

Thailand: A State-Based Grievance Mechanism for Land and Soil Governance

OVERVIEW

Submitting Organization	Office of the National Land Policy Board (ONLB) https://www.onlb.go.th/
Type of Grievance Mechanism	State-Based Judicial
Level of Operation	National and Provincial
Geographic Scope	Thailand

SYNOPSIS

This case study presents the Center for the Management and Resolving Grievance on Land and Soil, a state-based mechanism under the Office of the National Land Policy Board designed to address land- and soil-related complaints and strengthen coordination among government institutions. The Center was introduced in response to a growing number of grievances and a national policy mandate to improve public service delivery and grievance management in the land sector. The mechanism provides accessible channels for submitting complaints and applies clear procedural steps for submission, inter-agency coordination, monitoring, and follow-up. By centralizing land and soil grievances and linking them to relevant authorities, it supports the resolution of individual cases and provides legal and policy guidance within existing institutional frameworks.¹

BACKGROUND

This grievance mechanism emerged in response to a sustained and high volume of land- and soil-related complaints received by the **Office of the National Land Policy Board (ONLB)** through multiple government channels. Prior to the establishment of the **Center for the Management and Resolving Grievance on Land and Soil**, ONLB had received more than 2,000 complaints transmitted from institutions such as the Parliament and the Office of the Prime Minister's complaint center. These complaints highlighted the need for a dedicated institutional unit with technical expertise capable of addressing a broad range of land and soil grievances directly and in a coordinated manner, including:

1. **Overlapping claims between people and State land agencies**, resulting from the involvement of nine government agencies responsible for managing State land. These overlaps have prompted the implementation of the One Map Project, which aims to produce a single authoritative national map at a scale of 1:4000 to be used consistently by all agencies.
2. **Unclear land titles**, particularly in cases where individuals have occupied land prior to its designation as State land but lack formal documentation. Affected persons may apply for land rights

¹ <https://www.1111.go.th/>

verification through the Sub-Committee on Verifying Land Rights over State Land at the provincial level, with the possibility of obtaining formal land titles if prior occupation can be demonstrated.

3. **Landlessness and applications for State land allocation**, where individuals or communities seek updates on the status of their applications under government allocation schemes.
4. **Requests for assistance in pursuing justice in land-related matters**, including support with legal processes, verification of land plots, or obtaining official documentation for court proceedings.
5. **Impacts of government land policies**, where individuals are either adversely affected by policy measures or are not recognized within existing policy frameworks.
6. **Impacts of the One Map Project**, particularly where revised State land boundaries affect existing land use or claims.

The diversity and persistence of these issues underscored the need for a centralized grievance mechanism capable of handling land and soil complaints in a holistic and coordinated way.

MECHANISM

The creation of the Center and its associated e-Petitions system responds to a Cabinet resolution adopted on 8 March 2022, which called on government agencies to strengthen the effectiveness of public service delivery, including grievance management and inter-agency coordination. Within this policy framework, the Center was introduced to enhance public access to grievance channels, streamline the submission of complaints, and reduce processing time by enabling grievances related to land and soil to be submitted directly to the ONLB.

The Center for the Management and Resolving Grievance on Land and Soil operates as a dedicated unit under the Office of the National Land Policy Board in accordance with the National Land Policy Board Act B.E.2562 (2019), which confers its formal legal mandate and institutional authority. The Center became operational on 15 January 2024 under this statutory framework. Its development involved several central government institutions, notably the Office of the National Land Policy Board, the Office of the Prime Minister, and the Ministry of Interior, which contribute to the governance, coordination, and day-to-day functioning of the mechanism.

The design of the Center was informed by the volume and characteristics of grievances raised by affected stakeholders through multiple official channels, including the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Interior, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Parliament, and the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand. Engagement took place primarily at the institutional level, ensuring that relevant agencies agreed to systematically classify and transmit land and soil-related complaints to the Center, which serves as the central entity responsible for handling such matters.

PROCESS

The grievance mechanism is designed to be accessible to all affected stakeholders. Affected persons may submit petitions to the Center for the Management and Resolving Grievance on Land and Soil through several channels, including telephone, mail, email, and in-person submissions, ensuring multiple entry points for users.

Upon receipt, the Center forwards the petition to all relevant agencies responsible for the subject matter of the complaint. Evidence related to the case is explored and considered by these agencies. Complainants are able to follow the progress of their submissions online through the e-Petitions system.

The process establishes clear procedural steps for submission, coordination, monitoring, and follow-up across institutions and follows a structured sequence:

1. Affected persons submit petitions through available communication channels.
2. Submitted petitions are transmitted to relevant agencies directly responsible for the issue, both via email and through notifications sent using the Line application.
3. Officials from relevant agencies access the case, respond, and provide progress updates through the e-Petitions system.
4. Notifications are automatically sent through the Line application as deadlines approach and upon reaching deadlines.

Complaints are categorized into two types:

- **Non-complex issues:** ONLB processes the complaint and notifies the outcome to complainants, or refers the case to a relevant agency, within 15 days. When cases are referred, the responsible agency is required to notify ONLB within 15 days after a resolution is reached.
- **Complex issues:** ONLB notifies relevant agencies to clarify background information and facts. Meetings and site visits may be organized to gather additional information. Findings are reported to the sub-committee under the National Land Policy Board and to the National Land Policy Board itself. Where necessary, issues may be submitted to the Cabinet. ONLB then communicates Cabinet resolutions to relevant authorities and undertakes a monitoring role to follow up on implementation.

Where necessary, financial support may be provided to establish working groups composed of relevant stakeholders. This support may also cover field visits conducted for fact-finding and consultation purposes

When the mechanism does not result in a satisfactory outcome, the Center continues to coordinate with relevant agencies to identify alternative resolutions or provide further legal advice. If dissatisfaction persists, complainants may seek clarification or submit petitions through other institutional channels, including the Office of the Ombudsman or the Parliament.

OUTCOMES

The mechanism supports the prevention of future land-related disputes by ensuring that guidance and recommendations issued by relevant agencies are grounded in current legal frameworks and policy provisions. Through this approach, complainants receive up-to-date legal and policy advice, either contributing to the resolution of the dispute or clarifying appropriate pathways for further action where resolution is not immediately achievable.

LESSONS LEARNED

The functioning of the mechanism is supported by the active involvement of relevant government agencies that assist in resolving conflicts and complaints. This support includes providing documentation, factual information, legal advice, and participation in site visits. In addition, a formal committee structure composed of experts from various fields provides an institutional framework with legal authority to resolve conflicts and issue recommendations. One identified challenge relates to the need for ONLB and relevant government agencies to obtain accurate and comprehensive information from local authorities. This step is necessary to ensure that advice and recommendations are based on thorough investigation, which may affect timelines and procedural efficiency.