The Rapid Guide on Setting up Client Feedback Mechanisms

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The Rapid Guide on Setting up Client Feedback Mechanisms provides advice on how to quickly review and update your client feedback channels, establish roles and responsibilities, and set up referral pathways. It also provides templates to develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for client feedback mechanisms at a country level and record client feedback.

Why use it?

We have developed this Rapid Guide in order to support you in initiating a review of your existing feedback channels and to identify additional channels to collect feedback from different groups of clients. This will help you to select a combination of client feedback channels that are specific to your project, as well as those that are, or can be, used across different projects and sectors. The Guidance will also help you to define appropriate roles and responsibilities, referral pathways and SOPs to train and introduce your staff to your client feedback mechanisms (if this is not already in place in your country program). These are necessary conditions for you to be able to record, make decisions and respond to the different type of client request, feedback and complaint. We recommend that you don't start collecting client feedback before you have assessed, reviewed or identified which feedback channels are appropriate. Similarly, you should check that your roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and that the SOPs are still relevant.

This Guidance helps country teams to be accountable to affected populations"[1] and to achieve the IRC Good and Great Standards[2] and associated Good and Great Practices for Client Responsiveness at the design, start-up and implementation phases. More specifically, it supports the achievement of Good Practice 1 at the design phase; Good Practice 1 and 2 at the start-up phase; and Good Practice 1, 2 and 3 at the implementation phase. For more details, please refer to the Good and Great Standards Hub.

When to use it?

At project design and start-up: we recognize that these project phases can be very busy. When country teams have limited time to work through the full set of Client Responsiveness guidance, they can use Section 1 of this Guidance, which addresses identifying and / or reviewing client feedback channels. If there are new staff members, or if you are using new channels, you will also need to update the roles / responsibilities and referral pathways (Section 2 of this Guidance) and your SOPs (see Annex 1). It is particularly important to go through this Guidance in detail when setting up a project in a new sector or in a new location (where IRC has no previous presence). Technical Advisors (TAs) and country teams may use this Guidance when developing project proposals, in order to advise and support decisions on how to make use of existing feedback channels (if they already exist in the targeted location), and to identify the sector or project-specific proactive feedback channels that the country team will use during the implementation of the project. TAs and Senior Management Team (SMT) / Country Leadership Team (CLT) should also encourage their teams to use and adapt the templates provided in the annexes to record client feedback.

During the implementation phase, if the project is executed in a location where the IRC has already set up reactive feedback channels (e.g. hotlines, feedback desks, etc.), those channels can be used to collect client feedback during the implementation of the project; in such cases it may not be necessary to design additional reactive channels.

Don't use this guidance if you need to do a comprehensive assessment and plan in detail the feedback channels that you will use to collect and act on clients' requests, feedback and complaints. This would be the case when you design a project in a new sector or in a new location, or if you don't have any feedback channels in place in the

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[1] Donors often asked their grantees to justify how they created the conditions in which people can hold us responsible for the decisions and actions we take.

[2] **Good Standards** are expected to be achieved by all projects in all countries on a routine basis. All countries should be making sustained incremental progress on them from this point forward.

Great Standards build on and presuppose the achievement of good standards. They represent the ultimate vision of success for the IRC, and are expected to be eventually achieved by all countries. However, they are not expected to be achieved by all projects, only those that advance Signature Outcomes and that are 18 months or longer in duration.

location where you want to implement this project. In that case, please refer to the Selection and Design of Feedback Channels Guidance note.

How to use it?

This Guidance can be read by staff for advice or used to facilitate a workshop with Country Teams to review their existing feedback channels and select new ones if necessary. For more detailed advice on this subject and on developing questions to collect client feedback through surveys and focus group discussions, please refer to the Selection and Design of Feedback Channels Guidance note.

It also provides a framework to categorize and set up referral pathways to ensure that all requests, feedback and complaints from clients are addressed and responded to systematically and within the time agreed.

Look out for the ⚥ symbol calling out where specific considerations for women and girls may exist and influence your choice of feedback channels.

This Guidance note is accompanied by:

Annex 1: Template for Standard Operating Procedures

Annex 2: Template for Client Feedback Form

1. Introduction and Definitions

What is Client Responsiveness and why is it important for the IRC?

Programming is client-responsive when we design and implement it in a way that takes into account the views of our intended and direct clients. This requires that we systematically, deliberately and regularly listen to and collect the diverse perspectives of our clients. We must also analyze and use their requests, feedback and complaints to make decisions and plan for, or course correct, our actions. It entails that we explain to our clients how their feedback has (or has not) informed our programmatic decisions and actions and the rationale behind this.

Consulting and collaborating with our clients contribute toward making our aid and services more effective, relevant, appropriate and accountable. This also contributes to building trust with the people we serve and to managing risks of fraud, corruption and any other illegal or inappropriate behavior from our own staff and partners.

<u>DEFINITIONS</u>

Feedback is a positive or negative statement of opinion about someone or something.

Complaint is a type of feedback that is negative and that is lodged with the intention of receiving a response/action.

Request for assistance and information refers to a situation in which a client or a person of concern asks for aid or information to address their physical, material, legal or other protection needs.

What is a client?

Client	A person for whom the IRC provides, or intends to provide, assistance or services. We make a distinction between intended clients, direct clients and indirect clients
Intended Client	A person who is targeted by planned or existing IRC aid / services (*e.g. eligible people living in a program catchment area*)
Direct Client	A person who is receiving the IRC aid and / or services (*e.g. patients in an IRC clinic*)
Indirect Client	People who are not directly receiving assistance from the IRC, but who are connected to people who are, and therefore might potentially also benefit in some way from the IRC's provision of assistance to those people/ institutions *(e.g. families and dependents of IRC's direct clients)*

The Client Responsiveness Good and Great Standards

The IRC has established the Good and Great Standards which define a practical vision for success in delivering Client-Responsive Programming. The Good Standards are expected to be achieved by all projects in all countries on a routine basis. Great Standards represent the ultimate vision of success and are eventually expected to be achieved for projects that advance Signature Outcomes and that are longer than 18 months.

Good Standard	Great Standard
<u>Client Consultation</u>: Clients routinely provide feedback that informs key decisions during project design, start-up, implementation and close-out.	<u>Client Collaboration</u>: Clients collaborate in key strategic and programmatic decisions.

For more information about the Good and Great Standards and associated Good and Great Practices for each phase of the project cycle, please refer to the Good and Great Standard Hub.

