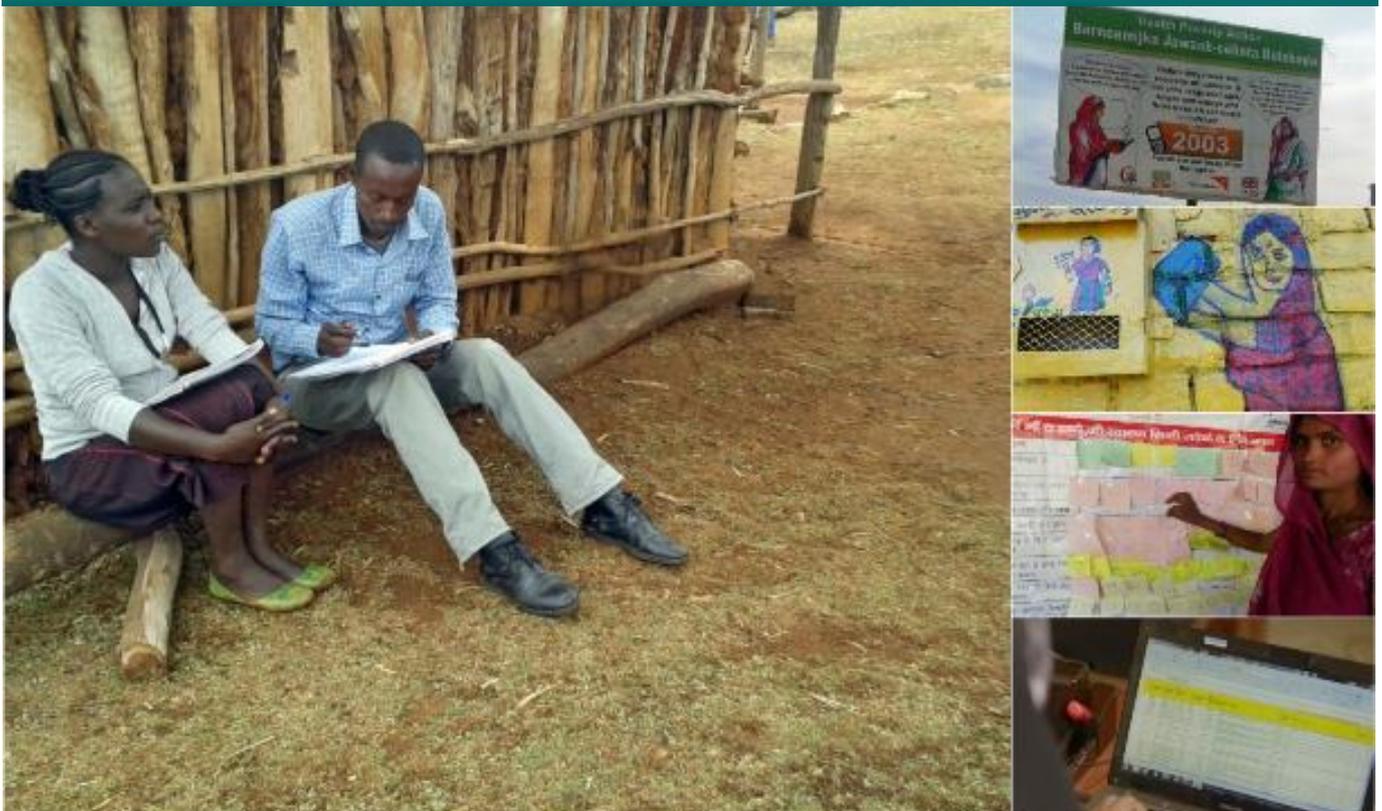# Beneficiary Feedback Mechanism

PRACTICE NOTES

Practical tips for navigating challenges that are often experienced in establishing a Beneficiary Feedback Mechanism

"At first, the community did not understand where the organisation was coming from and intending to go with their quest for soliciting feedback. Some people believed that this was a trap. As time went on with people airing their views and realising that the organisation is responsive, people realised it was a genuine desire to meet community needs"


Drawing on experiences from seven organisations that piloted Beneficiary Feedback Mechanisms as part of their Maternal and Child Health Projects

Background to the Beneficiary Feedback Mechanism Pilots

World Vision UK, together with INTRAC and Social Impact Lab, were commissioned by DFID to pilot beneficiary feedback mechanisms in seven Global Poverty Action Fund (GPAF) maternal and child health projects. The pilots took place in six different countries and in a variety of rural and urban contexts. Three approaches to collecting feedback were trialled -

1. Mobile phone technology for feedback through SMS and voice calls
2. Structured questions to seek feedback about aspects of the project at regular intervals
3. Community designed feedback systems where communities decided what issues they would like to provide feedback about and how they would like to provide feedback

For comparisons, each pilot focused on collecting feedback through one of these approaches. All pilots included a suggestion box for confidential feedback.
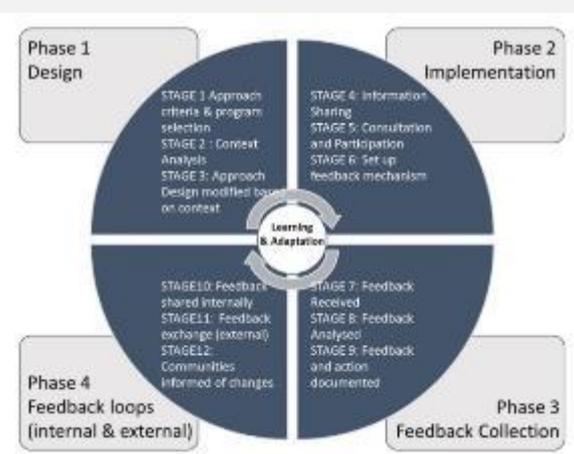
The four-phased process illustrated in this figure sets out the key steps which were followed through the Pilot. During **Phase 1**, to inform the design of the BFM a thorough context analysis was undertaken of the organisation and community. This included talking to community members about how they would prefer to provide feedback. During **Phase 2**, the focus was on implementation. This included sharing information about the GPAF partners' maternal and child health project, talking to communities about how the BFM could be rolled out (for example location of suggestion boxes), and agreeing to organisational protocols for managing feedback. **Phase 3** was focused on the piloting organisations documenting, referring and tracking action in response to feedback. By **Phase 4**, feedback loops were fully functioning with analysis and trends shared internally and externally (for example with fund managers) and changes made in response shared with feedback provider/s. The phases were a continuous cycle of learning and adaptation to ensure the mechanism was effective.

While moving through these four stages some common lessons and challenges emerged, as well as some experiences unique to each organisation. These are shared in the following practice notes.

Pilots took place in:

- ADRA, Zimbabwe
- AMREF Health Africa, Ethiopia
- Child in Need Institute, Kolkata, India

- CUAMM, Tanzania
- Health Poverty Action (HPA), Somaliland
- Mamta, Uttar Pradesh, India
- Rahnuma, Pakistan

Contents

Practice Notes - Scope and Intent

Relevant for

The Practice Notes will be most useful for **staff involved in the design and/or implementation of a Beneficiary Feedback Mechanism (BFM), as well as staff who provide technical support** for the process.

Purpose

The Practice Notes are **not intended as a 'How to Guide'** for setting up a BFM. Many organisations have their own evidence informed guidelines for setting up a BFM. However, complex organisational and community realities, mean that many challenges can arise in operationalising guidelines.

