FCRM (Feedback, Complaints and Response Mechanism) - Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) Example of narrative

*The purpose of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) is to document processes and protocols required for quality FCRM implementation. Please adapt this example to the specific needs and context of your FCRM and ensure it is updated as the FCRM evolves and improves. It is recommended that all tools and supporting materials are included as annexes and that each annex is referenced.*

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## Background

**Content**: Scope of project, donor requirements for FCRM, partner safeguarding policies, agency safeguarding, and MEAL policies and requirements, FCRM categories (with local examples or sub-categories if applicable), integration with consortium partners’ FCRM and CP-level FCRM (if applicable), and staffing structure, along with key FCRM roles. **Annex**: FCRM flowchart, FCRM roles and responsibilities table, and FCRM categories.

### Introduction

<Name of Organization> is committed to ensuring that all project stakeholders, especially members of the communities and affected populations, are able to communicate directly with <Name of Organization>, and that their feedback and complaint are heard and responded to in a timely and appropriate manner. In order to meet this commitment, <Name of Organization> establishes Feedback, Complaints, Response and Mechanisms (FCRM) in each Country Program (CP) or project.

The benefits of FCRM are interconnected and support the needs of <Name of Organization>, our partners and the communities we serve.

* Program relevance and quality - FCRM supports an ongoing practice of listening, requesting feedback and complaints about <Name of Organization>-supported services, and using this information in decision-making. Programs teams can also use feedback to test assumptions, theories of change and contextual understanding. Acting on this feedback in a timely manner improves programs by making them relevant, context appropriate, better targeted, conflict sensitive and adaptive.
* Accountability - FCRMs are one of the means by which people can claim their rights and entitlements. <Name of organization> demonstrates its accountability, responsiveness, and respect by valuing community input, working hard to maintain open communication and trust, and taking responsibility for decisions and actions taken in partnerships and projects. When staff and partners actively seek and prioritize community feedback, this helps to chip away at existing power imbalances by enabling local input to shape programs and operations.
* Protection and safeguarding - FCRMs enable <Name of Organization> to learn about and respond to protection and safeguarding concerns in real time, such as misconduct by <Name of Organization> or partner staff, or other organizations operating in the local context, as well as changes to security or risks to people’s safety. This information is critical to ensure that <Name of Organization> and our partners provide safe and dignified programming and identify and address potential risks created or increased by programming and reporting allegations regarding abuse, exploitation and corruption.
* Learning - FCRM supports the program management, learning and adaptive management when providing services to affected communities or implementing project/program.

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) has been developed to guide the Country Program in its implementation of its FCRM related to the <Name of Organization or project> offices and all programs that <Name of Organization> implements in <name of location>. The SOP includes specification of:

* The FCRM that project stakeholders can access to provide feedback and complaint;
* The procedures for handling feedback and complaint, including receiving, processing, and responding to feedback; and
* Staff and partner roles and responsibilities within these procedures.

As all community members in targeted communities and other project stakeholders have the right to provide <Name of Organization or project> feedback and receive a timely and fair response, the following commitments underpin this SOP:

* <Name of Organization or project> will undertake due diligence to ensure its FCRM is appropriate to the preferences and distinct needs of individuals from the targeted communities, including vulnerable groups within these communities;
* <Name of Organization or project > will uphold transparency of its FCRM, including robust information sharing about the process, timeline and right to appeal;
* <Name of Organization or project > will respect the confidentiality of feedback and complaint; and
* <Name of Organization or project > will handle complaints fairly and judiciously, ensuring non-retaliation.
* <Name of Organization or project> will ensure that all users are not exposed to safety and security issue when accessing FCRM channels.

This SOP builds on <Name of Organization> learning and industry good practice and aligns with <Name of Organization> Safeguarding and Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability & Learning (MEAL) Policies and donor requirements.