2. Selecting and Designing your Feedback Channels

You do not necessarily need to select and design new feedback channels for each project. You can continue using existing feedback channels if they are functioning well and are still appropriate for your context and diverse groups of clients. You would ideally coordinate with other sectors and projects that are present in the same location to reduce duplication of feedback channels.

As per the IRC Good Practices, highlighted in the section above, all IRC projects should collect requests, feedback and complaints from their clients through at least one proactive and one reactive channel.

Proactive Feedback Channels are mechanisms through which the IRC actively solicits the perspectives and feedback from clients, for example: surveys, focus group discussions, individual interviews and community meetings. This means that we choose the clients we want to ask questions, control the questions that are being asked, and set the timing of when the information is collected.

Reactive Feedback Channels are mechanisms that the IRC provides to its clients and other stakeholders to communicate with us, at the time and on the subject of their choosing. This includes, for example: suggestions boxes, hotlines, email addresses and office walk-ins.

> Feedback Channels have to be accessible to all groups of clients, including women and girls, persons with disabilities, and other minority or vulnerable groups.

Use Table 1 below to map the feedback channels that you will be using for your project. You can refer to the Selection and Design Guidance Annex 5: Strengths and Weaknesses of Proactive and Reactive Feedback Channels to help you fill in this table. This document can help you identify which types of channel are appropriate for your project.

You should, each and every time it is possible, **ask your clients about their preferred engagement preference** and the type of feedback channels they would like to use. These questions could be integrated into a survey conducted at the design or start-up phase of the project. If this is not possible, you can also use the results of a survey conducted in a previous project to inform the selection and design of the feedback channels you will be using during the implementation of a new project. For the ongoing projects, ask your clients during the next scheduled meeting or other activity which are their preferred channels to file suggestions and complaints. Make sure you consult a diverse and representative group of clients, people of different genders and ages including minority groups, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. You should also consider the power dynamic in your context and consult those groups separately through different focus group discussions. Please refer to Annex 2: Writing Questions to Proactively Collect Client Feedback for more information on the kind of questions that you could incorporate.

Table 1: Mapping and Selecting Reactive and Proactive Feedback Channels

Reactive channels					
Type of channel	**Already in use? (Yes or No)**	**If yes, name of project and location**	**If yes, has this channel provided useful and actionable client feedback data from all clients?**	**If not in use, what are the opportunities and challenges to selecting this channel?**	**Decision (Keep, Drop, Add)**
Phone line (toll-free or paid line)					
Providing staff telephone numbers					
Short Message Service (SMS)					
WhatsApp, Twitter, Skype					
Email address					
Help desk					
Office walk-ins					
Suggestion box					
Community liaisons or volunteers					
Proactive channels					
Type of channel	**Already in use? (Yes or No)**	**If yes, name of project and location**	**If yes, has this channel provided useful and actionable client feedback data?**	**If not in use, what are the opportunities and challenges to selecting this channel?**	**Decision (Keep, Drop, Add)**
Focus groups					
Individual interviews					
Community meetings					
Satisfaction surveys					
Recipient committees (e.g. local village committees)					
Games and drawing cards (e.g. feedback from children)					
Listening exercises					

3. Defining how to Communicate and Respond to Client Requests, Feedback and Complaints

Once you have selected the proactive and reactive feedback channels that you will be using to collect client feedback during the implementation of your project, you need to set up systems that ensure different types of client requests, feedback and complaints are presented to staff with the appropriate skills and level of authority to interpret and decide on how to respond. You will therefore need to define:

1) **Categories** for the different type of clients' requests, feedback and complaints and how this should be communicated to different staff / units; and,
2) **Roles and Responsibilities** for handling and responding to feedback, paying particular attention to the handling of sensitive complaints and ensuring staff have the appropriate training and knowledge to safely and ethically respond to clients.

Defining how to respond or refer clients' requests, feedback and complaints:

Having a clear framework (i.e. a set of referral pathways), which defines how to respond or refer different types of requests, feedback and complaints collected from your clients is a prerequisite to ensure that you will be able to respond to your clients in an appropriate and timely manner. Please note that referral pathways are defined at country or location levels for all reactive client feedback channels in that area. They are not defined differently for each individual project. With reactive client feedback channels we have no control over the type of input clients provide. It is therefore critical to define different categories for requests, feedback and complaints which we receive, so that they can be appropriately managed, and to determine who within the country team should be responsible for handling it.

See also the Guidance on Safety and Ethical Considerations for Sensitive Complaints for the appropriate procedures and reporting mechanisms for responding to complaints concerning Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), Sexual Harassment (SH) and Gender Based Violence (GBV). Please also refer to Annex 3 Reporting to the Ethics and Compliance Unit (ECU) for guidance on how to report SEA and other allegations of breach of the Code of Conduct.

A survivor-centered approach to safeguarding misconduct applies for all IRC's mandatory reporting obligations. A survivor-centered approach seeks to create a supportive environment in which the survivor's rights are respected and in which s/he is treated with dignity and respect. It also ensures that the IRC considers power differentials, the importance of consent, and the developmental stages of children and adults as it relates to IRC's reporting process.[3]

This approach helps to promote the survivor's recovery and their ability to identify and express needs and wishes, as well as to first understand and second to reinforce their capacity to make decisions about possible interventions. It also allows survivors, who are the ones often with the best sense of their safety issues and risks, to determine any response.

The survivor-centered approach is grounded in the following principles:

1) Survivors have a right to be treated with dignity and respect, and not exposed to victim-blaming attitudes or behaviors;
2) Survivors have a right to privacy and confidentiality; and
3) The safety, welfare and rights of the survivor come before all other considerations.

Clients' perspectives and feedback collected through proactive channels are easier to handle as they are actively sought by the project team and respond to questions they have designed. The results of the client surveys, focus group discussions and community meetings should be compiled and discussed within the team in order to inform programmatic decisions and actions.

For more information about how to interpret and respond to client feedback collected through proactive and reactive channels, please refer to the Guidance to Present, Interpret and Respond to Client Feedback.

You can use Table 2 below to define the categorization of client's requests, feedback and complaints and adapt the last column to determine the referral pathway best suited for your context and operational environment.

[3] Refer to the IRC Guidelines for a Survivor-Centered Approach to Reporting Safeguarding Misconduct for more details.