The Practice Notes are **intended to offer practical tips** of how these challenges can be addressed and unless otherwise stated, examples and lessons are from the pilot programme. They do not prescribe a solution to problems, but can help staff generate ideas for what might work in their context. This is in consideration to both -

- Possible problems that can be anticipated and avoided through good planning
- If challenges do arise during implementation, finding a way to overcome these ('troubleshooting').

The BFM pilots were based on thorough planning and context analysis. This helped to ensure a robust design that got each BFM off to a good start. However, it was necessary to continually check with communities, partners and staff what was working and wasn't. Based on this information the BFMs were improved so that they functioned more effectively.

Format and themes

There are attributes that characterise quality and well-functioning BFMs. The Practice Notes are divided thematically by six core attributes that organisaitons commonly aim to achieve in the design and implementation of their BFM. Each Practice Note sets out -

- **The attribute** and how it contributes to a well-functioning BFM
- **The challenges** often encountered in meeting that aim
- **Examples and tips** that will help generate ideas for mitigating challenges and helping to ensure the aim is achieved

The six core attributes are for Beneficiary Feedback Mechanisms to be –

1. ***Founded on information provision and sensitisation*** - Communities need to know their entitlements and what services/activities the mechanism can be used to give feedback about, how to provide feedback, and what will happen to their feedback
2. ***Inclusive and accessible –*** Those targeted or impacted by a project should be able to give feedback with ease and without barriers
3. ***Responsive through clear internal referral processes*** – Staff and senior management support, understand and actively fulfil their roles in responding to feedback
4. ***Responsive through clear external referral processes*** – Partners, including government, support, understand and actively fulfil their roles in responding to feedback
5. ***Responsive through 'closing the loop'*** - Those who provide feedback are informed of the response to their feedback
6. ***Adequately resourced*** - Resources are allocated and invested effectively and sustainably

A note on terminology

Feedback is used to refer to any questions, suggestions, complaints or concerns community members may have about an organisation and its activities.

A functional feedback mechanism is defined by CDA Collaborative Learning Projects as being a context-appropriate mechanism which -
   a) solicits and listens to, collates and analyses feedback
   b) triggers a response/action at the required level in the organization and/or refers feedback to other relevant stakeholders
   c) communicates the response/action taken where relevant back to the original feedback provider and if appropriate, the wider beneficiary community.

In this definition (a), (b) and (c) must all be present/true. A feedback mechanism is not fully functional and effective if just one of them is present/true.[1]"

The Practice Notes are aligned with this definition and uses 'Beneficiary Feedback Mechanism' to refer to a situation where (a), (b) and (c) are present/true. This is consistent with terminology adopted for the piloting programme. It is recognised that organisations will chose their own terminology in line with agency values and preferences.

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[1] Jean, Isabella. Desk Review of Existing Evidence on Effectiveness of Transparency and Beneficiary Feedback Mechanisms in Aid Programmes. CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, Development Initiatives and ITAD. September2013.

PRACTICE NOTE 1: Information Provision

The Aim: *Communities know what commitments they can hold the organisation to account to, their right to provide feedback, how they can provide feedback, and what will happen to their feedback*

Information provision is a pre-requisite to a functioning beneficiary feedback mechanism (BFM). For communities to provide relevant feedback, they first need to know what the main services or activities are that they are being asked to give feedback about, who is being targeted, and what commitments or standards the responsible organisations/agencies can be held to account to. It also refers to any related information communities want to know .

Communities then need to know how they can contact the organisation and options available to provide suggestions, questions, complaints and appreciations. It's essential for everyone to know it is their right to provide feedback and to feel confident using the BFM. To build this trust, communities need to know what will happen to the feedback once it is received by the organisation, including who will see it (level of confidentiality) and timelines for receiving a response. Knowing what the organisation is responsible for and able to take action on, leads to more relevant feedback.

The Challenge: *Moving from 'some people' knowing to 'everyone' knowing correct information*

Some difficulties arise from **organisational beliefs and practices** for sharing information

- *Assuming we've been working in this location for years so everyone knows us* stops us from checking that information is actually reaching the people we aim to support (not just community leaders). New ways for communicating with those who are missing out may be required.

- **Retention of information -** Even if information is received and understood by community members, over time it may be forgotten. The next time you read a document or attend a seminar - see how much you can remember the following day and then again in a week. If staff and volunteers forget information this can also lead to incorrect messages being shared in the community.

- *Information channels are easier for some to access* - Ensuring people receive and understand information is easier said than done! Barriers can include illiteracy, people's availability to attend meetings, and challenges accessing communities - either due to geography, cultural barriers, disability or security concerns

Sometimes sharing information can reach people, but it takes a long time to for this to be understood and particularly to change attitudes and beliefs.

- *Feedback is a very new concept* - In some countries we are always being asked to provide feedback as customers, clients and patients. In other contexts, the idea of providing feedback and receiving a response is very new! It can take time to build community understanding of the purpose, value and process of providing feedback.

  'Hargeisa people they are not familiar for giving their comments. Maybe they will talk later on when they go to their home, "oh do you know the midwife she did this and this and this...and so I don't want to go to the health centre". That is what was happening, and the people they are not familiar with using this system...' Programme Manager, Health Poverty Action, Somaliland - film interview

- **Gift or entitlement?** Sensitizing communities about a BFM also requires changing attitudes about NGO activities, so they know that support and services they receive is about fulfilling their rights (for example to education), rather than receiving gifts.

  "…women in Zhomba went on to stress that they were not empowered to complain about things that are provided for free as a gift from well-wishers." ADRA, Zimbabwe, Endline monitoring report

- *Fear of* consequences - Once people understand how they can provide feedback, it can take time to build their confidence and overcome their concerns about providing feedback. Often community members fear an organisation may leave if anyone provides complaints or suggestions to improve its work. Or they might fear retaliation from those that a complaint relates to, particularly if they don't know what will happen to their feedback and who will have access to it.

  "Well, it is easy for us to give feedback if it is a positive thing you want to talk about…otherwise you may be accused of having said something that offended the donors and caused them to leave with their support…" Community member, Zimbabwe – ADRA Endline monitoring report

  "We kept quite and fear providing feedback on these issues because we thought that it is either the village chairman or the Village Executive Officer who is responsible for opening the suggestion box and that might put the person writing the feedback in trouble" Community member, Tanzania – CUAMM Endline monitoring report

- **Language for example use of 'complaint'** may not be culturally appproriate as it implies 'criticism' and can create barriers to using the BFM

- **Raised expectations –** Sometimes information reaches communities about how to provide feedback, but not on the type of feedback that can be acted on. If this happens feedback may be provided to the organisation that is outside its scope to refer or respond to. There is a risk that the community's trust in the BFM and organisation may break down.

Tips and examples: *Moving towards 'everyone' knowing*

***Regularly ask people* how** they would like to receive information, then you know which communication methods will be more effective. For example, MAMTA asked women to vote for their preferred ways to receive information. During these meetings you can check **what information people would like to know** about your organisation, its activities and the BFM. Sometimes this is additional to our own standards for transparency, and can help to build trust.

These discussions, particularly early in the design phase are also a good opportunity to **ask about language**. For example, if local culture 'complaint' is perceived negatively, discuss alternative phrases. In Kolkata, the community felt more comfortable with 'dropbox' than 'suggestion box'

> *"During context analysis training in Tanzania, we realised there was a mistake in how feedback was translated into Swahili as it was seen more as information extraction from beneficiaries. We conducted back translation and used a more appropriate word which translated as "opinions" and which is still used to date"*
> World Vision UK, Programme Manager

To reach different target groups, use ***multiple methods*** to share information. HPA Somaliland shared information about their organisation and BFM through meetings, posters, billboards, radio, and a film played in health centre waiting rooms. This helped disseminate information to different groups.