### FCRM categories

The FCRM categories serve as an essential resource in appropriately documenting, referring, escalating and responding to feedback and complaints. A description of each standard category is presented in Table below. The categories are referenced across steps and quality standards in this guide. The full list of the categories with examples and key actions is in Annex #. The table below includes only brief descriptions for each of the nine categories.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **CATEGORY** | **DESCRIPTION** |
| **Programmatic feedback and complaints (information requests and programmatic)** | **1. Request for information**  | Questions about current project activities, services and eligibility, or about the organization.  |
| **2. Request for individual project support**  | A request by an individual to receive project services that have not been supplied due to a potential targeting error or larger access issue.  |
| **3. General suggestions for service and program improvements**  | * Feedback on relevance, quality and appropriateness of services and programming.
* A request to change how support is provided in current or future projects.
 |
| **4. Appreciation of services or support** | Appreciation of current activities or support provided. |
| **5. Complaints about services or support**  | A complaint or expression of dissatisfaction about timeliness, appropriateness or quality of services or support. |
| **Sensitive**  | **6. Any alleged violation of the CRS Code of Conduct and Ethics or Safeguarding Policy** | An allegation of misconduct involving CRS staff (including interns, volunteers, partners, vendors and suppliers; or other aid workers). Includes:* Safeguarding issues
* Harassment
* Abuse or exploitation
* Fraud or misuse of project resources
* Unprofessional behavior
 |
| **7.Other protection issues** | An allegation of exploitation or abuse that *does not* involve CRS staff, partners or other aid workers, or an allegation of protection concerns[[1]](#footnote-1) affecting the communities we support. This includes any reference to exploitation or abuse committed by, for example, a government official, schoolteacher, community member or family member. |
| **8. Safety and security concerns** | Information related to the safety or security of CRS staff, offices or goods; of partners or any humanitarian organization; or of the communities we serve. |
| **Other** | **9. Out of scope feedback** | A request for support not provided by the project, or programmatic feedback on support provided by another actor. No safeguarding violations or issues of protection from abuse or fraud are included in this category.  |

### Key Roles and Responsibilities

*Below is a breakdown of roles and responsibilities related to the FCRM :*

* ***Country representatives (CRs)*** *have the overall responsibility of ensuring the FCRM is in place and functional for all programming needs. They are also responsible for handling sensitive complaints in line with the Safeguarding Policy. They can champion the use of FCRM data by requesting trends in feedback and complaints and response rates on an ongoing basis, supporting adaptive management based on programmatic feedback received.*
* ***Heads of programming (HoPs)*** *support quality FCRMs by allocating sufficient staff time for FCRM implementation, ensuring staff have appropriate training and competencies for FCRM, including FCRM responsibilities in staff job descriptions and performance planning, and requesting trends in feedback and complaints and response rates. In addition, HoPs foster an environment in which staff are encouraged to speak openly, question assumptions and use data in ongoing decisions and adaptive management practices.*
* ***Program managers (PMs)*** *are responsible for ensuring that diverse community members have access to and trust FCRM channels by consulting individuals and communities on their preferred channels, and setting up and managing the implementation of the FCRM. They ensure responsiveness to feedback and complaints received, the use of feedback and complaints in ongoing decisions, and regular checks on the effectiveness of the FCRM. PMs may also directly receive, acknowledge, document and respond to feedback, particularly via community-level response channels. In addition, PMs should integrate key messages on FCRM into ongoing project communication activities.*
* ***FCRM manager*** *(or focal point) provides oversight of the whole FCRM process. They assume the wider responsibility for coordinating FCRMs within and across CP projects, and supporting individual project teams to operate and improve their FCRMs. They lead the development of SOPs, and develop and conduct trainings. They also lead the annual effectiveness check to learn about and improve the safety, accessibility, efficiency and impact of the FCRM.*
* ***Safeguarding focal points*** *serve as a trusted channel for staff safeguarding reports and concerns. They receive, triage and escalate these, and can also help establish other channels to ensure confidentiality in reporting.*
* ***MEAL staff*** *are responsible for operationalizing the initial FCRM design decisions, ensuring flow of programmatic feedback and complaints through the system, and analyzing and summarizing them. MEAL staff may also directly receive, acknowledge, document and respond to feedback, particular via active FCRM channels. MEAL staff participate in the annual FCRM effectiveness check and facilitate reflection on the findings to generate key recommendations for improvement.*
* ***Accountability/protection mainstreaming focal points****, where they exist, support program managers to ensure channels are accessible, safe and used by all program participants, regardless of sex, gender, age, disability or other relevant diversity factor.*
* ***Field staff and outreach teams*** *are primarily responsible for acknowledging, documenting and responding to feedback and complaints received through various channels as soon as possible. It is important that field staff and outreach teams demonstrate value by employing active listening skills and being open to various opinions, ideas and even criticisms of project activities. Field staff will need to recognize feedback or complaints shared as part of ongoing community engagement efforts and include these in the FCRM system.*
* ***FCRM manager*** *(or focal point) provides oversight of the whole FCRM process. They will assume the wider responsibility for coordinating FCRMs within and across CP projects, and supporting individual project teams to operate and improve their FCRMs. They lead on developing SOPs, and developing and conducting trainings. They also lead the annual effectiveness check to learn and improve the safety, accessibility, efficiency and impact of the FCRM.*

