**Guidance 4.1: Overview of Feedback Channels – Strengths, Weaknesses & Tips**

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| **STATIC CHANNELS** | | | |
| **Channels** | **Description, Tips & Examples** | **Strengths** | **Weaknesses** |
| **FACE-TO-FACE** | Staff are approached by individuals in the field and receive and record feedback directly | * Allows for a rapid response to urgent questions and referral and can resolve many issues immediately. * Can reveal unintended effects of programs that fall outside monitoring rubrics. | * Staff may find the need to record the feedback time consuming and arduous and see it as a distraction from the task they are trying to complete. * Staff might think feedback means poor performance of their work and be reluctant to share and process. |
| ***TIPS***     1. All staff need to have good listening skills and know how to log feedback. 2. Having a set of FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) and ensuring that staff are able to use it can provide immediate resolution for much of the feedback received. 3. Make sure the team is gender-balanced so that women and girls can speak to female staff if preferred. 4. Add a question at the end of any data collection activity (e.g. HH survey, post-distribution monitoring) to ask whether the respondent has any feedback to share. | ***INCLUSION***  Increases access for illiterate people, people with limited mobility, persons with sensory impairment and children. | ***INCLUSION***  Existing power dynamics within the communities might limit the capacities or willingness of marginalised individuals to approach field staff |
| **SUGGESTION BOXES** | Locked boxes available in the community for individuals or groups to drop in written messages using free text or forms provided.  **CARE** has experience operating suggestions boxes in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Chad, Ethiopia, Greece, Iraq, Jordan, Nepal, Peru, Somalia, Syria and Timor-Leste. | * Fairly easy to implement in small-scale responses and in large-scale responses, complements other channels. * Boxes can be placed in the community over a long period of time and allow access at any time. * Low running costs. * Can also make it “mobile” by carrying a box with the team whenever they visit the site. | * Widely known to be ineffective due to illiteracy and preferences for direct contact with staff. * Not ideal for urban, dispersed, or large camp settings unless multiple boxes can be managed well. * Privacy is compromised since the box must be in a prominent position in the community. * Feedback can be partial, missing essential details necessary to follow-up (e.g. name of agency, contact info). |
| ***TIPS***     1. Involve the community in deciding the locations of the boxes. 2. Make sure you define collection protocols – e.g. two specified people open boxes on a weekly basis – and ensure that these people are not directly implementing the project to ensure impartiality. | ***INCLUSION***  Boxes can be put in private spaces such as women-only spaces. Pictorial forms can be used by illiterate people to share feedback. | ***INCLUSION***  Low literacy, low mobility and sensory impairment can be an obstacle to access the boxes, especially for women and girls. |
| **HOTLINE MANAGED IN-HOUSE** | A dedicated number available for individual(s) to call CARE directly.  **CARE** has experience operating in-house hotlines in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Chad, Ethiopia, Greece, Iraq, Jordan, Nepal, Peru, Somalia, Syria, Timor-Leste | * Good option for remote contexts and large-scale responses, where mobile coverage is high and mobile use is not restricted. * Often preferred by people who want to speak to someone. * Allows for a rapid response to urgent questions and referral and can resolve many issues immediately using FAQs. * Can be used for staff to directly report feedback received face-to-face. | * Mobile network functionality can vary over time and across different regions, particularly in conflict situations. * People may not have access to electricity to charge phones. * The traceability of calls can be a barrier to those wishing to report something confidential or sensitive. * Cost implications can be high for a toll-free number and for several dedicated staff members (with relevant language skills) to answer calls. |
| ***TIPS***     1. Make sure that hotline operators are not directly implementing the project to ensure impartiality. 2. Invest in training hotline operators on appropriate language, inter-personal, listening, and dialogue skills and on FAQs as well as processes for logging and responding. 3. Negotiate with the local mobile network provider(s) for a toll-free number to ensure access and sustained user engagement. | ***INCLUSION***  Using the phone can reduce the need to travel to a mechanism, improving access for individuals with low mobility. | ***INCLUSION***  Marginalized community members often have limited access to mobile phones and might have to negotiate to have access. In cases where the complainant does not control the phone, privacy can be limited and raising sensitive concerns in this way can cause further harm. People with sensory disabilities may find it hard to access the phone or hear. |