Commit to ***continual sensitization and repeated messages.*** In Kolkata, the Child in Need Institute (CINI) introduced a standard agenda item in community meetings where staff reminded people of their rights and entitlements and how to use the BFM. This was a quick and easy way to provide repeated messages and encouragement.

> *"I would hesitate earlier, would be afraid…what will I say, why should I say it? But when we came to know about the BFM, that we should tell, that is our right, it raised our confidence, my voice"* Community member, Kolkata *India – Film interview*

Explain processes for what happens to peoples feedback after it is received and managing feedback, and **respond to fears and concerns**.

> *"We were truly in the dark until you explained to us today the process of who opens the suggestion boxes… a large percentage of us have fear that the person who opens the suggestion box is from Ufyambe village, and if he opens and sees the feedback concerns him, then we are in big trouble."*
> Community member, Tanzania – CUAMM Endline monitoring report

CUAMM introduced BFMs through community theatre

To manage expectations, let the community ***know what the BFM can and cannot be used for***. In Zimbabwe, the BFM was used to raise all needs in the community and ADRA had limited scope to respond to issues beyond its project. It developed **Frequently Asked Questions** documents to explain the purpose of the BFM and the scope of ADRA's project and what they can respond to[2].

> *'The community is now aware of the possible response that they will get, if it's not on the notice board or the programme brief, it will not be possible to address under the current programme'. Community Leader Zimbabwe – ADRA Endline monitoring report*

One of the best ways to build confidence and understating of the BFM is to let people ***know what action has been taken*** in response to their feedback (see Practice Note 5)

> *"My feeling was that when the feedback response was brought back we appreciated the organization. We said thank you. And my feeling was so good"* Community member, HPA, Somaliland – film interview

Make sure staff and volunteers are well trained and understand your organisation, its activities and about the BFM. That way they will provide correct information to communities and not add to any confusion in the community or create unrealistic expectations.

Build information sharing into ***work plans and budgets, and monitor*** that it is effective. This helps us to be intentional about sharing information and checking that it's working. If some groups still don't know about our organisation and BFM, or have misconceptions, we need to address this. Also, if the BFM is receiving continual information-seeking requests, that is a sign that more information provision is needed!

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[2] While the FAQ managed expectations, there were still some frustrations that these dismissed certain categories of needs/requests

PRACTICE NOTE 2: Inclusive and Accessible Feedback Channels

The Aim: *All those targeted or impacted by a project are able to give feedback*

Feedback from service users is essential for accountability and monitoring the quality of development programmes. Those targeted or impacted by a project should be able to give feedback and see improvements made during the project's implementation. Sometimes the 'impact' of a project is felt by those not directly targeted as a beneficiary. Impact may be positive or negative, and can include unintended consequences or harm.

In designing a BFM, an organisation will decide who it would like to prioritize soliciting and receiving feedback from. These groups then be able to provide feedback with ease and without barriers or personal risk. The feedback system should be inclusive of the voice of the most vulnerable and stakeholders in achieving project objectives such as husbands and mothers in law.

The Challenge: *Overcoming common barriers to people providing feedback*

Some of the most common barriers people face in providing feedback, include -

- **Not knowing about the right to provide feedback, how and what issues** feedback can be provided on (see Practice Note 1)

- **Illiteracy** and ability to provide feedback in written form

"In our area their literacy level is very low. So what was happening was that our Change Agents would have to write on their behalf and then their privacy was not maintained. For this mothers were not happy" CINI staff, Kolkata, India – film interview

- **Geographic isolation or time** and ability to access a suggestion box or attend meetings

"The load of covering all the target kebeles (villages) by one person was the biggest challenge. Added to that the busy schedule of women and their preference for weekend meetings " Community Feedback Officer, AMREF – Final partner report

"The (suggestion) boxes that were far from their houses didn't receive that much feedback'. MAMTA Project Manager - Final partner report

- **Resources** and ability of target groups to access anything from a pen and paper to use a suggestion box, through to a phone and credit to call or text an organisation

> "*This issue rose quite often among the beneficiaries, who were asking why are only phone-owners entitled to let their voice be heard? And again, to own a phone is mainly a gender related issue. At rural level in Tanzania, actually only men have their own phone; it hampers a lot which kind (and the number of cases) of feedback that can be provided*" CUAMM, Project Manager – *Final partner report*

> "*It was thought that SMS could work. But when we went and met with the community people first of all the problem was the language. Most of the women are comfortable using Urdu language, SMS doesn't happen in Urdu language, it happens in English, in Bengali and in Hindi. The second challenge was we figured out that maybe everyone has a mobile phone, though the mobile phone is generally carried away by the main person (husband) when he goes off to work... so what we did is we did a context analysis*" Community Feedback Officer, CINI, India – *film interview*

- **Lack of permission to attend meetings or confidence** to speak up in groups, due to low power or cultural norms around what can be said to people who hold power

> "*The biggest barriers are low of feedback and reluctance to feedback as the result of feedback related past history. Fear of reprisals by authority figures is also a barrier*" AMREF, Community Feedback Officer – *Final partner report*

> " *Because you see every mother cannot speak when lots of people in a group, because they are not in the habit of speaking their problem.*" Community member, Kolkata India – *film interview*

- **Sensitivity** of some issues and a need for confidentiality (for example related to a personal health issue, or an allegation of staff misconduct such as inappropriate behaviour or corruption)

> "*If you try to borrow a mobile phone from either a friend or your husband they will ask you who are you talking to? They tell you to speak while they listen to everything that you are saying – a situation that undermines confidentiality.*" Community member, Tanzania

ADRA Zimbabwe, reaching out to community members

Tips and Examples: *Moving towards accessible and inclusive BFMs*

Talk to target groups during planning and implementation about how they feel comfortable giving feedback. This will help make sure methods are appropriate to the people you want to receive feedback from. As one community member in Kolkata explained, '*Every mother is different. Mothers prefer to give their feedback in different ways*' To achieve this, provide ***a number of options for feedback***. Each method has different strengths and limitations (**see attached table**). Select a combination of methods that complement each other and are aligned with target group's preferred ways to provide feedback. For example, in India, women preferred providing feedback to MAMTA through discussions; where adolescents preferred suggestion box because they were literate and it was confidential.

MAMTA India, consulting women on how they would feel comfortable providing feedback

Be prepared to adapt the methods to make them work in practice.

Examples of adaptation...

In Kolkata, women wanted a suggestion box. CINI reiteratively tried ***different suggestion box forms***. The first form was too busy and confusing, then they tried a blank piece of paper but people stopped using the box! It was difficult for women who could not write, and those that felt their problem wasn't important enough to write a letter. Pictorial forms were then developed for different topics, and people could select happy or sad faces. There was also an option to include comments. This form became very popular.

HPA Somaliland introduced text messaging as a way for communities to provide feedback. Due to low literacy and Somali people being an oral society, feedback was very low. They then introduced a free 'missed call' system and called community members back to receive their verbal feedback. To improve the system further, they introduced a ***toll free 4 digit number***. There was a dramatic increase in feedback! "The fact it was free ensured that I would give feedback regularly." Community Member, Somaliland – HPA Endline Monitoring Report

AMREF Ethiopia developed feedback questionnaires about their projects. Due to distance between villages and occasional security issues, it was difficult for the Community Feedback Officer to regularly travel to communities to hold feedback meetings. ***AMREF trained volunteers in villages to hold feedback meetings*** using the questionnaire. This dramatically increased the number of community members that AMREF could reach and receive feedback from.

