



The Sphere Project



CHURCH WORLD SERVICE
Pakistan / Afghanistan



Outputs of Lessons Learned
Event Organized by CWS-P/A
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BEST PRACTICES: COMPLAINTS HANDLING

Challenges and Issues

During emergency phase and humanitarian response, there is probability for misuse of power that may lead to 'secondary disasters'. Misuse of power could be due to cultural differences, political affiliations or staff incompetency. Disaster survivors may feel powerless and ignorant of the work carried out by numerous organizations. There are various challenges in implementing CRM.

Changing bad practices to good practices of emergency response takes time and requires adequate resources. Implementation of policy and improvement of procedures is time and energy consuming. Initially a complaint may not be substantiated with evidence, therefore may miss the attention of CRM. Continuous commitment from senior management to ensure successful implementation of CRM is yet another challenge. Complaint boxes are not always effective medium of sending complaints. Often complaints are received against new staff than old staff who are more familiar with the organization and local context. Nature of complaints varies including malicious complaints.

What worked well?

Sungi established a Complaints Response Mechanism to deal with potential community dissatisfaction and disappointment but more importantly to build long term relationship with the community. The formation of village committees with consent of disaster affected community remained a good practice. Their role through-out the project cycle; handling general complaints or forwarding them was highly beneficial. The Project Implementation Committee and Community Project Audit Committee is good practice in development projects to balance power between community and implementing organization. Accountability Forums held to share project progress and answering the queries from community was also helpful in managing expectations of community. Clear CRM policy and procedures helped to sort out complaints in an effective manner.

CRM is effective when all other HAP benchmarks such as information sharing and participation are taken into consideration.

Lessons Learned

- Accountability Committees from the community are helpful in promoting accountability towards disaster survivors
- Complainant has low power; making him/her to complain is a positive step towards empowerment.
- Decentralization of complaint handling based on its seriousness helps to solve serious complaints in less time.
- Safety & security of staff needs to be factored in when implementing a CRM.
- CRM should be designed based on the context & effectiveness; other mediums like phone, post, exit surveys & help desks could serve better than complaint boxes.
- Be specific with the complaints receiving time to manage the influx of complaints.
- Women staff play important role in getting complaints from women in community.
- Complaints against staff if not addressed promptly may affect staff morale.

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