Table 2: **Client Feedback Categories and Referral Pathways**

	Type of category	Priority level	Explanation	Record	Respond	Refer
1	Request for information	Low or medium	An information request about the type of aid and services available at the IRC, the location or timing of a specific service, questions about targeting or registration criteria, eligibility criteria, etc.	**Yes** Record into the Feedback Registry.	**Yes** if you know the answer	If you don't know the answer, refer to the protection actor responsible for information services.
2	Request for assistance	Medium or high	Request to be included in one of the IRC aid or service provision programs.	**Yes** Record into the Feedback Registry.	**Yes** if you know the answer	If you don't know the answer, refer to the Protection team or relevant program staff members, and/or discuss during weekly meetings, if request is not sensitive/ confidential.
3	Programmatic complaint – minor dissatisfaction	Medium	Complaint about aid entitlement missing or delayed, the timing or location of IRC services, or timelines of IRC staff and partners.	**Yes** Record into the Feedback Registry.	**Yes** if you know the answer	Record into the Feedback Registry. If you don't know how to respond, refer to relevant program staff member or discuss during weekly staff meeting.
4	Programmatic complaint – major dissatisfaction	High	Complaint about staff attitude, lack of access to aid distribution or service, lack of access to information, exclusion of a minority/vulnerable group, extortion of aid by a third party (with no IRC involvement), refusal by IRC staff to listen or acknowledge a complaint or inability for a client to reach the feedback hotline or any other mechanism.	**Yes** Record into the Feedback Registry.	**No**	Refer to the supervisor or program manager, HR or field coordinator for interpretation and action.
5	Breach of the IRC Way,[4] IRC policy, procedure, or the law, safeguarding misconduct[5]	Critical	Allegations of the following involving **IRC staff and partners,** including: • Exploitation and abuse (sexual, economic, other) • Gender Based Violence (GBV) • Bribery, corruption and kickbacks • Child protection • Fraud	Don't record any personal information or details in Feedback Registry, but take detailed notes for referring or reporting the matter.	**No** Don't try to investigate or handle the complaint	Refer the person to the appropriate support services (WPE, Child Protection or PRoL depending on the content of the allegations). **Report immediately to the ECU** following the existing procedures and IRC Guidelines for a Survivor-Centered Approach to Reporting Safeguarding Misconduct.

[4] The IRC Way: Standards for Professional Conduct:

[5] The IRC requires mandatory reporting for alleged safeguarding misconduct involving children (defined as any person under the age of 18 years), but does not take the same reporting position for alleged misconduct against adults. It is requested that alleged misconduct against adults be reported, however it is not mandatory. Refer to the IRC Guidelines for a Survivor-Centered Approach to Reporting Safeguarding Misconduct for more details.

			• (Sexual) Harassment or discrimination • Misappropriation or misuse of IRC resources/assets • Physical safety risks • Procurement fraud • Retaliation • Threat			Use two primary channels outlined in the IRC Way using: • IRC's Ethics Hotline (Ethics Point): irc.ethicspoint.com • ECU confidential mailbox: integrity@rescue.org Refer to Annex 3 of the Guidance to Present, Interpret and Respond to Client Feedback for additional Guidance on Reporting to the ECU. ***If in doubt, report to the ECU for guidance.**
6	Allegations of abuse or exploitation against non IRC staff or representative	Critical	Allegations of child abuse, sexual exploitation and abuse, theft or fraud committed by someone who is **not an IRC staff, or partner** (e.g. other members of the community, armed groups, officials, other organizations, etc.).	Don't record any personal information or details in the Feedback Registry, but take detailed notes for later referring or reporting the matter.	**No** Don't try to investigate or handle the complaint.	Refer immediately to PRoL, Child Protection, WPE or any other relevant program manager depending on the content of the allegations. Refer to the Safety and Ethical Considerations for Sensitive Complaints. If the allegation relates to a member of another aid organization, **report to the ECU.**
7	General feedback/ other	Low	Opinions, comments, ideas, suggestions, expectations and spams.	**Yes** Record into the Feedback Registry.	Acknowledge and respond if need be.	Refer (the person or the feedback) to other relevant organizations if the feedback was meant for them or if this is a request that would fall within their mandate.

Use Table 3 to define the timeframe for responding to your clients. Please note that "responding" doesn't necessarily mean providing a definite response to clients' complaints or queries. For more complex issues, especially when an investigation is required, this will take much longer. The timeframe defined here is for providing at least a first response or update to your client.

Table 3: Priority Level and Response Time

Priority	Priority level	Response time (indicative)
1	Critical	Within 72 hours
2	High	Within 7 calendar days
3	Medium	Within 14 calendar days
4	Low	Within 1 month

4. Defining Roles & Responsibilities

Depending on the human and financial resources available within your team and the challenges and opportunities offered by your operational context, you will have to define roles and responsibilities to different members of your team in order to operationalize your client feedback mechanisms.

You can use and adapt the table below to define the roles and responsibilities within your team.

