MODULE 4

HOW TO USE PERCEPTION SURVEYS IN A FEEDBACK MECHANISM

A quick guide to collecting feedback through structured surveys and ensuring a complete feedback cycle around it

October 2022

IFRC FEEDBACK KIT

CONTENTS

Bangladesh 2019 – Nurjahan (center), a cyclone preparedness volunteer in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, shares the story of how she left Myanmar for Bangladesh and how she is supporting her community in the camp by sharing information about what to do if a storm hits.
© Brad Zerivitz/American Red Cross


CPP
American

NAVIGATING THIS GUIDE

What is this document?

The module of the IFRC Feedback Kit provides the most important tips for conducting perception surveys as part of a feedback mechanism. It provides tools that help you plan the mechanism and collect, answer, analyse and share community feedback perception data.

KEY TO READING THE GUIDE

The guide provides:

- Key terms defined in the glossary hyperlinked

Resources

Tips

Examples

Who is this document for?

This document is for anyone who would like to collect community feedback in a structured way by asking a subset of the community specific questions on a regular basis. This contributes to better and more accountable programming and helps establish structures where people's opinions are listened to and acted on, especially when making decisions that directly affect them. It is kept simple and practical to ensure it is easy to use for colleagues who do not have a strong information management background.

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 module, 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

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CEA	Community Engagement and Accountability[1]
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent
KAP	Knowledge, attitudes, and practices
KoBo Toolbox	A data collection, management, and visualization platform
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Promotion
PGI	Protection Gender and Inclusion
PMER	Planning Monitoring Evaluation and Reporting
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

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).

AT A GLANCE: HOW TO USE PERCEPTION SURVEYS IN A FEEDBACK MECHANISM

Overview of the stages and available tools

INTRODUCTION	
Content includes	***Who should read this?***
• Introduction to perception surveys, community feedback and the stages of the feedback cycle	Anyone who is relatively new to the concepts and practice of using perception surveys as part of a feedback mechanism

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 **10.** Integrate into monitoring and evaluation systems **11.** Design the sample **12.** Decide between self-collection vs. independent data collection **13.** Decide on how often the data will be collected **14.** Find the right questions **15.** Pilot and revise the questions	Anyone who is planning a perception survey with communities, or would like to strengthen their approach to conducting such surveys
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

Steps 1 – 9 are included in the Feedback Essentials Module of the Feedback Kit. Only the additional steps relevant for perception surveys are covered in this document.

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 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
Feedback tool 13: Sampling for feedback surveys	A short guidance document which can help you to develop your sampling strategy for a perception survey
Feedback tool 14: List of perception questions	A set of example questions for perception surveys
Feedback tool 15: Workshop agenda for a designing a questionnaire	This template agenda helps you to organise a meeting with key stakeholders to design the right questions for your perception survey

Feedback tool 16: Quick guide focus group discussion guide for testing questions	This short guidance helps you organise focus group discussions to test your questionnaire, allowing you to refine the questions before rolling out the survey
Feedback tool 17: Checklist for designing a feedback survey	This list reminds you of the key considerations when designing a questionnaire
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 supervising or supporting the data collection process, as well as those who are collecting the perception data
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?***
Tool 24 Excel template graphs	Provides some template graphs that can help you visualise the perception survey data
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

What are perception surveys and how do they fit into a feedback mechanism?

With perception surveys we mean the collection of feedback data by asking specific, predefined questions. This is done with the goal of better understanding communities views on different areas of relevance for the success of a programme or operation.

Feedback cycle for perception surveys

A feedback survey does not make a feedback mechanism. A survey is a way of data collection, which needs to be embedded in the broader system of a feedback mechanism. The survey needs to be designed collectively, and the information analysed, shared and discussed in a way that it informs concrete decisions and the feedback cycle can be closed. If these additional steps are missing, a feedback survey remains a simple data collection effort that will hardly have an impact on the operation or programme.

See what the feedback cycle looks like when using structured surveys:

Figure: Stages of a feedback mechanism

1. **Building the feedback mechanism:** Determine if a structured survey is a suitable way to collect community feedback. If yes, design the questionnaire together with communities, partners and colleagues and ensure the information will be actionable. Clearly identify the processes to collect, manage, and share the community feedback and the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved.

