**Tool 3**

**FCRM Channels Pros and Cons\***

This tool presents a range of feedback, complaints and response channels to assist teams to tailor these to the context and target audience during start‑up and implementation.

**A. Feedback and complaint channels**

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| **Suggestion box** |
| Community can submit written feedback and complaints using free text or forms placed in a secure box.**Type:** Static **Base:** Non‑tech**Information direction:** One‑way |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** | **Key considerations[[1]](#footnote-1)**  |
| Can have a wide reach if placed in high‑traffic areas.Easy to set up in small‑scale projects or responses.Accessible to non‑program participants.Suitable for anonymous or confidential complaint (although privacy can be compromised).Can be placed in the community over extended period and enable access at any time.Can be mobile.  | Unsuitable for illiterate community members. Can exclude people with limited mobility, such as those in remote locations or older people.Not ideal for urban, dispersed, or large camp settings. Can delay response.May be difficult to respond to individual or community if insufficient contact information provided. | Only use in combination with other channels.Involve community members to select box locations and decide how responses will be shared (e.g., noticeboard near box).Significant staffing and resource costs for projects with multiple remote locations.Define collection and communication protocols, e.g., two designated staff open the box weekly and return it the day after. To ensure impartiality, they should not be directly implementing the project.Consider placing boxes in private spaces such as women‑only spaces. Consider using pictorial forms and ticked boxes to try to navigate literacy issues. Remote settings: consider suspending use if staff can no longer travel to locations. Replace with alternative channels. |
| **Hotline and SMS: Single prepaid account (managed in‑house)** |
| Community members call and give feedback directly to a staff member.**Type:** Static **Base:** Low‑tech**Information direction:** Two‑way |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** | **Key considerations**  |
| High accessibility if location has good network coverage and if diverse program participants use mobile phones.Suitable for remote contexts and large‑scale responses.Suitable for anonymous or confidential complaint although traceability of calls can be a barrier.Easy to use for people with low digital literacy.Suitable for communities with low literacy.Accessible to non‑program participants.Fast and immediate acknowledgement, response and referral. Accessible to people with limited mobility. | Requires set‑up time, which may be too long for short projects.Excludes community members who don’t have access to a mobile phone, phone credit or electricity to charge phone.Can be costly to respondents if toll‑free number has not been set up.Confidentiality and use of personal data can be compromised. Long response delay if hotline has high traffic. | High staffing and resource costs (requires that staff have specific skills and training on immediate feedback and complaints handling).Negotiate with local mobile network provider(s) for a toll‑free number.Ensure that staff have adequate language and interpersonal skills and are trained to log and respond to feedback and complaints.To ensure impartiality, hotline staff should not be implementing the project directly.To protect the personal data of callers, ensure that phone numbers are not being tracked.Don’t use staff’s personal phones. |
| **Hotline: Call center (managed by external service provider)** |
| A dedicated number on which individuals call a call‑center company representing CRS.**Type:** Static**Base:** Tech‑based**Information direction:** Two‑way |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** | **Key considerations**  |
| High accessibility if good network coverage and diverse program participants use mobile phones.Good option for remote contexts and large‑scale responses.Suitable for anonymous or confidential complaint although traceability of calls can be a barrier.Easy to use for people with low digital literacy.Can include a call‑out function to return missed calls or to respond to and follow up on previous calls.Enables an immediate response. | Can exclude community members who don’t have a mobile phone, phone credit or electricity. Time‑consuming to set up.Can be perceived as detached from the organization. Organization has less direct oversight of hotline operators for quality assurance.Confidentiality and use of personal data can be compromised. Can cause further harm if complainant does not own the phone, and reply is given to family member.Slight delay in response if hotline has high traffic. | Negotiate with local mobile network provider(s) for a toll‑free number.High staffing and resource costs (requires that hotline operators have skills and training in feedback and complaint handling).Ensure hotline operators have adequate language and interpersonal skills, and are trained to log and respond to feedback and complaint. Also include training on CRS programs and principles.Ensure processes are in place for urgent, sensitive or complicated complaint to be managed by CRS staff. |
| **Hotline: Interactive Voice Response (IVR)** |
| A dedicated number for community members to access information and record their feedback message.**Type:** Static or active**Base:** Tech‑based**Information direction:** One‑way |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** | **Key considerations**  |
| High accessibility (24/7) if good network coverage. Program participants can call at any time.Often popular with young people.Decreases the amount of feedback and complaints provided since questions are answered by providing key information.Can be made free for communities.Suitable for anonymous or confidential complaint (caller can choose whether or not to leave contact information).Easy to use for people with low digital literacy.Enables an immediate response. | Works better for providing information than processing feedback and complaints.Excludes community members who don’t have access to a mobile phone, phone credit or electricity. Can be costly for users if a toll‑free number is not set up.High staffing and resource costs: requires agreement with a service provider and staff time to listen to and log messages (or investment in software), although cheaper than a call center. Feedback can exclude details necessary for follow‑up (e.g., name of agency the feedback is about, contact information) especially if feedback does not fall within pre‑coded categories. | When possible, integrate IVR with a call center so that IVR can provide the more straightforward information, while operators can focus on more difficult issues and individual requests (such as protection or safeguarding concerns).Use alongside an interpersonal channel.  |