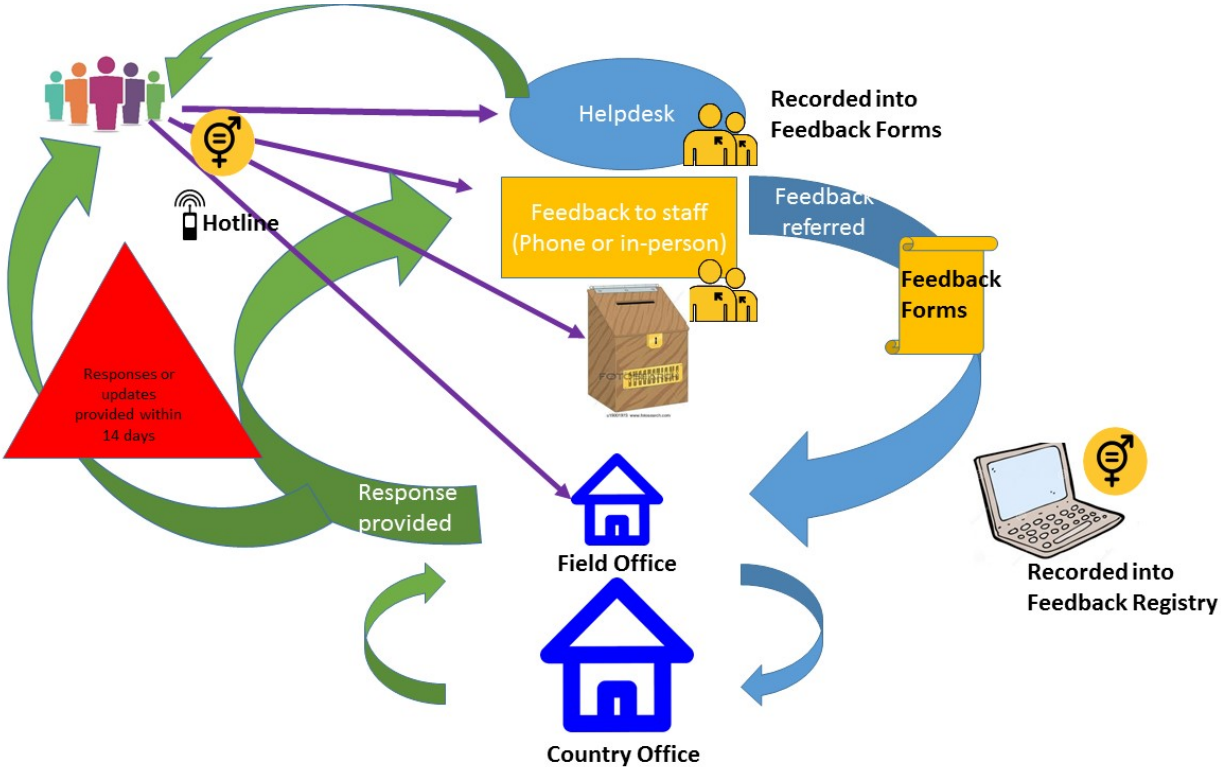
Table 4: Roles and Responsibilities

Job Title	Roles & Responsibilities
M&E Coordinator / Manager	• Responsible for setting up and supporting the implementation of reactive feedback channels at field locations. • Ensures that client requests, feedback and complaints are systematically recorded into the Feedback Registry and acted upon within the agreed timeframe. • Compiles client feedback data from the Feedback Registry to discuss by SMT during program review meetings.
Client Responsiveness Manager/ Officer (if position exists)	• Generally reports to the M&E Coordinator and carries out the core functions related to Client-Responsiveness listed for the M&E Coordinator, under her/his supervision • Can also support on some of the more time-intensive actions, like responding to clients or inculcating a client-responsive culture among staff
Protection Mainstreaming Coordinator/ Manager	• When present in country, ensures that information collected through help desks is systematically recorded and referred to, as per the agreed pathways. • The ultimate contact person for all protection-specific feedback lodged through all types of feedback channels. This person should have experience with GBV case management or at least the core concepts and guidelines.
Client Responsiveness Focal Points (staff)	• Can be identified per sector and/or field locations to collect client feedback (e.g. in charge of receiving clients' feedback at the help desk or lodging feedback from suggestion boxes). Phone numbers of these Focal Points can also be distributed to clients to share their feedback. • Record feedback received on the Feedback Form and/or in the Feedback Registry and ensure the referral of feedback as defined in the referral system. It is important to have gender balance among Focal Points so that female clients can provide feedback to a female staff member.
Technical Coordinators	• Responsible for planning and budgeting the resources needed for Client Responsiveness and for ensuring that their teams are collecting client feedback through proactive channels, as defined by their projects. • Responsible for analyzing client feedback trends related to their projects/sectors from data received from the M&E Coordinator. A combined analysis of feedback collected through the proactive and reactive channels should be discussed within the team to inform strategic and programmatic decisions and course correction and to agree how to communicate the IRC responses to the clients. • Responsible for Identifying potential gaps and additional resources needed to collect and respond to client feedback and including them in the next project proposals.
Field Coordinator	• Responsible for supporting the M&E Coordinator, ensuring that all projects regularly collect feedback data, and discussing cross-sector issues at the regular team meetings in the field. • Analyzes trends at the field level and reports them to the country office.
Human Resource, Supply Chain and Finance Manager and teams	• Use client feedback to inform their decisions. • Contribute to building an institutional culture that prompts staff to listen to clients and to communicate and respond to their requests, feedback and complaints.
Deputy Director Programmes (DPP)/ Country Director (CD)	• Plays a critical role in cultivating a client-responsive culture within the country program and incentivizing staff to collect and refer requests, feedback and complaints received, including negative and/or sensitive ones. • Reviews and analyzes client feedback trends received through the different channels and uses this to inform strategic and programmatic decisions including how this can inform future project design. • Plays a role in the resolution of the most sensitive or serious allegations and complaints escalated to them.

5. Visualizing your Client Feedback Mechanism

Once your referral pathways and roles and responsibilities have been defined, it is important to visualize how client feedback will be collected through the different channels you have identified, how data will be recorded and acted upon, and how the responses will be communicated back to your clients.

You can see an example of this in the picture below.



You can use some of those icons to create yours!

6. Establish your Procedures and Feedback collection tools

Before getting started in collecting and using client feedback to inform your decisions, you should:

1) **Define your Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)** for your client feedback mechanisms in country (which will encompass most of the information and decisions that you've taken through the previous steps of this Guidance note). You can use the template in Annex 1 to draft your SOPs.

Reactive channels:

2) **Adapt the Feedback Form** in Annex 2 and the Feedback Registry in order to record requests, feedback and complaints received through your reactive channels. If possible, consider creating a Feedback Form in Kobo or CommCare. The Feedback Form should be shared with all client-facing staff to record feedback reported through the everyday routine interactions.

3) **Train staff gathering feedback** through reactive channels on GBV Core Concepts and Protection Mainstreaming[6] in order to prepare them to safely and ethically respond to any sensitive complaints.

Proactive channels:

4) **Define the specific questions** that you will add into existing project (or sector-specific) tools (such as exit interview questionnaires, post-distribution monitoring, client surveys, focus group discussions, etc.), or conduct those interviews separately. At minimum, each project team should proactively collect feedback at the mid-point and end-point for projects of 12 months, or at least once every year and at the end-point for longer projects (Good Practice). **Refer to Selection and Design of Feedback Channels:** Use **Annex 1: The Core Feedback Themes to determine what themes you should collect client feedback around at the different phases of the project cycle,** and use **Annex 2: Writing Questions to Proactively Collect Client Feedback** for illustrative list of questions for use in client surveys, focus group discussions and individual interviews, and further advice on how teams can adapt those questions is available at

5) **Ensure that staff understand how to gather feedback and data in a gender-sensitive way**, speaking to women and men separately, if appropriate, and considering the time and location of data collection that is safe, convenient, and comfortable for all clients, particularly women and girls, people with disabilities or other vulnerabilities.

Now you are ready to start collecting and using client feedback! You will find additional information in the Guidance to Present, Interpret and Respond to Client Feedback.

[6] These trainings can be provided by the PRoL and the Gender Team; please ask your relevant TA for more information.

IRC [Insert name of the country]

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Client Feedback Mechanisms

[Insert date]

[Insert table of contents]

1 INTRODUCTION

The IRC is committed to placing the people we serve – our clients – at the center of humanitarian response and being responsive to their aspirations and perspectives. This makes our services and assistance more effective, relevant and appropriate, and our decisions and actions more accountable to our clients, affected communities and other stakeholders.

