IFRC

MODULE 3

HOW TO LISTEN AND RESPOND TO OPEN COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

A guide to qualitative feedback management for humanitarian response and beyond

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IFRC FEEDBACK KIT

with support from:

CDA PRACTICAL LEARNING for INTERNATIONAL ACTION

CONTENTS

This module is part of a comprehensive Feedback Kit, which provides more detailed information on the basic steps of setting up any feedback mechanism, on how to handle sensitive feedback, as well as how to conduct perception surveys. This module is also part of a bigger toolbox developed with CARE and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

South Sudan 2013 - A meeting of rural villagers in Western Bahr el Ghazal State learning about health and hygiene through pictographs and facilitated discussion. This South Sudan Red Cross initiative helps illiterate communities improve their standards of living.

NAVIGATING THIS GUIDE

What is this document?

This guide describes how those involved in humanitarian responses can systematically document, analyse, and use any kind of open, unstructured feedback shared by community members during humanitarian response. This includes feedback about the response, the groups involved in the response, or the issue being addressed by the response (e.g., an epidemic such as COVID-19). Importantly, this guide may also be useful for non-emergency contexts.

This document will help you to collect and use all kinds of open feedback, including information shared informally. Depending on your context, it provides guidance on how to set up both simple and more sophisticated community feedback mechanisms. The guidance and tools provided can work for both in-person and remote situations. It provides the steps to process open, unstructured feedback data to see trends and prioritise actions in real-time.

KEY TO READING THE GUIDE

The guide provides:

- Key terms defined in the glossary hyperlinked

Resources

Tips

Examples

Definition of open, unstructured feedback

Feedback that community members share when they want about topics they want to address (as opposed to structured feedback, when an organization actively solicits feedback from communities about certain topics). It can come through routine conversations, community meetings, telephone hotlines, interactive radio shows, etc. and generates qualitative data for the organization to analyse and act upon.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CDA	CDA Collaborative Learning Projects
CDC	United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CEA	Community Engagement and Accountability[1]
CP3	IFRC Community Epidemics and Pandemics Preparedness Programme
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IM	Information Management
KAP	Knowledge, attitudes, and practices
KoBo Toolbox	A data collection, management, and visualisation platform
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MISP	Minimum Initial Service Package
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NS	National Society
PGI	Protection Gender and Inclusion
PMER	Planning Monitoring Evaluation and Reporting
RCRC	Red Cross Red Crescent
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Promotion

Who is this document for?

When there is an emergency, staff and volunteers of humanitarian organisations, or other stakeholders such as governments, often receive feedback from the crisis-affected community. However, many groups struggle to document, share, and analyse this information systematically and in a way that informs broader learning and action. This document can be used by any organisation to help them better manage open feedback from community members.

While this document is based on experiences from public health responses, it can be used in any context where there is ongoing communication with community members and a need to understand and act on feedback. While we provide examples of Red Cross Red Crescent feedback mechanisms, these can be used by anyone involved in programmes offering services to crisis-affected or vulnerable communities.

1. Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) describes the process of working in a transparent and participatory way with communities that improves the quality of programmes and operations. It can be used interchangeably with Accountability of Affected People or Populations (AAP).

How to read this document?

The overview on the next pages helps you to quickly identify what part of this guidance might be most relevant to your situation. It lays out each section of the guide, what is included in that section, who should prioritise reading it, and an overview of the different resources provided (with embedded links to the sections and resources). The resources are distinguished between:

Guidance documents
text that outlines advice, key concepts, and best practices

Tools
resources that you can fill out to help you make decisions

Templates
samples of tools that you can use in a real-life implementation of a feedback mechanism, all of which can be modified to fit your organisation's specific context and needs

Democratic Republic of Congo 2019 – Dr. Anita Mtongo engages a woman at a local health centre in Binza Meteo, an urban centre in the country's capital, Kinshasa. She provides critical health information that can help prevent herself and her family from getting sick in the future. © Corrie Butler/IFRC

AT A GLANCE: HOW TO LISTEN AND RESPOND TO OPEN COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Overview of the stages and available tools

INTRODUCTION	
Content includes	***Who should read this?***
• Clarification of what to expect from the document • Understanding the basics of community feedback and open feedback • How to navigate the overall guidance document	Anyone who is relatively new to the concepts and practice of setting up feedback mechanisms and/or is looking to use the document as a step-by-step guide
STAGE 1: BUILDING YOUR FEEDBACK MECHANISM	
Steps to take:	***Who should read this***
1. Get the buy-in you need **2.** Determine the scale of the feedback mechanism **3.** Define your communication channels **4.** Determine how you will document open feedback **5.** Map and design information flows **6.** Agree on roles, responsibilities, and timeframes **7.** Identify the resources you will need **8.** Conduct the necessary trainings **9.** Advertise the feedback mechanism	Anyone who is at the beginning stages of setting up a feedback mechanism that will receive open, unstructured feedback or wants to strengthen such a mechanism
Resources include:	***What is this resource for?***
Feedback tool 1: Tips for creating leadership buy-in	Practical tips that can help you approach and win over the leaders of your organization and make them advocates for community feedback mechanisms
Feedback tool 2: Determining the scale of a feedback mechanism	Asking your organisation critical questions to help ensure you can handle the feedback you will receive and to ensure analysis and action is happening at the right levels
CEA toolkit tool 19: Communication channel matrix	Provides detailed information on a wide variety of information channels, their strengths and weaknesses, and their best uses
Feedback tool 3: Defining the communication channels for a feedback mechanisms	Walks you through the steps of how to engage the community in selecting the right communication channel

Feedback tool 4: Deciding on how to document your feedback data	Provides a decision-tree tool to help you decide the most appropriate way to document feedback, as well as the advantages/disadvantages of each approach
Feedback tool 5: Community feedback form	Provides a Word document template form for recording individual pieces of feedback
Feedback tool 6: Community feedback form for KoBo Collect	Provides an Excel spreadsheet template for those using the KoBo collect software on a mobile device for collecting feedback
Feedback tool 7: Community feedback logbook	Provides an Excel spreadsheet template for how to log feedback in a central location in a way that will let you begin to organise and analyse it
Feedback tool 8: Feedback mechanism design workshop package	A facilitator agenda for a workshop organised with key stakeholders to discuss and agree on the essential aspects of the feedback mechanism
Feedback tool 9: Mapping the information flow	Provides advice about how different kinds of feedback should be handled internally and questions to help you map how information does and should flow in your organisation
Feedback tool 10: Mapping and agreeing on roles, responsibilities, and resources	A document that includes a table for you to fill out that will help you think through what human, financial, and technical resources you will need for each step of the feedback cycle
Feedback tool 11: Template budget for feedback mechanisms	A template that helps you to develop a detailed budget for a feedback mechanism
Feedback tool 12: Community feedback training package	Provides model agenda and PowerPoint slide decks for training data collectors and data analysts on community feedback mechanisms
STAGE 2: COLLECTING FEEDBACK	
Steps to take:	***Who should read this?***
1. Listen and acknowledge **2.** Ask for permission to use and share the information **3.** Record community feedback **4.** Provide initial responses	Anyone who is directly interfacing with communities who are providing feedback, or is working with/ supporting the people who are
Resources include:	***What is this resource for?***
Feedback tool 18: Important skills for effective listening	A guidance document with best practices on how to actively and respectfully listen to community feedback

STAGE 3: FEEDBACK REFERRAL AND ANALYSIS	
Steps to take:	***Who should read this?***
1. Consolidate and clean data **2.** Prioritise and refer feedback **3.** Coding data to identify key themes **4.** Disaggregate and triangulate the data **5.** Integrating feedback data into broader analysis processes	Anyone who is responsible for handling feedback data, including those who compile feedback, analyse feedback for broader trends, and refer feedback for immediate action
Resources include:	***What is this resource for?***
Feedback tool 19: Ways to code feedback data	Provides an overview of the different ways to code data, from hand-written approaches to ones that rely on computer software, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of each
Feedback tool 20: How to code open feedback data	Provides a step-by-step guide to how to code feedback data, including examples about how this looks in with different coding approaches (e.g., post-it note coding, Excel coding, etc.)
Feedback tool 20: How to build or adapt a coding framework	Provides step by step guidance on how to build, adapt, test, refine, and update a coding framework for qualitative analysis
Tool 22 Template coding framework and codebook	An Excel sheet that provides a template of what a coding framework and associated codebook might look like, with guidance and examples
Tool 23 Example coding frameworks	An Excel sheet that is a real-world example of a coding framework that was used for the Ebola response and can be adapted for other public health responses.
Feedback tool 25: Types and examples of data disaggregation	Provides a summary of the most common categories for data disaggregation with a brief example of the kind of analysis each could produce

STAGE 4: SHARING AND ACTING ON FEEDBACK	
Steps to take:	***Who should read this?***
1. Share feedback data in appropriate formats **2.** Discuss the feedback with the relevant stakeholders **3.** Take action	Anyone who is responsible for sharing feedback with decision-makers at any level of the organisation, as well as people who are using feedback to make decisions
Resources include:	***What is this resource for?***
Feedback tool 27: Identifying the right format for your audience	Includes a table to map out who needs what kind of information in what format, as well as a decision-making tree for what kinds of products you can develop

Feedback tool 28: Formats for sharing community feedback	Provides an overview of the different ways you can share feedback analysis with stakeholders, the advantages and disadvantages of each, and advice on good practice for each
Feedback tool 29: Key considerations for sharing community feedback data	A short overview of the main things to consider when sharing community feedback data
Feedback tool 30: Inter-agency or inter-office sharing of community feedback highlights	A Word document that provides an example questionnaire to gather information from different stakeholders inside or outside your organisation about how they collect feedback data to facilitate the sharing of those data
Feedback tool 31: Developing an action plan for addressing community feedback	Provides a decision-tree to help plan out whether and how action can be taken in response to certain feedback data
Feedback tool 32: Community feedback action tracker	An Excel spreadsheet that provides a template for how an organisation can keep track of what actions it is taking in response to community feedback
STAGE 5: CLOSING THE LOOP	
Steps to take:	***Who should read this?***
1. 'Close the loop' internally 2. 'Close the loop' with the community 3. Document the closing of the loop	People involved at every step of the feedback cycle – decision-makers who decide what happens with feedback data, community-facing staff and volunteers who need to let communities know what has happened with their feedback, and the people managing the flow of information between both groups
STAGE 6: REVIEWING AND ADAPTING THE MECHANISM	
Step to take:	***Who should read this?***
1. Check if the mechanism is working and adapt where necessary	People who are responsible for running the feedback mechanism and community engagement more broadly
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	
Content includes	***Who should read this?***
• Additional resources • Glossary of terms used in document	Anyone who needs additional references and resources

INTRODUCTION

When a disaster hits, it is essential to understand the affected communities' main concerns, questions, thoughts, and priorities. Investing in building a feedback mechanism for open data helps you track community members' priorities and thoughts. This allows you to address issues when they arise and stay relevant by adjusting your work in almost real-time, be it operational decisions or community engagement strategies. You will not be able to handle all concerns and not all of them will fall under your mandate. Still, the systematic documentation makes it easier to advocate for changes, share insights in inter-agency forums, and plan for collective action. These actions help build trust by showing that you are listening and acting on what is important to the community.

What is open feedback?