2. **Collecting feedback:** You can collect survey data face to face, via phone calls or online depending on the best way to reach out to the target population and the resources you have. The feedback is collected using a predefined questionnaire, which includes questions where and how the data was collected, as well as demographic characteristics of the person who shared the information.

3. **Feedback referral and analysis:** You will then enter or upload all data into one central database, review and clean it. The survey data will usually be of non-sensitive nature, but in case there are any critical or sensitive issues, they need to be referred to programme teams or leadership. The feedback data will then be analysed and presented in a clear, simple and visually compelling way. Conider combining and comfirming feedback findings with operational, epidemiological and social data.

4. **Sharing and acting on feedback:** The most essential step of the feedback cycle is when you get together to discuss what you have been hearing, what this means, and what you can do to address the feedback. To facilitate this process, you need to share and discuss the feedback findings with those who are in the position to act on the feedback. This includes internal discussions, external discussions (with peers and others) and, importantly, meetings with the community. It is eqaually important to use feedback findings as a source of future community-led social research.

5. **Closing the Loop:** A fully functioning feedback mechanism is one in which the community knows what happens with the feedback they gave, a process referred to as "closing the feedback loop". To close the feedback cycle, you document the agreed action points and provide updates on what has been done with the feedback to the community. If done properly, when people are reached out to with the next micro-survey, they will be convinced it is worth their while to respond.

6. **Reviewing and adapting the mechanism:** Carry out regular checks to make sure the feedback mechanism is working, and people still feel comfortable participating in the surveys. This stage allows you to make improvements to the process and adapt to changes in the context and programming.

Uses of structured feedback data

As for any kind of feedback data the uses are diverse, but there are specific purposes for which structured feedback is most suitable. It can be used for (but is not limited to):

- Monitoring key metrics that relate to your organisation or your operation. This will allow you to understand if you are moving in the right direction and to adapt to changes in communities' perceptions in real time.
- Gaining a deeper understanding of issues that were highlighted in unstructured, open conversations.
- Generating more robust data to support strategic decisions

STAGES OF A FEEDBACK MECHANISM

STAGE 1: BUILDING YOUR FEEDBACK MECHANISM

The key steps of setting up a feedback mechanism apply to feedback surveys, so make sure to use Module 2 - Feedback Essentials in the Feedback Kit to show you how to:

1. Get the buy-in you need
2. Determine the scale of your feedback mechanism
3. Define your communication channels
4. Determine how you will document the feedback
5. Map and design internal information flows
6. Agree on roles, responsibilities, and timeframes
7. Identify the resources you will need (financial and human)
8. Conduct the necessary briefings and trainings
9. Advertise the feedback mechanism

Below are the key considerations for designing perception surveys that are additional to what was included in the Feedback Essentials Module.

1.1. Integrate into monitoring and evaluation systems

Feedback mechanisms are part of regular monitoring and evaluation systems for programmes and operations and need to be considered with other monitoring and evaluation data in programme-level decision-making. Collecting structured feedback data can be integrated into other planned data collection efforts such as needs assessments or post-distribution monitoring surveys.

Include feedback indicators in monitoring and evaluation frameworks to ensure the data will be collected and considered. Here are some examples of indicators:

- % of community members who feel support provided by the programme currently covers their most important needs
- % of community members who feel treated with respect by programme staff and volunteers
- % of community members who feel the programme has communicated well about plans and activities
- % of community members who feel their opinion is taken into account during programme planning and decision-making
- % of community members who know how the programme decided who should receive support and who does not
- % of community members who feel support is provided to those most in need

For more indicators:

Resources

- CEA toolkit tool 7: M&E tool

1.2 Design the sample

Depending on the scale of your feedback mechanism and the use of the feedback data, you need to decide on how many people will be surveyed. This process is called sampling. Consider if you want the results of your survey to be representative for the whole target population, if you want to understand particular issues more in depth, or if you want to use the opportunity to collect the feedback as part of a broader engagement process, where the initial survey findings will be discussed and triangulated.

The following tool provides guidance on how to develop a sampling strategy for feedback surveys:

Resource

- Feedback tool 13: Sampling guidance

Accept that your approach might not be perfect

Situations are changing fast in humanitarian contexts, communities are moving, and there is often a lack of data about the target community which is needed when aiming for representative and reliable surveys. It is still possible to make the most out of what is possible, and the combination with more qualitative methods such as focus group discussions will provide the information needed to identify issues and inform subsequent discussions.