The purpose of these Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) is to provide IRC [name of the country] with a systematic approach for collecting, recording and acting upon clients' feedback and to strive to achieve the Good and Great Standards for Client Responsiveness. The SOPs outline channels that are safe, accessible, transparent and confidential for clients to provide feedback and to receive timely and appropriate responses about the IRC's decisions. When we are setting up feedback channels for our clients to communicate with the IRC, we cannot control the type of information our clients will provide. We may receive inputs which extend beyond feedback on IRC services, which may include requests and protection-related or sensitive complaints that may need to be referred appropriately and in a timely manner to other relevant units or other organizations for action.

1.1 TYPES OF FEEDBACK CHANNELS

i. **Proactive Feedback Channels** are mechanisms through which the IRC actively solicits feedback from clients, for example: surveys, focus group discussions, individual interviews and community meetings. This means that we choose the clients we want to ask questions of, control the questions that are being asked, and set the timing for when the information is collected.

ii. **Reactive Feedback Channels** are mechanisms that the IRC provides to its clients and other stakeholders to communicate with us, at the time and on the subject of their choosing. This includes, for example: suggestions boxes, hotlines, email addresses and office walk-ins.

iii. **Open Feedback Channels** refer to feedback shared with staff through routine interactions with clients, such as conversations between staff and clients during project activities.

iv. **Indirect Feedback Channels** refer to the sources through which the IRC obtains information about community perceptions. These may include: monitoring and evaluation data, large surveys conducted by governments or international organizations, or feedback data collected by other organizations.

2 DEFINITIONS, SCOPE AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES

2.1 DEFINITIONS

Feedback is a positive or negative statement of opinion about someone or something.

Complaint is a type of feedback that is negative and lodged with the intention of receiving a response/action.

Request for assistance and information refers to a situation in which a client asks for aid or information to address their physical, material, legal or other protection needs. Protection assistance may include support for food items, medical supplies, clothing, shelter, psychosocial and legal support, as well as the provision of infrastructure, such as health facilities and schools.

Client is a person for whom the IRC provides, or intends to provide, assistance or services.

Client feedback mechanism is a formalized process that gives clients access to safe means of voicing feedback on areas relevant and within the control of the IRC. The client feedback mechanism allows the channeling of feedback, requests and complaints and their objective investigation and response.

Transparency is "being honest and open in communications and sharing relevant information, in an appropriate form, with crisis-affected people and other stakeholders".[1]

Accountability "refers to the duty we have, as a humanitarian organization, to create the conditions in which people can hold us responsible for the decisions and actions we take".[2]

2.2 SCOPE OF THE SOPs

Feedback, complaints and requests for assistance and information can be raised by our clients or other members of the community or the public.

Clients and community members may use these channels to raise issues other than feedback or complaints. They could ask a question or claim their rights to receiving aid or services. Although those are not feedback or complaints, this is information that must be communicated and handled by the relevant teams (see Section 3 of the SOPs below).

IRC [name of the country] client feedback mechanisms <u>are not designed to receive/respond to</u>:

- Feedback from IRC staff related to employment contracts, employee terms and conditions or any other human resource issues. Such feedback is covered by the IRC human resource policy and the IRC Employee Handbook.
- Feedback that is already the subject of current investigation by any regulatory body or legal/official authority.
- Feedback motivated by a political view point or opinion.
- Offensive feedback using inappropriate or abusive language**.**

2.3 SELECTED FEEDBACK CHANNELS

[Insert the list of Proactive and Reactive Channels that you have selected in each location and sector][3]

Proactive Feedback Channels:

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-

Reactive Feedback Channels:

-
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2.4 ACTIVITIES TO SENSITIZE AND PUBLICIZE SELECTED CHANNELS

In order to fully utilize the selected feedback channels, clients should be informed of available channels and their purpose. Specific attention must be paid to engagement with women, girls, boys, and other vulnerable groups, with women and girls having the opportunity to report their feedback to female staff, if they prefer. Specific attention should be also given to language barriers and disabilities which may affect the ability of some clients to express themselves. Community meetings must include a diverse and representative group of clients. Clients shall also be informed about the expected staff behavior, the IRC Anti-Retaliation Policy and the principle of confidentiality, which will govern how clients' requests, feedback and complaints will be managed.

[1] As stated in Principle 9 of the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) Standards.

[2] Introduction to IRC Client-Responsiveness is available on RescueNet: https://rescuenet.rescue.org/Interact/Pages/Content/Document.aspx?id=9101

[3] Please refer to the selection made using Section 2 of the Rapid Guide if you have done a rapid review. Refer to the selection made using the Selection and Design of Feedback Channels Guidance note if you have carried out a comprehensive review.

[Insert the list of awareness raising activities][4]

-
-

[Insert the list of gender and vulnerability considerations][5]

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2.5 ANONYMOUS FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS

IRC [name of the country] recognizes that, at times, clients are unable to voice their concerns due to special circumstances, thus they may wish to provide feedback or file a complaint without revealing their identity. IRC teams should encourage people who would like to remain anonymous to use a proxy (another member of the community, an elder, or an IRC/partner staff member) to allow us to more effectively communicate back our response to the feedback received. If a person chooses to remain completely anonymous, the IRC will not necessarily be able to communicate the response to the client. We should stress our commitment to the confidentiality of clients' feedback.

Clients are encouraged to provide their name or contact information (e.g. phone number) when providing feedback to respond or follow up if additional information is needed. Providing one's name also helps the IRC to follow up and communicate directly with the client and to ensure that she/he does not experience retaliation for making a report in good faith. There may be unique circumstances when disclosing one's identity is required by law or is necessary to fully investigate sensitive feedback. In such instances, and especially in cases involving children, the IRC will be guided by confidentiality protocols, protection information management principles and the Safety and Ethical Considerations for Sensitive Complaints.

2.6 CONFIDENTIALITY OBLIGATION

Confidentiality is a status given to information that is sensitive, in need of protection, and only disclosed in the context of a trusting relationship. It is breached when information is disclosed without the client's consent.[6] Confidentiality is critical in the handling of personal information, including feedback and complaints, in order to protect the privacy and safety of clients. For sensitive complaints, details regarding allegations reported, the identity of the client and the investigation records shall remain confidential. This means that access to and dissemination of information will be restricted to a limited number of authorized staff only for the purpose of concluding a necessary investigation. Any breach of confidentiality by staff shall lead to disciplinary action according to the IRC policy.

