires the provision of fair compensation and secure resettlement for all displaced persons, including those without legally recognized land rights.

## **OUTREACH AND ADMISSIBILITY**

The SECAP Redress Service (SRS) is mandated to conduct outreach to external stakeholders to improve awareness and accessibility of the complaints procedure. During both project design and implementation, IFAD and its partners are required to inform stakeholders about SECAP and the Enhanced Complaints Procedure. It is the responsibility of the borrower or implementing partner to ensure this information is communicated to affected communities in a clear, accessible manner and integrated into the project's broader community engagement strategy.<sup>7</sup> <sup>8</sup> IFAD also maintains a dedicated webpage on its complaints process, which provides key resources such as brochures, contact details, and a complaint submission form. These materials are currently available in English.<sup>9</sup>

To be considered admissible under IFAD's Enhanced Complaints Procedure, a complaint must be submitted by at least two individuals who are nationals or residents of the project area, or by an authorized representative acting on their behalf. The complaint must allege that IFAD failed to comply with its SECAP, resulting in actual or potential harm, and must relate to a project that is currently under design or implementation.

Complaints are considered inadmissible if they are unrelated to IFAD's actions; submitted more than 24 months after project closure; previously resolved without new evidence; anonymous or submitted without appropriate representation; or deemed frivolous or submitted in bad faith. In addition, complaints related to procurement, financial issues, fraud, corruption, or sexual misconduct fall outside the scope of the Enhanced Complaints Procedure and are referred to IFAD's relevant specialized mechanisms.<sup>10</sup>

## **FILING A COMPLAINT**

Under IFAD's Enhanced Complaints Procedure, complaints can be escalated through multiple levels. Complainants are encouraged to first seek resolution through the local Project-Level Grievance Mechanism, which is managed by the borrower or project team. However, if the local response proves inadequate or if there is a fear of retaliation, complaints may be submitted directly to IFAD's SECAP Redress Service (SRS). Should the matter remain unresolved, the complainant may request that the issue be referred to the Impartial Review Process (IRP) within IFAD's Office of Audit and Oversight, which evaluates compliance and may recommend remedial action.

Complaints may be submitted in the complainants' native language via letter, email, or the designated web form. Requests for confidentiality are permitted and should ideally be included at the time of

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<sup>7</sup> Paragraph 48. Enhanced Complaints Procedure. IFAD. 2022. Enhanced Complaints Procedure for alleged Non-Compliance with IFAD's Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP). <https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/136/docs/EB-2022-136-R-27.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Paragraph 4. Enhanced Complaints Procedure. IFAD. 2022. Enhanced Complaints Procedure for alleged Non-Compliance with IFAD's Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP). <https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/136/docs/EB-2022-136-R-27.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> IFAD. n.d. SECAP complaints and incidents. <https://www.ifad.org/en/social-environment-assessment-procedures/complaints-and-incidents>

<sup>10</sup> IFAD. 2023. IFAD Complaints Procedures. [https://www.ifad.org/documents/38711624/39623033/Complaints+Procedure\\_DIGITAL\\_ENG.pdf/e860e0e4-51b2-4ae5-95e5-fd3fc2eab579?t=1691673122174](https://www.ifad.org/documents/38711624/39623033/Complaints+Procedure_DIGITAL_ENG.pdf/e860e0e4-51b2-4ae5-95e5-fd3fc2eab579?t=1691673122174)

submission. If confidentiality is not explicitly stated, the SRS will follow up to confirm whether the complainant wishes their identity to remain confidential.<sup>11</sup>

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS

The IFAD Enhanced Complaints Procedure offers two main avenues for addressing grievances: the **Problem-Solving Process (PSP)** and the **Impartial Review Process (IRP)**.

Upon receiving a complaint, the SRS acknowledges receipt and informs the complainant of the timeline for the eligibility review. If additional information is required, the SRS will request it. Once the submission is complete, the complaint is assessed against the established eligibility criteria.

