CCFSA CLIMATE CHANGE AND FOOD SECURITY ASSOCIATION

Complaints and Response Mechanism Guidelines

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COMPLAINTS AND RESPONSE MECHANISM GUIDELINES

Member:	• all board members/trustees, board committee members • all association employees, secondees, interns and volunteers; and • all consultants/contractors/suppliers (including internal consultants with an association email address) • all association partners
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1. INTRODUCTION

Climate Change and Food Security Association (CCFSA) is committed to improving accountability in its programming. Humanitarian accountability focuses on accountability to beneficiaries and the communities in which we work. It requires responsible use of power, and the participation of community members in the aid program. This is best explained in the following definitions of accountability:

RESPONSIBLE USE OF POWER

Accountability is the means by which power is used responsibly... Being accountable to beneficiaries requires that humanitarian agencies take account of beneficiaries' opinions, concerns, suggestions, and complaints.
- Humanitarian Accountability Partnership Standard

PARTICIPATION

Accountability means making sure the women, men and children affected by an emergency are involved in planning, implementing, and judging our response to their emergency too.
- Good Enough Guide

CCFSA recognises Complaint and Response Mechanisms (CRMs) are a critical component of humanitarian accountability. A Complaint Mechanism can be defined as:
Simple procedures and mechanisms that give users access to safe means of voicing complaints on areas relevant and within the control of the agency.
- Danish Refugee Council's Complaint Mechanism Handbook 2008

CCFSA has included the word 'Response' to highlight the importance not only of receiving complaints, but also responding to them. Complaint and Response Mechanisms restore dignity and empower beneficiaries. They help us identify and fix mistakes that improve the effectiveness of our programs, and reduce organisational risk by discouraging corruption, abuse and theft. Donors recognise this and are strongly supporting CRMs, even insisting on CRMs in some cases. CRMs also contribute towards the ongoing professionalisation of CCFSA programming and are an innovative contribution to CCFSA's broader work in Humanitarian Emergency Affairs and Transformational Development.

In evidence of CCFSA's commitment to Humanitarian Accountability and Complaint and Response Mechanisms, CCFSA has set the goal that all programs should have a functioning Complaint and Response Mechanism by 2010.

Purpose

The CRM Resource Guide is designed primarily for CCFSA practitioners who wish to implement CRMs in project programming. It is a collection of resources and templates that practitioners can quickly contextualise for their own purpose. It is in its First Edition; improvements will be made based on feedback and lessons learned from future implementation.

While CRMs are best developed entirely specific to the context, this Resource Guide is designed around two key mechanisms that are often applicable to project programming: Community Help Desks (CHDs) and Suggestion Boxes (SBs).
The validity of these mechanisms for each context is tested by conducting Humanitarian Accountability assessments as one of the steps to implement a CRM. Practitioners who find that these two mechanisms are not appropriate can follow the same process and will find many of the resources directly applicable. Resources not directly applicable will serve as useful examples.

The Danish Refugee Council's Complaint Mechanism Handbook is an excellent practical guide to developing a highly contextualised CRM, and is recommended for those who need resources beyond what is included in this guide.

How To Use This Resource Guide

Read Section 2: How to Implement a Complaint and Response Mechanism. The purpose of this section is to explain each of the steps required to implement a CRM, focusing on Community Help Desks and Suggestion Boxes. It also explains how to use the resources that are included in this guide as they relate to each step of the process. Once you have read Section 2, use the information to plan how you will implement a CRM in your context. You can then access the relevant resources which can be found in the Annex.

If you are not familiar with the concept of complaints, it is highly recommended that you first conduct background reading. There is some basic information in this Section, including a brief review of why we have CRMs, and the international benchmark for complaints-handling by the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership. This will give you an idea of the standard CCFSA aims to achieve in all of its CRMs. This information is not sufficient if this is the first time you are trying to implement a CRM. For more information, it is strongly recommended that you access the references listed below. They are all excellent resources, in particular Chapter 2: Reference Material of the Danish Refugee Council's Complaint Mechanism Handbook 2008.

Points to consider

There are three key lessons to consider before using this resource guide. The first is that a poorly implemented CRM can be worse than no CRM at all. It can encourage distrust and further disempower communities – the opposite of what a good CRM will do. CCFSA has learned this from experience. Take the time to plan and prepare to implement a quality CRM.

Secondly, all the systems in the world will not guarantee that you will receive all the complaints, particularly sensitive complaints that you need to ensure protection and quality programming. Systems are no substitute for trusted relationships with community members. Continue to encourage staff to informally discuss programs and issues with community members, and act on feedback they receive.

Finally, a CRM is but one aspect of humanitarian accountability. A CRM alone will not make your program accountable to beneficiaries. Information provision is strongly interlinked with CRMs, and is covered in this manual (Refer to Step 6: Provide the Resources and Support for a CRM to function). For more information on other aspects of accountability, refer to the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership's Guide to the HAP Standard and the Good Enough Guide, referenced below.

Key References

The three key references that will assist practitioners to understand the concepts behind CRMs and how to implement them are:

Danish Refugee Council's Complaint Mechanism Handbook 2008 http://www.drc.dk/Complaints_Mechanism.4637.0.html

Humanitarian Accountability Partnership Guide to the HAP Standard http://www.hapinternational.org/ http://publications.oxfam.org.uk/oxfam/results.asp?aub=HAP%20International&sort=sort_date/d&TAG=&CID=

Emergency Capacity Building Project's Good Enough Guide http://www.ecbproject.org/home http://publications.oxfam.org.uk/oxfam/display.asp?isbn=0855985941

2. WHY COMPLAINT AND RESPONSE MECHANISMS?

The Benefits

CRMs are formal mechanisms to help us to understand our programs from the beneficiaries' perspective, giving us the information to adjust our programs to best meet beneficiary community needs. There are many benefits, including:

Dignity and empowering stakeholders

- When stakeholders have an issue, they are heard and responded to. Stakeholders' issues are not ignored.
- Stakeholder issues and opinions can be incorporated in to program implementation and future program design, increasing their influence.
- Aspects of programs that inadvertently reduce the dignity of stakeholders can be identified and addressed.