Feedback can be collected in different forms. This guidance relates to open, unstructured feedback, which is feedback that community members share when they want about topics they want to address (as opposed to structured feedback, when an organisation actively solicits feedback from communities about certain topics). It can come through routine conversations, community meetings, telephone hotlines, interactive radio shows, etc. and generates qualitative data to be analysed and acted upon.

The difference between open and structured feedback is described in the chart below:

	OPEN FEEDBACK	STRUCTURED FEEDBACK
GENERAL DESCRIPTION:	Staff or volunteers listening to feedback about anything community members decide to share	Staff or volunteers actively soliciting feedback from communities by asking specific questions about pre-determined topics
CHANNELS THROUGH WHICH THE FEEDBACK IS RECEIVED:	Shared through channels dedicated to collecting feedback and/or during other kinds of routine activities. E.g., Community meetings, interactive radio shows, hotlines, discussions after community events, informal conversations during daily activities, etc.	Shared through channels dedicated to collecting feedback. E.g., Perception or Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) surveys, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, social media polls, etc.
TYPE OF DATA GENERATED BY FEEDBACK:	Qualitative data	Qualitative data and/or quantitative data
USEFUL FOR:	Understanding the thoughts and priorities of communities in real-time	Answering specific questions that can help to design programs, activities, and strategies

Types of open community feedback

While open community feedback can come in many different forms and cover various topics, it tends to fall into a set of known categories, such as those below:

Questions

Can show what communities need to know and help you to identify information gaps.

Examples:
- How can I keep my family safe?
- Where can I register for receiving assistance?
- Why is the COVID-19 vaccine only for older people?

Suggestions or requests

Can tell you what communities think needs to be done about specific issues and what you could do better or differently.

Examples:
- You should provide us with face masks.
- We want to be consulted before you decide what will be done.

Observations, beliefs, and perceptions

Can show how communities understand and analyse their situation.

Examples:
- People in our communities don't want to be vaccinated.
- The COVID-19 vaccine causes infertility. The Government wants to sterilise our women.
- The earthquake is a revenge of the gods.

Encouragement and praise

Can tell you what communities appreciate, and think should be continued, confirming if you are moving in the right direction.

Examples:
- Thanks for visiting us and discussing with us.
- We love the radio shows, keep up the good work!

Reports of concerns or incidents

These are comments about specific issues which might need to be handled on an individual basis.

Examples:
- The latrines in our sector are broken and need to be fixed.
- I have not received my cash transfer for this month.

All of the types of feedback mentioned above, but particularly the reports of concerns or incidents, can be sensitive in nature.

Sensitive feedback is any information that can put the person sharing it or other people linked to it at risk and needs to be handled with care. It can involve serious allegations related to breaches of national or international law, violations of human rights law concerning the protection (safety, dignity, and rights) of affected populations, or any violation of the humanitarian Code of Conduct or safeguarding policies. In practice, this often is about reports of sexual exploitation and abuse or acts of corruption.

What is the learning behind this document?

This guidance document and its tools are informed by the experiences of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, who implemented a qualitative feedback approach in the 2018-2020 Ebola response in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). This qualitative feedback approach was then adapted and used in the COVID-19 response across Africa, the response to the volcanic eruption in Goma, the Ebola response in Guinea, and the IFRC Community Epidemics and Pandemics Preparedness Programme (CP3) in DRC.

This guide was also developed in partnership with CDA Collaborative Learning (CDA), who are well-known in the humanitarian sector for Do No Harm and the Listening Project. CDA has 20 years of experience working with partners such as the Red Cross Red Crescent (RCRC) Movement and NGOs on effective listening and feedback practices, and much of the evidence and lessons gathered have been adapted for this guide[2].

How does this document relate to other tools and guidance on community feedback?

This guide is part of a bigger toolbox developed together with CARE and the US Center for Disease Control (CDC). It should be used together with the IFRC Feedback Kit, which provides more detailed information on the basic steps of setting up any feedback mechanism, on how to handle sensitive feedback, as well as how to conduct perception surveys. Consult the Red Cross Red Crescent CEA guide for more general information on the Red Cross Red Crescent approach to community engagement and accountability (CEA).

There is some overlap in content between the different modules of the IFRC Feedback Kit as they have been designed to stand on their own as guidance documents. However, each has specialised guidance and resources for different issues related to building and managing community feedback mechanisms. This guide focuses on how to receive and manage open, unstructured feedback. Guidance for how to manage structured feedback can be found in the Feedback Kit Module 4 on perception surveys, and Tool 16 of the CEA toolkit provides guidance for conducting focus group discussions.

The graphic below shows how this document fits with the other resources and toolkits mentioned above:

Red Cross Red Crescent guide on Community Engagement and Accountability

The CEA guide clarifies how community feedback is a core part of any community engagement and accountability approach.

IFRC Feedback Kit

IFRC

This kit provides Red Cross Red Crescent global guidance for setting up and managing feedback mechanisms and consists of the following modules:

- Community Feedback – Why Bother?
- Feedback Essentials
- How to Listen and Respond to Open Community Feedback*
- How to Use Perception Surveys in a Feedback Mechanism
- How to handle sensitive feedback

* This document, which is also part of a broader social-science toolbox developed with **Care** and **CDC**

2. For more see: https://www.cdacollaborative.org/

STAGES OF A FEEDBACK MECHANISM FOR OPEN, UNSTRUCTURED FEEDBACK

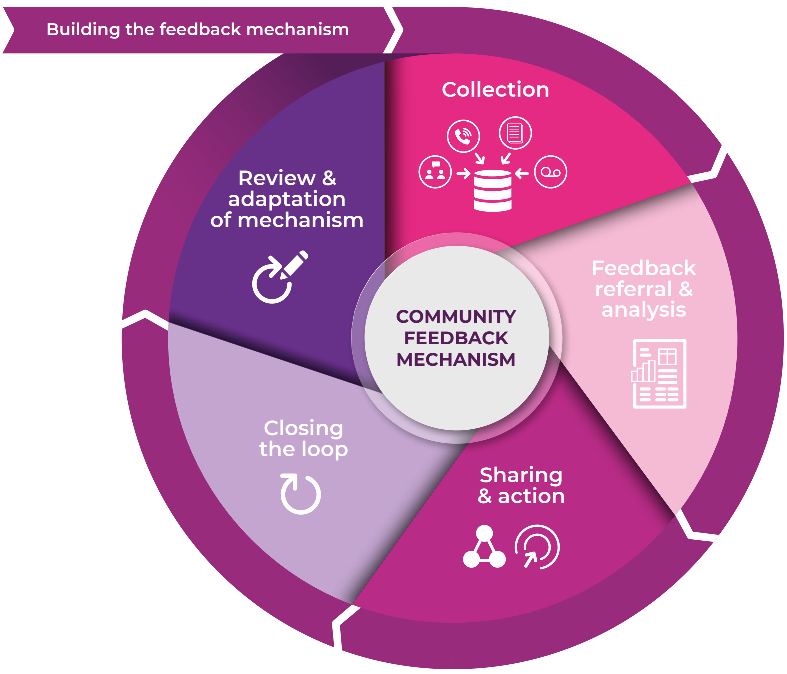
STAGE 1: BUILDING YOUR FEEDBACK MECHANISM

This section guides you through setting up a mechanism for open, unstructured community feedback.[3] As a first step, you need to determine ***who*** needs to be involved, ***where*** the information will go, and ***what*** will be done with it.

Clarify if open, unstructured feedback is the right approach

You might be in a situation where there is an urgent need to understand specific topics, like how vaccines or other public health measures are perceived. If you do not have the time or capacity to train large teams to record and analyse extensive amounts of open, unstructured feedback, you can consider collecting feedback on these key topics in a proactive, structured way, such as through focus group discussions or perception surveys. You can use Module 4 of the Feedback Kit for more guidance on how to set up a mechanism for structured feedback collection and developing a sampling approach to ensure you are hearing from the diverse groups in the community. This proactive way of collecting feedback can complement other open feedback channels, such as a hotline. This combination ensures that there is still a way for community members to reach you if there is an issue they would like to share with you.

Figure: Stages of a feedback mechanism



3. For more information on how to set up any kind of feedback mechanism, see Module 2 - Feedback Essentials of the IFRC Feedback Kit.

This section will walk you through how to plan for all the stages of a feedback mechanism (visually presented in the graphic).

It is important for the community to be involved in setting up the mechanism to ensure there is agreement on its purpose, channels used, how they want to be involved in the analysis and decision-making process, and how they would like to receive a response to their feedback. Communities are diverse, so consult and engage different groups as they will have their own specific needs and preferences, including women, youth, people with disabilities and members of marginalised groups.

1.1. Get the buy-in you need

A feedback mechanism requires staff time, funding, and a commitment to make changes based on what the community says, so it's important everyone is on board and understands their role.

Get the management on board

If management supports the feedback mechanism this sends a strong message to the rest of the organisation. Highlight the benefits a feedback mechanism provides and point out that communities will have feedback even if there is no feedback mechanism, so better to have a system in place to manage feedback positively and use it as a tool for improvement.

Involve the following key teams early

Make sure you involve your colleagues who hold the following roles as soon as you start the process:

- **Programme and operations staff** to seek their input on the best way to share feedback findings so they can be easily understood and acted on
- **Information management** to help manage and visualize feedback data so it can be used for tracking and decision-making
- **IT** if specific equipment or technology is needed
- **PMER** so feedback data can be included in monitoring
- **PGI** to ensure safe and confidential processes for managing and referring sensitive feedback and serious complaints
- **HR and legal staff** to support investigations into complaints about SEA or fraud and corruption by staff or volunteers.
- **Logistics** to make sure you are aware of the procedures to procure any needed equipment

Talk to the community

If it is clear already which communities you will build the feedback mechanism with, you should already share your plans and get them on board. Discuss the concept of community engagement and accountability and their right to be involved and share their feedback. This is essential to make sure the feedback mechanism will be trusted and used. If the scale and geographic scope is not clear at this stage, you can take this step once this has been clarified.

Following resources can help you with this task:

Resources

- Feedback tool 1: Tips for creating leadership buy-in
- Module 1: Community Feedback – Why Bother?
- CEA toolkit tool 1: Briefing for senior leadership
- Zine: Do you want people to trust you? Start by listening.

1.2 Determine the scale of the feedback mechanism

Feedback mechanisms all contain the same core steps that facilitate an ongoing dialogue with the community,[4] but they come in many different sizes, structures, and levels of complexity. They can range from small mechanisms at the local office to large regional inter-agency efforts. The scale of the feedback mechanism will depend on its purpose and the resources available to run it. Feedback mechanisms can be scaled up or down as needed. For instance, a smaller, local feedback mechanism might be scaled up nationally during a large-scale emergency.

The following table provides some guidance on feedback mechanisms at different scales, which will help you think through other aspects of the design process.

EXAMPLES OF DIFFERENT SCALES FOR YOUR FEEDBACK MECHANISM		
Location	**Purpose**	**Best Used?**
Local Level	Informs decisions at the local level, taken by local teams in coordination with local actors	If feedback only needs to be collected in a small geographic area, by one team, and concerning a small number of projects
District/Branch Level	Informs decisions at the district/ branch level which might be taken in coordination with partners at this level	If feedback is collected by several teams working in one district/branch and an overview of the situation across the branch/district is needed
National Level	Informs decisions at the national level concerning the whole organisation or operation. Action might be taken in coordination with partners at the national coordination level.	If feedback is collected in several districts/branches and an overview of the situation across the country or across several districts/ branches is needed
Inter-Agency or Regional Level	Informs inter-agency and/or regional decisions. Action might be taken in coordination with partners at the national and regional coordination level.	If feedback is collected in multiple countries and/or by multiple organisations. This is particularly relevant during large-scale disasters such as pandemics or natural disasters affecting multiple countries.