IRC staff are bound by the confidentiality obligation to:

- Observe the best ethical management of confidential information
- Not disclose any information except to the client or his/her proxy
- Protect the complainant and the identity of all the people participating in the investigation, as well as the confidentiality at each step of the process
- Manage confidential information carefully.

All sensitive complaints and allegations against IRC staff (including exploitation and abuse, GBV, bribery and corruption, child protection, fraud, sexual harassment and exploitation, misappropriation or misuse of IRC assets, physical safety risks, retaliation and threats shall be referred to the Ethics and Compliance Unit/Human

[4] Awareness raising could include the production of IEC materials, messages communicated by staff and volunteers or through SMS/ radio, etc.

[5] Specific considerations could include not using only a hotline in contexts where women don't have equal access than men to mobile phones, having female staff and/ or enumerators to collect feedback from women and girls, etc.

[6] Please refer to the IRC Consent Form Guidance and Template: https://rescuenet.rescue.org/Interact/Pages/Content/Document.aspx?id=5853

Resources focal point in accordance with the IRC Way[7] and Annex 3 of the Guidance to Present, Interpret and Respond to Client Feedback for additional Guidance on Reporting to the ECU. All allegations reported to Human Resources will still be referred to the ECU for assessment and triage.

Sensitive complaints should then be recorded in detail, separately from the Feedback Registry and in accordance with the specific protocols for handling those sensitive complaints. For more information, please refer to the Guidance for Safety and Ethical considerations for Sensitive Complaints.

2.7 NON-RETALIATION

IRC [name of the country] prohibits retaliation by its employees against any individual who lodges a feedback or complaint. The IRC will not tolerate retaliation against anyone who, in good faith, reports a concern or participates in an investigation, even if the allegation is ultimately not substantiated. Anyone, regardless of position or tenure, found to have engaged in retaliatory conduct against someone who has raised a complaint will be subject to disciplinary action and possibly termination. For more information, please refer to the IRC Anti-Retaliation and Reporter Protection Policy.

3 COMPILING AND PRESENTING FEEDBACK, COMPLAINTS AND OTHER INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM CLIENTS

3.1 CLASSIFICATION OF FEEDBACK, COMPLAINTS AND REQUEST FOR INFORMATION/ ASSISTANCE

IRC [name of the country] has defined seven different categories of information, feedback, complaints and other requests received from clients. All information received should be categorized accordingly into the Feedback Registry.

Table 1: Information Categories and Response Time

Category	Type of category	Priority level	Explanation
1	Request for information	Low or Medium	An information request about the type of aid and services available at the IRC, the location or timing of a specific service, questions about targeting or registration criteria, eligibility criteria, etc.
2	Request for assistance	Medium or High	Request to be included in one of the IRC aid or service provision programs.
3	Programmatic complaint –minor dissatisfaction	Medium	Complaint about missing or delayed aid entitlement, the timing or location of IRC services, or timelines of IRC staff and partners.
4	Programmatic complaint – major dissatisfaction	High	Complaint about staff attitude, lack of access to aid distribution or service, lack of access to information, exclusion of a minority/vulnerable group, extortion of aid by a third party, refusal by IRC staff to listen or acknowledge a complaint, or inability for a client to reach the feedback hotline or any other mechanism.

[7] The **IRC Way** is the standards for professional conduct at the IRC: https://rescuenet.rescue.org/Interact/Pages/Content/Document.aspx?id=7766&SearchId=142948

5	Breach of the IRC Code of Conduct	Critical	Allegations of the following involving **IRC staff and partners,** • Exploitation and abuse (sexual, economic, other) • Gender Based Violence (GBV) • Bribery, corruption and kickbacks • Child protection • Fraud • (Sexual) Harassment or discrimination • Misappropriation or misuse of IRC resources/assets • Physical safety risks • Procurement fraud • Retaliation • Threat
6	Allegations of abuse or exploitation against non-IRC staff or representative	Critical	Allegations of child abuse, sexual exploitation, theft or fraud committed by someone who is not a staff member or partner of the IRC (e.g. other members of the community, armed groups, officials, other organizations, etc.).
7	General feedback/ other	Low	Opinions, comments, ideas, suggestions, expectations and spams.

Level of priority and response time[8]

Different types of feedback, complaints, and requests for information and assistance should be treated with the appropriate level of priority as indicated in Table 2:

Table 2: Priority Levels and Duration to Respond to Feedback[9]

Priority	Priority level	Timeframe for responding to feedback
1	Critical	[insert defined response time]
2	High	[insert defined response time]
3	Medium	[insert defined response time]
4	Low	[insert defined response time]

[8] The response time doesn't necessary mean that the IRC will be providing the full response by this time, but that it will at the minimum inform the client on the progress made by that time.

[9] You can adapt the timeframes proposed in the Rapid Guide depending on your context and environment. It is recommended that critical complaints are responded to within 72 hours and that responses to medium level priority complaints don't exceed 14 days.

3.2 PRESENTING OR REFERRING CLIENT FEEDBACK, COMPLAINTS AND REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION/ASSISTANCE

Depending on the nature and content, feedback will need to be either communicated and acted upon internally (by the IRC country program) or referred to another organization or institution (referred externally), in accordance with the timeline defined in Table 2.

Tables 3 and 4 define the referral pathways established for each category of information received and the internal roles and responsibilities for feedback provision or decision making.

Table 3: Client Feedback Categories and Referral Pathways:

[Insert the Table 2 that you have completed in the Rapid Guide or when using the Guidance on how to Present, Interpret and Respond to Client Feedback]

Table 4: Roles and Responsibilities

[Insert the Table 4 that you have completed in the Rapid Guide]

Figure 1: Client Feedback Mechanism Flow Chart:
[Insert the flow chart designed in Section 5 of the Rapid Guide]

4 INTERPRETING AND RESPONDING TO CLIENT FEEDBACK

After client feedback has been communicated to the relevant staff member, this information needs to be interpreted in order to inform decision making about how to respond. The Guidance on how to Present, Interpret and Respond to Client Feedback provides general advice on how to interpret and make decisions based on client feedback. Key tips are highlighted below:

1. **Identify major trends and outliers**: Look at the feedback you have received over the past week, month, or quarter. Try to identify the major trends. What are people most concerned about? What are they most confused about? What do they want to see happen? Then identify the outliers: pieces of feedback that seem to disagree with what the broader group is saying, or cases where certain clients are talking about topics that no one else is bringing up.