1.3 Decide between self-collection vs. independent data collection

Data can be self-collected by Red Cross and Red Crescent staff and volunteers or independently collected by a third party. An experienced, independent data collection group is more likely to reduce response biases and provide high quality data. From the National Society's point of view, collecting data by itself may be less costly. Internal data collection requires training of staff and setting aside resources. In addition to assigning staff or volunteers as data collectors and training them, supervisors are necessary to ensure quality control. Internal data collection has to be well planned and managed. Self-collected data is prone to courtesy bias. To reduce courtesy bias, staff can take precautionary measures. These include informing responders that candid answers are more likely to influence programme delivery, using technology tools that can provide for anonymity (e.g. email survey) or in the case of face-to-face data collection, using volunteers from other programmes who are not known by the respondents to collect data. One can also consider making an agreement with a local university or another organization to carry out the interviews on behalf of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

While data collection through a third party usually requires less management oversight than internally collected data, it is still essential to ensure that enumerators are well aware of the the purpose of the data collection, potential sensitivities and codes of conduct of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. See more on trainings of data collectors in Section 1.8 of the Module 2 – Feedback Essentials Module of the Feedback Kit.

1.4 Decide on how often the data will be collected

How often you will be collecting the data will depend on your specific context and needs. If you survey questions are integrated into the monitoring and evaluation framework, you will follow that specific plan. It is best to repeat data collection in regular intervals, as it will allow you to track changes over time, and the results can also become more robust, if they are repeated over time. When deciding on how often to collect the data, ask yourself the following questions:

- *Will the data be collected continuously (e.g. as exit survey for all recipients of a service), or in phases (e.g., collecting data from a certain number of people every three months)?*
- *How fast is the context changing and to what extent do we need to react to these changes in real time?*
- *How often do decision-makers get together to discuss decisions?*
- *How often can we afford to collect data?*
- *How often does the community want to share their views and how can we avoid survey fatigue?*

You can always readjust your schedule. Make sure you leave enough time between the rounds of data collection to share and discuss the findings and take action. Survey fatigue will usually only be an issue if communities do not hear back on the findings and therefore don't see the value of participating in the process.

1.5 Find the right questions

As with all other steps of designing the process, the questionnaire should be developed collectively with colleagues, partners and ideally also the community. You can start with reviewing the objectives of your programme or operation which might be defined in your strategy, workplan, or theory of change. There might also be specific areas of importance that are linked to a specific disaster or situation. This will help you to identify questions that will bring out issues that are both important to the communities you are aiming to serve and that are amenable for action by your organisation.

Questions can relate to areas including:

- The quality and relevance of services
- The quality of relationships between your organisation and the people you are aiming to serve
- People's sense of safety and security
- People's sense of being heard, and able to participate in programmes and operations

To be able to handle a big amount of feedback, analyse the data quickly, and compare differences between demographic groups, perception surveys usually mainly consist of Likert Scale questions. This means that questions are asked to be answered on a scale.

Eg:

Are you satisfied with the information you received about the operation?

- ❒ **1 – Not at all**
- ❒ **2 – Rather not**
- ❒ **3 – Somewhat**
- ❒ **4 – Rather yes**
- ❒ **5 – Very much**

To the extent possible, these closed questions should be combined with open follow-up questions to provide the opportunity to share explanations for responding positively or negatively. Nevertheless, it needs to be kept in mind that structured surveys are not a qualitative study. They are usually, and this depends on the purpose, a way to provide snapshots of perceptions on certain topics and should be combined with more qualitative methods such as focus group discussions to gain more detailed insights on areas that were highlighted in the surveys.

Resources

- Feedback tool 14: List of perception survey questions
- Feedback tool 15: Workshop agenda for designing a questionnaire

1.6 Pilot and revise the questions

The next step is to test these questions with the communities. The wording of questions is crucial and needs to be checked before finalization to make sure they are easily understood and relevant to the most pressing issues faced by affected people.

One approach to testing the questions is to conduct focus groups with people representing the potentially different views in the area where you are operating. Consider what time of day makes most sense in terms of people's availability to attend the focus group discussions. Remember to leave time for team discussion on the feedback received afterwards. Another approach is to conduct a small pilot survey to test the questions through individual interviews.