Feedback Channels

The following table is adapted from the CDA Collaborative Learning Project Menu of Feedback Channels and Tools. It draws specifically on channels for feedback that were trialled during the Beneficiary Feedback Mechanism Programme and adds learning emerging from the pilots. The full Menu of Options that was developed by CDA Collaborative for the Norwegian Refugee Council(NRC) is available with other related resources at www.cdacollaborative.org.

Selecting a combination of feedback channels in consultation with community members and partners will help make sure the BFM is accessible and used by different groups. Providing a combination of feedback channels means that the strengths of each channel complement each other and offset the weaknesses of relying on one option alone.

SUGGESTION BOX

STRENGTHS	LIMITATIONS
More inclusive for - • People who are literate (or able/willing to get someone to write on their behalf) • People who are less comfortable verbally expressing their views, and/or expressing directly to those who the feedback relates to • People who have time restrictions on when they can provide feedback (for example they might not be able to attend meetings to ask questions) • Anyone who wants and is able to provide feedback – ie not restricted to those who are invited to provide feedback **Type of feedback** • Feedback can be anonymous, so more likely to capture sensitive issues such as allegations of staff/volunteer misconduct • Feedback can be provided at the time an issue arises • Feedback is unsolicited so can relate to a question or issue of importance to the community member rather than what the organisation defines as important	**Less inclusive for -** • People with low literacy (unless adapted as below) • People who live far from the suggestion box • Restricted movement – eg women who cannot move freely or elderly or disabled • Oral cultures who prefer to talk than write **Type of feedback** • Feedback can be provided at the time an issue arises, however, the organisation is not notified until the suggestion box is opened • Feedback is unsolicited so can relate to issues outside the scope of the organisation to refer or respond to (creating a heavy reliance on information provision on what the suggestion box can be used for) • Feedback can be anonymous, which is difficult to provide a response to, or to contact the person for more clarifying details

Organisational resource and logistical considerations
- Suggestion boxes need to be opened at regular intervals and may not be appropriate in remote or insecure locations which are not visited very often by staff
- A suggestion box 'opening committee' may help build confidence that there is independent oversight for the process and that negative feedback wont 'disappear'
- There is a heavier reliance on information provision to manage expectations about what the suggestion box can be used for, how often the suggestion box can be opened and by who (creating confidence in the process), and response timelines
- In some contexts, governments or local power holders, may be more suspicious of suggestion boxes and that anonymous feedback may be used against them

Tips and adaptations

- Pictorial suggestion box forms can be used, for example with an image of a MCH service that beneficiaries can tick whether they are happy or not happy with. This only provides quantifiable data to the organisation without an explanation of why they feel that way. However, if the quantifiable data shows there is a problem with an activity/service, this can act as an 'alert' and trigger a follow-up meeting with the community to help understand what the issue might be
- Involve community members in deciding where the suggestion box should go. Normally this will be somewhere less visible (for confidentiality), however in Kolkata women preferred it in a busy place 'of coming and going' so no one questioned why they were there
- Portable suggestion boxes allow staff to collect feedback when they are in the community (for example leaving the room after a meeting while participants drop their feedback). This overcomes location as a barrier - both for those who provide feedback, as well as the frequency in which staff visit remote communities to open the box.

SMS/Text Messaging

INCLUSION – STRENGTHS	INCLUSION - LIMITATIONS
More inclusive for - • People who have access to a phone, credit to send texts, reception, and electricity to charge phone batteries • Moving populations (eg refugees), or those who are difficult to meet with due to remote or insecure location • People who are literate (or able/willing to get someone to text on their behalf) • People who are less comfortable verbally expressing their views, and/or expressing directly to those who the feedback relates to • People who have time restrictions on when they can provide feedback (for example they might not be able to attend meetings to ask questions) • Anyone who wants and is able to provide feedback – ie not restricted to those who are invited to provide feedback **Type of feedback more likely to be received –** • Feedback can be provided at the time an issue arises and the organisation is instantly notified (eg no time-lag until the suggestion box is opened) • Feedback is unsolicited so can relate to a question or issue of importance to the community member rather than what the organisation defines as important • Feedback will usually be concise and clearly categorized as positive, negative or neutral •	**Less inclusive for -** • People (often women, youth and children) who do not have access to a phone, reliable reception, credit to send texts, and/or electricity to charge phone batteries • People in a region where their written script is unavailable on the phone • People with low literacy levels or tech skills to text • People who want to provide anonymous feedback • People with minimally functioning phones who may only use the call function • Oral cultures who prefer to talk than write • The ultra poor who may have phone credit but need to save the credit for other purposes • People who share a phone within the household and wont always have access **Type of feedback -** • Feedback is unsolicited so can relate to issues outside the scope of the organisation to refer or respond to (creating a heavy reliance on information provision about what SMS can relate to) • An SMS may not provide sufficient levels of detail to analyse and take action on • Following up with the reporter on feedback received for sensitive information can be tricky if it's a shared phone or if it's unknown
Organisational resource and logistical considerations • It can be less resource intensive receiving feedback through SMS compared to going to the community to conduct interviews or open a suggestion box. As well, it can potentially be less resource intensive to provide a response to feedback as you can use the phone number to call/text the person back (if they are the phone owner/not borrowing it). This includes send a common response message to a large volume of people who raised the same question/issue.	

- SMS management software such as FrontlineSMS can automatically receive, sort and even respond to feedback received through SMS with keywords (such as help, maternal health, education etc.). When multiple types of feedback mechanisms are in use, an excel file should be used to aggregate the feedback into one database.
- Feedback can be quickly and automatically sorted through the use of keywords as being positive or negative and by subject area to assist referrals to the relevant service providers (for unsolicited feedback)
- Every feedback SMS can receive an automatic SMS confirming the feedback had been received

Tips and adaptations
- As part of Information provision, let beneficiaries know the supporting details that they should provide in their text message (for example their village name)
- See if mobile network operators are willing to set-up reverse SMS billing that charges the organisation for texts rather than the person providing feedback

Toll free hotline or 'Missed call' service (beneficiary calls and hangs up, then the organisation returns the call and bares the cost)

INCLUSION – STRENGTHS	INCLUSION - LIMITATIONS
More inclusive for - • People who have access to a phone, reception to call, and electricity to charge phone batteries • People with low literacy levels or tech skills to text and prefer calling • Moving populations (eg refugees), or those who are difficult to meet with due to remote or insecure location • Anyone who wants and is able to provide feedback – ie not restricted to those who are invited to provide feedback • Oral societies who prefer to talk than write • People who can call/receive a call back during the Hotline operating times **Type of feedback more likely to be received –** • Feedback is unsolicited so can relate to a question or issue of importance to the community member rather than what the organisation asks about • Feedback can be provided at the time an issue arises and the organisation is instantly notified (eg no time-lag until the suggestion box is opened) and in some cases respond immediately, for example answering a question	**Less inclusive for -** • People (often women, youth and children) who do not have access to a phone, reliable reception, and/or electricity to charge phone batteries • People who want to provide anonymous feedback • People who cannot call/receive a call back during the Hotline operating times • The ultra poor who may have phone credit but need to save the credit for other purposes • People who share a phone within the household and wont always have access **Type of feedback -** • Feedback is unsolicited so can relate to issues outside the scope of the organisation to refer or respond to (creating a heavy reliance on information provision about what SMS can relate to) • Feedback via voice call can be lengthy and expensive. It may be hard to encourage beneficiaries to provide concise feedback • If a toll free number is acquired and well-advertised the organization will likely receive 'spam' calls