| **HOTLINE WITH EXTERNAL SERVICE PROVIDER** | A dedicated number is available for individual(s) to call a call-centre company representing CARE. | * Less risk of staff turnover impacting system because external service provider must guarantee that it can be operated at all times. * Good option for remote contexts and large-scale responses, where mobile coverage is high and mobile use is not restricted. * Often preferred by people who want to speak to someone. * Allows for a rapid response to urgent questions and referral and can resolve many issues immediately using FAQs. * Can be used for staff to directly report feedback received face-to-face. * Can include a “call-out” function to reach return missed-calls or to respond to and follow up on previous calls. * Can also be used to proactively solicit feedback from participants when their phone number is available. | * Can be perceived as detached from the agency. * Agency has less direct oversight of hotline operators for quality assurance. * Confidentiality and use of personal data can be an issue. * Mobile network functionality can vary over time and across different regions, particularly in conflict situations. * People may not have access to electricity to charge phones. * The traceability of calls can be a barrier to those wishing to report something confidential or sensitive. * Cost implications can be high for a toll-free number and for several dedicated staff members (with relevant language skills) to answer calls. Further implications for call-centre fees. * Female staff answering the hotline might face harassment. |
| ***TIPS***     1. Make sure that urgent, sensitive and complicated feedback is managed by CARE in-house. 2. Invest in training hotline operators on appropriate language, inter-personal, listening, and dialogue skills and on FAQs as well as processes for logging and responding. Also invest in training on CARE’s programs and principles. | ***INCLUSION***  Using the phone can reduce the need to travel to a mechanism, improving access for individuals with low mobility. | ***INCLUSION***  Marginalized community members often have limited access to mobile phones and might have to negotiate to have access. In cases where the complainant does not control the phone, privacy can be limited and raising sensitive concerns in this way can cause further harm. People with sensory disabilities may find it hard to access the phone or hear. |
| **HELP DESK** | Desks or hubs set up in the field with designated operating hours and are staffed by trained local volunteers, partners or staff who receive feedback directly.  **CARE** has experience operating helpdesks in Chad, Somalia and Bangladesh. | * When set-up alongside aid distributions provides easy access for participants who attend the distribution. * Provides face-to-face contact which is often preferred by community members. * Many issues can be resolved immediately. | * For large scale responses multiple simultaneous help desks can be needed if more than one distribution occurs at the same time. * Risk of high turnover if financial retribution is not provided for volunteers but cost implications cost implications of incentives can be prohibitive. * Volunteers must be literate to record feedback. * Requires resources to cover costs of several male and female dedicated staff (with local language skills) as well supervision and mentoring for staff and volunteers. * High resource investments on data entry if feedback is recorded manually at the helpdesk. |
| ***TIPS***     1. **Invest in training** staff and volunteers in **appropriate language, inter-personal, listening, and dialogue skills and on FAQs as well as processes for logging and responding.** 2. Non-financial retribution (e.g. t-shirts, note-pads) can provides incentives for volunteers. | ***INCLUSION***  **If there are female** helpdesk staff or volunteers and timing of the helpdesk takes into account daily schedules, then it can facilitate access for women and girls. | ***INCLUSION***  In some contexts women and girls may not attend distributions due to restricted mobility and therefore cannot access the helpdesk. |
| **COMMUNITY FEEDBACK COMMITTEES** | Individuals from the community are selected or elected to form a committee in charge of collecting feedback.  **CARE** has experience with community committees in Chad. | * Works well in locations where we will be working for an extended period of time to build relationships with communities and invest time in setting-up committees. * Increased ownership of local community. Some community members may feel more comfortable taking their feedback to a community representative rather than a staff member. * Can build on existing social and cultural platforms for sharing information and resolving issues rather than imposing an unfamiliar approach   . | * Not suitable in short-term projects. * Can be time consuming and requires strong technical skills from staff to set-up in the right way, particularly on gender to ensure committees are inclusive. * Requires time and effort from community members. * Not usually conducive for raising sensitive concerns. * Risk of high turnover or low effort if no financial retribution is provided for committee members but cost implications of incentives can be prohibitive. |
| ***TIPS***     1. Non-financial retribution (e.g. t-shirts, note-pads) can provides incentives for committee members. 2. Be aware of timing and location which suits all members of the committee including minorities and people with disabilities. 3. Do not permit traditional leaders or local authorities to be members of the committee since their presence is likely to limit people’s ability to speak freely. | ***INCLUSION***  Gender-balanced or segregated committees can ensure that people feel comfortable to express their opinion.  When sensitization is done well, the committees have the potential to amplify women’s voices within their community and within humanitarian decision-making. | ***INCLUSION***  Without sufficient sensitization and gender-balanced or segregated committees there is a risk that a community committee will reflect existing power inequalities and marginalisation so the views of women and girls and other vulnerable community members are not adequately represented.  Persecuted minorities like LGBT+ may not feel comfortable coming out in public |
