Key elements of a feedback, complaint and response mechanism

A formal feedback, complaint and response mechanism (CRM) provides safe, accessible and effective channels for individuals and communities to raise complaints, ask questions and give feedback, and for the organizations involved to respond. CRMs are essential for community participation, monitoring and evaluation, and learning. This tool will review the key elements to be considered before and while designing and setting up a successful CRM, and will introduce the relevant tools available in the toolkit.

### Before designing the CRM, ensure that:

* Senior management and field staff support the idea of a CRM
* The CRM has an appointed dedicated staff
* The appointed CRM staff members have experience and/or receive training
* Financial resources are made available
* The community is consulted regarding traditional and preferred complaint channels

### When designing the CRM ensure that:

* Staff and community participate in the development of the CRM guidelines
* Principles of confidentiality and non-retaliation are included
* Roles and responsibilities are clear for all those involved
* The complaints process is accessible, easy and safe:
* children and their carers in remote locations are able to complain
* complaints can be received both verbally and in writing
* a complaint can be made on behalf of somebody else (because of illiteracy, fears for personal safety, inability to travel, etc.)
* Cases outside the organization’s mandate (e.g., allegations of abuse) can be responded to and/or referred
* The complainant can appeal if he/she is not happy with the outcome

### Before setting-up the CRM, ensure that:

* All staff members (not only those directly involved) are informed and trained on the CRM
* The community is informed and knows what they can complain about and how to do it

### When setting-up the CRM ensure that:

* **All complaints are recorded** on a complaints form and saved in a database. It is good practice to categorize them by type.
* **Complaint files are kept confidential**. Only those responsible for dealing with complaints should have access to the files. It is vital that complainants have complete trust in the process and that their right to confidentiality is respected at all times.
* **All complaints are acknowledged**, verbally or in writing. Complaints can be received via telephone hotline, email, complaints box, etc. You should develop your own procedures, considering the specificities of the complaint channels selected. Remember to include: the date the complaint was made, the person to whom the complaint was made, a brief outline of the nature of the complaint, the date by which the person should expect a response, and how to appeal against the outcome of the complaint.
* **All complaints are resolved**. Remember that some complaints, especially those involving staff misconduct, require formal investigation. It is good practice to involve staff not directly linked to the project (or partners or community members). In some cases, the complaint has to be ‘escalated’ so that investigation involves people from a more senior level or with specialist expertise.