If deemed eligible, the complaint is registered, and the SRS initiates an **assessment phase**, which involves consultations with the complainant, the borrower or implementing partner, the country director, the project team, and—if necessary—procurement staff and local stakeholders. During this phase, the SRS may also recommend the suspension of project activities if warranted. The assessment aims to clarify the issues, explore early resolution opportunities, and facilitate dialogue. It concludes with an assessment report summarizing the findings, stakeholder inputs, and a proposed action plan, where applicable. This report is shared with all parties and published in IFAD's complaints registry.<sup>12</sup> The complainant may accept the proposed resolution or request to proceed to the Problem-Solving Process.

If the issue remains unresolved following the assessment, the SRS initiates the **Problem-Solving Process**, a neutral, transparent, and collaborative mechanism. This process may involve various approaches, including facilitation, information sharing, fact-finding missions, site visits, or formal mediation. Mediation is conducted by a mutually agreed-upon expert mediator. Participation is entirely voluntary, and any party may withdraw at any time. If a resolution is reached, the agreement must clearly outline the objectives, commitments, and timelines, and must comply with IFAD's policies as well as relevant domestic or international law. The SRS is responsible for documenting the agreement, publishing it on IFAD's website, and monitoring its implementation.<sup>13</sup>

If the Problem-Solving Process does not result in a satisfactory resolution, the complainant may request a referral to the **Impartial Review Process (IRP)**. The SRS will then forward the case to the SECAP Complaints Officer (SCO)—an independent expert within IFAD's Office of Audit and Oversight. The SCO prepares terms of reference for the review, consults all relevant stakeholders (including co-financiers, if applicable), and conducts a compliance review. A draft report is shared with the complainant, the borrower or partner, IFAD Management, and the relevant regional division for comments. After feedback is incorporated, the SCO finalizes the report, detailing findings, harm assessments, and recommendations.

The final report is submitted to IFAD's Audit Committee, along with a Management Action Plan that outlines agreed-upon mitigation measures, developed in collaboration with the borrower or partner. The

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<sup>11</sup> Paragraph 19. Enhanced Complaints Procedure. IFAD. 2022. Enhanced Complaints Procedure for alleged Non-Compliance with IFAD's Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP). <https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/136/docs/EB-2022-136-R-27.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Paragraphs 22-28. Enhanced Complaints Procedure. IFAD. 2022. Enhanced Complaints Procedure for alleged Non-Compliance with IFAD's Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP). <https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/136/docs/EB-2022-136-R-27.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Paragraphs 29-33. Enhanced Complaints Procedure. IFAD. 2022. Enhanced Complaints Procedure for alleged Non-Compliance with IFAD's Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP). <https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/136/docs/EB-2022-136-R-27.pdf>

final report and all stakeholder responses are shared with the involved parties, and a summary is published on IFAD's website.<sup>14</sup>

The Impartial Review Process does not create any legal rights for complainants and is not subject to judicial review.<sup>15</sup> The SCO, supported by consultants as needed, monitors implementation of the action plan at least annually until all remedial measures are completed. Progress is reported to the Audit Committee through annual updates, and a final monitoring report is issued to conclude the compliance process. While there is no fixed timeline for completing the IRP itself, the monitoring phase is limited to a maximum of three years.<sup>16</sup>

To ensure transparency, all key documents, decisions, and reports related to both the PSP and IRP are shared with the involved parties and published where appropriate.

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<sup>14</sup> Paragraphs 34-39 . Enhanced Complaints Procedure. IFAD. 2022. Enhanced Complaints Procedure for alleged Non-Compliance with IFAD's Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP). <https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/136/docs/EB-2022-136-R-27.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Paragraph 40 . Enhanced Complaints Procedure. IFAD. 2022. Enhanced Complaints Procedure for alleged Non-Compliance with IFAD's Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP). <https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/136/docs/EB-2022-136-R-27.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Paragraph 40 . Enhanced Complaints Procedure. IFAD. 2022. Enhanced Complaints Procedure for alleged Non-Compliance with IFAD's Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP). <https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/136/docs/EB-2022-136-R-27.pdf>