| **DESIGNATED DROP-IN HOURS OR OPEN DOOR POLICY AT OFFICE** | CARE or partner offices are open for community members to share feedback direct with staff. | * Satisfies preference for face-to-face communication and for immediate response to urgent questions and feedback. * Demonstrates openness, responsiveness, and accessibility of staff. * Many issues can be resolved immediately. * The Open Door Policy does not require a designated time which improves ease of access for community members. | Offices are often inaccessible for remote communities.  The cost of travel and time spent away from household and income-generating activities can be a limiting factor.  Waiting times can erode trust.  Risk of security incident in the offices in case of strongly dissatisfied individuals.  Requires resources to cover costs of several male and female dedicated staff (with local language skills)  For Open Door Policy if no designated time is allocated because someone must be available to deal with issues **at all times.** |
| ***TIPS***    **Invest in training** staff and volunteers in **appropriate language, inter-personal, listening, and dialogue skills and on FAQs.** | ***INCLUSION***  Low mobility of women and girls due to limited mobility, cultural restrictions or due to domestic or income-generating activities. Likely low mobility with people with disabilities and children. |
| **RADIO SHOW WITH**  **CALL-IN SERVICE** | A dedicated radio show to share information with listeners and receive calls that are answered during the live show. | * A good option if radio service is available and accessible. * Ideal for combining information provision, public service announcements (e.g. hygiene, cholera prevention, DRR etc.) with questions and issues from local population. * Would usually respond to the most commonly recurring issues and questions. * Can be operated with other agencies. | * Risk of perceived bias, depending on the reputation of the station. * The level of participation from listeners (community members) can be very low therefore it will not cover the full range of feedback. * Does not provide confidentiality or privacy. * Cost implications include high fees for hosting the radio show especially if the station is very popular and has large coverage/subscription. * Reputational risk if criticism or allegations are raised publically. Likely to trigger ‘defensiveness’ and therefore limit dialogue. |
| ***TIPS***     1. If you cannot answer live calls then answer common questions received previously through other channels. 2. Negotiate with a phone provider to have a free phone-in option. 3. Can be a good way for closing the feedback loop at the community level. 4. Listening circles can be arranged to reach more people if ownership of radios is low. | ***INCLUSION***  A good way to utilise verbal communication which is often a preference for communities with low literacy levels | ***INCLUSION***  The most marginalised community members, such as women and girls, may have with limited access to radios and mobile phones and may face obstacles to call-in or even listen to the show. They may not feel comfortable to speak publicly.  Language can be a barrier in contexts where local dialects are not spoken on the radio unless multiple shows with different languages are arranged. |
| **SMS, WHATSAPP, FACEBOOK, TWITTER** | A dedicated number or account available for individuals to share written or oral messages and pictures.  CARE Jordan has experience using Facebook and CARE Syria has experience using WhatsApp | * Good option for remote contexts and large-scale responses, where mobile coverage is high and mobile use is not restricted. * A good way for quickly collecting information about acute needs in the first phase of an emergency response across a wide geographic area. * Free platforms and those with costs associated are available and already used by NGOs (e.g. Frontline SMS, Ushahidi, [RapidPro](https://community.rapidpro.io/)). Some are linked to databases to allow for easier tracking, sorting and analyzing. | * Can generate large volumes of data which are difficult to manage and analyse. * Limitations with apps which do not allow direct response. * If perceived as a two-way communication tool it can cause frustration if response not received. * In remote contexts, it might be difficult to share the phone number with community members. * Requires dedicated staff to oversee of the operating platform/s. * Cost implications if paying for platforms. |
| ***TIPS***     1. Negotiate with local mobile network provider(s) for a toll-free number to ensure cost effectiveness for the agency. 2. There is a higher likelihood of if the SMS number is short (e.g. 3-digits). 3. Invest in training staff to manage accounts, log and respond to feedback. | ***INCLUSION***  Pictorial guides linked to # codes sent via messages can overcome literacy issues. | ***INCLUSION***  Marginalized community members often have limited access to mobile phones and might have to negotiate to have access. In cases where the complainant does not control the phone, privacy can be limited and raising sensitive concerns in this way can cause further harm. |