It is important to test the questionnaire in all the languages in which the survey is to be conducted. A good way of ensuring that the translations are correct is to translate the questionnaire back into the original language in which it was initially developed to verify that the meaning of the question has not been changed.

Resources

- Feedback tool 16: Quick FGD guide for testing questions
- Feedback tool 17: Checklist for designing perception surveys

When soliciting feedback, keep in mind how much data are useful and actionable

If actively going out to collect data on a specific topic, set criteria for you to avoid collecting more data than necessary, and than you can handle. Only collect data that is useful and actionable, to avoid causing survey fatigue of community members, as well as waste time and energy on information that might be interesting but does not serve a specific purpose.

Armenia 2020 – Volunteers and staff of the Armenian Red Cross Society are delivering humanitarian aid parcels to those affected by the COVID-19 crisis most. © Armenian Red Cross

STAGE 2: COLLECTING COMMUNITY 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 Plan your data collection

If you are collecting community feedback in a dedicated data collection effort, make sure to plan the data collection together with the local community. Discuss with local leaders and community representatives on how to best organise the data collection, which times are best and how to best identify the respondents. In a situation where community leaders request to represent the perceptions of their community, explaining that a random sampling approach is a key pillar of the approach can help to avoid data collectors being directed to specific members of the community.

If there are other organisations operating in the same area, coordinate with them to ensure there are no other parallel data collection activities, or other activities that could interfere with the data collection such as relief distributions.

Before starting to collect the feedback data, make sure the communities you are targeting know you will be coming. When arriving at the day of data collection, greet the local leaders or other relevant structured and coordinate on how the data will be collected.

Avoiding selection bias

When planning the data collection exercise, it is important to be aware of some people being more likely to be selected to share their views than others. For example, when visiting homes in the morning on a workday, you will not be able to talk to those having left for work. Or when calling respondents on their phones, you will only be able to reach those owning a phone and being able to charge it. These factors need to be taken into consideration, and what can help is to divide the target population based on gender, age or other attributes, and select respondents from each group in a proportionate manner.

2.2 Avoid response bias

Response bias is when people feel compelled to respond differently from what they actually believe. The are different types of bias, and following are most relevant when collecting perception data:

Courtesy bias is when people tend to respond in a way that pleases the interviewer. Recipients of humanitarian aid might be inclined to answer politely – but less candidly – so as not to offend or risk backlash or consequences of providing negative feedback.

Conformity bias, where people tend to respond in a way that is favoured by the social group they belong to, regardless of their own opinion. This type of bias is particularly strong if respondents feel that their responses are not anonymous.

Tips to avoid response bias during data collection:

- Explain that the survey is ***anonymous*** and that participation or refusal to participate will not affect the individual's prospects of receiving assistance. This is particularly important if the data is collected by members of the organisation that provides aid in the area.
- Explain that it is perceptual data – ***there are no right or wrong answers***. You want to know how they feel about certain things, which of course is subjective.
- Try to ***create a comfortable dynamic*** between interviewer and respondent, especially if sensitive issues are being discussed. For example, female refugees should ideally be approached by a female interviewer. If possible, also pair nationalities (Iranian data collector with Iranian refugee, Afghan data collector with Afghan refugee).
- Ensure a ***calm environment***, avoiding other influences (e.g. not conducting an interview in a waiting room or busy area where others are listening).
- Explain that the ***purpose of the survey*** is to gather honest feedback to improve quality of assistance provided.
- It is important ***to remain neutral and encourage honest answers*** (e.g. try not looking overly pleased or happy when they give positive responses).

Most of these tips are most relevant for face-to-face data collection, or a conversation via phone. Nevertheless, a lot of the tips can be followed when setting up online surveys as well by including a clear introduction to the survey and considering who shared and sends out to survey.

2.3 Listen and acknowledge

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.

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

Resources

- 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.

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.

Turkey 2021 – Nezila, 64-year-old Syrian refugee, shares her story about how she came to Turkey and how she is making ends meet with the help of her son, and the EU-funded Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) cash assistance. © Ilrem Karakaya/IFRC

2.4 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.

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.

2.5 Record community feedback

Record the answers the person provides without trying to validate the answer. It is not the aim of the survey to record facts, but to record the respondents' perception. Hence, do no question the response provided, but make sure you understood the reply correctly. If the reply seems vague, ask them for clarification.