4. For more information on what community feedback and community feedback mechanisms are, see: Module 1 - Community Feedback – Why bother?

You can use the following decision tree tool to help you determine what scale of feedback mechanism is best suited for your situation and context.

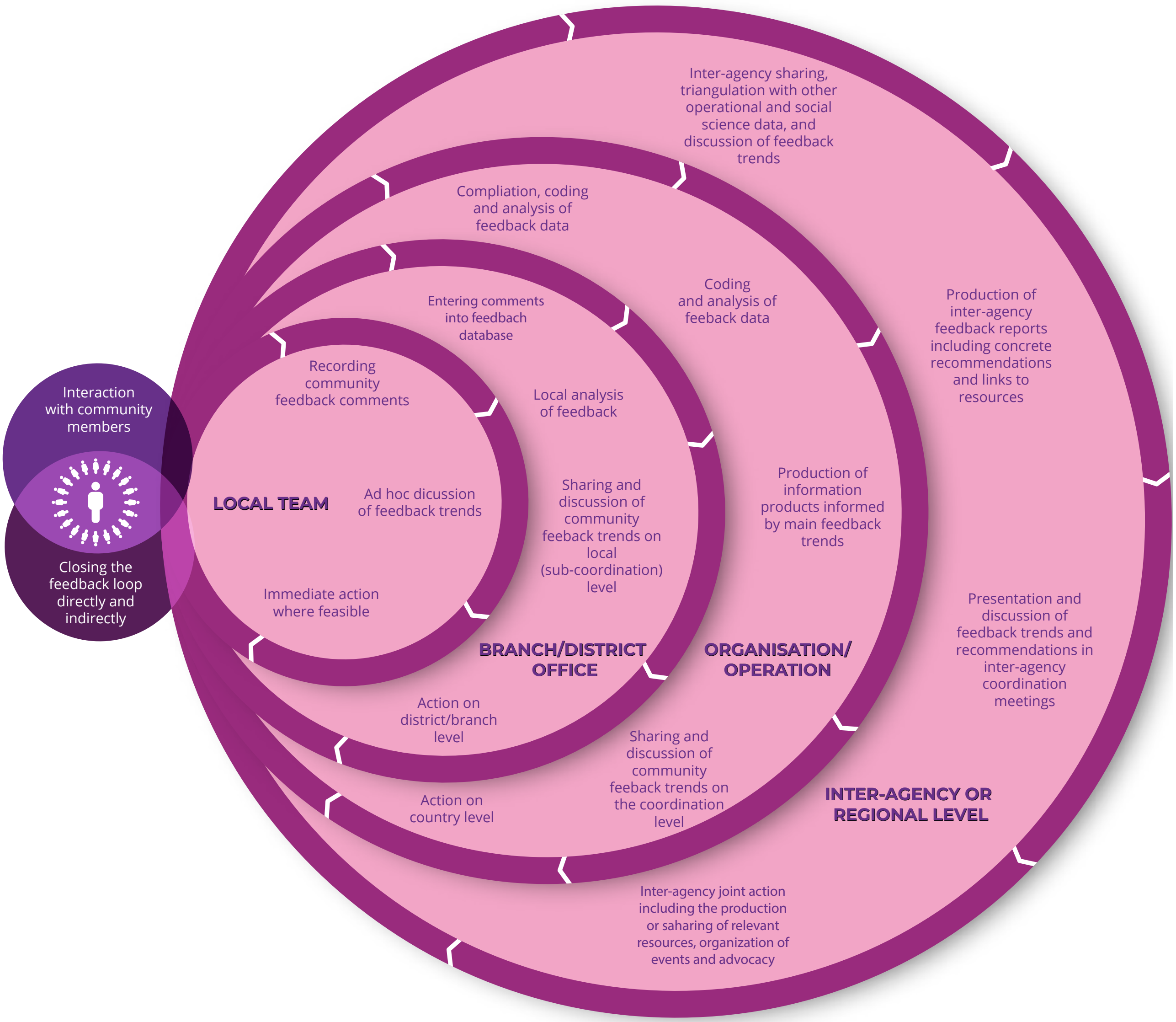
Resource

- Feedback tool 2: Determining the scale of a feedback mechanism

Feedback mechanisms work at many levels

As a feedback mechanism gets scaled up, it does not erase or replace analysis and action happening at levels closer to the community. No matter the scale of the feedback mechanism you are using, information will need to move throughout your organisation and sometimes to other stakeholders.

Example: Feedback mechanism operating at multiple-levels



1.3 Define your communication channels

Once you determine the scale of the feedback mechanism you need, you need to select the ways, or channels, through which the organisation and the community communicate with each other. If you already have communication channels in place, consider if these are sufficient. Some of the communication channels you have in place already might be more structured in nature (such as surveys or score cards), while others will allow for open feedback. Having a balance between the two is ideal.

Think about the types of open communication channels

Communication flows in many directions between an organisation and the community. There should be multiple channels for each communication pathway to ensure everyone in the community can give and receive information. **Communication channels are most effective when they are determined with the community; and therefore, can respond to contextual needs and community preferences**. The chart below outlines different channels for giving information to and receiving information from communities.

TYPES OF OPEN CHANNELS		
Communication Channel	**Description**	**Examples of Open Communication Channels**
Information Provision Channels	Are channels through which **you share information about your feedback mechanism, and about your organisation and efforts (programs and operations)**. These channels are essential for ensuring community members are aware of the channels available to them, and their right to provide feedback.	• Public Community Meetings • Two-way SMS messaging (e.g., WhatsApp, SMS)
Feedback Channels	Are channels through which you **collect insights from communities about your work and services, and anything else of importance to the community**.	• Interactive radio show • Conversations during regular program activities
Response Channels	Are the channels through which you respond to community feedback, usually during the process of "closing the loop" (see: Stage 6).	• Direct phone call back to community member • Community meeting

Considerations for choosing the right channels

The choice of communication channels depends on the preferences of the community, on how sensitive the feedback topic is, their access to different technology (e.g., phone, radio, etc.), as well as on what is already in place. Some questions to ask yourself when considering setting up feedback channels:

- ***Which channels are we currently using to share information, receive feedback, and respond to communities?***
- ***Are there structures managed by the community or other partners that we can use?***
- ***Are these channels suitable and working?***
- ***Do we need additional channels?***

Some of the answers to these questions might already be available, while other topics will need to be discussed with the community, colleagues, and partners. The following tool guides you through this process and provides more information:

Resources

- Feedback tool 3: Defining the communication channels for a feedback mechanism

The Red Cross experience with open feedback in the DRC

During the response to the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) from 2018-2020, the DRC Red Cross developed an approach (with support from the IFRC and the CDC) to managing large amounts of open feedback data. A core part of this approach involved engaging communities to share and discuss information about Ebola. Hundreds of Red Cross volunteers conducted household visits, organised interactive radio shows, engaged in discussions in local markets, schools, and places of worship, along with many other channels for collecting feedback.

The feedback heard during these activities was documented using simple feedback forms, entered into a database, and coded to identify main trends and themes. The CEA and IM teams jointly produced regular feedback reports, which were shared and discussed with local and international partners working at all levels of the response. These reports and collaboration across different levels of the response effort informed advocacy campaigns and direct action to address community concerns. Critically, this process made the engagement with communities more relevant, as actions were often in direct response to community issues. Finally, staff/volunteers also ensured that a response relayed back and discussed with communities to close the feedback loop.

For more information see this case study.

Democratic Republic of Congo 2019 – Bungamuzi Eugide, Vice Chief of Lembabo community in Bunia, Ituri, speaks to his community about how to prevent and detect the Ebola virus. The Red Cross works closely with community leaders like Eugide. © Corrie Butler/IFRC

1.4 Determine how you will document open feedback

Once you have determined the communication channels through which communities can provide open feedback, it is important to decide how you will systematically document that feedback (i.e., collect feedback data). There are different ways of collecting and documenting feedback (verbally, with pen and paper, using digital tools) and each one has its strengths and weaknesses. Different communication channels might have different documentation approaches (e.g., a call centre might use an Excel database while community meetings might use a paper form).

The following tool will help you see how to select the appropriate data collection and documentation strategy for each channel:

Resource

- Feedback tool 4: Deciding on how to document the feedback data

Once you decide on a data collection approach for each channel, you can develop the tools and processes to ensure that your teams can effectively document open feedback.

Steps for setting up data collection tools and processes include:

- For each kind of data collection, **develop a model of the tool** that will be used to document the feedback. That could be a simple form that data collectors fill out, an online survey on a mobile device, an Excel database for a call centre, software for managing community feedback etc. Make sure the tool can capture the feedback itself and other important information (date and time of the feedback, demographics, and language of the feedback provider, etc).
- **Test data collection tools** with data collectors and community members to ensure they are user-friendly and easily understood.
- **Set up the data collection processes** to ensure sensitive data will be transferred and stored in a manner that means it is only accessible to authorised, trained personnel. See more about how to handle sensitive data in Module 5 of the Feedback Kit.
- **Create detailed standard operating procedures** (SOPs) for each of the tools, clearly outlining roles, responsibilities, and timeframes for all data collection steps.

Resources

- Feedback tool 5: An example form for recording open community feedback on paper
- Feedback tool 6: An example Excel logbook for community feedback
- Feedback tool 7: An example form for recording open community feedback using a KoBo survey

Data collection during the response to Ebola in the DRC

During the 2018 Ebola response in Eastern Congo, Red Cross volunteers conducted a range of activities. They shared information about the virus, ways to protect oneself, and the response activities with community members. They conducted household visits, discussions with community groups, interactive radio shows, and more. During these activities, the volunteers received lots of feedback from community members, which they recorded using paper forms. Paper forms were chosen because of various reasons, including limited volunteer experience in mobile data collection, weak phone network in some areas, community suspicion of data collection by phones, and limited availability of mobile phones. A simple paper form was used for all household visits throughout the day. This form was shared with the team leads at the end of the day, who submitted them to the team members responsible for entering the data into an Excel database.