| **Face‑to‑face with CRS staff**  |
| Staff (such as community liaison officers with specific FCRM tasks) are approached by individuals in the field and receive and record feedback and complaints directly. **Type:** Static **Base:** Non‑tech**Information direction:** One‑way |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** | **Key considerations**  |
| Often one of the most popular channels. Can reveal unintended effects of programs that fall outside monitoring rubrics.Enables a rapid response to urgent questions and referral, and can resolve many issues immediately. | Staff may find recording feedback time‑consuming and arduous.Staff may think complaints reflect poorly on their performance and be reluctant to process them. | Ensure staff have adequate language and interpersonal skills, and are trained to log and respond to feedback and complaints.Ensure a gender balance among staff.Have a set of FAQs and ensure staff can use them to provide immediate resolution to much of the feedback received.Ensure that FCRM work is built into staff job descriptions. Effective face‑to‑face feedback requires trust, which can take time, and requires timely responses and respectful communication. |
| **Community focal point (sometimes called feedback and complaints committee or community advisory group)** |
| Locally managed focal point/committee appointed by community members and trained to collect and document feedback and complaints, and share it regularly with CRS and partners.**Type:** Static **Base:** Non‑tech**Information direction:** One‑way |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** | **Key considerations**  |
| Often a popular channel as community members may feel more comfortable talking to a community representative than to a staff member.Increased ownership by community. Works well in locations where CRS/partner has been working for an extended period.Can build on existing social and cultural platforms for resolving issues rather than imposing an unfamiliar approach.Enables a rapid response to urgent questions and referral, and can resolve many issues immediately. | Requires time and effort from community members.Time‑consuming. Usually not conducive to sensitive complaints.Risk of high turnover or low effort if no stipend is provided.  | Ensure volunteers are trained to log and respond to feedback and complaints.Ensure committees are inclusive, and strongly encourage community to select gender‑balanced committee or segregated committees (male/female) to ensure people feel comfortable expressing their opinions.Avoid traditional leaders or local authorities as committee members as their presence may limit people’s ability to speak freely.Consider providing a stipend to committee members.Some staffing costs as staff need technical skills to set it up. |
| **Help desk near project sites, or designated drop‑in at CRS or partner offices** |
| Desk or hub set up at the office or in the field, with designated operating hours and trained staff or community volunteers to answer questions and listen to concerns.**Type:** Static **Base:** Non‑tech**Information direction:** Two‑way |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** | **Key considerations**  |
| Easy to set up.Highly accessibility when set up with other program activities, e.g., at a distribution site.Good visibility if placed in high‑traffic areas.Useful in communities with low literacy.Suitable for confidential feedback and complaints although complainant may be reluctant to share in visible way.Provides face‑to‑face contact which is often preferred by community members. Convenient for program participants who are accessing other program activities or during distributions.Fast and immediate response. Many issues can be resolved immediately.Follow‑up or more detailed information can be requested during the interaction. | Low accessibility for those far from office location.  | Ensure staff and volunteers have adequate language and interpersonal skills, and are trained to log and respond to feedback and complaints. Ensure volunteers are literate.Ensure a gender balance among staff.Significant staffing and resource costs especially for data entry of manually recorded feedback and complaints. Requires staff trained in handling feedback.Consider giving volunteers a non‑financial token of thanks (e.g., t‑shirt or notepad). Involve community members to select desk locations, ideally in an area that offers privacy and is accessible by all.Consider having an outreach component to reach the most vulnerable.  |
| **Open community meetings** |
| Meetings organized periodically at project locations bringing together large groups of people to share information with and collect feedback and complaints from.**Type:** Active **Base:** Non‑tech**Information direction:** Two‑way |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** | **Key considerations**  |
| Easy to set up.Able to solicit feedback and complaints from many people in a limited time.May engage non‑program participants.Can be adapted for the audience (e.g., using child‑friendly approach).Suitable in communities with low literacy.Low staffing and resource costs.Enables immediate response. Can address common questions and concerns immediately and for a large number of people simultaneously. | Discussions may be limited if certain people dominate the group. May not be appropriate in cultures where public criticism is not acceptable.Can exclude most marginalized (such as women and children) who may not be comfortable attending and voicing their concerns.Unsuitable for anonymous or confidential complaints. | Ensure gender balance among staff and consider power dynamics and gender roles within the community. Set clear rules to ensure survivors or perpetrators are not identified in a group setting.Consider integrating these sessions into regular community meetings as a standing agenda item.Ensure staff have adequate language, facilitation and dispute‑resolution skills, as well as interpersonal skills to solicit in‑depth information. |
| **Project site visits / observations** |
| **Type:** Active**Base:** Non‑tech**Information direction:** Two‑way |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** | **Key considerations**  |