Pay attention to the person sharing the feedback. Whenever possible, there should be a second person recording the feedback (especially during longer discussions), as this allows the person leading the interview to fully concentrate on the conversation.

2.6 Provide initial responses

It is likely that data collectors will be asked questions that are not directly related to the topic of the questionnaire. No matter if the survey is conducted by your own staff or volunteers, or an independent data, make sure that data collectors are able to share some basic information about your organisation and the services you are providing with the respondents of the survey, and direct them to the places where they can access more information.

Iraq 2015 – An Iraqi Red Crescent Society staff member explains the relief distribution process to a community member. IRCS works closely with the authorities to ensure that relief is provided to those who need it most.
© Stephen Ryan/IFRC

STAGE 3: FEEDBACK REFERRAL AND 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

Once the survey data has been collected either online, via phone or face to face, you need to gather it in a central place before processing it. This will depend on how you document your data, which was determined in the design process (see more on this in Section 1.4 of Module 2 - Feedback Essentials). When you collect data on paper forms and still need to transfer it to your database, this should be done as soon as possible after data collection. Once the data is in your data base, it might make sense to download and clean the data once a week, every two weeks or a month – depending on the volume of the data and how often it is necessary to provide new updates on the feedback.

Cleaning and quality assurance

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. It is best to review and clean the data while it is still collected. The feedback on the data collection process can be shared with those who collect the data immediately. This will help to learn from mistakes and improve the data collection in real time.

3.2 Prioritise and refer

Some of the 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 in the Module 2 - Feedback Essentials of the Feedback Kit).

In the case of sensitive data, 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. See more about how to handle sensitive data in Module 5.

Once you have referred feedback comments to the appropriate focal point for action, document to whom you have referred the feedback case with the date and focal point for follow-up. You can do so in a feedback database or logbook.

3.3 Explore the data and disaggregate

The most obvious thing to look at after conducting a survey is the basic distribution of responses. Here is a list of questions to consider when looking at the distribution:

- *Have people responded as you thought they would?*
- *Does a specific question stand out in some way?*
- *Did different groups in your sample respond to the same question differently?*
- *For example, did men respond differently from women or did young people respond differently to older people?*
- *If you collected data from more than one location, are responses different from one place to another?*
- *If you have collected more than one round of data, do responses change over time?*
- *To what extent items correlate with one another? Do people who respond with high values on one question also respond with high values on another question?*

Lebanon 2021 – A local doctor and an IFRC staff member discuss the progress of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign as part of IFRC's independent monitoring in Lebanon.
© IFRC

For findings the answers to the questions below, you can create pivot tables for each question. Look at the results overall, as well as the results for the different demographic groups and locations separately. It can help to visualize the results to better be able to spot trends. This can be done in a dashboard in Excel, tableau of PowerBI for example, or should you be using R or python, by rendering and/or exporting the graphs you need.

Analysis Step	Sample finding from hypothetical analysis
Compare the results for the questions to see which questions were responded to **most positively**, and **most negatively**.	This month, the respondents were most positive about the financial support they are receiving, compared to other types of support such as health services and food assistance.
Filter data to find if there are differences between **different demographic groups**. Disaggregate the data by sex, age, and other diversity factors but only look at differences if the different groups have at least 20 responses.	Men were more satisfied with the information about the services they received than women. 56% of male respondents stated to be "informed" or "very informed", compared to only 30% of female respondents who answered this question positively.
Filter the data to see if there are differences between the different **locations**.	While respondents in camp A were mostly positive about the feedback process, respondents in camp B shared mixed responses.
Identify **outliers** to see if there are community members sharing views different than the trends	While the majority of respondents was satisfied with the feedback committee, some responses were very negative. Negative responses were mainly shared by younger respondents. This may require follow-up to better clarify how young community members are involved in and represented by the feedback committees.
Identify changes over time	For the third month in a row, information on where to register for vaccinations was chosen to be the most needed information. This needs to be covered in all risk communication and community engagement activities and included in FAQ documents for staff and volunteers to ensure people are able to access this information.
Correlations between questions	Those who stated to be aware of how to shared feedback, were also likely to answer the question on feeling treated with respect positively.