## Feedback and Complaints channels

**Content**: Name and description of each feedback and complaints channel; access details for each channel (e.g., hours of help desk or number for hotline or languages available); process for documenting feedback and complaints (including through face-to-face channels); plans for acknowledgement, and feedback and complaints for each channel. **Annex**: Data collection tools, acknowledgement scripts.

*Any individual, household, group of people, organization, partner, program staff, volunteer, contractor, or other stakeholder can submit feedback about <name of the organization>’ projects, activities, staff, partners or suppliers. <name of the organization> currently receives feedback through the following channels:*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Feedback & complaint Channel options  | **Details**  |
| Suggestion boxCommunity 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
 |  |
| 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
 |  |
| 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
 |  |
| 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
 |  |
| 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
 |  |
| 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
 |  |
| Help desk near project sites, or designated drop-in at CRS or partner officesDesk or hub set up at the office or in the field with designated operating hours, with trained staff or community volunteers to answer questions and listen to concerns. * Type: Static
* Base: Non-tech
* Information direction: Two-way
 |  |
| Open community meetingsMeetings 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
 |  |
| Project site visits / observations* Type: Active
* Base: Non-tech
* Information direction: Two-way
 |  |
| 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
 |  |
| Social media and instant messaging platforms (e.g., Twitter, WhatsAppA dedicated number or account available for individuals to share written or voice messages and pictures.* Type: Static
* Base: Tech-based
* Information direction: Two-way
 |  |
| Mail Letters can be mailed to a CRS or partner office.* Type: Static
* Base: Non-tech
* Information direction: Two-way
 |  |
| Dedicated email address Individuals can send emails to an address specifically set up for feedback.* Type: Static
* Base: Tech-based
* Information direction: Two-way
 |  |
| Regular consultations with key informants or community leadersLeaders collect feedback and complaint on behalf of their communities.* Type: active
* Base: Non-tech
* Information direction: Two-way
 |  |

## Response channels:

**Content:** Name and description of each response channel;project-level commitment for response time to each feedback and complaint category. **Annex**: FAQs, response scripts, referral maps

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Response Channels options  |  |
| Radio showA 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
 |  |
| Individual phone call or SMS* Type: Static
* Base: Low-tech
* Information direction: Two-way
 |  |
| 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
 |  |
| Household visits* Type: Static
* Base: Non-tech
* Information direction: One-way
 |  |
| Street theater, drama or music |  |
| Public community meetings See details above  |  |

## Escalation of sensitive complaints:

**Content**: Local procedures for escalation of sensitive complaints in accordance with donor and agency policies, the name and contact information of the focal point for sensitive complaints (country representative or staff safeguarding focal point). **Annex**: FCRM flowchart, scripts for responding to protection or safeguarding concerns.

*Escalation of all sensitive complaints related to misconduct (FCRM Category 6) are aligned with the SOPs and the Safeguarding Policy and will follow these steps:*

* *To allow for follow-up, request individual contact information if not yet provided and if person wants to be contacted. Inform the individual that someone will be in touch within 3 working days to follow up or sooner, depending on the gravity of the situation.*
* *Escalate to the EthicsPoint / country representative (or designate) or staff safeguarding focal point immediately (within a maximum of 24 hours). Ensure confidentiality by limiting access to or removing PII and details of the alleged incident from the FCRM data management system.*
* *Appropriate referral for follow-up and support will be determined by the CR or designate. Timeframe for action should reflect the gravity of the case.*

## FCRM communication

**Content**: Communication approaches for community awareness of FCRM, access to each feedback and complaint channel, access to response channels, expectations for response associated with each FCRM category, consent process, appeal process, and the agency Code of Conduct. **Annex**: Communication plan and associated materials.