Discouraging corruption, theft, abuse

- People who intend to engage in harmful activities are aware that anybody is able to identify and complain about them. The CRM in this case can act as a deterrent.
- Cases of corruption, theft and abuse are more likely to be identified and addressed.

Increased transparency

- Managers are aware of the issues faced in the field, and can support field staff to resolve them.
- Beneficiaries can question CCFSA actions and be given a response, increasing their trust and understanding of the program.

Improved programming

- Mistakes are identified and can therefore be acted upon and improved.
- Suggestions are heard and taken on board.
- Difficulties faced by stakeholders in accessing the program are understood and can potentially be minimised.
- Targeting is improved through identification of inclusion and exclusion errors and allowing for complaints during the selection process, improving the effectiveness of the program.
- Stakeholders including donors and partners can have confidence that issues will be raised and addressed. Some may have access to the reports on issues to increase their understanding of the program.

Saving money

- While it is time consuming to listen to and address issues, once the issues are resolved the program will be more effective, and can be more cost-efficient particularly through improved targeting.
- Improved relationships with communities
- CDA's Listening Project (referenced below) found that beneficiaries feel that the aid industry is becoming systematised and is not engaging with communities sufficiently to address real issues and have the most effective programs. A CRM is one method through which to communicate and develop relationships and trust with stakeholders.

Early warning

- CRMs help us to identify issues early, before they become too large and unmanageable.

CRMs and Field staff

"I can see how an effective complaint and response mechanism in place is good for the beneficiaries. But why is it good for us as? It's just more work and makes us look bad."

The first point is correct – an effective complaint and response mechanism is certainly more work. It does take some effort to ensure that the CRM works properly. So why is this a good thing when it identifies the 'bad' things that are going on in the program? There are a number of ways in which a CRM helps field staff:

1. Identification of issues at the field level that you are able to fix yourself, demonstrating to management a commitment to improved programming.
2. Documentation and evidence of more numerous and serious issues that you can use to garner management support to address the issues.
3. Improved programming and targeting, which will improve the effectiveness of your program and the impact of your program overall, reflecting on your performance as field staff.
4. Better relationships with community members. It is another avenue for communication, which helps community members to trust CCFSA more. The better our relationships and communication with community members, the more likely our programs can be designed and implemented to be most effective in meeting their needs.
5. Security in knowing that if the program is inadvertently harming people – through corruption, abuse or theft – the organisation is more likely to find out about it, and make sure that the harm is stopped.

CRMs are NOT about making field staff look bad by identifying the issues. All programs will have issues, this is clearly understood by anyone involved in aid programs. CRMS are about identifying the issues so that we can resolve them. Field staff who are able to do this will improve their programs and be very well regarded by management.

The Risks

In outlining the benefits, it is important to realise that there are real risks in implementing Complaint and Response Mechanisms, the key risk being that a CRM not implemented properly can be worse than no CRM at all. The Danish Refugee Council's Complaint Mechanism Handbook 2008 pages 17 – 22 details the key risks, including

- the security of staff and stakeholders in implementing a complaints mechanism in volatile contexts
- the security of stakeholders who choose to complain about sensitive issues
- insufficient resources including staff time, resulting in an ineffective CRM
- the CRM alters the power structure in communities
- staff fear of being overburdened

These risks are not reasons not to implement a CRM. All of these risks can and should be carefully considered and managed when developing a CRM for your context.

Further Reading:

In addition to the Danish Refugee Council's Complaint Mechanism Handbook 2008, the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership's Guide to Implementing the HAP Standard and the Good Enough Guide (all referenced in the Introduction to this Resource Guide), the following are the valuable resources:

CDA's Listening Project, for a global analysis of beneficiary perspectives on their role in aid: http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/project_profile.php?pid=LISTEN&pname=Listening%20Project

'Why Do Accountability? A Business Case from Sri Lanka', for an overview of the benefits of a CCFSA Humanitarian Accountability program, which includes CRMs. Available on the HAP website at: http://www.hapinternational.org/projects/field/case-studies.aspx

3. INTERNATIONAL COMPLAINTS-HANDLING STANDARDS?

Any complaint and response mechanism developed by CCFSA needs to adhere to the international complaints-handling standard as defined by the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership.

HAP standard Benchmark 5: complaints-handling

The association shall establish and implement complaints-handling procedures that are effective, accessible, and safe for intended beneficiaries, disaster-affected communities, association's staff, humanitarian partners and other specified bodies.

1. The agency shall ask intended beneficiaries and the host community about appropriate ways to handle complaints.
2. The agency shall establish and document complaints-handling procedures which clearly state:
   • The right of beneficiaries and other specified stakeholders to file a complaint
   • The purpose, parameters and limitations of the procedure
   • The procedure for submitting complaints
   •The steps taken in processing complaints
   • Confidentiality and non-retaliation policy for complaintants
   • The process for safe referral of complaints that the agency is not equipped to handle
   • The right to receive a response

3. The agency shall ensure that intended beneficiaries, affected communities, and its staff understand the complaints-handling procedures.
4. The agency shall verify that all complaints received are handled according to the stated procedures.
5. The agency shall establish and implement an effective and safe complaints-handling mechanism for its staff, consistent with the requirements set out in 5.2.

For more information, refer to the Guide to the HAP Standard, Benchmark 5: Complaints-handling (p79). In this section you will find information about complaints-handling, how to implement it, tools and reference materials

4. HOW TO İMPLEMENT COMPLAİNT AND RESPONSE MECHANİSMS (CRMS)

The purpose of this section is to explain how to implement a Complaint and Response Mechanism, focusing on Community Help Desks and Suggestion Boxes.