3.4 Triangulate

To understand the full picture, you need to **triangulate** the information with other data sources to confirm your findings and gain more insights. Bringing together multiple data sources may make your feedback findings stronger and more compelling, may help to explain certain confusing feedback trends, and/or may reveal trends and observations that are not being captured in your feedback data. There are various ways for you to do that:

- 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 important need, it may be helpful to have a discussion with a WASH colleague to get their assessment 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 to explain the discrepancy 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, other feedback data including qualitative data from meetings, interviews and focus groups discussions, monitoring data, security incidents, KAP survey findings, information on operational presence and progress, information on the impact of the disaster, epidemiological data, or staff feedback.
  For example, if you are seeing a high volume of questions about vaccines, you may be able to validate this by looking at a recent KAP survey and finding out that the community has limited knowledge about vaccines and highly sceptical attitudes towards them.
- 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** or similar informal reports to help contextualize and explain key trends in the feedback data.
  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?***
- ***What does this mean for the humanitarian response, the communities' agency, and the actors involved?***
- ***Are there topics that are not clear and need to be further explored?***

The value of staff and volunteer surveys

A culture of accountability means not only listening and responding to community members, but also to staff and volunteers. This is not only important for increasing motivation and make sure everyone has the support they need, but also for tapping into and documenting all the information your staff and volunteers are gathering when they are doing their jobs and are in contact with the community. Conduct regular staff and volunteer surveys and compare the results to those of your feedback mechanism.

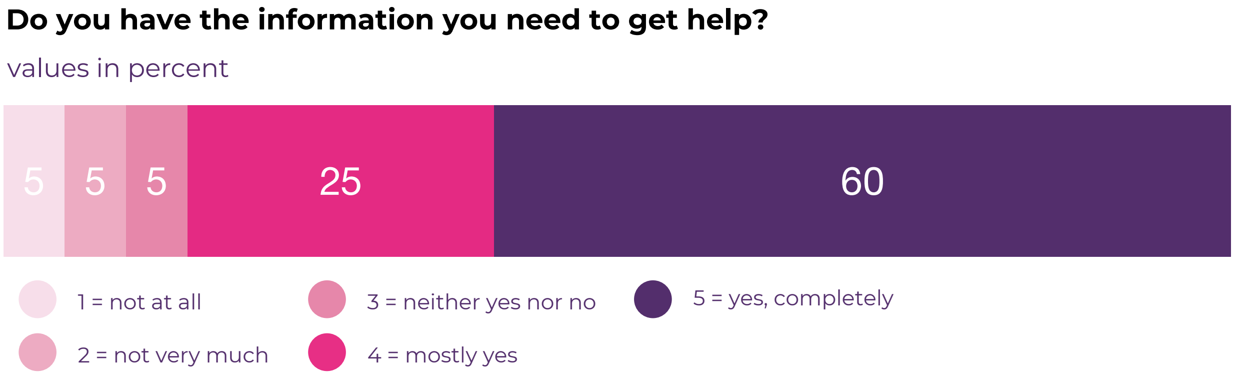
3.5 Visualise

Visualising your data is necessary to fully understand your results, and in order to effectively communicate them with others. It is best to present analysis results as graphs. The key to a good graph is that it conveys the information of the analysis effectively. This includes:

- Labelling clearly what you show.
- Minimising graphics that do not carry information.
- Avoiding overloading individual graphs with too much information.
- Using text or titles to highlight the key message.