Democratic Republic of Congo 2019 – Blandine and Bernadette, two Red Cross volunteers talk to families in Bunia about Ebola. During their conversations they gather information about their questions and concerns that will also help improve how humanitarian actors, including Red Cross address these concerns.
© Corrie Butler/IFRC

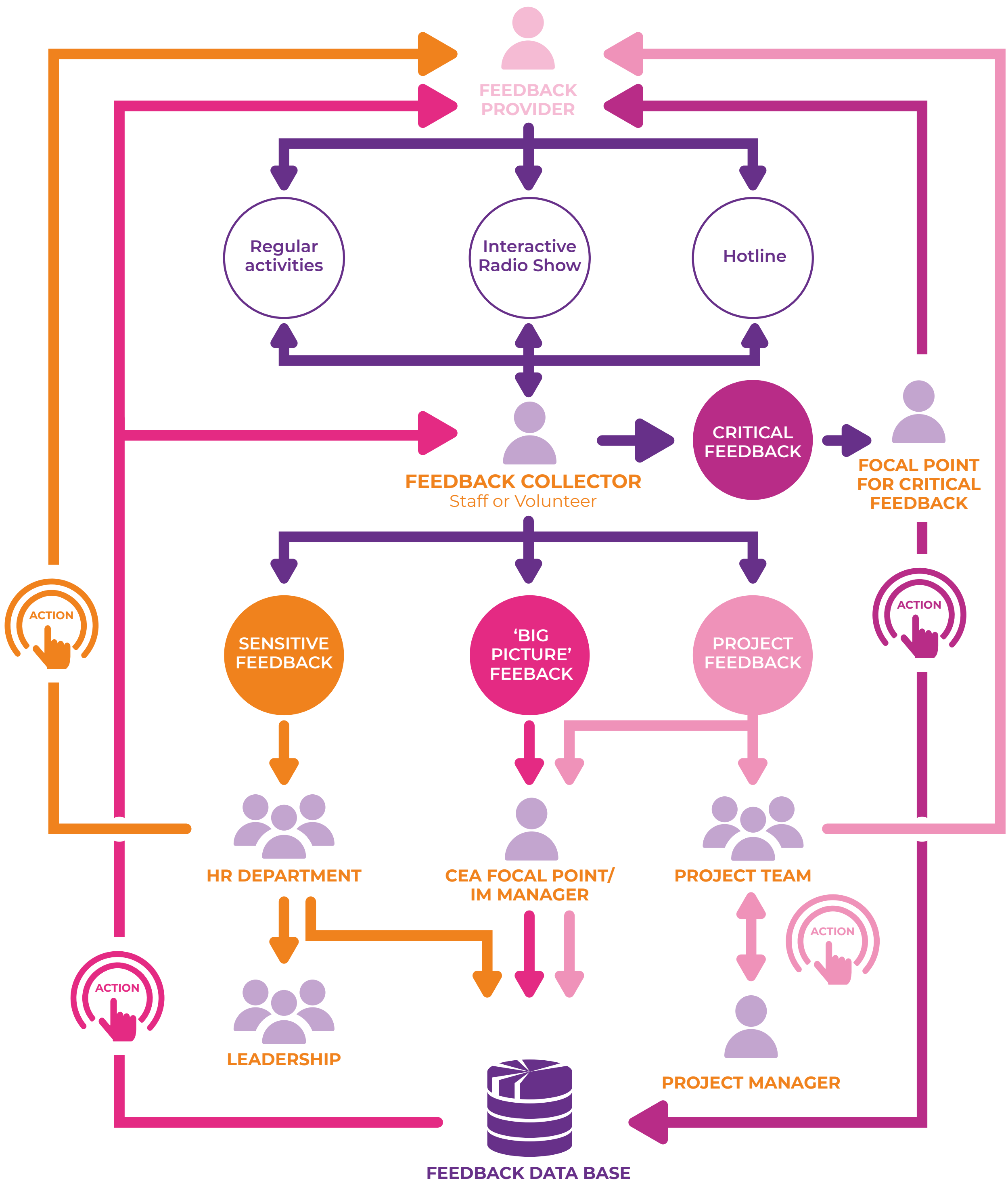
1.5 Map and design information flows

After you decide on how open feedback should be documented, you need to decide on how this information will be shared inside of your organisation. It is vital to map out how feedback data will flow through your organisation to those who have the decision-making power and responsibility to act on it. Otherwise, community feedback may never lead to real changes, which can lead to the community distrusting the feedback mechanism and ultimately stop participating in it.

Below is an example of a feedback data information flow map, also sometimes called an internal referral mechanism. It highlights how information can move through an organisation and should help to guide you as you think about developing your own information flow diagram. A few important things to notice:

- Closing the Loop – Regardless of how the feedback is managed internally, the community members always receive a response.
- Sensitivity and criticality – There are different processes for handling sensitive, critical, project/operational, and 'big picture' feedback.

Example: Information flow diagram



Mapping out how information is currently shared in your organization can make it easier to identify gaps in where feedback data could get lost or missed. In a dedicated meeting, you will discuss the following questions:

- ***Where does what kind of feedback go once it is collected?***
- ***Where is it consolidated and analysed?***
- ***Who needs to act on what type of feedback and in what timeline?***
- ***Who and how are stakeholders informed about the decisions that were or were not made based on feedback?***
- ***Who is or could be involved in closing the loop with communities?***

You need to get the right people together to map out the information flow and plan your mechanism:

- **Programme and operations staff** to seek their input on the best way to share feedback findings so they can be easily understood and acted on
- **Information management** to help collect, manage, and visualise feedback data so it can be used for tracking and decision-making
- **IT** if specific equipment or technology is needed
- **PMER** so feedback data can be included in monitoring
- **Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI)** to ensure safe and confidential processes for managing and referring sensitive feedback and serious complaints
- **Human Resources and legal staff** to support investigations into complaints about SEA or fraud and corruption by staff or volunteers
- **Logistics** to make sure you are aware of the procedures to procure any needed equipment

The following tools help you to convene the discussion and provides guidance for the mapping process:

Resources

- Feedback tool 8: Feedback mechanism design workshop package
- Feedback tool 9: Mapping the information flow

1.6 Agree on roles, responsibilities, and timeframes

Once you have mapped out how information should flow through the organisation, it is crucial to identify and assign concrete roles, responsibilities, and timeframes for each stage of the feedback mechanism. A few helpful questions to keep in mind are:

Who is already doing this work?

One of the reasons for the mapping exercise in Section 2.4 is to identify who is already doing what, and where information is already going. It is often quicker, more effective, and more sustainable to build on what is already happening in the organisation.

Who has the capacity to fill gaps and/or reinforce what is already happening?

Certain steps of the feedback cycle may not be covered currently in the organisation or may be covered by someone who is stretched thin and overwhelmed. It is helpful to think through who can fill which gaps and who can play a role that can make a step more effective or efficient. Remember that capacity can include technical expertise, language skills, available time, etc.

Who can play an enabling or supporting role?

For every step in the feedback cycle, there are actions that other people in the organisation can carry out to make that step easier and/or more effective. This could include leadership creating a supportive environment for taking action in response to community feedback or human resources ensuring that onboarding training includes skills related to community feedback.

The following tool can be used for discussing and documenting the roles and responsibilities for all steps of the feedback cycle:

Resource

- Feedback tool 10: Mapping and agreeing on needed roles, responsibilities and resources

Timeframe for responding to feedback

Determining the timeframe to respond to individual feedback depends on the context, capacity, and type of feedback. Some general rules might include:

- **Routine feedback** should be responded to within a maximum of two weeks, but ideally much quicker (2-3 days).
- Sensitive **and** critical **feedback** should be acted on immediately (within 24 hours maximum). During that same timeframe, the person who submitted the feedback should be acknowledged and it should be explained to them how their feedback will be handled by the organisation.

Be aware in the case of Sexual Exploitation and Assault (SEA) there is a window of 72 hours only to provide life-saving medical care via Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP)[5] which must be handled by medical professionals trained in the use of MISP.

1.7 Identify the resources you will need (financial and human)

The next step is to determine what kinds of resources and support everyone will need to carry out their roles effectively. This includes human resource support (who will be needed), material support (what tools will be needed), technical support (what expertise and training they will need), and financial support (what budgets will be required to secure and sustain these other resources).

You can use the mapping tool introduced above to identify and document the resources you need:

Resource

- Feedback tool 10: Mapping and agreeing on needed roles, responsibilities and resources

The volume of feedback you receive will influence the resources you may need. If you anticipate a high volume of feedback, you will likely need more people and resources to manage it. For instance, a feedback mechanism for a small program in one community may only need a few data collectors and one person to analyse the data. In contrast, a national emergency response may need dozens of data collectors and a whole data analysis team. Note that it may be difficult to anticipate exactly how much feedback data you will receive, and so planning for different scenarios may be helpful.

In terms of financial resourcing, ensure that you budget adequately for all resources (human resources, physical resources, training resources, travel resources, etc.) needed to build an effective feedback mechanism. The template budget provided in the feedback kit can help you.

5. For more see: https://www.unfpa.org/resources/minimum-initial-service-package-misp-srh-crisis-situations?

Resource

- Feedback tool 11: A template budget for feedback mechanisms

Strategies for designing a mechanism that can handle different volumes of data

A common concern with setting up feedback mechanisms is that they will get overwhelmed by too much data. It can be hard to predict at the start what volume of feedback data you will receive. Feedback volume may also change throughout a response: for example, the volume might increase as the community gets more comfortable with the feedback mechanism, or it could decrease if communities get frustrated with it.

Consider the following when designing a feedback mechanism that might need to handle large volumes of data:

- **Start small and scale up when ready:** Launch your feedback mechanism on a smaller scale, and gradually scale up as your staff gets more comfortable with the tools and process. This will help you and your staff avoid getting overwhelmed at the beginning and will give your team experience in what it looks like to go through all steps of a feedback mechanism before scaling it up.
- **Be clear about your capacity:** If you do not have a team that can analyse the data using Excel or other software, you can choose different ways to document and analyse the data (see Section IV). You can choose to have regular meetings with your volunteers to discuss what the key issues are they are hearing from communities, and how you need to address these. This can enable you to identify, share, and address key issues in real time without the delay of setting up a more complex mechanism (which can still be set up at the same time).[6]
- **Proactively collect data on key metrics:** If you urgently need to understand perceptions across locations, but do not have teams who are in regular touch with communities, or do not have the capacity to analyse bigger amounts of data, it may be better to proactively collect community feedback. More information on collecting data in a proactive, structured way can be found in this module of the Feedback Kit.
- **Be ready to course-correct when needed:** Continuously look for bottlenecks in your processes (e.g., data entry, or coding) and see where more staff may need to be trained to maintain a high quality throughout the process.

1.8 Conduct the necessary trainings

Once it is clear who will be involved and how the mechanism will function, ensure that everyone is adequately briefed and trained on their roles and responsibilities. If any gaps are identified, organise trainings to provide or reinforce those skills. Use the tool for mapping roles, responsibilities, and resources to help you anticipate training needs.

Resource

- Feedback tool 10: Mapping and agreeing on needed roles, responsibilities and resources

6. You can use this tool for identifying the scale of the feedback you need and this tool for deciding how to document the data.

Examples of trainings and briefings that can be provided for different people involved in the feedback mechanism.

- **BRIEFING for leadership and senior management teams:** How does the feedback mechanism strengthen accountability and trust between the organisation and the community? How can you use community feedback data to advocate for broader change and new/improved programming? (See: CEA toolkit tool 1: CEA briefing for leadership).
- **TRAINING for people engaging directly with communities:** How to receive and record community feedback? How to close the loop with communities?
- **TRAINING for data analysts:** How to clean, code, and analyse qualitative data and present it in formats suitable for different audiences.

Resource

- Feedback tool 12: Community feedback training package

1.9 Advertise the feedback mechanism

Communities need to know the feedback mechanism exists and how to access it. For sharing information about the feedback mechanism, you can use the channels you identified earlier using Tool 3. Ensure that you:

- **Communicate with communities** so they understand that they have a right to provide feedback and that even negative feedback is welcomed as it helps the National Society to improve its services.
- Stress there will be **no negative consequences** if people complain.
- **Manage expectations** by being clear about what type of feedback the mechanism can respond to and how long it will take to respond.
- Assure people that **sensitive feedback and serious complaints** will be handled safely and confidentially.