This section is divided in to each of the 8 Steps to Implement a Complaint and Response Mechanism. Under each step is an explanation of how to carry out the step, a list of resources that are included in the

Annex that will help you to implement that step, and an explanation of how to use each of the resources. Not all the steps have resources included in this manual.

Additional resources on Protection and how it relates to project programming are included at the end of the list of resources for those who would like a briefing on this very important cross-cutting theme.

A summary of the Basic Steps to Implement CRMs can be found on the following page.

Steps To Implement Complaint and Response Mechanisms

Step 1: ensure management support
Task: sensitise senior management

Implementing any new system in an organisation is much easier with senior management support. This is particularly true for CRMs, as they illicit and deal with sensitive organisational problems. Engage senior management first. This may include a presentation and training for senior management, and individual meetings.

For ideas on engaging senior management, refer to The Danish Refugee Council's Complaints Mechanism Handbook 2008, Chapter 3 page 44. You can further engage management by involving them in Step 2 in conducting a HAP Self-Assessment. This will highlight to them the strengths and weaknesses of any existing systems.

Step 2: Ensure systems are in place for handling complaints
Tasks: review existing systems review CCFSA CRM Policy
write a CRM Policy

It is important to have methods in place for handling complaints before you begin soliciting them. Start by reviewing and documenting existing systems for receiving, addressing and responding to complaints. Check what systems exist for theft, fraud, corruption, sexual exploitation and abuse, programmatic problems e.g. inclusion and exclusion errors, political interference, child protection. A good way to do this is to conduct a self-assessment exercise with staff in order to get key stakeholders in your office to think through how complaints are currently handled, discuss their challenges with existing systems and resources and identify gaps. Use the HAP Self-Assessment questionnaire, focusing on Benchmark 5 to lead this discussion with staff. This activity is also an excellent opportunity to engage senior management in the CRM process.

Where there are gaps for addressing and responding to certain complaints, establish a system to ensure this is covered. The Danish Refugee Council's Complaints Mechanism Handbook 2008, Chapter 3 page 55 can help you do this.

To make certain all systems are commonly understood, you may need to document them. It is recommended that a national level CRM Policy is written and adopted by senior management which outlines how various complaints will be dealt with. For CCFSA programs, these must be in line with the CCFSA CRM Policy. Use the WV CRM Policy as a national level policy template to contextualise as appropriate.

Resources:
How To Use These Resources
A. CRM Systems and Policies

- HAP Self-Assessment Questionnaire
- Map of Complaints-handling in CCFSA
- CCFSA CRM Policy
- CCFSA CRM Policy

Resource 1: HAP Self-Assessment questionnaire

Resource 2: Map of Complaints-handling in CCFSA
Use: To Help Review Existing Organisational Systems and Policies

The first step is to review existing organisational systems and policies for receiving, addressing and responding to complaints. This will require an investigation. The Map of Complaints-handling in CCFSA will help you to think through what currently exists.

Another useful resource is the HAP Self-Assessment questionnaire, focusing on Benchmark 5. The best way to use this is in a workshop or meeting with key stakeholders following an introduction to CRMs. You may choose to do this with senior management to engage them on the status of CRMs in the organisation and/or with a group including representatives from commodities, finance, human resources, field staff and child protection. Following the self-assessment, ask the group to list what procedures and documentation exists in the organisation to receive, address and respond to complaints. Collect any related documentation. Any system that is developed must link in to these existing systems.

Use this information to identify any gaps for how to handle complaints. Where there are gaps, you will need to establish mechanisms to address these gaps. For assistance, refer to the Danish Refugee Council CRM Handbook, Chapter 3 page 55.

Resource 3: CCFSA CRM Policy
Use: Review to Ensure National Level Policy is in Line with CCFSA CRM Policy

Read the CCFSA CRM Policy. Distribute to relevant managers and staff dealing with CCFSA programs. All CRMs implemented throughout the partnership need to adhere to the principles outlined in the policy. To make sure this happens in your country, ensure that any National Level CRM Policy is in line with the CCFSA CRM Policy.

The CCFSA CRM Policy was developed during the CCFSA Lessons Learned workshop drawing on the experience of field pilots, HAP and various CCFSA experts.

Resource 4: National Level CRM Policy template
Use: A template or example to write your own National Level CRM Policy

The second policy is a template for national offices to amend for their purposes. Complete gaps and contextualise as appropriate. This is where you are able to document generic standards upon which all CRMs for the organisation are based. Such standards are important to ensure that complaints are received and handled appropriately and consistently across the organisation. These standards need to be in line with what already exists in the organisation. The work that you did reviewing existing policies and developing new systems for handling complaints where gaps existed can be put together and documented here.

There may be a number of decisions required to write this policy. Consultation with selected stakeholders will be required to ensure acceptance. Appropriate sign-off and adoption by senior management can make the document official policy at the national level.

A National Level CRM Policy builds on the principles of the global CCFSA CRM Policy, but includes more details to guide implementation, in particular around the ways in which complaints are handled by that office. A National Level CRM Policy remains generic enough to apply to any CRM used in that country.

You can have feedback and complaints mechanisms such as Help Desks without a CRM Policy. In this case, it is recommended that you cross check the design of the mechanism with the National Level CRM Policy template to ensure that all key points and standards are included.

Step 3: Sensitise communities
Task: engage communities and community leaders on the concept of complaining

Many of the communities we work with may not be familiar with the concept of complaining and providing feedback. It is important that before we conduct focus groups in Step 3, that communities have a thorough understanding of what it means to complain and provide feedback. When communities do not understand the concept of complaints, Step 4 becomes difficult and you may find yourself talking about many things other than complaints. Sensitising communities require meetings with community leaders first, followed by discussions and public meetings with community members.