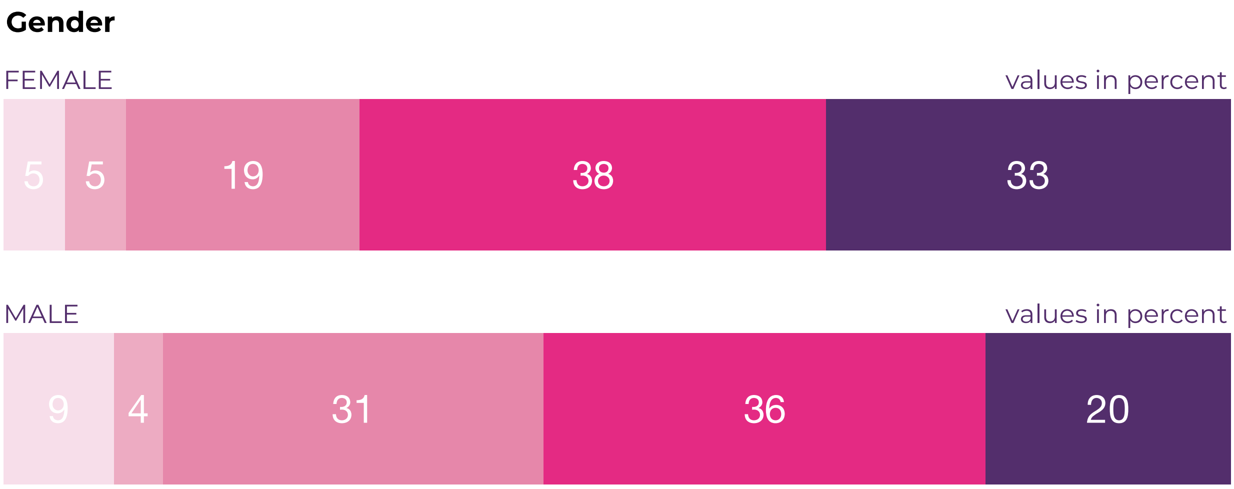
Flowing data has a more extensive guide to graph design in 7 Basic Rules for Making Charts and Graphs. Different graphs are appropriate depending on what questions you ask and what you want to show. The graphs discussed below are the ones most suitable for presenting the results of surveys that use Likert scale questions. Other types of graphs can be more appropriate for presenting the answers to yes or no or open-ended questions.

Figure: Visualization: Response overview (Stacked bar graph)



This graph is called a stacked bar graph, because the different categories are stacked on the same line, rather than being shown separately. This kind of graph is used for showing the distribution of responses for Likert scale questions. Likert-type scales use fixed choice response formats and are designed to measure attitudes or opinions. Respondents are offered a choice of five or seven pre-coded responses which allow the individual to express how much they agree or disagree with a particular statement. A five-point scale is easy to comprehend by most respondents and provides sufficient granularity for tracking any change in perceptions over time.

Figure: Visualization: Comparing groups (Bar graph, comparing female and male results)



Bar graphs are useful when comparing the responses of different groups. The above graph allows us to compare the frequency of responses between the two groups.

Figure: Visualization: Changes over time Point plot graph on the feelings of safety

Respondents feel safer in the camps

When measuring change across discrete time points (when you repeat a survey every three months), it is conventional to use a point plot graph, with lines connecting the points. The horizontal lines from each value on the Likert scale make it easier to connect each point to a specific score.

The following resource provides some template graphs that can help you visualise the perception survey data:

Resource

- Feedback tool 24: Excel template graphs

3.6 Integrate feedback data into 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, and integrated outbreak analytics. The Data to Action Handbook provides useful guidance on this topic.

Philippines 2009 - Red Cross staff and volunteers provide food assistance and education on public hygiene in Barangays, which was heavily affected by typhoon Ondoy in September 2009.
© Yoshi Shimizu/IFRC

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

Protect the identity of the feedback provider

Even if you share the 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. Any data needs to be anonymised before sharing, particularly when there is a risk of sensitive information being included.

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

Making the information products available

The information products on the community feedback findings will be of interest to various stakeholders and not all of them might be your target audience. Especially in an emergency response, it is important to share your content with all stakeholders involved in the response efforts. 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.

Be transparent about your process

Make sure to provide precise information on the methodology used and guide the audience on how findings can be interpreted. If purposive or convenience sampling approaches were used, it is important to stress that the findings cannot be extrapolated to the whole community to avoid misunderstandings and false expectations.

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/or 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 community representatives and groups, local authorities, other humanitarian organisations, media, and anyone else who can act on the feedback.

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 (see Stage 5).

4.3 Take action

Moving from analysis to action is probably the most challenging task. Together with those who are in the position to act, you will need to answer the following questions:

- ***Which topic do we 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?***

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.

The following tool guides you through this process and provides more details:

Resource

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

Documenting the recommendations or action points in a document accessible to everyone allows you to monitor progress and hold different stakeholders to account. You can use and adapt following template for keeping track of your recommendations and agreed actions:

Resource

- Feedback tool 32: Community feedback action tracker

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 stage:

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 when setting up the system 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

Just as there needs to be a plan to close the loop internally, there has to be a plan to close the loop with the community. There are many ways to return information back to the community, depending on the kind of information and action.