| **LETTERS/**  **E-MAILS** | A dedicated email address is set up where individuals can send emails or letters can be mailed to the office.  **CARE has experience of using letters and email for feedback in Bangladesh and the Caucasus.** | * In some contexts, people associate written letters with a formal and respectable form of feedback provision. | * Widely known to be ineffective due to illiteracy, lack of connectivity and preferences for direct contact with staff. * While in some contexts it is acceptable to ask someone else to write letters on your behalf, this limits privacy. * Limited access to computers and low internet coverage is an for email feedback. * Feedback can be partial, missing essential details necessary to follow-up (e.g. name of agency, contact info). * Feedback through regular mail is much slower than other methods. |
| ***TIPS***     1. Establish protocols for handling incoming letters, sorting and referring feedback internally. 2. Recruit staff with appropriate language skills to respond either in writing, calling or through visits. | ***INCLUSION***  Marginalized community members often have limited access to education and higher levels of illiteracy. Even if literature, access to internet and computers is likely to be harder for those who are marginalised. |
| **VOICE RECORDER** | Voice recorder devices made available in the community for individuals or groups to record oral feedback messages. | * Good for people who prefer verbal communication and want to be anonymous. * Good if literacy rates are low. * Generally feedback can be recorded at any time. | * Coverage is limited since the device remains in a specific physical location. * To manage multiple handsets in large urban, dispersed or camp settings can be difficult. * Most feedback will be anonymous which makes it hard to investigate or respond directly to the individual. * Feedback can be partial; missing essential details necessary to follow-up (e.g. name of agency, contact info). * It may not be clear which agency the feedback refers to, particularly in areas where several agencies are active. * Requires strong protocols to ensure that people are not able to listen to the previous messages recorded. * Safety and security concerns if the recorders are lost or stolen. * Requires time investment to orient community members on how to use the device. |
| ***TIPS***    Community engagement is key to determine where to locate the devices and to orient communities on how to use the device. | ***INCLUSION***  Easily accessible for women and girls when located in a dedicated space, such as a Women Friendly Space. Can prove more accessible for the most marginalised, including older people, people with disabilities and those with sensory impairment IF ample consideration is given to community consultation on device location and orientation on how it operates. | ***INCLUSION***  Lack of access to the device and lack of privacy when recording message can create barriers for women, girls, older people and some people with disabilities or sensory impairment. |
| **INTERACTIVE VOICE RESPONSE** | A dedicated number available 24/7 for community members to access information and record their feedback message. | * Decreases the amount of feedback provided since queries or questions will be avoided by providing key information. * Often popular with young people. * Service accessible 24/7 | * A one-way system which works better to provide information than process feedback but people may hang-up before accessing all relevant information. * IVR menu is sometimes long or difficult to understand, including challenges around language. * Requires either staff time to listen and log messages or investment in software to process. * Requires time investment for orientation and sensitization with community members. * Feedback can be partial, missing essential details necessary to follow-up (e.g. name of agency, contact info). |
| ***INCLUSION***  Marginalized community members often have limited access to mobile phones and might have to negotiate to have access. In cases where the complainant does not control the phone, privacy can be limited and raising sensitive concerns in this way can cause further harm. |

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| **Active CHANNELS** | | | |
| **Channels** | **Description, Tips & Examples** | **Strengths** | **Weaknesses** |
| **Micro Feedback**  **Surveys** | A small set of pre-determined questions in periodic, light-touch surveys. A common approach used is Constituent Voice (CV).  CARE has experience using feedback surveys (Constituent Voice in) Ghana, Zambia, Tanzania, Nepal and Bangladesh      [Step-by-step Guidelines - Inclusive Governance Wiki](http://governance.care2share.wikispaces.net/Constituent+Voice+Feedback+Mechanism+-+Step+by+Step+guidelines) | * A relatively easy way of collecting quantitative feedback data from specific groups of people, including those who are less able to access unsolicited mechanisms. * Repetition of the same questions allows for easier trend analysis (e.g. the CV system can analyse by gender, geography and over time). * Provides a topline indication of key areas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction by actively engaging with a range of different people. * If surveys are short this approach can sample a relatively high number of people. | * With a pre-determined range of topics and closed questions there is limited space to capture other feedback. |