If the culture that you are working in already clearly understands the concept of complaints you may not need to do this step. This might happen in communities where CRMs have been successfully used, or where there is a national corporate and Government culture of customer service, open to complaints and feedback. If you are unsure, it is best to consult the community to find out.

Begin by explaining that CCFSA wants to make sure its programs are working how they are supposed to be, and that we need to know what their issues are in order to be able to fix them.To do this, we would like to plan in the future focus groups to understand how people would like to complain. Firstly, we need to find out what people think about complaining.

Ask questions to understand:

• What does the community understand complaints to be?
• How comfortable are people with the idea of complaining? If they are not comfortable, is there another way of expressing it? For example, different words or phrases like 'expressing dissatisfaction' or 'raising issues or concerns'.
• What are the barriers to understanding the concept of complaining? How can we overcome those barriers?

Step 4: Find out how the community would like to complain and give feedback
Task: conduct a Humanitarian Accountability Assessment

It is important that any complaint and response mechanism matches the community in which you are working. If the community does not feel comfortable using the CRM, the CRM will not be used and cannot possibly be effective. Even if you are from the country or even community in which you are operating, you may make incorrect assumptions if you do not conduct an assessment first.

Conduct a humanitarian accountability assessment to find out existing complaints systems from the community perspective and how people would like to complain to the organisation and receive responses to those complaints. If you are planning on implementing a help desk, use this opportunity to ask the community if this would work for them. If the feedback is positive, you may be able to plan details e.g. who would make up the Help Desk Committee. It is also an excellent opportunity to find out the best way to provide information to the community.

Use the FGD Assessment Guides as they are, or amend for your purpose.

Resources:
B. Humanitarian Accountability Assessment
• HA FGD Adult Guide
• HA FGD Child Guide
• Resources available in soft copy:
• HA FGD Adult Script
• HA FGD Analysis Form
• HA FGD Consolidation

These resources will guide you through conducting a humanitarian accountability assessment using focus group discussions. The topics are broad, covering a range of humanitarian accountability areas. If you would like to focus the discussion, use Section 3: Information Gathering/Complaints at a minimum, although it is recommended that Section 2: Information Provision and Section 4: Consultation are also included as they will provide you valuable information for designing your CRM.

The aim of Section 3: Information Gathering/Complaints is to understand the community's general preference for filing complaints to CCFSA. You may be at a stage where you would like to get detailed information about the type of CRM preferred by the community. If so, you will need to ask additional questions depending on your context, aiming to really understand how communities would like to file complaints, including sensitive complaints. In some contexts where you have a good understanding of general community preferences, it may be relevant to present a few CRM options and ask participants to vote on what their preference is, similar to the voting activity conducted for the information provision section of the FGD. The CRM Options resource might help to give you some ideas. Ensure that all information related to complaints handling is documented in detail by note takers.

It is assumed that this process will be carried out by staff who are trained and competent in conducting assessments.

How To Use These Resources

Step 1: Preparation
Use the *Focus Group Discussion Guide* as an overview during preparations for the focus group discussions. You may choose to remove some broader accountability questions and include more detailed questions about CRM preferences.

Step 2: Conduct focus groups
Use the *Focus Group Discussion Script* (in soft copy) as a script or guide for the facilitator, and as a recording template for the note taker. Ensure that the facilitator probes for detailed information about CRM preferences.

Step 3: Analyse data
Use the *Focus Group Discussion Analysis Form* (in soft copy) to analyse the notes taken after each focus group discussion.

Step 4: Consolidate data
Use the *Focus Group Discussion Consolidation Guide* (in soft copy) to consolidate the data analysed from all focus group discussions. You may want to do this by demographics or other grouping e.g. women, men, children, as well as an overall consolidation.

Step 5: Report and use data
This data will be used to inform the selection and design of your CRM. The results of the FGD will be useful for managers and staff working in the areas where the FGD was conducted. Write a simple report to present to these stakeholders.

There is also a focus group discussion guide to be used with groups of children. It is strongly encouraged that children are consulted as well as adults during a humanitarian accountability assessment and that CRMs are made accessible to children.

Step 5: Develop a complaint and response mechanism (CRM) with detailed procedures
Task: Select an appropriate CRM
Write CRM guidelines
Conduct a workshop to contextualise the guidelines with staff and community representatives

Complaints-handling guidelines are critical to ensure that all stakeholders have a common understanding of your complaint and response mechanisms, and that the CRM can be applied fairly to all who access it. CRMs cannot be successfully implemented without some form of comprehensive instruction for how to do it, like guidelines.

The Guidelines are based on the assumption there is an underlying CRM Policy that stipulates how complaints will be dealt with by your organisation, as outlined in Step 2. If there is no such policy, it is necessary to review the CRM Policy template, and ensure that all aspects are included in these guidelines, in particular, how complaints will be handled in the organisation.

Firstly, select a CRM based on the outcome of the humanitarian accountability assessment, and the operational resources and constraints of the program. This may require designing a new type of CRM depending on your context. If you are not using Help Desks or Suggestion Boxes, refer to the Danish Refugee Council's Complaints Mechanism Handbook 2008, Chapter 3 for assistance. Selected CRMs are listed in the CRM Options resource with their advantages and disadvantages to assist you make this decision.

Note that help desks cannot handle sensitive complaints as they are described in this resource guide. Suggestion boxes have the potential to receive sensitive complaints, but only if the boxes are managed in a very specific manner, carefully restricting those who have access to the complaints and communicating this process to communities. Collecting sensitive complaints is one of the more difficult aspects of the CRM process. If this is important in your context, you may need to spend some time to design the best possible mechanism for making this happen. Refer to the Danish Refugee Council's Complaints Mechanism Handbook 2008, Chapter 3 for assistance. Keep in mind that if you reassure communities that a CRM is confidential, you MUST ensure that it is. CRMs can potentially cause significant harm if a person makes a confidential complaint that is discovered by the wrong person.