Organisational resource and logistical considerations
- It can potentially be less resource intensive receiving phone calls than going to the community to conduct interviews or open a suggestion box. However dedicated staff member/s are needed to receive calls during operating hours.
- If women are providing feedback, due to social norms they often need to speak to a female on the phone

- It can potentially be less resource intensive to provide a response to feedback as rather than leaving the office you can use the phone number to call the person back (if they are the phone owner/not borrowing it). However, with phone calls, the response need to be provided on an individual basis – which may not be viable when there are large volumes of feedback and a response needs to be provided at community level
- Software, such as Frontline SMS can receive and automatically log the missed call, recording the time and phone number of the caller
- In sensitive cases the feedback officer taking the call may react to the feedback on impulse without first checking with the appropriate authorities and can over-promise, or give wrong information. Whereas with feedback boxes or SMS there is time to ensure responses to feedback are appropriate.
- There is no automatic digital record of the content of the feedback, so if a call is lengthy, the feedback officer may have difficulty properly recording the discussion

Tips and adaptations
- In some contexts a toll free number may be available from the mobile network operator for a low-cost so that beneficiaries can call to provide feedback directly free of charge

Pre-determined questions - feedback solicited at regular intervals through interviews or FGDs

INCLUSION – STRENGTHS	INCLUSION - LIMITATIONS
More inclusive for - - People who are illiterate - People who are comfortable verbally expressing their views to an intermediary, and/or directly to those who the feedback relates to - People who feel more confident sharing their views in meetings if peers, neighbours and friends are there to support them - People who are not familiar with the concept of providing feedback and need encouragement (rather than waiting for them to proactively share views - ask) - Potentially those who are less mobile if the interviewer can go to their location **Type of feedback more likely to be received -** - Feedback is solicited that is relevant to the project and issues the organisation is willing/able to respond to - therefore it's easier to analyse and respond to	**Less inclusive for -** - People who are not comfortable verbally expressing their views to an intermediary, and/or directly to those who the feedback relates to, or in a group - Restricted movement – eg women who cannot move freely or elderly or disabled and unable to attend feedback meetings (if the interviewer cannot go them) - People who are unavailable when interviews/FGDs take place, eg due to work - People not selected to provide feedback – though may still have an issue/question **Type of feedback** - Feedback that is outside the scope of pre-determined questions, including additional issues/suggestions/questions of importance to the community

Organisational resource and logistical considerations
- Staff and/or volunteers are needed to conduct the interviews and FGDs - this requires time and resources. On the other hand, there can be some savings as information provision about the BFM can be provides at the same time, as well as updates on response to feedback received during previous interviews/FGDs
- Volunteers can help reach larger numbers of people and can act as an intermediary for more honest feedback to be provided. However, they need to be trained and supported, and have an easy method to forward the feedback on to the organisation. Monitoring should check beneficiaries trust and feel comfortable with the volunteer
- In most cases, staff/volunteers conducting the FGD/interview should be the same gender as participants

- Depending on the number or questions, these could be integrated into existing processes with the community (for example at the end of meetings, or during existing monitoring/health check-ups).

Tips and adaptations
- Asking the same questions at regular intervals allows trends to be shown overtime. However, participants may get bored being asked the same questions each time. Consider alternating questions, or changing to questions that become more relevant in certain stages of the project cycle
- Involve communities in the selection of indicators that feedback will be collected on through meetings and interviews. That way they are providing feedback on issues that they feel most strongly about and will be more motivated to participate.

PRACTICE NOTE 3: Responsive Internal Referral Pathways

The Aim: *Staff and leaders support, understand and actively fulfil their roles and responsibilities in relation to the BFM*

Roles in relation to the feedback system may vary. For example, field staff may have a role in raising community awareness about the BFM, collecting feedback, acknowledging it and taking action in response to feedback. Monitoring staff may link feedback trends into monitoring reports, and periodically check that BFM is accessible and appropriate. Managers and leaders may have roles according to levels of authority in adapting projects or budgets in response to feedback trends, or in investigating sensitive complaints.

When roles are fulfilled, feedback is more systematically responded to and benefits can be experienced including improvements in relationships with communities, and in the quality, relevance and targeting of projects.

The Challenge: *Bringing about organisational change in support of a functional BFM*

Resistance by staff is common in setting up a BFM, particularly if staff are working hard and see feedback as a source of scrutiny and performance management. Alternatively, they may fear a formal system may undermine their existing relationship with communities, including informal practices for listening and responding to community ideas and concerns.

> " *Time constraints for the field team were always a challenge as they were also responsible for implementing GPAF project, which was already loaded with activities...Additionally the team believed that if community was engaged in the feedback process then it will complain on shortcomings of the implementation strategies.*" MAMTA, Programme Manager – Final Partner report

Feedback is valued, but responding is a lower priority to competing demands on staff time. It can become a lower priority because there are a lack of clear decision making processes for considering response to feedback. In comparison, there are more incentives and processes for completing logframe activities than checking on quality or engaging in dialogue with communities.

> *"Well we always hear staff saying we have sent the information to the head quarters, and sometimes this goes on for a long time and we know that that's where things die unaddressed"* Community Member, Zimbabwe - ADRA Endline monitoring report

Reluctance to upward manage senior staff or donors can reduce responsiveness to feedback trends. Perceived or actual tensions can exist between what the donor wants and what the community feels. Making changes may also be seen as a weakness in project design.

> *"I came in as a new staff member and it became pretty difficult because every project has a guideline on how the project activity is going to take place, and BFM was an offshoot, so it was initially very difficult"* Community Feedback Officer, CINI, India – film interview

Narrow scope of what feedback will be responded to – Sometimes staff only see feedback as being 'in -scope' and able to be responded to if it relates to logframe activities. However, community feedback often suggests a new or different activity that will be help a project achieve its aims. For example, in Ethiopia the aim of awareness raising activities was to get more women to access maternal and child health clinics. In one location, women indicated the cleanliness of a clinic was deterring them from going – despite awareness raising about the importance of the service. AMREF needed to decide if it would only respond to feedback about its awareness raising activities, or it would respond to feedback that related to the projects aims and objectives.

BFM perceived as the responsibility of one person, rather than everyone. Having a dedicated employee to help set-up and manage the BFM will add greatly to its success. However, having a dedicated person creates the risk that one person rather than the entire team is perceived to own the BFM and operational responsibilities. In the BFM pilots, this was particularly challenging because the Mechanisms were established as a separate add-on project to programmes that were already in implementation phase.

MAMTA India – different staff played a role in collecting and referring feedback

Tips and Examples: *For bringing* about organisational change in support of a BFM

Allow time for staff sensitization, gaining buy-in and answering questions and concerns. Consider bringing in staff who have been involved with a BFM for peer to peer exchange. Share concrete examples to demonstrate how feedback has improved programme and results in similar programmes in other settings.

> *"Convincing the field team to accept BFM took approximately 3 months. The success of this exercise was enhancement of team understanding on concept of feedback mechanism... The World Vision facilitators was successful in convincing (the team) that the proposed BFM will help them to strengthen their continuous efforts in implementing the GPAF project".* Project Manager, MAMTA - Final partner report

Have clear protocols which outline responsibilities in raising community awareness about the BFM, and in collecting and responding to feedback. If teams are involved in developing the protocols, this will increase buy in and ownership. **Rahnuma brought together leaders, health centre and M&E staff to plan** and map out feedback referral and response protocols. Once protocols are established, build responsibilities into *job descriptions and work plans*. This recognises that responding to community feedback takes time, and needs to be planned for and valued.