Make sure the feedback mechanism is known by everyone within your organisation as well including staff and volunteers. Share information about the mechanism at staff meetings, put up posters in your office with the details about the feedback mechanism, etc.

You can use the following tools to find the right channel for sharing information on the feedback mechanism:

Resources

- Feedback tool 3: Defining the communication channels for a feedback mechanism
- CEA toolkit tool 19: Communication channel matrix

November 25, 2016, Capafou, Carcasse, Haiti. A community devestaed by Hurricane Mathew. The Canadian Red Cross ERU mobile clinic was the first humanitarian assistance to reach this community since Hurricane Mathew. Decheline Joseph - single mother of 7 children and a resident of the community, also had major damage to her home. She is speaking with Canadian Red Cross ERU deputy team leader of the mobile clinic, Tamara Bornival.
© Marko Kokic/Canadian Red Cross

STAGE 2: COLLECTING FEEDBACK

A feedback mechanism relies on good quality data. Therefore, the process of data collection must be carried out with skill, strategy, and integrity. This section provides a brief overview of the key skills and processes that are necessary for a strong data collection process.

2.1 Listen and acknowledge[7]

Intentional and active listening is a way to show respect and to create an open space for dialogue. It requires the listener to be humble, have an open mind, to suspend their judgments and preconceptions, and to be open to hear not just words, but also the feelings and meanings behind the words. It is important to listen to thoughts, to feelings, and to intentions. Listening helps you to:

- **Recognize and respect local knowledge** – Every person has different backgrounds, beliefs, experiences, ideas, and preferences. Therefore, it is important to engage a broad range of people in conversations.
- **Think beyond projects and sectors** – Think of each conversation as an opportunity to learn from others. People affected by crises are rarely asked to reflect and comment on both tangible (infrastructure, food security, services, etc.) and intangible (empowerment, trust, accountability, etc.) issues and the long-term effects of humanitarian action. To learn from people's experiences, conversations need to explore this broader context.
- **Engage people in analysis** – Conversations differ from structured, rigid interviews or surveys. They provide an opportunity for people to share and clarify their insights and analysis using their experiences and observations as evidence.
- **Hear about recommendations** – Meaningfully listening also allows you to engage people in critical thinking about what can and should be done differently (and by whom) to better address the concerns they have raised.
- **Build trust** – Listening helps you express empathy, highlights your common humanity, and helps you build trusted and collaborative relationships.

Acknowledging sensitive feedback

If the feedback comment includes sensitive feedback, the data collector needs to provide a confirmation of receipt to the person submitting the feedback (unless it was submitted anonymously). It depends on the feedback channel how this confirmation is provided: it can be a paper, an SMS, and email or a WhatsApp message. This confirmation should include how long it will take to hear back and a focal point for follow-up. It is important to remember that feedback collectors do not investigate sensitive feedback cases themselves. Read more about how to handle sensitive feedback in Module 5 of the Feedback Kit.

7. Much of this section has been adapted from: Brown, Dayna, and Imogen Wall. (2015) *Guidance on Engaging People in Crisis-Affected Communities to #ReshapeAid*. Developed for The World Humanitarian Summit 2016. For more see: https://www.cdacollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Guidance-on-Engaging-People-in-Crisis-Affected-Communities-to-ReshapeAid.pdf

The following resource provides some guidance on how to listen effectively:

Resource

- Feedback tool 18: Important skills for effective listening

Feedback received through any kind of channel needs to be acknowledged. This includes:

- Thanking the feedback provider,
- Telling them what you will do with the feedback,
- Explaining how long they should expect to receive a response, and
- Noting through what channels they should expect to receive a response.

Practice how to introduce yourself and the feedback process

Data collectors need to avoid collecting and recording information before clearly explaining who they are, why they are recording the information, and how this information will be treated. Make sure to cover this topic adequately in data collection trainings so that data collectors understand how to introduce themselves and the feedback process to the community in clear terms and their role as advocates for the community.

Each feedback channel can have different ways of acknowledging the receipt of feedback: for instance, in-person conversations can end with a verbal acknowledgement, an email or social media inbox can respond with a short message, or anonymous feedback can be acknowledged with a carefully worded mention in a community meeting.

2.2 Ask for permission to use and share the information

Whenever a feedback mechanism is set up, the community should be informed about what kind of information may be documented, what will be done with that information, and their rights to not share information if they do not feel comfortable. When feedback is shared in public forums or during other routine activities (e.g., a health visit), it is also good practice to ask the person giving the feedback if they are ok with you writing down that feedback. It helps to keep the feedback process open and transparent.

Before documenting and sharing any personal data, you need to make sure the person who shares feedback is clear about the process and who the information might be shared with. This is called informed consent. If the feedback can be used to identify a person, only document the information if the person gives informed consent. This means the person needs to understand and agree with:

- The intended purpose of the data collection and processing.
- What data you are collecting (e.g., demographic data) and what data you aren't collecting (e.g., their name or address).
- With whom their data may be shared.
- Any risks associated with collection, processing or sharing of their personal data.
- Alternatives in the case that they do not wish to, or cannot, share their personal data.

Handling data received through one-way channels

Informed consent can be implied if a person chooses to use a one-way feedback channel (e.g., a voice recorder or suggestion box) as long as the points above have been discussed with the community using the feedback channel.

Provide adequate support to data collectors

The staff and volunteers listening to the feedback are your links to the community. It is of the highest importance that they receive the necessary training and support to fulfil their tasks. There needs to be regular meetings so they can debrief and share their experiences about the process, training to reinforce their skills (including refresher training), and their tasks need to be clear and realistic. Those documenting the feedback should have the opportunity to share their own thoughts on the process and seek psycho-social support when required. The insights of volunteers provide important information to triangulate community feedback findings and can be solicited in regular perception surveys (see an example from the IFRC Africa region here).

If the feedback cannot be resolved by the person who received it, ask the feedback provider to consent to share their contact details for the referral and follow-up. Only record personal information such as the name and contact details if necessary and informed consent was given to do so.

In general, pictures should not be taken during community feedback processes. This is because it can make the person providing feedback uncomfortable or put photographed people at risk. However, a picture may sometimes be necessary for feedback provision (e.g., taking a picture of damaged goods given to a family). Before taking pictures, you need to get informed consent from the people the image relates to, especially if they are visible in the picture. You need to be clear on how the image will be used and with whom it will be shared.

2.3 Record community feedback

When recording feedback, as much as possible, you want to write down the comment as it was shared with you and in the language it was shared. Summarising and paraphrasing too much will create challenges in interpreting what the person wanted to say and might change the meaning of the feedback.

While it is important to take good notes, you should still pay attention to the person sharing the feedback. Whenever possible, there should be a second person who takes notes (especially during longer discussions). Sometimes, it may be more culturally appropriate to write down notes after the conversation, although this may result in lower quality notes.

2.4 Provide initial responses

Ideally, feedback can be responded to immediately by the person who receives it. For example, questions can be answered, misunderstandings clarified, and rumours addressed. Even when feedback is responded to immediately, it should still be documented so it can be consolidated and compiled with other feedback data.

To increase your team's ability to respond to feedback in the moment, it is useful to have discussions about frequently asked questions. During emergencies, it is often essential to have regular meetings with data collectors to provide updates, discuss answers to emerging common questions, and practice addressing rumours and misinformation.

If a data collector does not know the answer to a question or how to respond to a concern, it is better to be honest than make up an answer or tell someone what they think they want to hear. This can be followed up by telling the person how their question or concern will be relayed through the feedback mechanism and when they can expect an answer. It is vital to help data collectors and other frontline staff practice telling people this because it can be awkward or uncomfortable at first.

FAQ documents

A document with the most frequently asked questions and concerns that offers short and simple answers should be created and regularly updated. This document needs to be available to everyone involved in feedback collection. When staff or volunteers who regularly engage with the community have access to the answers to FAQS, they can provide quick and accurate initial responses. It can be most practical to share the updated FAQ document via WhatsApp or another online communication channel with those who collect the feedback. This allows the data collectors to access the latest version and look up answers when needed. Sharing the FAQ document cannot replace regular discussions with frontline staff and volunteers, as these are essential for answering other emerging questions and learning from each other's experiences.

Philippines 2014 – Staff from the IFRC/Philippine Red Cross cash team explains to a community member the process and next steps for receiving his unconditional cash grant in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan. © IFRC

STAGE 3: FEEDBACK REFERRAL & ANALYSIS

Once feedback has been collected, it needs to be managed and shared in the appropriate way. This section explains how to manage, refer, and analyse feedback data.

3.1 Consolidate and clean data

Based on the decisions you made about how to document feedback (whether verbally or through data collection tools), consolidate feedback from each individual channel. If you have multiple feedback channels, you can then periodically compile all feedback data into one central location so you can analyse all of it together. Remember, how you compile data depends on the scale your feedback mechanism is operating at; refer to Feedback tool 2 to help you plan how to do this.

Resources

- Feedback tool 7: The template Excel logbook that can be used for consolidating the feedback

Cleaning feedback data

Once the feedback has been documented and consolidated in one place, it needs to be reviewed by someone else to make sure it has been properly recorded and entered (a process called "cleaning" the data). The person responsible for data cleaning should be indicated in your roles and responsibilities planning.

Tasks involved with cleaning and reviewing data include:

1. Ensure **no** sensitive feedback **mistakenly classified as non-sensitive**. If there was, change the status of the feedback comment and delete any unnecessary personal information.
2. Review feedback data to check for duplicates, ensure each comment is assigned a **unique ID**, comments are **tagged and categorised correctly**, and **inconsistencies** fixed (e.g., data in wrong columns, wrong formats, inconsistent spelling of categories or missing data)
3. Monitor if specific topics should urgently be addressed with data collectors, updated in the repository of **key messages and talking points**, and/or **discussed with leadership** and external partners.
4. If GPS data were recorded, check if there are any **obvious outliers** (e.g., one point in another county or department) as this might indicate a mistake was made.
5. Check if all **feedback comments were added to the database** in the correct language, and if not, check back with the data collectors to try to find how it was recorded in its original language.

Once data have been cleaned and reviewed, it is essential to share observations about common mistakes with the data collectors, which will help them to learn from those mistakes and avoid issues in the future.

Consolidation and cleaning of feedback data during the response to Ebola in the DRC

During the Ebola response in Eastern DRC, feedback was collected using simple paper forms.[8] Community volunteers recorded feedback data during health promotion activities conducted three times a week. At the end of each day of activities, the volunteers handed over the forms to the supervisors. They then reviewed the forms and passed them on to the volunteers responsible for entering the data into a standard Excel spreadsheet. This Excel spreadsheet was then shared with Information Management (IM) officers, who consolidated the feedback data for all locations in one central Excel file. The IM officers reviewed the data to ensure all the data was entered correctly and ready to be coded and analysed. In instances when there were Inconsistencies and lack of clarity in the data, the IM officers contacted the relevant colleagues for clarification and to share feedback on the quality of the data.

Democratic Republic of Congo 2019 – A DRC volunteer discusses with Chance Evariste, the vice president of the motorcycle association in Komanda. They were a key partner of the DRC Red Cross in the Ebola response, joining forces to help tackle the spread of the virus.
© Corrie Butler/IFRC

8. The form used for data collection during the Ebola response informed the template form which can be accessed here.

Deciding when and how to translate feedback

Community members should be listened to in the language they feel comfortable with. Translating qualitative feedback data is time-consuming, though, and bears the risk of changing or losing critical details of what the person was saying. Therefore, translating data should be limited to situations where there people who do not understand the local language really need to see the raw data. The decision to translate data should depend on the scale of your feedback mechanism and the information flow within your organisation. See more on these steps in Section 1.2 and 1.5 and make sure the translation is considered when agreeing on roles and responsibilities and the information flow.