One of the main decisions that need to be made is whether to share the response to the feedback with an individual or the community as a whole:

OPTIONS FOR “CLOSING THE LOOP” WITH COMMUNITIES		
WHO TO SHARE WITH:	**Directly with the person who provided feedback**	**With the broader community where the feedback was received**
WHEN IS THIS IMPORTANT?	• 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	• When the feedback topic is of interest to the whole community • If the feedback was provided anonymously and the response can be shared without potentially identifying the anonymous feedback giver
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 4.3).

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.

Peru 2021 – A volunteer of the Peruvian Red Cross asking a member of an indigenous community about her perception of COVID-19. This is part of an effort to support the Ministry of Health to ensure consistent dialogue with the indigenous communities. © Sebastián Castañeda/Reuters, ICRC

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 the 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.

Nigeria 2021 - Mariya holds her granddaughter while speaking with Nigerian Red Cross volunteer, Hauwa, in her flooded home. © Corrie Butler/IFRC

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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

Closing the feedback loop

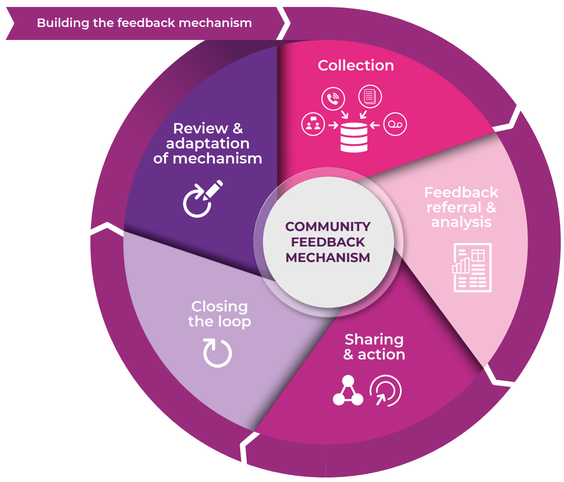
The process of communicating to feedback providers what has been done in response to their feedback. It involves explaining and discussing how the feedback was considered, what was feasible to do (or not), the rationale behind these decisions, and what this means for the future. Closing the loop is not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

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 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.



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[2].

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).

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[3].

Perception survey

Perception surveys are data collection efforts to measure what respondents believe, think or feel and can produce information about: (a) Knowledge (e.g. levels of awareness and understanding of particular issues); (b) Experiences (e.g. in regards to service provision) (c) Beliefs and values (e.g. norms, beliefs and levels of tolerance of certain behaviours) (d) Attitudes and opinions (e.g. views of performance of actors, satisfaction with services); and (e) Expectations (e.g. fears and hopes).[4] The primary distinction of a perception survey is that it is intended to discover opinions rather than factual data.

Sampling

Sampling is the process of selecting units (e.g. people, organizations, etc.) from a population of interest which may be surveyed and/or studied and the results generalized back to the population from which they were chosen. This is different from a census, where every person or entity in the population is included in the survey or study, a practice which is often not feasible nor adds to the credibility of the data collected.[5]

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.[6] 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.[7] 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.

2. World Food Programme (2020). Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms Guidance Document, p.66.
3. OCHA (2019): Data Responsibility Guidelines, p.49. https://centre.humdata.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/OCHA-DR-Guidelines-working-draft-032019.pdf
4. Sian Herbert (2013): Perception surveys in fragile and conflict affected states, https://www.academia.edu/3365331/Perception_surveys_in_fragile_and_conflict_affected_states
5. ICRC (2020): Acquiring and Analysing Data in Support of Evidence-based Decisions: A Guide for Humanitarian Work, p. 105. https://www.icrc.org/en/publication/acquiring-and-analysing-data-support-evidence-based-decisions-guide-humanitarian-work
6. 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
7. 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.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This guide is a product of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

The document is a revised version of the guide “How to establish and manage a systematic community feedback mechanism”, which is a joint product of IFRC and Ground Truth Solutions and was originally published in 2018. This revised version was further refined to clarify the linkages of perception surveys and IFRC’s broader approach to community feedback. It is informed by all the hard work of the staff and volunteers of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies across the globe who have been recording community feedback in a structured way. It would not have been possible without the excellent partnership with Ground Truth Solutions during numerous projects in the past years.

Author: Eva Erlach (IFRC Consultant)

Main contributors: Rachel Yales (IFRC Geneva), Elisabeth Ganter Restrepo (IFRC Africa), Ombretta Baggio (IFRC Geneva), Alexandra Sicotte-Lévesque (IFRC Geneva).