2. **Try to understand what is behind the trends**: Based on what you know about your clients, try to explain the trends you see in the data. Which group of clients may be concerned about an issue, and what particular experiences may have informed their perspective? What might be unique about the outliers that would lead them to have different concerns or opinions from other clients?

3. **Triangulate**: Where possible, bring in other sources of information to help you make sense of what you are seeing in the feedback data. Are there other reports, records, or resources that might help you understand the trends and what is behind them? Can other sources of information further describe and validate the concerns and priorities you are hearing through client feedback?

4. **Weigh your options:** Try to outline the possible courses of action that could be taken to address the various concerns and ideas raised by our clients. Evaluate how feasible it would be to implement those actions based on your program's resources (technical, human, financial) and mandate. Try to establish whether you can meet the expressed expectations of all the clients from whom you have heard feedback, or whether there need to be trade-offs. If you decide there will need to be trade-offs (that is, you cannot meet everyone's requests) you will need to consider your operating environment, and the IRC strategic objectives in order to prioritize.

5. **Decide a course of action:** Based on your analysis of the trends, the options you've generated, and the opportunities and constraints you've identified, your team needs to make a decision. This decision could be made in consultation with a group of clients (such as a Stakeholder Reference Group – a small

group of clients representing the interests of your target group) or internally with other IRC team members. And, of course, don't forget to "close the loop" by informing your clients about the decision and creating room for discussion.

5 COMMUNICATING THE IRC RESPONSE (CLOSING THE LOOP)

Responses to client's requests, feedback and complaints will be responded to as per the timeframe, roles and responsibilities and referral pathways defined in Section 3. In case of sensitive feedback, the client will be given the opportunity to give their consent to follow up after lodging the initial feedback. The [Name of the role or function] will keep contact with clients and update them when/ if they request updates. Confidentiality and security of the clients are of high importance and have to be considered when communicating the IRC response.

IRC [name of the country] response will be communicated through different means depending on whether the feedback received was individual or collective,[10] sensitive or non-sensitive. For additional guidance on how to respond to Client Feedback, please refer to the Guidance on how to present, interpret and respond to client feedback.

[Insert the list of response channels][11]

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Risk Analysis and Protection

At the initial contact with the client, the staff member handling the feedback should find out whether the client or anyone else is immediately or potentially at risk. To assess and act upon such risks, staff involved in handling feedback shall be trained on risk assessment and mitigation by the Safety and Security Managers in country. Risks should be addressed, and any security concerns should be referred to the management (Supervisor) or to the Safety and Security Advisor. Adequate and rapid protection and security measures must be provided to the client and the subject of the feedback if needed. Investigation of serious feedback can also involve a risk for the staff or person that conducts the investigation. Management is responsible for minimizing these risks as much as possible. If the ECU decides to start an investigation, they will assess the risk and work with the country team to manage risks as much as possible.

6 APPEAL PROCESS AND ESCALATION OF COMPLAINTS REQUIRING AN INVESTIGATION REVIEW

Apart from those cases which require an investigation (category 5 "Breach of the IRC Code of Conduct"), if a client is not satisfied with the response provided by the IRC to his / her request, feedback or complaint, he / she can appeal the decision. Appeals will be reviewed and responded to by a Committee or at least two members from the Senior Management Team appointed in this role by the Country Director.

Any allegations of misconduct (violations of the IRC Way, IRC policies, procedures and the law, including exploitation and abuse of clients) by IRC staff, partners, volunteers, or incentive workers that are received through the established feedback channels must be escalated to the IRC's Ethics and Compliance Investigation Team by submitting the complaint of alleged misconduct to integrity@rescue.org along with any other supporting information. All administrative investigations within the IRC are sent to the IRC's Ethic and Compliance Unit[12] and are managed in accordance with the ECU investigation standards. When a report is

[10] Individual complaints are lodged by a single person, generally referring to a personal challenge or dissatisfaction which would require the response to be provided directly to this individual. Collective complaints are lodged by a group/ community and refer to a collective challenge or dissatisfaction, and the response should be communicated back to the whole group/ community.

[11] List the channels that you will use to respond to your clients to inform them about how their request, feedback or complaint was taken into account and what the IRC will do (or not do).

[12] Guidelines for Conducting Investigations into Allegations of Beneficiary Exploitation and Abuse (Annex 7).

made, the ECU will review the matter and may take the following steps, depending upon the matter and the information received: i) Receive and document the allegation; ii) Assess and analyze the allegation; iii) Undertake a preliminary assessment and allocate to an investigator (if required); iv) Investigation planning; v) Conduct witness interviews and gather documents; vi) Analyze information; and, viii) Prepare an investigation report.

Post-investigation actions vary depending upon the matter under investigation. As appropriate, the ECU may provide recommendations to the Country Director following completion of an investigation. Any staff disciplinary actions are the decision of the Country Director and Human Resources (HR).

Informing the complainant
The complainant, if known, will be advised once an investigation has been concluded, but will not necessarily be informed of the outcome.

7 RESPONSE TIME

IRC [name of the country] will strive to process the information and take action in a timely manner. However, the response time will vary depending on the complexity and nature of the feedback. The IRC will strive to respond to sensitive communication as soon as possible, while non-sensitive feedback should be responded to within [number] working days of receipt.

8 ROLE AND OBLIGATION FOR IRC PERSONNEL AND PARTNERS

Job descriptions of relevant IRC [name of the country] staff, particularly client-facing positions, should include the Client Responsiveness core competencies, as well as identifying specific tasks to support the collection, recording and referral of client feedback. For additional information on how to integrate elements of Client Responsiveness into Human Resources processes – please refer to the Guide for Client Responsive Staff Management.

All contracts and partnership agreements with client-facing partners will include a clause on the IRC Client Responsiveness obligations. The [name of the function] will ensure the Client Responsiveness obligations are respected by staff and partners. Partners should appoint a client-responsiveness focal person, who will liaise with an IRC focal person regarding feedback collection and handling. When feedback is communicated to the partner, they have the obligation to relay the information to the IRC focal point. In case of a delay of more than 10 days, this will be treated as retention of information. Partners can also file their own feedback about the IRC to the focal person.

9 MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

All received communication should be confidentially filed and registered in the Feedback Registry or other appropriate database. In coordination with the DDP, the M&E Coordinator will review the Feedback Registries for each site on a weekly basis to ensure that all referral and actions have been implemented.