If you select Community Help Desks or Suggestion Boxes as your mechanism, the resources below will be of most value. Start by making initial changes to the guidelines provided, then conduct a contextualisation workshop with staff and representatives from the community to finalise the guidelines to meet the needs of the organisation and the beneficiaries. If you select another CRM, these resources can still give you an idea of the type of document we have found useful. Write your own guidelines, and use the contextualisation workshop to get feedback and make decisions together with the staff and communities that will be using the mechanism.

A contextualisation workshop is not crucial to the process, but will increase the CRM's applicability to the context and help with buy-in from staff and the community

Resources:
C. CRM Development

- CRM Options
- Community Help Desk Guidelines
- Suggestion Box Guidelines
- Community Help Desk Contextualisation Workshop [Trainers' Agenda, Session Plans and Handouts]
- Suggestion Box Contextualisation Session Plan

How To Use These Resources

You can use the CRM Options to assist in your decision in which CRM is most applicable. This list is NOT exhaustive. There are innumerable ways to structure a CRM to best suit your context. If you are not using a Community Help Desk or Suggestion Box it is very important to refer to the Danish Refugee Council's Complaints Handbook 2008, Chapter 3 to help you design a mechanism that best works for your context.

The following instructions apply only to those who choose to implement Community Help Desks and/or Suggestion Boxes.

The goal is to create Community Help Desk Guidelines and/or Suggestion Box Guidelines that suit your purpose. Use the example guidelines provided and adjust them according to your organisation, the context and the communities that you work with. All aspects of the examples can be adjusted. It is recommended that this is done in a workshop together with staff and community representatives, including vulnerable groups. Once you have completed this step, you can make all changes and remove the instructions contained within this document to create a final set of guidelines.

If you choose to contextualise the guidelines during a workshop with staff and community representatives, the Community Help Desk Contextualisation Workshop, and the Suggestion Box Session Plan can help you. Both the Community Help Desk Guidelines and the Suggestion Box Guidelines are used during the contextualisation sessions.

The Suggestion Box Contextualisation Session Plan is an example of a session you can run with a group to help contextualise those guidelines. The Community Help Desk Contextualisation Workshop includes a Workshop Trainers' Agenda, Session Plans and Handouts for a one-day workshop designed to amend the Community Help Desk Guidelines to best fit a particular context. The session plans are written for experienced trainers to use and amend as appropriate. You will also need a minute taker to take detailed notes throughout.

Think of the resources as templates, like the guidelines. Take the time to review both, and adjust according to your priorities. If you would like to contextualise a different CRM, you can use the same process but with some additional preparation, see below for instructions.

Participants

The workshop is designed to include both staff and community members. The participants need to be those who have an interest in determining the Help Desk or Suggestion Box Guidelines, as well as those who will be using it. This would include a mix of project managers, field staff, community leaders and community members. The recommended number of participants is 20.

Depending on your context, many of your participants may not understand English, or be able to read. In this case, the workshop will need to be amended accordingly. You may want to translate the videos and read out the translation while the video is playing, partner up literate and non-literate participants, ensure everything written is also read out and minimise handouts.

The agenda is currently tight, is written for groups where approximately 70% can read and write and assumes there is not likely to be significant debate over the guidelines. If you would like a more relaxed approach, have lower group literacy levels or expect debate, you may like to

• Extend the time allowed e.g. take 1.5 to 2 days to complete the work and/or
• Use the afternoon session as option (2) focusing on parking lot issues or
• Extend the time taken to work on the guidelines to take the afternoon session as well, addressing issues as you go along.

Invitation

Invite participants at least one week in advance, detailing the objectives of the workshop.

Contextualising other CRM Guidelines

The same workshop can be used to contextualise guidelines for other types of CRMs. To do this, you will need to first prepare (a) a presentation on the CRM to substitute for the CHD video (b) draft guidelines for the CRM and (c) a draft resource kit that can be finalised in the workshop.

Reference

Refer to the Sphere Trainers' Guide for assistance with training preparation: Sections B, C, D. http://www.sphereproject.org/component/option,com_docman/task,cat_view/gid,18/Itemid,203/

Step 6: Provide the resources and support required for the CRM to function
Task: design and procure necessary resources
train staff and the community
inform the community about the help desks provide information to prevent complaints

There are three key categories of resources and support that are essential for any CRM to function effectively:

- Physical resources including complaints register, desk, chairs, banner, etc
- Training for staff and the community on the CRM and their role
- Information about help desks, CCFSA, the program, beneficiary rights
-

Physical resources

CRM's cannot operate effectively without resources. What resources and how they are provided will depend on the CRM, your time and budget. Some physical resources can be provided by communities, others will need to be provided by CCFSA. Keep in mind that professional resources can add to the respect provided to the CRM. The Help Desk Resource Kit lists the recommended resources for help desks.

One critical resource is the Complaints Register for CHDs. CHDs must have a carefully designed Complaints Register in order to collect the information required to investigate, respond to and report on the complaints received. Suggestion Boxes could use a blank sheet of paper, but will be more effective with a Suggestion Box Form.

Why record complaints

- pass on full information to the appropriate person to deal with the complaint
- the complainant can see that their complaint is being documented and taken seriously
- to collate and analyse complaints received to inform future programming

What to record

The key principle is to record as much detail as possible about both the complainant and the complaint. At a minimum, you will need:

- name and contact details (although you may like to keep this optional if you are accepting anonymous complaints)
- date the complaint is received
- details of the complaint
- agreed date for response
- signature of the complainant
- date resolved
- details of resolution

In addition, the complainant should receive a copy of the complaint form, or at least a receipt that they can keep to acknowledge that their complaint has been lodged, and when a response can be expected.