*Communication efforts follows the initial planning in the stakeholder communication plan (see annex # ) in terms of which stakeholders, including key community groups, should be included and what means of communication are most appropriate. FCRM communication messages and materials (e.g., posters and flyers) should with which should be translated into local languages and tested with diverse members of the community for clarity and completeness before they are finalized.*

*All projects will include a core set of information related to FCRM and key topics such as the Code of Conduct and project information. Program participants and key stakeholders will be informed about FCRM through different means e.g. posters, flyers, hoarding board, community orientation, community meetings, face to face interaction.*

*Along with above means, the message about FCRM will be shared during any project related interaction with stakeholders. The standard message for <means of communication> or other interaction (individual or group) is mentioned in* ***Annex #.***

## Description of data management system (DMS)

**Content:** Data management system used, access to and data protection for sensitive complaints, consolidation of partner-level DMS or registries among partners, relevant national and local regulations for data protection, plans for quality checks on system completeness. Annex: **DMS** template or registry.

*The FCRM system can use CommCare, KoBo, YouTrack and <other technologies> to receive, review and respond feedback complaint. The mechanism will be handled by <MEAL Officer-Accountability> with the technical supervision from <MEAL Manager>.*

*FCRM’s are designed to ensure confidentiality, a timely response, and attention to urgent matters. The data management, documentation and information sharing processes will protect the dignity and confidentiality of people who provide feedback and complaint by:*

* *Passwords protect or encrypt FCRM data management systems and all associated files.*
* *Document the names, contact information (email), and role of CRS and partner staff who will have access to feedback and sensitive complaints. Do quarterly, biannual or annual reviews of the list of staff who have access to these systems and confirm it with the project or country management. Remove access for staff who have changed roles or are no longer involved in the project or CP FCRM.*
* *Avoid emailing FCRM data files.*
* *Store hard copies (logbooks, feedback forms) in locked filing cabinets with clear protocols for access and destruction.*
* *Destroy hard copy files once digitally documented in the electronic data management system.*
* *Determine the length of storage and steps for de-identification and archiving of the FCRM data after project close by considering donor and agency requirements.*

*The FCRM data regularly assessed to catch and resolve challenges with responsible data management, gaps in internal information sharing between teams, and delays in response caused by inefficiencies in FCRM data storage and reporting.*

## Data analysis:

**Content:** Approach for and frequency of analysis, comparison groups for tracking trends (e.g., male and female, use of each channel), plans for calculating response rate (against timeline commitments), and data visuals to support interpretation of trends

*Analysis and interpretation of data (while protecting person data; please see the following section) collected through the FCRM will be undertaken on a <periodicity> basis to ensure that activities are responsive and that appropriate, timely steps can be taken to mitigate risks. It will also include the following:*

* *Regular analyze FCRM quantitative and qualitative data to identify larger trends and how those change by month or by quarter.*
* *Summarize the key points in feedback received, noting the key characteristics of individuals sharing feedback, such gender, age, disability and geographic area.*
* *Remember that individual perspectives are as important as larger trends in informing data use.*
* *Triangulate perspectives within feedback received and against monitoring results as part of FCRM data interpretation.*
* *Analyze FCRM data by each channel (active and static), gender, age and other key characteristics, FCRM category and geographic area.*
* *Check the satisfaction levels with the FCRM, and determine whether and why these may vary by community group.*
* *Track the response rate to feedback and complaints, calculating the percentage of response that meets the project’s commitment for response time and the average response time for each category and channel.*
* *Explore new comparisons and trends as initial ideas and findings emerge during preliminary analysis.*
* *Identify any errors in the completion of the FCRM registry or concerns of FCRM data quality and data protection.*

*The trend analysis will be done based on the number of feedback and complaint received in particular quarter along with comparison with previous quarters. The analysis shared during quarterly reflection meeting, quarterly FCRM report and to FCRM working group to develop and implement action plan based on the analysis.*

*FCRM data will be made available to program managers and decision makers in accessible formats such as data summaries and visuals and dashboards*

## Data use

**Content:** Plans for the use of feedback data and trends in adaptive management processes (i.e., quarterly and annual reflection meetings).