When translating community feedback from or into local languages, it is good to develop a glossary of key terms. It can include words used for terms such as "complaints", the names of the response sectors, terms describing important stakeholders of the response, and common idioms and expressions. This helps to ensure consistency and prevents important terms from being mistranslated.

3.2 Prioritise and refer feedback

Some feedback comments might be critical, meaning they need **urgent and specific follow-up** ahead of the general analysis and discussion of all feedback data. These can include issues like the delivery of spoiled food, potential security risks, signs of an outbreak of disease, or new rumours that might threaten programming. As feedback is being consolidated, anything of a sensitive or urgent nature needs to be flagged and immediately referred to the people designated in your internal referral framework (See: Section 1.5).

Some critical feedback will be sensitive data. In this case, only the pre-identified focal point should have access to the information. Depending on your organisation's policy on handling sensitive information, sensitive feedback comments can be shared via email with a password-protected attachment and the password transmitted through a different channel, such as a text message.

Protecting the identity of the feedback provider

Even if you are referring and sharing feedback data without any personal information, such as names or contact details, you need to ensure there is no information that could be used to identify the person who shared the feedback or other people concerned (e.g. "the most senior woman in a certain location"). Any data needs to be anonymised before sharing, particularly when there is a risk of sensitive information being included.

3.3 Code data to identify key themes

Analysing community feedback allows you to explore the data to understand the big picture. This is not always easy when working with larger amounts of open, unstructured data, so this section walks you through the steps of taking a systematic approach to the analysis.

Using different types of data for analysis

You can use elements of both quantitative and qualitative data analysis for community feedback data:

- **Qualitative data analysis –** In the context of community feedback data, this refers to the process of looking at the meaning of open feedback comments. Comments in their original, unstructured form are important as they provide detail, illustrate the specific problem or situation, and are not limited to answer options to predetermined questions.
- **Quantitative data analysis –** This is where you look at numbers rather than words. For open feedback data, you may be counting the number of people who have shared feedback, feedback comments, or comments assigned to a certain code or category.

Coding data to identify trends

Qualitative analysis starts by grouping data together in a process called coding, which is the process of attaching a specific keyword or short phrase to feedback comments to track and analyse them more easily. For example, you might code all comments related to the belief that COVID-19 is not real as "COVID scepticism". This process can help you to better understand the main topics communities are talking about and to identify important differences about who is saying what.

Coding can be done in various ways, including:

- Hand-writing the codes beside text in hand-written forms or logs
- Using post-its, flipchart posters, or chalk on a board to organise and group statements relating to different topics
- Using a table in a word processing program and placing codes in a column next to each feedback comment
- Adding all comments to an Excel spreadsheet and adding the codes in separate columns. Using "dropdown menus" can facilitate the coding process.
- Use qualitative data analysis software (e.g., NVivo, MaxQDA)
- Using machine learning to automatically assign codes to different feedback comments

The following resource can give you an idea of what these different methods can look like:

Resource

▶ Feedback tool 19: Ways to code feedback data

Contextual knowledge is needed to interpret the meaning of feedback comments correctly. Therefore, it makes sure the person coding the data understands cultural and linguistic nuances. Preferably, data should always be coded as close to where it was collected as possible (e.g., by a local office instead of headquarters). If this is not possible, regular communication with colleagues at the local level needs to take place to review the coding and discuss things that might not be clear.

Resource

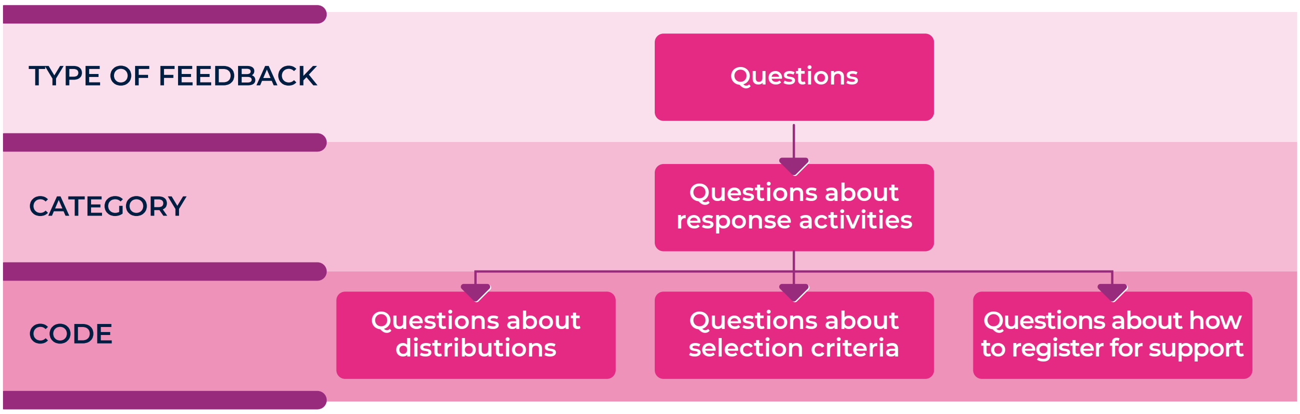
- Feedback tool 20: How to code open feedback data

Using a codebook or coding framework

No matter which method you are using, you will need the following two documents for coding your feedback data in a consistent way:

1. **Coding framework –** Presents the hierarchy of codes and how they are grouped into categories under the different types of feedback.

Example: A small extract from a community feedback coding framework



2. **Codebook –** Describes the different types, categories and codes and explains how to use them. Importantly, a codebook is the reference document for everyone using the coding framework and ensures everyone codes the data the same way.

Example: A code can be structured like the following

Code	Description	Example feedback comments	Last changed	Comments
Questions about distributions	Any questions relating to distributions, e.g., the time or location of the distribution	• When will the next distribution take place • How will we be informed about the tof the next distribution • Is the next distribution happening at the same site?	Introduced on 03.11.2021	Do not code questions about how to register for support, this is coded under the separate code "questions about how to register for support"

You should ensure that your coding framework and codebook are tailored to your context, which includes involving your colleagues in discussions about the data and coding. For example, to involve frontline data collectors, so the codebook reflects the kinds of comments they are hearing from the community, and your technical colleagues, as they will need the data to be structured in a way that helps them act on the information.

Coding in teams

Coding can be carried out by one or more people trained on how to apply the codes accurately. Whenever several people are involved in the coding process, it is essential to have regular meetings. It is unlikely that the coding framework will stay the same throughout your programme or operation, as the topics community members are talking about will naturally change. Meetings will be needed to discuss how codes are defined, review new emerging topics, agree on potential changes, and document these in the codebook.

Coding of community feedback during the response to Ebola in the DRC

With the support of the behavioural science team of the CDC, a framework was developed for coding the feedback comments collected by the DRC Red Cross volunteers. Throughout the operation, the capacity of the local CEA and IM team was built to code the feedback comments and produce feedback reports for the different locations. The feedback collected in the different locations was compiled and coded on an ongoing basis, enabling the local teams to produce and share weekly or biweekly feedback reports.

The following resources can help you to prepare a coding framework and codebook:

Resources

- Feedback tool 21: How to build or adapt a coding framework
- Feedback tool 22: Template coding framework and codebook
- Feedback tool 23: Example coding frameworks for Ebola, COVID-19 and other diseases

3.4 Disaggregate and triangulate the data

Once you have coded all the data you want to analyse, you can go through the following steps to further explore the data to understand important trends, outliers, and the bigger picture.

Disaggregating data

Disaggregation is when you sort your feedback data by factors other than theme to understand trends about who said what, when, how, and why. For example, a common kind of data disaggregation is separating feedback by the gender of the feedback provider, which may help you notice whether women's concerns or priorities may be different than men's concerns. Data can be disaggregated in many ways, including:

- By demographics (e.g., the age, gender, ethnic group, etc.) or location of the feedback provider
- By the project type or programmatic sector, the feedback refers to (e.g., WASH or cash)
- By the feedback channel they came through (e.g., hotline or community meetings)
- By most or least common topics
- By the time the feedback was captured (e.g., by month or point in the project cycle)

The following document gives an overview of these (and other) approaches to data disaggregation and examples of the kind of analysis they can produce:

Resource

- Feedback tool 25: Types and examples of data disaggregation

Triangulating data

To understand the full picture, you need to compare the information with other data sources "and types of data" to confirm your findings and gain more insights, a process called triangulation. Bringing together multiple data sources can help to make your feedback findings stronger and more compelling, to explain confusing feedback trends, or reveal patterns that are not being captured in your feedback data. There are various ways for you to do this:

- You can hold **discussions with community members, colleagues and other partners** who know the context and can help understand the situation.
  For example, if water access is highlighted as the most commonly cited concern, you can talk with a WASH colleague to get their thoughts on the water situation.
- **Sit down with those who collected the information** to ensure their analysis informs the interpretation of the findings and the formulation of recommendations.
  For example, if you are seeing that men and women are having very different reactions to a new program, your data collectors may have insight because they are in the communities every day and may better understand local gender roles.
- You can **combine the findings with other operational data**, including needs assessments, monitoring data, security incidents, epidemiological data, staff surveys, etc.
  For example, if you are seeing a high volume of questions about vaccines, you can look at a recent KAP survey and find out that the community has limited knowledge about vaccines.
- You can **triangulate the findings with data from social science** that provide expanded and in-depth understanding of the context, like recent survey findings, qualitative studies, anthropological studies.
  For example, if there is resistance to accepting vaccines, you can look at previous research on barriers and enablers to health services, grasp the socially and culturally-rooted motivations and the power dynamics.

- You can **look at other official reports and articles** to help contextualise and explain key trends in the feedback data. This can include internal and external reports, local media, scientific articles, etc.

For example, if the community is providing feedback that they are not happy with the placement of a new clinic, you may find previous security reports that explain that the road to the clinic used to be full of landmines and infer that the community is still wary of this route.

You can use the following questions to guide your process of triangulating the data:

- ***Can the main findings be confirmed or explained by other information sources?***
- ***Can other data sources explain the reasons for certain concerns or perceptions?***
- ***Are there feedback topics that are not clear and need to be further explored?***

Find out more about triangulation of data in the module 4.8 of the Social Science training package.

Plan for enough time for analysis and avoid doing analysis in a silo

We often underestimate the time it takes to engage with the information collected and to make sense of it in a meaningful way. Make sure you do not rush the step of identifying what is interesting about the data and ensure the whole team participates in interpreting the findings. While a data analyst can prepare a preliminary analysis, programmes and operations teams can help interpret the data in different ways. Equally, people not working on the programme may see things in the data that programme staff may overlook. In addition, it may be important to involve stakeholders outside of the organisation (such as technical experts, peer organisations working in the same or similar contexts, and people from the community) to help interpret and validate key findings.

3.5 Integrate feedback data into broader analysis processes

To avoid community feedback being treated in a silo, it should be included in broader analysis processes. Community feedback should not only be analysed and discussed by practitioners who are focusing on community feedback but needs to be included in broader analysis such as monitoring and evaluation processes, needs assessments, integrated outbreak analytics (for public health crises), etc.. The Data to Action Handbook provides useful guidance on this topic.