The Complaints Register could be in the form of a plain exercise book, on templates printed by the office or officially printed log books. It all depends what time, funds and access to printing you have available.

Resources: D. CRM Support and Resources
• Help Desk Resource Kit
• Complaints Register for CHDs
• Suggestion Box Form

How To Use These Resources

The Help Desk Resource Kit can be reviewed as part of the CHD Contextualisation Workshop. Otherwise, amend with selected stakeholders once the CHD Guidelines have been completed. The Suggestion Box Form can also be amended with selected stakeholders based on the context and the needs of the organisation.

The Complaints Register for CHDs

There are two options presented for a CHD Complaints Register, as well as a receipt template. Review each of the templates and select which is most appropriate for your context. Amend as appropriate. If none are appropriate, you can create your own, using the principles above.

1. Register Option A

This format is only appropriate for simple complaints because of the limited space available. However, it is effective and requires minimal preparation and resources. Print one copy of the log book for each point where you receive complaints, and instruct people receiving complaints to copy the format in to an exercise book. It is designed to be copied in landscape across two pages of an A4 exercise book.

2. Register Option B

This format can be used in two ways. The first is to print multiple copies of the forms and complete the copies twice for each complaint, one copy to be given to the complainant, the other to be kept with the organisation. The second and most useful is to print the Register with a carbon copy by professional printers. It is appropriate when you have time and resources for printing, and for many, limited sector complaints. It has the advantage that exact copies of the complaint can be immediately given to the complainant.

There is a section in this Register for management – be it the district or project manager depending what is appropriate in your context – to review the Register and make comments. This is important to evidence that management is aware of the complaints, approves of the responses and also gives managers and opportunity to comment.

3. Receipt

Use this simple receipt when you are not able to give a carbon copy of the complaint.

Resources to train the staff and community

Training of staff and community members who participate in the operation of the CRM is non-negotiable. They must have detailed knowledge of how the CRM works for it to be effective. The fastest way to do this is conduct a Training of Trainers for key staff, who then train staff and community members who operate the CRM in their districts. Included in this Resource Guide is a 3.5 Day Training of Trainers Session Plan and Handouts.

The Help Desk Training of Trainers Session Plans outlines a 1-day workshop for participants, as well as a 3.5-day training intended for staff to learn how to conduct the 1-day workshop themselves. It is only relevant for those who have selected Community Help Desks as their CRM.

If you are not using CHDs or suggestion boxes, you can use the process as an example to help you develop session plans to train staff and communities on different types of CRMs.

Resources: D. CRM Support & Resources
• Help Desk Training of Trainers Workshops [Agenda, Session Plans and Handouts]
• Help Desk 1 Day Training for Staff and Communities [Agenda, Session Plans and Handouts]

How To Use These Resources

This workshop can be conducted once the Community Help Desk Guidelines have been finalised for your particular context. You may be able to adjust the training to include Suggestion Boxes if you are using both CRMs.

The resources provided are in three parts:

(a) Agenda and session plan for the 3.5-day CHD Training of Trainers (ToT). The format of this is as follows:
- Introduction
- Modelling of the 1-day CHD training. The facilitators conduct the 1-day CHD training for the ToT participants. You will need to use the resources from the 1-day CHD Training for staff and community members here.
- CHD knowledge for staff; facilitation skills; preparation for practicum
- Practicum: participants will be required to conduct a real 1-day CHD training.
- Debrief and future steps.

(b) Agenda and session plan for the 1-day CHD Training for staff and community members.
(c) Handouts for both workshops.

Facilitation team
The ToT session plans are written for experienced trainers of trainers, to use and amend as appropriate. You will need at least the number of facilitators as there are practicums (see below) so that each group facilitating a practicum has their own trainer with them.
The 1-day training can be facilitated by people with little training experience after they have completed the ToT, assuming they have demonstrated the capacity to conduct such trainings.

Participants
The CHD ToT is designed expressly for staff who will be responsible for training staff and community members in the future. They should all have the capacity to conduct such trainings. Previous experience training is desirable, but not essential. 12 – 18 participants are ideal, up to 20 is manageable.

The 1 Day CHD Training and Practicum participants should be community members and staff who will be working with and/or operating help desks in the near future. Up to 25 people can participate in this workshop.

Depending on your context, many of your participants particularly for the 1 day CHD Training may not understand English, or be able to read. In this case, the workshop will need to be amended accordingly.

You may want to translate the videos and read out the translation while the video is playing, partner up literate and non-literate participants, ensure everything written is also read out and minimise handouts.

You may also like to consider extending the length of the workshop, depending on literacy and also how much community members like to engage during trainings and workshops in your context.

Invitation
Invite participants at least one week in advance, detailing the objectives of the workshop.

Preparation
Administratively, the CHD ToT requires an additional level of preparation to most workshops. On day 3 of the ToT, all the ToT participants will be conducting a practicum – a real 1-day CHD Training of community members. The number of simultaneous practicums you will have will depend on the number of trainers you are training. For example, if you are training 18 participants in the ToT, you would need 3 practicums, with 6 trainers in each group. This means you will need 3 x venues; 3 x sets of resources and 3 x 20 participants on the third day of training.

Try to ensure:

- 4-8 trainers per practicum
- 15 – 20 participants in each practicum who all need to be invited with appropriate protocol
- Appropriate venues and services (food, IT) for each practicum
- Appropriate resources for each practicum (in the handouts are a list of resources each group should be provided).

Reference
Refer to the Sphere Trainers' Guide for assistance with training preparation: Sections B, C, D. http://www.sphereproject.org/component/option,com_docman/task,cat_view/gid,18/Itemid,203/

Information Provision Resources

Providing information is a key aspect of any accountable aid program. Often, we do not provide enough information or the right kind of information to our stakeholders.