Wherever possible, *streamline these BFM related activities into existing plans and processes*. This helps to save time, and the BFM becomes a way of working rather than additional workload. To enhance access to feedback channels, ADRA leveraged existing project activities, for example **staff carried a mobile suggestion box** with them when conducting routine activities such as workshops and trainings. When CINI Change Agents (right) were **conducting home visits** to monitor what maternal health services mother has accessed an extra component was added to see feedback on why services hadn't been accessed.

Management may need to make **decisions that enable staff respond to feedback**. For example, in Zimbabwe, community members complained about ADRA staff turning up late to meetings. ADRA sought to address the underlying problem of not having a base close enough to the target communities by opening a small sub-office. This supported staff to build better relations with the community and meet their expectations.

Management **check with funders to see if there is flexibility to adapt programme plans and budgets to respond to feedback –** rather than perceive there is no flexibility.

In Pakistan, most feedback was about the nutrient packs. Rahnuma discussed this feedback internally and referred it up to management level. Rahnuma's management decided to take this issue to the donor level as it required budget amendments. Additional resources were required from the fund manager; the fund manager in turn identified some unutilised resources, saved from the overall budget of GPAF budget. This change required DFID approval, which was given within two weeks. Additional nutrients (Milo and Cornflex) were added in the pack to fulfil the demand of beneficiaries – INTRAC, Endpoint Synthesis Report

To help manager make these decisions, **present feedback trends in a user-friendly format**. This strengthens perception of reliability and utility of feedback in decision-making.

"All feedbacks from beneficiaries were internally shared with the Senior Management Team (and it was decided) on the feedbacks where the SMT had to take actions, such as advocacy issues, approval of additional programs etc". Project Manager, MAMTA - Final partner report

Celebrate listening and responding to feedback - rather than complaints being seen as scrutiny reward responsiveness to community views, and reduce feelings of individual scrutiny and fault by teams collectively analysing and taking action

"The entire team of Outreach Workers, Program Manager and CFO sit together to analyse feedback received on a weekly basis, we take actions and do follow-ups until it gets resolved" Project Manager, MAMTA - Final partner report

Maintain a central database of feedback received, referrals, actions and communicated responses to monitor whether feedback loops are closing and follow-up with responsible staff.

Date of Feedback	Source of Feedback	Complainant Name and Contact Details	Feedback Location of Rages	Feedback Code	Theme of Feedback	Frequency Issue raised	Feedback Details	Date Feedback Acknowledged	Staff member computer referred to for follow-up	Action 1 Taken	Date of Action 1	Action 2 Taken	Date Acti

Organisations piloting BFMs used an excel database to track feedback received, where it had been referred, action taken in response

PRACTICE NOTE 4: Responsive External Referral Pathways

The Aim: *Stakeholders including local partners and government, support the BFM, agree to referral protocols, and respond to feedback that relates to their work and responsibilities.*

Normally NGOs work with and alongside other partners in delivering projects and achieving objectives. For example, improving access to immunization could involve working collaboratively with community based organisations and government service providers. For this reason, a functional BFM often requires the buy-in of a range of project stakeholders and a willingness to respond to feedback that relates to their work. When this is achieved, BFMs can improve accountability of not just the organisation leading its establishment, but also of government agencies and other stakeholders.

> *"Unlike before when it used to take some time to resolve issues that were raised by feedback, now the District Medical Office acts on issues immediately as soon as they are raised. Depending on the seriousness of the feedback, the DMO for instance calls the team members and assigns a specific person to follow up the particular issue".* District Medical Official, Tanzania – CUAMM Endline monitoring report

The Challenge: *Gaining buy-in, support and agreement to roles*

Government and other stakeholders can **resist the BFM**, dismiss feedback and have concerns about oversight and scrutiny.

> *"At the beginning we thought the BFM was for HPA to check up on us, or for people to complain about members of staff"* Health Centre staff, Somaliland – Endline monitoring report

> *"In Zimbabwe, The MoHCC stakeholders at district level did not immediately understand the purpose of the BFM and viewed it as a separate project from the MCH programme, which had begun in November 2013. The timing differences brought skepticism and suspicions that ADRA is trying to police and monitor the Ministry activities"* ADRA, Zimbabwe, Endline monitoring report

> *"(At first) Councilor and party members were not cooperative, they did not allow CINI to put up boxes and notice boards in the ward. Feedback was viewed as reporting against the party work, they had asked the community not to give feedback".* CINI India, Community Feedback Officer - Final partner report

Sometimes partners and government stakeholders already have a feedback system. A new BFM may be seen to duplicate or undermine systems that organisations already have in place.

> *"The government was already exercising some form of feedback (e.g., public forum, suggestion books, community meetings...)" AMREF Ethiopia,* Community Feedback Officer – Final partner report

Government stakeholders may agree to be part of the BFM, but are then **slow to respond** to feedback that is referred to them. Community members can lose interest in the BFM if they are not seeing action in response to their feedback (see Practice Note 5)

> *"Advocacy activities at district and state levels don't produce results in short time; so responding to the beneficiaries (feedback) and fulfilling their expectations were difficult"* Project Manager, MAMTA - *Final partner report*

> *"The biggest challenge till date has been to co-ordinate the government service providers. They are willing to sit together, but everyone is putting some other person's name, saying 'that that person is responsible' so it's taking a long time to change... and they should understand that ultimately they are accountable for giving the services to the community". CINI* Community Feedback Officer, Kolkata India – Film interview

Tips and examples: *For achieving buy-in and active engagement of stakeholders*

Allow enough time to engage stakeholders. Don't assume it's impossible - with dialogue and exposure, stakeholders can come on board. Involving stakeholders in the design of BFMs will create ownership and reduce the feeling that the system is being imposed on them.

For example, in Kolkata, locally elected officials and their Club members were concerned feedback might affect votes plus draw attention to their other activities in the community (including 'use of muscle'). **Repeated meetings about the purpose of the BFM helped to address these concerns**. Club members accompanied CINI during feedback meetings and saw suggestion box forms related to maternal health. In time elected officials came to value and respond to feedback and invited CINI staff to share feedback at events. When nearby Clubs saw the success of the system, they requested CINI to come and help set up something similar.

Rahnuma needed agreement from schools to place a suggestion box on their premises, and to run feedback meetings with students. Some schools resisted, fearing that the feedback might relate to school management. Posters specified that feedback should relate to Rahnuma's project which helped alleviate school management fears. As well school staff were present when the suggestion box was opened and any feedback related to the school was provided to them on the spot. **Schools' support clearly enabled students to provide feedback in the most convenient setting for them.**

Start with stakeholders who are easy to bring on board. Once others start to see the process and benefits they'll be more willing to contribute and scaling up will be easier

- CUAMM chose to initially engage with the District Medical Office who it had an existing working relationship with. As well the DMO had an existing mandate and role in overseeing the quality of health services. The DMO felt community feedback could help in fulfil this role. Other departments started to come on board through quarterly inter-agency meetings for coordinated response to feedback

During a context analysis for the BFM*, see which stakeholders already have a feedback system*. Build on strengths and avoid duplication or substitution of government's role and responsibility.

- During the context analysis in Konso District, AMREF Ethiopia found that the Government already ran a quarterly forum to hear feedback from the public on the health sector as a whole. AMREF's CFO took notes in the forum to gather feedback on its GPAF project (improving quality of MCH services). As well it ran additional feedback groups with women who weren't confident speaking up in public forums. **The government welcomed this approach**, as well as informing communities of response to their feedback.

Explore options with stakeholders to bring about *more timely response to feedback*

- In Tanzania, a need emerged for CUAMM's Community Feedback Officer to have a single point of contact in departments to refer feedback to and to find out what actions were being taken in response. **The Departments of Health and Social Welfare**

appointed focal points and who actively engaged with the CFO. This worked very effectively and streamlined communication.