Client Feedback and Client Responsiveness indicators
To measure progress towards achievement of the overall responsiveness objective, the IRC [country] will use the indicators below in their project proposals:[13]

% of feedback and complaints cases which are responded to within the agreed timeframe
% of surveyed people who are aware of existing feedback and complaints mechanisms
% of people stating that they have used a feedback and complaints mechanisms in the last six months

# of project objectives or activities that are changed/adapted in line with client feedback
% of clients satisfied with their ability to influence project decisions

[13] The indicators provided here are examples which can be adapted by the country team.

% of clients satisfied with the quality of services and assistance delivered through a project

IRC [name of the country] will continuously seek to improve and learn from its client feedback mechanisms. The IRC shall keep records of all formal feedback and complaints received from clients. A synthesis report or dashboard on the types of feedback received and the status of the responses shall be reported [indicate frequency] to the senior management team. The IRC will summarize the learnings from client feedback analysis and respond through the quarterly SAP implementation plan updates.

10 APPROVAL

The SOPs were reviewed by the SMT on ___________________ Next revision due on ________________

Approved by: _____________________________ Date: ______________________

[Name], Country Director, IRC [country]

IRC [country] Client Responsive Programming
Feedback Form

What is the purpose of this Resource?

The purpose of this Client Feedback Form is to support IRC staff, especially those at the front-line of our operations and in regular contact with our clients, to record the feedback, comments, questions or complaints that clients have shared with them in the course of implementing the project. The content of what is fill-in the form follows the structure of the Feedback Registry where all those data should be recorded.

How should it be used?

Section	Sub Section	User Guidance - How to fill the Feedback Form
Form Identities	**Location Name**	Indicate name of the location where feedback is based
	Serial Number	This is a unique that is given to each piece of the feedback received. It will help the classification and case management of the feedback received
Feedback Registration Details	**Date Feedback Received (1)**	Date the feedback was received / recorded
	Name of the Registrar (2)	Name of the IRC staff member who recorded the feedback
	Feedback Status (3)	Indicate if the feedback has been *actioned, Under review, or Junk Message*
	Location (4)	Location where the feedback has been collected
	Project/Sector (5)	Name of the project and/ or sector to which the feedback relates
Client Information	**Name of the client/group (6)**	Name of the client if you know it/ leave it blank if not known
	Request to remain Anonymous? (7)	Indicate if the client expressed that he / she wanted to remain anonymous (select between, yes, no).
	Gender (8)	Gender of the person (male / female / unknown)
	Age (9)	Indicate the age of the person. If date and/or month of birth unknown, use 1st of January of the year that a client mention to determine the age.
	Nationality (10)	If relevant to your context or programme, indicate the nationality of the client.
	Type of client (11)	Indicate if the feedback has been lodged by: A Direct Client, An Intended Client, An Indirect Client, Other:
Contact Details	**Client preferred channel for a response (12)**	Indicate the preferred means of communication for the client to receive a response from the IRC. This could include different options, for instance: in person, by phone, by email, by SMS, through a third party, other
Feedback General Information	**Feedback Channel (13)**	Indicate the channel through which the feedback was received (Hotline, SMS, Office Walk-in etc.)
	Date which the feedback relates to (14)	If the feedback relates to a specific event or incident, indicate when this happened
	Location which the feedback relates to (15)	If the feedback relates to a specific location, indicate the specific location
	Feedback summary (16)	Record a short description of the content of the feedback.
Case Management	**Feedback category (17)**	Indicate the category of the feedback received
	Feedback priority (18)	Assign a level of priority for the feedback received
	Feedback referred or shared (19)	Indicate if the feedback was referred internally (within the IRC)
	Internal or external referral (20)	If applicable, indicate if the feedback has been referred internally (within the IRC) or externally (e.g. to another organization)
	Referred to (name and position) (21)	Indicate the name and the position of the person you are referring the feedback to
	Date of referral (22)	Indicate the date when the feedback was referred
	Type of response required (23)	Indicate the type of response that is required from the IRC. This is informed by the decision that was made on how to respond to the feedback
Closing the Loop	**Date of response/ feedback given to client (24)**	Indicate the date when the response / action taken by the IRC was communicated to the client or his / her representative
	Action taken (25)	Record the type of decision and action that was taken by the IRC in response to the feedback received
	Name of the staff who provided the response (26)	Indicate the name of the staff who communicated the IRC response to the client or his / her representative
	Response Summary (27)	Provide a short summary on the response provided (e.g. explaining what specific corrective action was taken by the IRC in response to the feedback received, explaining why the IRC couldn't accede to the request made by the client and if it was referred to another organization)

IRC [country] Client-Responsive Programming
Feedback Form

Table 1: Identification Information

Location Name: **Serial No[1].**

Feedback Registration Details			
1. Date Feedback Received	Month	Day	Year
2. Name of the Registrar(Staff)			
3. Feedback Status	Actioned	Under review	Junk message
4. Location			
5. Project/Sector			

Client Information				
6. Name of the client / Community group				
7. Requested Anonymity	Yes ☐	No ☐		
8. Gender	Female	Male	Unknown	
9. Age (If Known)				
10. Nationality (if known)	[country 1]	[country 2]	Other	
11. Type of Client	Direct	Intended	Indirect	Other
12. Client Preferred Channel for a response				

Table 2: Feedback General Information

Description of the feedback or observation made
13. Feedback Channel: ………………………………………………………..
14. Date (mm/dd/yyyy) which the feedback relates to: ……………………..
15. Location which the feedback relates to: …………………………………
16. Feedback summary: ……
………
………
………

Table 3: Case Management: Feedback Referral & Follow-Up

17. Feedback Category:	Information	Assistance	Minor dissatisfaction	Major dissatisfaction	Code of conduct	Allegations non-IRC	Other		
18. Feedback Priority:	Critical ☐	High ☐	Medium ☐	Low ☐					
19. Feedback referred or shared	Yes ☐	No ☐							
20. Internal or external referral (if applicable)	Internally	Externally							
21. If yes, referred to	Name	Position	Organization						
22. Date when the feedback was referred/ shared	Day	Month	Year						
23. Type of response Required	Apology	Corrective decision	Explanation	External referral	Goods/ Services	Information	Change Policy	Drop request	Other

Table 4: Closing the Loop

24. Date of response/ feedback given to client	Day	Month	Year							
25. Action taken (tick one)	Apology sent	Corrective decision taken	Explanation provided	External referral made	Goods/ Services provided	Information provided	Policy changed	Programming changed	Dropped	Other
26. Name of the staff who provided the response										
27. Response Summary										

This Feedback has been checked/reviewed by (Name & Signature)____

[1] This is a unique number that should be generated for each form before printing that will allow the tracking of each feedback and complaint received.