| Can engage broader community.Suitable for communities with low literacy.Gives opportunity for dialogue to address questions and ease doubts.Low staffing and resource costs if combined with regular project activities, post‑distribution monitoring and other assessments.Enables an immediate response. | Unsuitable for anonymous or confidential complaints. | Ensure gender balance among staff.Ensure staff have adequate language, facilitation and dispute‑resolution skills, as well as interpersonal skills to solicit in‑depth information. Ensure staff are trained to log and respond to feedback and complaints. |
| **Monitoring methods**  |
| Questions soliciting feedback and the general level of satisfaction with responses can be added into monitoring methods, including household or post‑distribution surveys, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, community score/report cards; community assessment and monitoring data.**Type:** Active**Base:** Flexible**Information direction:** One‑way |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** | **Key considerations**  |
| Provides an opportunity to actively seek feedback and may generate more feedback than other approaches.Suitable for collecting qualitative feedback from specific groups, including those less able to access static channels.Can be adapted to the audience (e.g., using child‑friendly approach). Suitable for people with limited mobility.Easy to set up or integrate into planned monitoring activities. Suitable for communities with low literacy. | Limited reach due to sampling and timeframe of data collection.Unsuitable for anonymous or confidential complaints.If respondents provide feedback that requires response, response may have long delay. | Relative staffing and resource costs (including technical MEAL staff time and guidance).Add feedback‑seeking questions into planned monitoring activities and assessments.Ensure sampling is informed by a gender and power analysis to ensure respondents are representative of all community members, including marginalized groups.Hold separate FGDs for women, men, boys, girls, and male and female adolescents, and have male and female facilitators. |
| **Social media and instant messaging platforms (e.g., Twitter, WhatsApp)** |
| A dedicated number or account available for individuals to share written or voice messages and pictures.**Type:** Static**Base:** Tech‑based**Information direction:** Two‑way |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** | **Key considerations**  |
| Can have a wide reach if location has good network coverage.Good way to quickly collect information about acute needs in the first phase of an emergency response across a wide geographic area.Can manage anonymous or confidential complaints if user’s account does not reflect personally identifiable information. | Can exclude groups with no phone access or digital literacy. Requires good network coverage, and access to smartphone or computer, and electricity.Requires digital literacy to set up and use.Can generate a high volume of feedback and questions, which can be overwhelming for staff to manage.Risk of online safeguarding issues.In remote contexts, it may be difficult to share the phone number or account with community members. Requires staff to oversee the platforms. If perceived as a two‑way communication tool, it can cause frustration if a response is not received. | Before use, conduct a comprehensive risk assessment to ensure that we are not putting any one at risk of harm.Train staff and community members on platform chosen.Negotiate with local mobile network provider(s) for a toll‑free number to ensure cost effectiveness. Ensure staff are trained to manage accounts, and log and respond to feedback and complaints. |
| **Mail** |
| Letters can be mailed to a CRS or partner’s office.**Type:** Static**Base:** Non‑tech**Information direction:** Two‑way |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** | **Key considerations**  |
| Easy to set up.Low cost.Suitable for anonymous or confidential complaint.People may see written letters as a formal and respectable form of feedback provision.  | Widely known to be ineffective due to illiteracy, lack of access to a postal network, and preferences for direct contact with staff.Can lack essential details necessary for follow‑up (e.g., name of organization feedback is about, contact information).Can be interfered with. Slower than other channels. | Establish protocols for sorting incoming letters and referring feedback and complaints internally.Recruit staff with appropriate language skills to respond either in writing, or by calling or through visits. |
| **Dedicated email address**  |
| Individuals can send emails to an address specifically set up for feedback.**Type:** Static**Base:** Tech‑based **Information direction:** Two‑way |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** | **Key considerations**  |
| High accessibility if location has good network coverage, and if population has access to smartphones or computers, and electricity.Can collect anonymous complaint if user’s email account does not reflect personally identifiable information.Suitable for confidential complaints.People may see emails as a formal and respectable form of feedback provision. Easy to set up.Low cost. | Requires digital literacy to use.Slight delay in response.Follow‑up depends on whether user supplied contact information. | Establish protocols for sorting emails and referring feedback and complaints internally.Recruit staff with appropriate language skills to respond either in writing, by calling or through visits. |
| **Regular consultations with key informants or community leaders** |
| Leaders collect feedback and complaints on behalf of their communities.**Type:** Active**Base:** Non‑tech**Information direction:** Two‑way |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** | **Key considerations**  |
| Can have a wide reach.Should be part of regular project activities and an expected relationship‑building protocol which can be expanded to include feedback. | Exclude groups or individuals who do not feel comfortable with the channel. Will often represent views of the most powerful community members.Requires a time investment to meet individuals, particularly at the beginning to orient them on their role to consult with and represent others.In high surveillance and low trust settings, may create the perception that the organization is aligned with the most powerful.  | Triangulate with feedback from other channels.Ensure that the staff member running the meeting has excellent facilitation skills and is in a senior position, as people will be more motivated to share if a decision‑maker is present.Relative staffing and resource costs. |