- In Kolkata, CINI facilitated Ward Sabhas between mothers, service providers, NGOs and elected officials. Feedback trends were shared and participants prioritized issues and developed action plans to respond**. Actions plans were monitored by the community**.

Stay **committed to the common good** – don't start from the assumption that skaheolders don't want to improve and do a better job. Understand what motivates them. For example, in some contexts local leaders are elected and need the support of local people. Opinions that come directly from the community add legitimacy.

> *"I would go and say this, but I am a NGO person, my opinion had no value… but when the local people are saying this, the Councillor thinks to do something now because he gets a vote from that person"* CINI staff member, Kolkata – film interview

> *"Although we had been doing the best we could to care for the patients, there are some things that we overlooked which came out of the feedback and we have changed the way we do those things.''* Health Worker Zhomba Clinic, Zimbabwe - ADRA Endline Monitoring Report

PRACTICE NOTE 5: Communicating a Response to Feedback

The Aim: *Those who provide feedback receive a response*

A response may include an answer to a question, an explanation about why a requested action cannot be taken, or what action has been or is being taken in response to the feedback. The response is received by a person or group or people who provided the feedback. When people receive a response to their feedback, they feel motivated to keep using the system for project improvement. Seeing responses to others' feedback may also encourage new users to give feedback.

> *"At first, the community did not understand where ADRA was coming from and intending to go with their quest for soliciting feedback… Some people believed that this was a trap, trying to identify offenders. As time went on with people airing their views and realising that ADRA is responsive, people realised that it was a genuine desire to meet community needs"* Community Member, Zimbabwe -ADRA Endline Monitoring Report

The Challenge: *Reaching everyone who has provided feedback with a timely response*

Some feedback takes a long time to take action on, particularly if it requires referral to senior decision makers, or to the government for action. People can lose interest in the feedback system if they don't receive a quick response.

> *"Delay in response to feedback actions is another barrier. If feedback is not responded to timely, then trust is eroded fast".* AMREF Community Feedback Officer, Ethiopia - Final partner report

Some feedback mechanisms provide easier channels for response than others. Mobile-based mechanisms clearly provide a direct channel for response (unless a handset has been borrowed to give feedback). However, anonymous feedback mechanisms do not include a name or contact information to provide a direct response.

> *"Women felt empowered to feedback through the feedback box because it was anonymous"* ADRA Zimbabwe – Final partner report

It can be **resource intensive taking a response back to the community** member/s who provide feedback. Staff time is required for activities such as returning phone calls, writing feedback response updates, and/or going to meet with the community members. Face to face contact is particularly difficult if communities are geographically dispersed or there are security concerns.

Notice boards can help share information more widely only if the target population is **literate and are regularly in the location** to read it (e.g. students in a school). In other contexts, they may not be helpful. Written updates should not breach confidentiality.

"The challenge in information sharing was inability to use notice board or fliers due to illiteracy on the part of the women. We needed to depend on oral information sharing". AMREF Community Feedback Officer, Ethiopia - Final partner report

Community meetings during which answers to FAQs and updates provided on actions in response to feedback can be very helpful in some settings but **not all community members are able to attend** and is not be appropriate for sharing details of confidential feedback

Relying on others to share a response to feedback has the potential to efficiently reach more people, but comes with risks that information will not be shared fully and accurately

"...especially if relying on the community leaders to give feedback during meetings because some of the ADRA feedback is not always high on the agenda, it might be overlooked if time runs out..." Ward Health Committee, Zimbabwe – ADRA Endline Monitoring Report

Tips and Examples: *For providing a response to feedback*

"We learnt the best enabler has been our capacity to provide practical reply to feedback. During the first months of the pilot we got very few feedback, but after demonstrating their feedback had been taken into considerations, people started to send sms, to call and to drop letters much more frequently. The more local authorities (supported by the project) were able to reply with actions to the feedback, the more people became confident about the importance of using the BFM". CUAMM Project Manager, Tanzania - Final partner report

Ask communities how they prefer to receive information. Using a variety of methods (such as written, verbal and phone technology) helps to reach different target groups. See Practice Note 1.

Even if feedback hasn't been resolved yet, **provide status updates** on its progress and what actions are being taken. Consider ways in which feedback providers can be involved in developing and monitoring action plans.

- In Kolkata, CINI brought together mothers, service providers, local government and stakeholders to meet and discuss feedback trends. Meeting participants prioritized issues

then developed actions plans in response. Mothers monitored the implementation of action plans.

Mainstream staff responsibilities for providing updates on feedback into everyone's role and interactions with the community. For example, if a staff members is heading to a community, the BFM point person can share written updates on actions being taken in response to their feedback. The staff member is then equipped to share these and respond to questions.

AMREF sharing response to feedback during existing meetings

Ask community based volunteers and committees to compliment staff efforts to share actions taken in response to feedback. They can also be provided with written updates to help them remember and provide accurate information. If it's not possible to distribute written updates, for example due to restricted travel, consider 'second best' options for example in Zimbabwe, ADRA used Whatsapp to communicate response back to volunteers. This will place a greater need to monitor the information sharing process.

> *"Nowadays, you will find that most ToTs, WHC, and some community leaders have access to mobile smartphones and communicate on WhatsApp, since ADRA gives their response to feedback to the community leaders and ToTs…. many people are reached by feedback in a short space of time rather than for us to wait to hear after at a community meeting"– Ward Health Committee Member, ADRA/Zimbabwe, end-point*

All responses count, including when an action requested by community members can't be taken. Acknowledging and responding means that people's voice has still been heard.

> *"(I requested) the food ration to be increased and. I was give the answer to it... They (HPA) have said that they communicated to WFP and WFP said that we cannot add on anything. My feeling was to good be replied with an answer - yes you can get it or you cannot get it - both of them I was waiting".* Community member, Somaliland – film interview

> *"When issues have been solved, they feel that giving feedback is correct. But there are problems which I have not been able to solve. I tell them we can only solve things which are in our control".* CINI staff member, Kolkata India – film interview

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PRACTICE NOTE 6: Resourcing Beneficiary Feedback Mechanisms

The Aim: *BFMs are adequately resourced*

"A feedback mechanism is seen as effective if, at minimum, it supports the collection, acknowledgement, analysis and response to the feedback received, thus forming a closed feedback loop. Where the feedback loop is left open, the mechanism is not fully effective[3]".

Each stage in the feedback loop requires an investment of resources. This includes budget allocation for tangible items such as information material and suggestion boxes, as well as investment of staff, volunteer and partner time.

The Challenge: Ensuring adequate resources are available to operationalise the BFM and maintain the quality of the feedback process through its lifetime

1. **Resources for aid projects are scarce**. It can be difficult to convince colleagues that resourcing a Beneficiary Feedback Mechanism is worth the investment and should be prioritized over alternative uses of funding.

2. As there is not a strong history of setting up BFMs in our organisations, it can be **difficult to predict costs** based on standard running costs. Even if a project does decide to allocate resources for a BFM, there can be surprise costs. During the Beneficiary Feedback Mechanism Pilots, areas where resources were higher than anticipated included -
    - Time taken to bring staff on board and build capacity to fulfil roles and responsibilities
    - Time taken to engage and gain support of project stakeholders, including government
    - Time taken to raise community awareness about the BFM and confidence to provide feedback
    - Time taken to provide a response to community member/s who provided feedback

3. In a situation where resources have been allocated to a BFM, there may be times when it is **difficult to maintain them**. The BFM may be seen as an add-on rather than integral part of the programme, and there may be tensions between accountability to funders and accountability to communities. There are contractual consequences if commitments to donors are not met, but no contractual consequences if we do not meet our commitments to communities. Resources allocated to a BFM (such as Community Feedback Officer) may be re-allocated to other project activities during busy times.