Information provision is strongly related to feedback and complaints. Stakeholders need to know they have a right to complain, and how to go about making a complaint for a CRM to be effective. Providing information about how to complain will increase the number of complaints received that will help improve your programming.

Complaints and rumors related to confusion about the project and the agency will be reduced by providing program information in an appropriate and timely manner. It also encourages complaints regarding rights that stakeholders may not even be aware they can complain about. No CRM can operate effectively without solid information provision.

If possible, make information available at the complaint and response mechanism. This may be in the form of written information, or spending time with a complaints committee explaining aspects of the program that they might pass on the information to others.

The resources in this resource guide are designed to help you provide information to the community faster. They assist with the development of either a comprehensive information provision strategy if time allows, or contextualisation of guidelines and a range of poster templates that can be applied to your program very quickly. Decide which option is most appropriate for your circumstance, and choose the applicable resources (resources marked * are considered the minimum).

Resources:
How To Use These Resources
E. Information Provision

- Information Provision Guidelines*
- Stakeholder Mapping
- Information Provision for Vulnerable Groups
- Information Provision Strategy
- Poster Templates* and Prepared Posters
- Pre-distribution meeting script example
- Notice Board Design
-

FIRSTLY, Adopt Information Provision Guidelines

Adopt Information Provision Guidelines so that staff understand what standard of information is expected to be provided by CCFSA. It is recommended that you contextualise the *Information Provision Guidelines* provided here for your program. The best way to do this is in a workshop based on the results of a Humanitarian Accountability Assessment, however if time is limited, it could be done with selective internal consultation.

SECONDLY Create an Information Provision Strategy

Use the resources *Stakeholder Mapping*, *Information Provision Strategy Template* and *Information Provision for Vulnerable Groups* to inform an Information Provision Strategy and action plan. This is best done in a workshop, to raise the awareness and skills of staff at the same time developing a strategy that they are all on board with. This step is valuable but time consuming, and may not be appropriate in rapid onset relief situations.

Stakeholder Mapping

Stakeholder mapping identifies the people and institutions that are important to the community, and to a program. It allows us to deliberately plan for the best way to provide them with information.

Information Provision Strategy Template

This template can be completed in a workshop or individually by staff working on a project. The aim is for staff to make a detailed plan for their information provision strategy.

Information Provision for Vulnerable Groups

This tool is to get people thinking about what vulnerable groups exist in their community and how their information needs might be different from others. It is useful where particular vulnerable groups tend to be overlooked. It will need to be contextualised to the particular situation.

THIRDLY Create Information Provision Materials

Use the *Information Provision Templates* to provide written information to communities. Highly practical, these are ready-to-go templates, intended for program staff to be able to edit, add a photo, and print within hours. They are most effective when their use is planned based on information provision guidelines, and following processes listed above. However, in situations where time is restricted, they can be used immediately. Each is explained in the table below.

There is a collection of posters and flyers. Posters are primarily intended for use at program and distribution sites, at CCFSA offices and community centers. Notice boards, mobile or stationery, are useful for displaying posters at program or distribution sites. Flyers are primarily intended for distribution to Government, other NGOs, CBOs, and community leaders. Prioritise which are most appropriate for your situation, amend and complete.

In some of the templates there is a section on 'how to complain'. If you do not have these same systems set up, you will need to completely change this text box. If you have no formal systems set up, think about what are the informal systems people can use, for example approaching staff at the office, calling the office, and provide this information instead.

Step 7: Receive And Respond to Complaints
Task: receive complaints and feedback
resolve complaints
document the complaint and the response

This step is essentially the implementation of the CRM as documented in your CRM Policy and CRM Guidelines and supported by all that you have developed in Step 5. Any resources you will need to guide how you receive, resolve, respond to and document the complaint and response has been covered in the previous steps.

Step 8: Learning

Task: collate, analyse and report complaints incorporate learning in to programming
For complaints to have an impact at the programming level, they need to be collated, analysed, and reported on to decision makers. Only with this information will decision makers be able to incorporate the learning from the complaints in to programming. If the resources are available, for large programs a complaints database may be useful. CCFSA is working on a standardised complaints database. In the meantime, means to collect the data, analyse it and present in a monthly report are required. Follow the Steps for Collating, Analysing and Reporting Data for guidance.

Resources:
How To Use These Resources
F. Data Collection and Reporting
- Steps for Collating, Analysing and Reporting Data
- Monthly Report Template District Level
- Monthly Report Template National Level
- Resource available in soft copy:

- Excel Data Collection Template o SPSS Data Collection Template

Read the 'Steps for Collating, Analysing and Reporting Data' to learn how to create your own data collection template. Use this template to collate and analyse the data to inform your monthly report. The Data Collection Templates are examples referred to in the 'Steps for Collating, Analysing and Reporting Data'. You may be able to use these in your program, or amend them to better suit your needs.

Alter the Monthly Report Templates to suit your purposes and meet the needs of the program and people to whom the report will be sent.

This process is particularly important because it determines what information is provided to senior management, who are able to incorporate learning into programming decisions.

ANNEX 1A

HAP Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Included here are the Self-Assessment questions for Information Provision (Benchmark 2) and Complaints-handling (Benchmark 5). You can access the full Self-Assessment Questionnaire from the HAP International website:
www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/self-assessment-against-the-benchmarks-1(2).doc

Benchmark 2

The agency shall make the following information publicly available to intended beneficiaries, disaster-affected communities, agency staff and other specified stakeholders:

(a) organisational background,

(b) humanitarian accountability framework,

(c) humanitarian plan,

(d) progress reports, and

(e) complaints handling procedures
A

		Strongly yes	Some-what yes	No	Don't know
1	Does our organisation have a well-disseminated information policy?				
2	Does our organisation inform communities about their rights and entitlements?				
3	Do we inform beneficiaries about the standards we have set ourselves?				
4	Do we share our objectives, plans and the implementation process with beneficiary communities and other stakeholders?				
5	Is the beneficiary selection process communicated and well understood by all members of the community?				
6	Do we ensure that our information is available in the languages of our beneficiaries?				
7	Are we sure our beneficiaries can access our information?				
8	Have we considered age, gender and diversity within our beneficiary groups when disseminating information?				
9	Do we monitor how well we're going with disseminating information to our stakeholders?				
10	Do we invite feedback and make sure people know how to give it?				