| ***TIPS***     1. Carefully consider which questions and closed answer options to include to ensure easy analysis. 2. Ensure that sampling is informed by a gender and power analysis to ensure that respondents are representative of all community members, including marginalised groups. 3. Follow-up surveys with conversations (e.g. FGDs) to understand the meaning behind results. | ***INCLUSION***  A way of actively seeking involvement from the most marginalized groups who are often unable to access static mechanisms. Rich data can be gathered if efforts are made to ensure privacy and comfort for respondents. | ***INCLUSION***  If sampling is not representative of all community members, results may be biased towards the opinions of the most powerful and which can entrench existing vulnerabilities. The choice to decline answering questions can create a bias against those who face barriers to speaking out. |
| **Public Community Meetings** | Meetings organised periodically at project locations bringing together large groups of people to share information and collect feedback.  **CARE Examples:**  CARE has experience with public community meetings in Nepal (Public Hearing & Public Audit), Timor-Leste (Project Progress Review Workshop) and Iraq. | * Provides face-to-face interaction, can answer common questions and concerns immediately and for a large number of people simultaneously. * If carried out systematically and regularly can provide crucial, reliable touch-points for community members to interact with the agency and build trust. * A valuable opportunity for closing the feedback loop and raising awareness around other feedback channels. | * Who attends and who speaks up may be impacted by power dynamics and gender roles. There is a significant risk that only dominant voices will be heard. * Public setting precludes feedback on sensitive issues. * Opportunity cost in attending. |
| ***TIPS***     1. Think about integrating these sessions into regular community meetings as a standing agenda item. 2. Ensure that the staff member running the meeting has excellent facilitation skills and is in a senior position as people will be more motivated to share if a decision-maker is present. 3. Think about linking these meetings with gender-balanced community feedback committee and use it as an opportunity for women to have a larger voice. | ***INCLUSION***  Can provide an opportunity to emphasise the importance of all community members having a voice and being represented. | ***INCLUSION***  **The most marginalized (such as women and children) may not be comfortable to attend and voice their concerns. Additionally,** distance and opportunity cost of attending can be a barrier for vulnerable individuals, including those with sensory impairments or disabilities. |
| **Focus Group Discussions** | Focus group discussion organised specifically to collect feedback. | * A good way of collecting qualitative feedback data from specific groups of people, including those who are less able to access static channels. * Uses open questions so that participants determine what topics are the most important. * People may feel more comfortable to talk when in a group with others who are similar to them. * Allows for a rapid response to urgent questions and referral and can resolve many issues immediately. * If facilitated well, FGDs have the potential to increase an individual’s confidence in speaking up and expressing their opinions which can lead to changes in the way they participate in HH and community discussions. | * Can be difficult to find staff and partners with qualitative facilitation and analysis skills. * Despite the low cost, FGDs require staff training and time to facilitate, input and analyse data. * The sample will be relatively small so selection of locations and participants must be done carefully |
| ***TIPS***     1. Invest in facilitation skills! 2. Ensure that sampling is informed by a gender and power analysis to ensure that respondents are representative of all community members, including marginalised groups. 3. Sampling should be done carefully and be informed by gender and power analysis to ensure that respondents are representative of all community members, including marginalised groups 4. Combine with other channels (e.g. feedback surveys) as a sense making exercise. | ***INCLUSION***  Highly accessible for women and girls as sessions can be arranged to accommodate their preferences for time and location. | ***INCLUSION***  Group dynamics can be a barrier to participation for minorities and people with disabilities. Persecuted minorities are less likely to speak or participate. If sampling is not representative of all community members, results may be biased and blind to some sections of the community. |
| **Regular consultations with key informants or community leaders** | Regular consultation with key informants or community leaders to collect feedback on behalf of their communities. | This type of consultation may be part of regular project activities and part of an expected relationship-building protocol which can be expanded to include feedback. | * Requires a time investment to meet with individuals, particularly at the beginning to orient them on their role to consult with and represent others. * Information from community leaders will often represent only the views of the most powerful and therefore there is a high need to triangulate with feedback from other channels. * In high surveillance and low trust settings may create the perception that the agency is aligned with the most powerful. |
| ***TIPS***  Ensure that the staff member running the meeting has excellent facilitation skills and is in a senior position, as people will be more motivated to share if a decision-maker is present. | ***INCLUSION***  Key informants can include those from marginalized groups, such as women, minorities and people with disabilities. This is easier if those groups are already organised in committees. | ***INCLUSION***  Traditional structures for community representation may systematically exclude most vulnerable. Leaders (often male) may misrepresent community views. |