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[3] CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, **cdacollaborative**.org

4. **Project/programme budgets are inflexible.** A BFM may be well resourced but if there is no flexibility in the design of projects to respond to feedback there are limited returns from investment in terms of improving the quality, relevance, targeting and effectiveness of projects. And responding that the project cannot be changed may actually be counter-productive in terms of empowerment of beneficiaries and accountability.

Tips and examples: *Moving towards adequate resourcing for BFMs*

1. The first step is to **convince colleagues** BFMs are worth investing in!

   ▪ **Create a sales pitch and know your audience and what will speak to them**– BFMs link to many agendas such as adaptive programming, social accountability, empowerment, local and ownership and 'leaving no one behind'. They also support a rights based approach to development, and the quality, relevance, targeting, results and sustainability. In insecure context they can also contribute to safety of staff as they are an avenue to raise complaints rather than addressing issues through violence and provide a way to learn about rumours and misconceptions which could cause risks[4]. As well, BFMs provide a way for community members to raise and resolve issues directly with an organisation rather than going to the media (including online social media), so it's good for reputational risk management.

   ▪ **Know your funder** – donors are increasingly asking to see feedback systems built into proposals. This is a green light to resource a BFM. If not, create a business case in your application that showcases your commitment to quality, relevant programming and program improvements based on local input.

   ▪ **Consider alternative budget lines** – in some situations unrestricted funding sources could be available to supplement a project's budget. Alternatively, consider using dedicated budgets set aside for monitoring and evaluation. BFMs can be seen as a form of participative monitoring and pick up issues not identified by structured monitoring. This helps course correction so we don't have to wait until an evaluation to find out something didn't work or caused harm.

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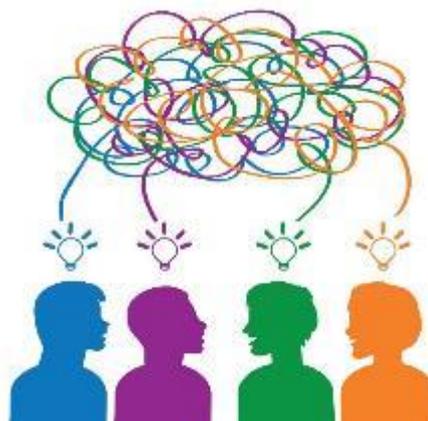
[4] Listening Project. Feedback Mechanisms in International Assistance Organizations. Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2011

2. Once there is agreement to resourcing a BFM, **plan a budget** that allocates sufficient resources for maintaining and adjusting the BFM according to evolving needs and changes in the context and in the program. It's not possible to have an exact figure for how much a BFM will cost. This will be proportional to the size of the project that it sits within. As well 'cost drivers' for the project will be similar to cost drivers for the BFM. If staff hiring costs are expensive in the project, this will be reflected in the costs of staff who are dedicated exclusively or partly to the BFM. If communities are dispersed and it's costly to access them, this will also act as a cost driver for the BFM.

   In setting up a BFM, common areas where costs can be incurred include
   - **Preparations -** context analysis of community and your own organisation to design an appropriate system and corresponding development (or adaptation) of protocols and guidelines (e.g. information needs, communication preferences, access and power, costs, risks, etc)

   - **Field staff time -** raising community awareness about the feedback system, engaging project stakeholders (eg government) for their support and responsiveness to feedback, collecting community feedback, discussing, investigating and taking action in response to complaints and feedback, communicating the response to those who provide feedback

   - **Dedicated person (full time or a 'point person') -** Oversight and coordination of the feedback system- ensuring feedback is registered, analysed and referred for action (including sharing of trends) and tracking follow-up actions taken until closed and a response provided to community members

   - **Management and leaders -** Ensuring staff understanding of fulfilment of roles in relation to the system, reviewing feedback trends and taking timely actions to address feedback according to authority

   - **Resources -** Information material to raise community awareness about the BFM (eg posters, leaflets, film, notice boards); and methods for feedback provision (for example suggestion boxes, printing of questionnaires, provision of a toll free number); travel costs associated with community meetings, face to face interactions and administration

     For ICT-enhanced channels, the cost analysis should include both initial set-up and routine maintenance and fees charged by telecommunications providers in the country

   - **Monitoring -** checking that the people are aware of the BFM, feel confident receiving feedback and are satisfied with responses. As well monitoring can help demonstrate contribution the BFM and closing the feedback loops has made to project objectives.

Use resources efficiently by streamlining BFM related tasks into project implementation plans and staff and volunteer activities.

- **For example, context analyses** are essential for designing a BFM that is appropriate and accessible to the community. Rather than creating this as an additional activity, information can be gathered as part of existing broader context analysis for the project

- Feedback will be collected and responded to more efficiently if staff build the process into existing activities. For example, as a standard agenda item in any training or community meeting, take time to remind participants about the BFM and provide updates on actions being taken in response to feedback. This mitigates the need, time and resources required for a separate awareness raising meeting. See Practice Note 3.

This integration will be easiest if the BFM is **integrated in the design of a project from the outset**, rather than added as an 'extra' after the project has started. BFM activities and budgets can be protected if indicators are built into design documents – after all, 'what gets reported on gets done'.

Resource List

- Full end-point synthesis report of the seven pilots

- BFM Pilot Summary Briefing Note

- Case studies from each pilot, and a case study on technology

- A video showing the feedback mechanisms in Somaliland and India

Further resources from this pilot can be found at: www.feedbackmechanisms.org

About the pilot

Between 2014 and 2016, the UK Department for international Development supported seven non-governmental organisations to pilot beneficiary feedback Mechanisms as part of their maternal and child health projects. The projects were funded under the department's Global Poverty Action Fund (now UK Aid Direct). World Vision UK led a consortium to support their journey and learn:

- What makes a beneficiary feedback system effective?
- Does it improve accountability to communities and the delivery of projects?
- Is it worth the investment?

Monitoring and review support was provided by INTRAC (UK) and consultants
in each of the six countries. Development and implementation of mobile-based beneficiary feedback mechanisms was supported by SIMLab, and learning from the pilots was supported by CDA.

Organisations involved in the pilot

	Department for International Development <mark>Funder and design</mark> www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-international-development		**AMREF Health Africa** Pilot, Ethiopia www.amrefuk.org
	CUAMM Trustees Pilot, Tanzania www.cuamm.org/en		**Child in Need Institute** Pilot, Kolkata, India www.cini-india.org www.facebook.com/cini.india
	Health Poverty Action Pilot, Somaliland www.healthpovertyaction.org general@healthpovertyaction.org		**MAMTA Health Institute for Mother and Child** Pilot, Uttar Pradesh, India www.mamtahimc.org mamta@mamtahimc.org
	Rahnuma Family Planning Association of Pakistan Pilot, Pakistan www.fpapak.org info@fpapak.org		**Adventist Development and Relief Agency** Pilot, Zimbabwe www.adra.org.uk info@adra.org.u
	World Vision UK Pilot consortium lead and implementation support www.worldvision.org.uk info@worldvision.org.uk		**INTRAC UK** Monitoring and review support www.intrac.org info@intrac.org
	Social Impact Lab Mobile technology implementation support www.simlab.org hello@simlab.org		**CDA collaborative Learning** Learning partner cdacollaborative.org feedback@cdacollaborative.org