**B. Response channels**

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| **Radio show** |
| A dedicated radio show to share information with listeners and receive calls that are answered during the live show. **Type:** Static **Base:** Non‑tech**Information direction:** One‑way |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** | **Key considerations**  |
| Good way to use verbal communication, which is often a preference for communities with low literacy. Could include two‑way communication if people can call in and ask questions.Can have a wide reach, especially where listening to the radio is universal.Ideal for combining information provision, service announcements (e.g., hygiene, cholera prevention, etc.) with questions and issues from community members. Would usually respond to the most commonly recurring issues and questions.Can be operated with other organizations. Good way to close the feedback loop at the community level. | Cannot reach people living with hearing impairments. Risk of perceived bias, depending on the station’s reputation. Level of participation by listeners can be very low.Does not provide confidentiality or privacy.Cost implications include high fees for hosting the radio show especially if the station is popular and has large a coverage/subscription. Reputational risk if criticism or allegations are raised publicly. May trigger a defensive response and therefore limit dialogue. | Ensure the slot is at the most appropriate time of the day, when it is likely to be heard by your target audience, e.g., when children are at school, but not when women may leave the house to fetch water, and not during prayer times.Negotiate with a phone provider to have a free phone‑in option.Tailor communication material to the audience.  |
| **Individual phone call or SMS** |
| **Type:** Static **Base:** Low‑tech**Information direction:** Two‑way |  |  |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** | **Key considerations**  |
| Good option if good network coverage and diverse program participants have access to mobile phones. Enables rapid response to urgent questions and referral, and can resolve many issues immediately using FAQs. May allow for more private and confidential conversation. | Can exclude those who don’t have a mobile phone, phone credit or electricity to charge phone.Requires several dedicated staff members with relevant language skills. | Ensure staff know how to handle feedback and complaint received.Ensure gender balance and diversity among staff to address barriers (e.g., language).To protect the personal data of callers, ensure phone numbers are not being tracked.Don’t use staff’s personal phones. |
| **Hotline** |
| See details above |  |  |
| **Community noticeboard, banners, posters, leaflets, etc.** |
| Placed in public place to give information about the feedback and complaint process, organization, program, etc. This may be to pre‑empt questions or respond to specific feedback. **Type:** Static**Base:** Non‑tech**Information direction:** One‑way, although can be customized to be two‑way |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** | **Key considerations**  |
| Moderately easy to set up.Medium cost for projects with few locations.Can have a wide reach if placed in high‑traffic areas.Responses to broad, community‑wide issues raised by posting on the noticeboard can be provided in group meetings and community updates. | Impersonal communication that may not generate trust.Unsuitable for responding to personal and sensitive complaints.Difficult to set up in locations with no communal spaces or with limited infrastructure. | Depends on frequency of information updates and FAQs posted.Ensure translation into local languages.If graphics are included, try to convey the message sensitively and pre‑test it with a few community members.  |
| **Household visits** |
| **Type:** Static **Base:** Non‑tech**Information direction:** One‑way |  |  |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** | **Key considerations**  |
| Gives access to people with limited mobility.Provides opportunity for dialogue to address questions and clarify doubts.Enables more private and confidential conversations. | High staffing and resource costs. Can lead to loss of trust among program participants if a perpetrator is involved in the visits.  | Ensure gender balance and diversity among staff to foster trust and address barriers (e.g., language).Ensure staff know how to handle feedback and complaint received. |
| **Street theater, drama or music** |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** | **Key considerations**  |
| Engaging way to share information. Can have a wide reach.Can be adapted to audience (e.g., child‑friendly approach) | May not be appropriate in more conservative environment.Discussions may be limited if certain people dominate the group. | Involve community members to create the content, and test messages with them.Ensure material is relevant to the context and appropriate to the target audience.Ensure translation into local languages. |
| **Public community meetings**  |
| See details above |  |  |

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Adapted from *Selecting feedback mechanisms* (CRS 2015, available on EFOM) and *Guidance 4.1: Overview of feedback channels – Strengths, weaknesses & tips* (CARE 2020).

1. . For COVID‑19 considerations, see Tipsheet: CARM & COVID‑19 (Mercy Corps 2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)