Check if there is a broader analytical framework in place and make sure feedback will be included. You can learn more about this in Module 2 - Feedback Essentials and access an example analytical framework in Tool 26.

STAGE 4: SHARING AND ACTING ON FEEDBACK

This section outlines how to share your analysis of community feedback with different stakeholders to ensure that action is taken, and that feedback can inform the broader humanitarian response. When sharing the feedback, it is important to think about who needs what kind of information and when. Review your information flow chart and your roles and responsibilities chart, which was part of the design of the feedback mechanism.

4.1 Share feedback data in appropriate formats

To share the feedback with the different stakeholders, you need to ask the following questions:

- *Who needs to see what kind of feedback?*
- *What level of detail do they need?*
- *How often do they need to see the feedback?*
- *In what form do they need to see the feedback?*

The following tools guide you through this process:

Resource

- Feedback tool 27: Identifying the right format for your audience

Once you have identified the most appropriate information products, you need to package the findings in a way the audience can understand, discuss, further explore, and address. You do not need to report on every detail but highlight what is interesting and actionable. The tool below also includes links to examples or templates for different information products, including a template PowerPoint presentation and a narrative report.

Resource

- Feedback tool 28: Formats for sharing community feedback

Sharing raw data vs. sharing highlights for broader analysis

There may be some stakeholders who would prefer raw data instead of information products that summarise findings. Raw data should be saved to inform broader analysis and allow colleagues with specific interests to access the details they need. Some of the potential uses of raw data include:

- Enabling colleagues to address specific feedback cases which relate to their area of work.
- Compiling feedback data collected in different locations and/or different channels for central analysis to inform learning and adaptation.
- Enabling key stakeholders (including communities themselves, technical colleagues, coordination groups, research organisations, journalists, etc.) to analyse, explore, and use the data for their own purposes.

When you cannot share raw data but still want to contribute to a broader analysis of community feedback, you can still share the highlights from your analysis of the community feedback. This can be relevant in inter-agency structures or when sharing highlights from feedback that was analysed on a more local level with colleagues in national or regional offices.

The following tool helps you to share community feedback data in a safe and responsible way:

Resource

- Feedback tool 29: Key considerations for sharing feedback data

The following tool provides an example for how to share the highlights:

Resource

- Feedback tool 30: Inter-agency or inter-office sharing of feedback highlights

Sharing of feedback highlights in interagency risk communication and community engagement groups in Africa

During the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, inter-agency coordination groups were set up to discuss feedback trends and develop concrete recommendations to address these in a collective way. Agencies shared the main trends and issues raised through their individual feedback mechanisms, which were then consolidated and presented in simple reports, together with suggested recommendations. These insights and recommendations were then discussed in the relevant inter-agency coordination groups. Here is an example report for East and Southern Africa.

Democratic Republic of Congo 2019 – Vany Biruni, DRC Red Cross volunteer, discusses Ebola and how to prevent it with community members at the biggest market in Bunia. This also provides the opportunity to better understand people's main questions, suggestins and concerns.
© Corrie Butler/IFRC

Make information available to others

The information products about community feedback findings will be of interest to many different stakeholders in the response. Many of them will not have a direct link to communities and sharing the insights from your feedback mechanism can enable a more community-centred response. Find ways to make the feedback findings available to the community as well, to enable them to have their own discussions on the situation and what needs to happen. You can share the information products via mailing lists or make them publicly available by uploading them to platforms commonly used for sharing humanitarian information and resources, such as ReliefWeb or relevant shared folders used for inter-agency coordination. You can also upload your feedback data to the HDX platform.

4.2 Discuss the feedback with the relevant stakeholders

Sharing the feedback is not enough. To enable the right people to engage with the data and take action, you need to make sure the feedback findings are discussed in the right places at the right time. Especially during humanitarian responses, it is essential to look beyond your own organisation. A lot of the feedback you are receiving will fall outside of your mandate and may be relevant to other groups involved in the humanitarian response.

Internal meetings

- In internal coordination meetings, it should be a **standing agenda point** to share and discuss updates on community feedback. Updates should be short and concise and followed by a discussion of who can do what in response to the feedback.
- A "**community feedback working group**" can be established to share and discuss community feedback, particularly during the early stages of setting up the mechanism.
- Some issues will require more in-depth discussions. For these, **bilateral meetings**, or meetings with relevant colleagues to discuss specific issues, should be organised to share insights and discuss options for taking action.

External meetings

- Community insights also need to be shared in **inter-agency coordination meetings**. Not all other organisations are in regular contact with community members, and they may depend on insights shared by organisations like yours. There are often thematic inter-agency groups that focus on community feedback. It is important to share your feedback with other organisations to triangulate findings and prioritise and coordinate joint action.
- It can also be important to organise **bilateral meetings with external stakeholders** to discuss specific issues. This can include meetings with local authorities, other humanitarian organisations, media, and anyone else who can act on the feedback. This includes presenting and discussing findings with social scientists, who can potentially use findings to inform community-led research activities.

Community meetings

- **Discussing feedback with community members** is important as it does not only allow you to better understand certain issues but also to discuss what needs to be done about them. Rather than you making a decision independently, you should see if the community already has suggestions or solutions and see to what extent your support is needed to implement them. These kinds of discussions also are part of closing the loop.

Dialogue about community feedback findings during the response to Ebola in the DRC

Feedback presentations for different locations were produced on a regular basis. A simple Excel dashboard was shared with internal colleagues who were able to filter the data and pull out what was most relevant to them. Furthermore, the key insights were shared and discussed in internal meetings, as well as in inter-agency coordination meetings. Meetings were held with representatives of the local Government and other organisations involved in the Ebola response to share updates on community feedback, discuss what needed to be done to address issues, agree on recommendations, and follow-up on the progress to address previous recommendations.

4.3 Take action

Moving from analysis to action requires you to get together with those who are in the position to take decisions that respond to the issues raised by the community. You will need to answer the following questions:

- *Which topic do you need to address?*
- *What kind of action needs to be taken?*
- *Who needs to take responsibility for the action(s)?*
- *Have those who should act agreed to take action?*
- *Is there something that can be done to learn from the feedback for the future?*
- *What are the consequences of inaction?*

For example, recommendations could be formulated as follows:

- Explore how the hire more local staff.
- Advocate for the construction of boreholes with local authorities.
- Focus group discussions should be conducted with young women to better understand their concerns related to the COVID-19 vaccines.
- Conduct an anthropological study to understand the reasons beyond the immediate factors that hamper people's acceptance of measures.[9]

Answer the question: "So what?"

Often colleagues can understand the feedback but are unsure how to act on it. Providing options or recommendations can serve as a starting point for discussion and further action. Recommendations can include specific actions to address the issues, as well as areas to further explore through additional data collection, discussion, and analysis. Link the feedback and recommendations to the operation and the issues experienced by the operation. Ask yourself: What does this mean for right now in the operation? What about the future of the operation?

Acting on feedback can include fixing certain issues and changing how you work, who you work with or what you do. This can, for example, include fixing broken latrines, the establishment of a project committee, or a change from the provision to in-kind aid to cash transfers. Acting on feedback can also mean sharing information on certain topics, such as where to register for support, when a project will end, or why requested cash transfers are currently not feasible.

When recommending changes based on feedback, the recommendations should be clear, concise, and realistic. Some feedback might not require any changes, such as positive feedback, which can confirm what you are doing works and should be shared with your colleagues to motivate them.

9. Find more about how to implement social science research here (Module 4).

The following tool guides you through the process of deciding how to act on feedback:

Resource

- Feedback tool 31: Developing an action plan for addressing community feedback

Documenting the recommendations and action points in response to feedback in a format that is accessible to everyone allows you to monitor progress and hold different stakeholders to account. Action taken in response to individual pieces of feedback, such as critical or sensitive feedback, can be tracked in your feedback log. Actions taken in response to broader analysis of feedback trends may need to be documented separately, as they relate to more than one piece of feedback and therefore would be difficult to track in your logbook. You can use and adapt following template for keeping track of your recommendations and actions for broader feedback trends:

Resource

- Feedback tool 32: Community feedback action tracker

Remember: it is mostly not only you who needs to take action

The responsibility of the feedback team is to share the insights with those who can take the action, as well as to learn from the feedback and adapt the feedback mechanism. Those who are best placed to take action are usually leadership of programmes or operations, the technical leads, local authorities, partner organisations and most importantly, the community itself. You need to make sure the information is fed into the decision-making channels and the feedback informs participatory planning processes.

Examples: how have feedback findings been used?

Ebola response in eastern DRC 2018-2020

In response to rumours and beliefs about rocks or banana trunks being buried in opaque body bags instead of actual people who had died from Ebola, new types of body bags were purchased. These bags had a transparent window, which allowed families and friends to see the deceased person during the burial process.

COVID-19 response in Cameroon 2019

The Cameroon Red Cross staff and volunteers repeatedly heard requests for water to be able to practice proper hygiene. These suggestions were shared and discussed with the Cameroon national coordination structure for the COVID-19 response. As a result, access to water in vulnerable communities was improved through the construction of 2 boreholes and the installation of water tanks in at-risk communities with a regular supply of water provided by the national water company.

Ebola response in Equateur province in DRC 2020

The humanitarian response to the Ebola outbreak was met with a lot of suspicion and resistance from community groups. The feedback shared by the community allowed responders to address key issues in dialogue sessions with members of community groups who had a specific influence on the broader community. This led to issues being resolved and members of these groups being integrated into the response as volunteers.

STAGE 5: CLOSING THE LOOP

A fully functioning feedback mechanism is one in which the community knows what happens with the feedback they give, a process referred to as "closing the feedback loop". If community members do not receive a response to their feedback, they may assume it has been ignored, which could lead them to lose trust in the feedback mechanism and stop using it. This step must not replace the regular involvement of community members throughout the feedback cycle; it is being highlighted separately because it is so important yet often treated as an afterthought.

The following tools will be useful for this entire section:

Resources

- Feedback tool 32: Community feedback action tracker
- Feedback tool 9: Mapping the information flow
- Feedback tool 10: Mapping and agreeing on needed roles, responsibilities and resources

5.1 'Close the loop' internally

Before you can close the loop with the community, you should make sure it is closed within your organisation. The staff and volunteers who are engaging with the community on a regular basis need to know what has been done with feedback so that they can communicate this back to the community. The loop should also be closed internally with other members of your organisation by sharing decisions and actions with staff in the project (including technical staff, support staff, M&E team members, etc.), other projects, and senior managers. This will help all staff understand the value of a functioning feedback mechanism.

Part of the action plans, information flows, and roles and responsibilities developed in Stage 1 should include: ***who*** *is responsible for communicating* ***what*** *to different staff and volunteers and* ***when*** *they should do it.*

Ways to close the loop internally with community-facing staff might include weekly updates about what has been done in response to community feedback, regularly updated FAQ documents, or monthly meetings where staff can ask questions about what actions have been taken in response to feedback. Ways to close the loop with other internal stakeholders could include sharing in staff meetings, all-staff emails, monthly reports to staff, etc.