ANNEX 1B

Benchmark 5

The agency shall establish and implement complaints-handling procedures that are effective, accessible and safe for intended beneficiaries, disaster-affected communities, agency staff, humanitarian partners and other specified bodies

		Strongly Yes	Some-what yes	No	Don’t know
1	Do we facilitate and welcome the raising of ideas, questions, concerns and complaints by beneficiaries and their leaders throughout the project cycle?				
2	Do we have a clear, formal and transparent system in place to handle beneficiaries’ complaints and concerns?				
3	Do we have a clear, formal and transparent system in place to handle staff complaints and concerns?				
4	Do we have a clear, formal and transparent system in place to handle complaints and concerns of humanitarian partners and other stakeholders?				
5	Does our organisation clearly communicate how people can access its complaints mechanisms, how to find out more and how to receive assistance if needed?				
6	Are staff clear on their roles in handling and responding to complaints and provided with appropriate training?				
7	Are all complaints recorded and responses monitored?				
8	Does our complaints-handling mechanism specify how and within which time frame it will be processed, how the complainant can get feedback?				
9	Do we respond in a timely manner to complaints and concerns raised?				
10	Does our complaints-handling mechanism specify how the safety of the complainant and confidentiality of the complaint are secured?				
11	Are there clear procedures in place to address allegations of abuse and do we have the expertise to investigate allegations of abuse, including sexual abuse and corruption?				
12	Are beneficiaries provided with information on where to go if they are subject to sexual abuse?				
13	Do we have a process for reviewing and responding to ideas, suggestions and comments from all staff members?				
14	Were our complaints-handling mechanisms established in a participatory way?				

ANNEX 2 A

CCFSA Complaint and Response Mechanism Policy

Purpose

CCFSA requires all project programs to have some form of complaint and response mechanism in place by 2024. Effective CRMs will become a standard that contributes to Go No Go trigger decisions for all new food programs. This policy is designed to guide national level complaint and response mechanism policies. It outlines the principles by which CCFSA expects feedback and complaints to be handled across all its programs.

Policy Statement

CCFSA is committed to receiving feedback and responding to complaints about its work and conduct from all stakeholders in a timely and appropriate manner. Feedback and complaints will be dealt with professionally, in ways that promote fairness, transparency and accountability. CCFSA recognises the importance of doing so to reaffirm the dignity and value of our stakeholders and their right to be heard and acknowledged,

(a) learn from our stakeholders and adjust our programs to better meet their needs, thereby improving program quality and impact,
(b) alert the organisation to serious issues for redress and to assure stakeholders that WVZ does not tolerate wrongdoing

Principles

The following principles have been developed to allow flexibility and ensure implementation with respect to the different local contexts in which CCFSA operates projects:

1. The following will be documented and communicated to relevant stakeholders: the purpose of the complaint and response mechanisms, what constitutes a complaint and how validity will be assessed (for different types of complaints), who can raise a complaint, methods for raising complaints of different nature, the handling and response procedures, and limitations.
2. Complaint and response mechanisms will recognise and effectively communicate the right of communities *(beneficiaries and non- beneficiaries)* to raise a complaint and receive a response.
3. All relevant stakeholders will be made aware of the CCFSA commitments in relation to food aid projects, of their respective rights, roles and responsibilities, including in relation to the complaint and response mechanism and the principles included here.
4. Complaint and response mechanisms will be developed, implemented and communicated in a manner that is appropriate to context and accessible to potential users. The name, the method for raising complaints, and the handling and response procedures will be context-sensitive and built on redress mechanisms that already exist in the community.
5. Complaints will be received, processed and resolved at a level appropriate to the nature of the complaint and as close as possible to the place where they were raised.
6. Complaints will be resolved as soon as possible, within a specified and clearly communicated timeframe.
7. All complainants will be able to raise complaints without fear of retaliation or discrimination.
8. Confidentiality of the complainant and of the subject or object of the complaint will be protected unless otherwise agreed by the respective parties.
9. All complaints will be subject to an independent review or investigation, depending on the nature of the complaint.
10. Our complaint and response mechanisms will include phased referral, depending on the nature of the complaint. Complainants will be provided with the opportunity to appeal and the terms for this process will be clearly stated and communicated.

11. Individuals handling complaints will be subject to rigorous selection procedures, sensitisation and training so that the principles herewith are implemented accordingly. Specifically, independence of individuals receiving, handling and investigating complaints will be observed according to principle nine above.
12. Any complaint and response mechanism will be subject to periodic reviews with a view of improving the mechanism and its stated procedures and understanding the impact it is having on users and the project. Indicators and methods to measure the performance and effectiveness of receiving and responding to complaints (community evaluation, Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM), user surveys and changes in organisational policies and practice) will be stated at the time when the complaint and response mechanism is set up.
13. As per a stated procedure, there will be regular reporting on the number of complaints, response time, type of complaints, and details on serious incidents.
14. Policies and procedures for complaint and response mechanisms will be compatible with Human Resources, Grievance, Child Protection, Whistleblower and Risk Reduction policies as well as other requirements from donor and host governments. Where external factors do not allow implementation of complaint and response mechanisms as per these principles, a justification will be provided by the project in question.