*Feedback, when used alongside monitoring and evaluation data, offers additional voices and suggestions that help our team to interpret and understand program participants’ experience with and perception of services and program staff.*

*Program teams should analyze FCRM data along with monitoring data during quarterly and annual project review meetings to understand different community perspectives and reflect those in ongoing decision-making. These reflection opportunities may identify ways to improve the FCRM itself if gaps appear in the use of FCRM channels by specific groups, or response rates do not meet project commitments*

*Findings from FCRM analysis will be shared with <job title> and the program team for review and validation. The team will have a meeting to discuss reflections, key learnings, and actions required on a monthly basis. Notes from meetings will be added to the Monthly FCRM Report and shared with the country program management team.*

## Effectiveness check

**Content:** Plans for checking effectiveness of FCRM during reflection events (i.e., quarterly) and annual effectiveness checks and/or integration with evaluation events (i.e., timing, methods and reflection questions).

*Effectiveness checks help improve FCRMs during implementation as the context evolves, and as expectations and preferences for communication change over time. These checks can explore questions raised by ongoing data use during quarterly review meetings and may be combined with annual review meetings or larger MEAL system reflection events, if appropriate*

*In planning the annual FCRM effectiveness check, Team will refer to FCRM Guide Tool 12: FCRM effectiveness check and follow these key steps:*

* *Review the FCRM database to identify trends in feedback and complaints, use of different channels by various community groups, and the completeness of the FCRM registry.*
* *Interview staff to determine their clarity on FCRM roles and responsibilities, understand their experiences of FCRM, and identify opportunities to better support them in implementing an effective FCRM.*
* *Consult different community groups, including men and women and those most and least likely to use the FCRM, to understand their access to, use of and trust in the FCRM.*
* *Reflect with MEAL, program and field staff on initial findings to generate key recommendations and an appropriate action plan.*
* *Document and communicate changes to the FCRM with stakeholders, including donors and communities.*

## Plans for FCRM sustainability or close-out:

**Content:** Plans for handover or close-out of FCRM or sustaining the system, and de-identification and archiving of FCRM data.

*CRM close-out should be largely integrated with overall project close-out and communication; however, the specific steps depend on the scope of the FCRM and the channels used. Examples of scenario for FCRM close-out include:*

* *While project-level channels close at project completion, CP-level channels remain available, and communities are encouraged to continue to use these to submit feedback and complaints.*
* *FCRMs are fully closed upon project completion and the team communicates the timeline and process for close well in advance so that community members are able to share feedback and complaints prior as needed.*
* *FCRMs are handed over to partner organizations upon project close through the transition of staff roles and responsibilities and capacity support as needed.*

*Initial FCRM close-out decisions during design should be revisited to reflect new opportunities and constraints related to FCRM sustainability.*

*During close-out, teams will also archive FCRM data according to donor, government and agency requirements as they apply to all MEAL data. Teams will de-identify all personal information in the FCRM dataset before it is archived but additional data protection practices may be required in operating context. Additionally, teams will also have an opportunity during close-out to reflect on FCRM implementation through a light after action review and, in this case, contribute to learning and FCRM quality going forward.*

*Teams will, at minimum, de-identify all personal information in the FCRM dataset before it is archived, but additional data protection practices may be required within the operating context (refer to* [*CRS Guidelines for De-Identifying Data*](https://crsorg.sharepoint.com/sites/Monitoring-Evaluation-Accountability-and-Learning/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FMonitoring%2DEvaluation%2DAccountability%2Dand%2DLearning%2FShared%20Documents%2F9%2E2%20Deidentification%20Guidance%20high%20res%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FMonitoring%2DEvaluation%2DAccountability%2Dand%2DLearning%2FShared%20Documents) *for additional information). Additionally, teams will have an opportunity during close-out to reflect on FCRM implementation through a light after action review and thus contribute to learning and FCRM quality.*

## Annexes

* Annex: Feedback and response categories (see Tool 1)
* Annex: FCRM flowchart
* Annex: Data collection tools
* Annex: FAQs for answering questions or information requests
* Annex: Script for acknowledgement by channel or category
* Annex: Referral map
* Annex: Communication plan
* Annex: Communication materials
* Annex: FCRM registry template
* Annex: FCRM roles and responsibilities table (see Tool 9)
* Annex: Scripts for responding to protection or safeguarding concerns
1. Protection concerns refer to situations of violence, discrimination or human rights violations that may affect members of a community. It can be a fact or just a rumor. For instance, refugees are increasingly being denied access to health facilities in one area, or you hear that many children are dropping out of school to participate in cash-for-work (CFW) activities proposed by different NGOs, or some women and girls have been attacked on a certain road. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)