5.2 'Close the loop' with the community

When closing the feedback loop with the community, you need to decide whether to share the response to an individual or the community as whole:

OPTIONS FOR "CLOSING THE LOOP" WITH COMMUNITIES		
WHO TO SHARE WITH?	**Directly with the person who provided feedback**	**With the whole community**
WHEN TO USE THIS APPROACH?	• When the feedback shared was sensitive • When the person urgently needs to hear back about a specific issue • If there is a need for the person to provide consent to share their contact details with another organisation?	• When the feedback issue and response is of interest to the whole community • If the feedback was provided anonymously and the response can be shared without identifying the person who shared it
HOW CAN THIS BE DONE?	Directly contacting the person the way they prefer and is feasible (e.g., in person, via phone, or email)	Options include: • Updates and discussions during regular activities • Community meetings on the topic • Discussing the issue on community radio programming • Posting signs or posters with the relevant information in public spaces

The following describes some good practice when closing the feedback loop with communities:

- **Use diverse and preferred communication channels** – Use the community's preferred channels of communication for providing, noting these may be different to how they prefer to provide feedback.
- **Make sure it is clear who is closing the loop and with whom** – In your information flow & roles and responsibility documents, make sure it is clear who is responsible for closing the loop with specific groups in the community. For example, this could be a community engagement team or programme staff.
- **Close the loop, even if no action was taken** – It is important to explain to communities' if their questions or requests cannot be addressed and why. This helps community members and staff better understand the constraints that the organisation, and the response as a whole, is experiencing.

5.3 Document the closing of the loop

It is important to track when the loop has been closed on individual pieces of feedback and when it has not. This can be documented in the feedback logbook or database. Record when the person was informed of the decision/action taken and how that information was delivered to them. This will help hold everyone accountable and ensure the community knows what has happened with their feedback.

Note: this process may be different for sensitive feedback, where the investigation process might be conducted completely separately and documented in a more confidential manner.

For action taken in response to broader feedback trends, this can be documented in the community feedback action tracker used for documenting recommendations and actions taken (See: Section 5.3).

Monitor whether communities are satisfied with the way their feedback has been handled and responded to. You may believe that the loop has been closed in a satisfactory way but affected communities may have a different impression (e.g., that it took too long, that the response was not clear enough, etc.). This kind of dialogue helps all stakeholders reflect on how well the feedback mechanism is working.

Philippines 2014 – The IFRC/Philippine Red Cross cash team registers community members who will receive unconditional cash grants as part of the emergency response operation for Typhoon Haiyan. Informing the community about the the different stages of the programme is an important part of the process. © IFRC

STAGE 6: REVIEWING AND ADAPTING THE MECHANISM

This last section will allow you to review the feedback process as a whole, which allows you to make improvements to the process and adapt to changes in the context and programming.

6.1 Check if the mechanism is working and adapt where necessary

Carry out regular checks to make sure the feedback mechanism is working, and people still feel comfortable using it. Some questions to ask regularly include:

- ***Are the feedback channels being used?***
  If the amount of feedback received is low, is it because people do not trust the mechanism? Have you received sensitive feedback?
- ***Who is sharing feedback – and who isn't?***
  Are there certain groups of people (e.g. women, elderly, certain ethnicities, or locations) that you are not hearing from?
- ***What are communities' views on the process?***
  Are they satisfied? Do they feel heard?
- ***Has the feedback led to action?***
  If not, why?
- ***Are people hearing back about the feedback they shared?***
  If not, why?

Answers to the questions above can be found by reviewing the feedback data and documentation of how the feedback was handled, having discussions with colleagues and community members, and collecting structured data. The tool on how to define communication channels with the community provides guidance on how to best seek structured feedback from communities and other stakeholders.

Resource

- Feedback tool 3: Defining communication channels for a feedback mechanism

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Key guidance complementing this guide:

- IFRC Feedback Kit
- Red Cross Red Crescent Guide to Community Engagement and Accountability and Toolkit
- Hotline in a Box guide
- Social Science Training - RCRC Adaptation

You can find more information on feedback mechanisms on following platforms:

- Community Engagement Hub: for videos, case studies, guidance documents and more.
- IASC Accountability and Inclusion Resources Portal: for guidance documents, standards, tools, and articles.
- CDA Collaborative Learning: for key publications including practical tools and case studies on the topic.

Bangladesh 2010 – Community meeting in Mitrodanga, near Bagerhat, as part of a PASSA programme. PASSA (Participatory Approach to Safe Shelter Awareness) is a participatory tool that allows communities to improve their living environment, build safer shelters and design better settlements. © Agostino Pacciani/IFRC

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Below are the definitions for critical terms used throughout this document.

'Big Picture' Feedback

This is feedback about issues that fall outside of your specific projects or interventions and is often about strategic issues or broader challenges related to the humanitarian response efforts. For example, this might include discontent with the Government or other agencies and their response efforts, questions about the timeframe of the larger humanitarian response, or comments about dynamics within the community that are outside of the response effort. This type of feedback can help you better understand the community, as well as their needs, challenges, and experiences/perspectives. This type of feedback can sometimes be shared with other actors involved in the response who might be in the position to address specific issues.

Closing the feedback loop

The process of communicating to feedback providers what has been done in response to their feedback. It involves explaining and discussing how the feedback was considered, what was feasible to do (or not), the rationale behind these decisions, and what this means for the future. Closing the loop is not the end of the feedback cycle, because feedback is continuous; however, it is often a missing piece that is critical to managing individual feedback.

Coding of open, unstructured feedback data

Coding is a process that occurs in a data management system (e.g., Excel). Specifically, it is the process of attaching a specific keyword or short phrase to feedback comments to track and analyse them more easily. For example, coding all comments related to the belief that COVID-19 is not real, or all comments relating to dissatisfaction with the hygiene kits. This helps you to better understand the main topics communities are talking about, and to identify differences between community groups and locations, and changes over time. Similar codes may be further organised into categories, e.g., different codes relating to WASH, or different codes relating to vaccines.

Community

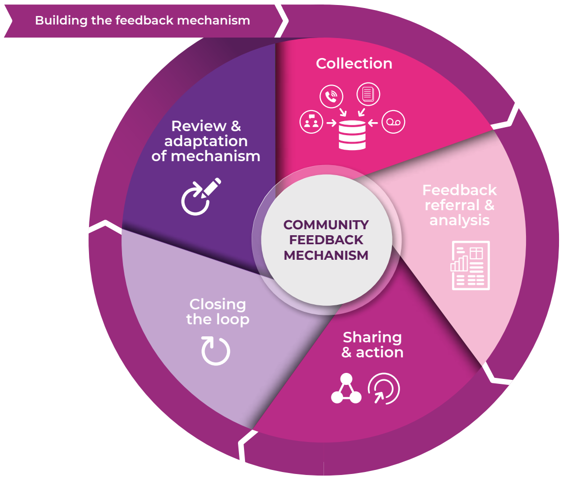
The term 'community' is used throughout this guide and refers to the group of people affected by the organisation's activities, programmes, or operations – including those who receive support and those who do not. Not everyone in the community is the same and within and across communities there will be a wide range of needs, capacities, and risks. Therefore, when you see the word 'community' in this document, it refers to all the diverse groups who make up a community, including women, men, boys, and girls, older persons, people with disabilities, different ethnic groups, sexual and gender minorities and marginalized or at-risk groups. This also includes community representatives, such as local leaders, organisations, and authorities.

Community feedback data collector

The person receiving and documenting the information shared by community members. This includes staff and volunteers documenting insights during their regular activities, as well as staff or volunteers (or representatives of third parties) specifically tasked with collecting and documenting community feedback.

Community feedback mechanism

A feedback mechanism is a system to enable community members to share information, express concerns and needs or suggest changes of importance to them. It includes the channels for receiving feedback, the processes and tools for managing, analysing and sharing the data, as well as the processes for ensuring the feedback is acted upon, and communities are informed of the actions. A feedback mechanism helps organisations be more accountable to communities and ultimately contributes to better quality of programming.



Critical feedback

Any feedback that requires urgent/timely follow-up but is not sensitive in nature. These can include issues like the delivery of spoiled food, potential security risks, signs of an outbreak of disease, or new rumours in the community that might directly threaten upcoming programming. Critical feedback comments need to be shared immediately with the person in the best position to address the issue.

Community Feedback

Community feedback are insights generated by community members and can be positive and negative in nature. Feedback offers the agency with an understanding of the community's needs, perspectives, experiences, challenges, and opportunities both related to the humanitarian response and outside of it. It can be received in all kinds of ways, for example as part of an informal conversation with a staff member, via a phone call to a call centre, or in the form of responses to structured surveys.

Feedback channel

A feedback channel is a modality through which community insights can be shared, captured, and received. For example, this can be a hotline, a face-to-face interview, or a feedback box. By its very nature, each channel has its own characteristics that affect how accessible it is to certain individuals and groups in a community. We can see that a feedback mechanism is the broader system that ensures a whole feedback loop, while the feedback channel is limited to the collection of the feedback. One feedback mechanism can, and should, comprise various feedback channels.

Informed consent

The permission granted by an individual to collect and process their personal data after understanding and voluntarily agreeing to: 1) the intended purpose of the data collection and processing; 2) with whom their data may be shared; 3) any risks associated with collection, processing or sharing of their personal data; and 4) alternatives in the case that they do not wish to, or cannot, share their personal data.[10]

10. World Food Programme (2020). Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms Guidance Document, p.66.

Information flow

The information flow refers to how people inside of your organisation share and receive different kinds of information (in this case, information from community feedback), this is also sometimes referred to as internal referral pathways. Information can be shared in formal, structured ways (e.g., through weekly reports, monthly meetings, databases, etc.) and through more informal, less structured ways (e.g., because the community engagement team and health team share the same office, the health team is often informed about current events in the community).

Open, unstructured feedback

Feedback that community members share when they want about topics they want to address (as opposed to structured feedback, when an organisation actively solicits feedback from communities about certain topics). It can come through routine conversations, community meetings, telephone hotlines, interactive radio shows, etc. and generates qualitative data for the organisation to analyse and act upon.

Operational feedback

This is feedback that directly relates to ongoing projects, programs, activities, or operations that are being undertaken by the organisation. For example, this can be suggestions on changes of the schedules for distributions, questions about opening hours, or reports of dissatisfaction with the type of assistance provided.

Personal data (or personal information, personal identifiable information)

Any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject'); an identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, or the cultural or social identity of that natural person.[11]

Sensitive Feedback

Any information that can put the person sharing it or other people linked to it at risk and needs to be handled with care.[12] This involves any allegation related to serious violations of national or international law pertaining to the rights of the individual; any breach of the code of conduct or safeguarding policies; and/or safety and security threats targeting the humanitarian community.[13] Sensitive feedback can be received as any type of feedback, such as a complaint, a question, or a suggestion as it depends on the specific situation if it puts a person at risk if shared with others.

Social Science

Is the scientific study of individuals and communities, how individuals interact with each other, how people behave and the dynamics between different (population) groups. This information is used to adapt the design and delivery of services and the way response actors engage with communities throughout the response.

11. OCHA (2019): Data Responsibility Guidelines, p.49. https://centre.humdata.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/OCHA-DR-Guidelines-working-draft-032019.pdf
12. Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2021). Data Responsibility in Humanitarian Contexts. Operational Guidance, p.30. https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/operational-response/iasc-operational-guidance-data-responsibility-humanitarian-action
13. Danish Refugee Council (2022): Community Feedback Mechanism. Guidance and Toolkit., p.8. https://www.drc.ngo/media/vzlhxkea/drc_global-cfm-guidance_web_low-res.pdf.

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