

GUIDANCE

REMOTE COMPLAINTS RESPONSE MECHANISM (CRM) AND COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

We are all aware of the imbalance of power between different stakeholders, even more important when working in emergency settings. Establishing robust complaints and response systems is an essential part of our overall accountability framework. This is even more important when many organizations are working remotely with no or little access to the most vulnerable.

It is certain that whatever challenges organizations have been facing when setting up (or not) efficient complaints mechanism are increased when there are important restrictions to movements as during the current pandemic, but also when working in volatile contexts or difficult security situations. Full inclusion of very vulnerable people, women, children, disabled, minorities is key to allow access to all. During times of restricted access, this inclusion becomes both more important and more challenging.

A robust complaints and response mechanism needs to be fully transparent, accessible to all, safe for all and confidential, accommodating all types of complaints, including the most sensitive on sexual exploitation and abuse.

To establish such a robust system, information sharing and meaningful participation were always key and must remain a priority also during the current pandemic.

KEY LEARNINGS:

Establishing a complaints and response mechanism during restricted access is more difficult than ever; it is key to verify its functioning and make simple improvements to take into account the changed situation. Whenever there is no system yet and if this is possible, organizations need to give at least one contact possibility and advertise this actively f.ex. setting up one phone number or email access to allow community members and right holders limited access to the organization so that they can voice their issues.

- Provide effective, updated information on program activities, entitlements of right holders including the right to complain, selection criteria, programming, staff identities and responsibilities.
- If ever possible, continue community consultations and do not forget to include the most vulnerable (physically or mentally challenged persons, women, minorities, children, etc.). Be inclusive and check alternative communication (visual, auditive, drawings, etc.) to take into account the most vulnerable.
- Ensure your existing complaints and response mechanism is confidential, safe, accessible and transparent and continuous to offer appropriate and accessible channels. Take into account

limited mobility and decreased access to support services for potential survivors, limited opportunities for in-person consultations with target groups, isolation and restriction of movements.

- Contact your local counterparts, community leaders, focal points and other trusted channels to check if you need to make any changes and if they can suggest any appropriate alternative solutions (WhatsApp both voice and message, phone credits, access to WiFi Hotspots). If possible and appropriate, designate a specific focal point for raising awareness on the right to complain and for receiving complaints.
- Train staff (induction and refresher trainings) remotely (e-learning, webinars, chats, WhatsApp groups, Q&A sessions) on expected behavior, prohibitions and obligations as well as consequences if not adhering to organizational policies.
- Train first responders such as health care staff, medical doctors, security staff in quarantine and other temporary shelters, community members, volunteers, to ensure that they know how to receive and respond to complaints. Make sure that they know well their responsibilities of acknowledging complaints and forwarding them to the appropriate staff without initiating an inquiry or dismissing the complaint.
- Share best practice and find creative and collaborative ways to support each other between big and small organizations to adapt and find quick common solutions, allowing communities to reach out and share their concerns with the humanitarian actors.
- Reiterate widely that any suspicion or concern can and must be reported and inform about widely accessible channels to do so.
- Ensure appropriate capturing of reported concerns for future learning and programmatic / organizational improvements.

USEFUL LINKS:

- Inclusive programming and COVID-19: [ICRC's guidance video on Covid-19 and Inclusive programming](#) and related [ICRC Guidance document](#)
- Report from the Inter-Agency Research and Analysis Network (IARAN) – [From Voices to Choices](#)
- Lutheran World Federation Nepal – [Covid-19: Radio and SMS information sharing](#) reaching people in Nepal
- Oxfam's [verification list](#) as well as [practical tips](#) for Community Engagement during COVID-19
- Establishing a dedicated hotline, ICRC's toolbox [Hotline in a box](#)
- [Available e-learning](#) on establishing CRM's
- [ALNAP's COVID-19 RESPONSE PORTAL](#) with resources on community engagement, information sharing and participation