

The steps and indicators of a Complaints and Response Mechanism (CRM)

Steps:

- 1. Establishment of a CRM is supported by senior management, and appropriate resources, including human, are devoted to this purpose**

Indicators:

- a. Field staff are aware of the commitment from senior managers to increase accountability.
 - b. Staff responsible for handling complaints have dedicated time available to do so.
- 2. Beneficiaries, host communities and other stakeholders are consulted regarding appropriate ways to make complaints**
 - a. Young people said they wanted to be able to submit complaints by sms and women told female staff that there are things they wouldn't feel comfortable about telling their male community representatives to pass on.
 - b. Field staff learnt that some beneficiaries would feel offended if information regarding the mechanism was to be communicated mainly in pictures.
 - 3. The organisation finalises its complaints handling policy and procedures**
 - a. The complaints-handling mechanism specifies how the safety of the complainant and confidentiality of the complaint are secured and there are clear procedures in place to address allegations of abuse.
 - b. There is documentation outlining the purpose and limitations of the mechanism, what constitutes a valid complaint, and the step-by-step procedures, including complaints about exploitation and abuse by aid workers.
 - 4. Staff are trained in the processes and procedures**
 - a. Field staff understands why they have a CRM and how it works.
 - b. There is expertise to investigate allegations of abuse, including sexual abuse and corruption.
 - 5. Beneficiaries, host communities and other stakeholders are informed as to how to go about making a complaint**
 - a. The number and nature of complaints received shows that beneficiaries understand how to use the system.
 - b. The organisation has information regarding the CRM available in a number of locations and in a number of languages and ensures that field officers explain it verbally to community groups at regular intervals.
 - 6. Complaints are submitted**
 - a. The number of complaints received by the organisation clearly increases after the mechanism is introduced.
 - b. The organisation receives complaints through a number of channels, including written complaints in a box, face-to-face reports, and emails.

7. Complainants are acknowledged

- a. The CRM file has copies of the receipts given to complainants, with information as to how long a response should take.
- b. Beneficiaries who make a complaint hear that their complaint was received and know when they will hear further.

8. Complaints are reviewed and investigated

- a. The organisation has clear documentary evidence of pending and processed complaints.
- b. The people responsible get to the complaints inbox within the time frame stated in the policy.

9. Response is given

- a. The CRM file has evidence that complainants received a response.
- b. Beneficiaries who have made a complaint will be able to tell you that they know the outcome.

10. The complainant may appeal the decision

- a. The fact that some complainants appeal the decision shows that people know how to, and that the system has the required integrity to allow for that.
- b. Mrs B wasn't happy with the outcome so the field officer facilitated her speaking to the person responsible at the regional headquarters.

11. Information from complaints is continuously fed into project improvement

- a. Staff are aware of what they and the organisation have learnt along the way as a result of the CRM and can give examples of what changed.
- b. Documentary evidence supports the fact that projects have been improved by the feedback received through the CRM.

12. The CRM is evaluated and adjusted according to lessons learnt

- a. There is documentary evidence that the organisation has formally reviewed the effectiveness of its CRM and that changes were made.
- b. The organisation discovered that the community committee they had chosen as one entry point for complaints was discouraging complaints from some people. It was decided to both work with the committee members to improve their understanding of the role and use an additional entry point suggested by beneficiaries consulted.