



# **Community Consultation Guidelines**

## **Developing CBCFM**

# Being Accountable to Communities

For Help a Child improving the quality of the work and being accountable to beneficiaries is a key priority. Welcoming feedback and complaints and addressing issues that are brought up is one of our ways to be accountable to the communities that we serve. At the same time, it prevents Help a Child from doing any harm and it gives the possibility to learn and improve our work. Finally, it is a way for community members to be involved in the projects.

## Core Humanitarian Standard

Help a Child aims to align its work more and more towards the Core Humanitarian Standard. The CHS Commitments 4 (Communication Participation and Feedback) and 5 (Complaints) provide requirements for Help a Child to adhere to. These requirements are integrated into the CBCFM approach and as well throughout the guidelines in this document.

## CBCFM

Within Help a Child we strive to develop for every project a Community Based Complaints and Feedback Mechanism (CBCFM). Community consultations are the starting-point for setting-up systems for complaints and feedback. In setting up this CBCFM, Help a Child invites her partners in organizing meaningful community consultations, as community members are best situated to inform on the CBCFM. In support of these community consultations, the following guidelines are developed and meant to give guidance in the initial discussions with community members on the design of the CBCFM.

**'Community members are best situated to inform on the Community Based Complaints and Feedback Mechanism'**

## Community Consultations – why to consult?

As said, Help a Child wants community members to make use of the Community Based Complaints and Feedback Mechanism, and therefore the CBCFM needs to be in line with the needs of the community members. Hence, the main aim of the community consultations is to get clarity on the needs of community members with regard to the CBCFM. Specific topics on which you want to get insight are the following:

- The most appropriate complaint intake channel; which types of mechanism will be appropriate in this specific context
- The location of physical reporting channels
- Local perceptions on complaining in general, and on complaining to “outsiders” (is complaining seen as appropriate? Is there any fear of retaliation? Etc.)
- The types of concerns community members might want to report
- The type of feedback they want to give



- How the community wants to be informed, and what information they want to receive (e.g. how to structure awareness-raising events)
- How to enable/support children to share their feedback

### **Community Consultations – whom to consult?**

Help a Child desires to develop CBCFMs that will be used by the community members that are served in the different countries. Each CBCFM will be context-specific, as to ensure that the community members in the specific contexts will be able to make use of the CBCFM. Therefore, in each country, Help a Child supports the country offices and their partners to conduct community consultations in order to gain clear insights for setting up these CBCFMs. It is important that the community consultations are held with and attended by the different community groups that make up the general community. Groups that can be thought of are:

- Adults; both men and women
- Youth; both young men and young women
- Children (think of the different age categories)
- Elderly
- People with disabilities
- Other vulnerable groups of people; widows, single-headed households, child-headed households, etc.

Depending on the context, it might be advisable to have separate community consultations for both genders and the different age groups of people, in order to enable people to speak out in front of each other. As the projects of Help a Child places children in a central place, it is very important to arrange community consultations that are specifically meant for children, as to ensure that the CBCFM is in line with their needs and expectations on how they wish to give feedback and hand in their complaints.

### **Community Consultations – what to ask?**

Below is a list of possible questions, specified per thematic area, that can be useful in the community consultations. It is not necessary to ask all these questions one-by-one, but the questions should be seen as guiding questions, or probing areas, that will help in getting the information necessary for each thematic area. It is important that all thematic areas receive proper attention in the consultations, as all are equally important in setting up a proper and relevant CBCFM.

While conducting the community consultations, it is important that at least one of the staff is occupied with taking notes of the points mentioned by the community members. The other staff is guiding the discussions, in a language the community members are acquainted with.

<b>Thematic Area</b>	<b>Guiding Questions</b>
<b>Community Information Needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What information is the community receiving now?</li> <li>• What kind of information would they like to receive?</li> <li>• What are the community's priority information needs? In general and in relation to the work of Help a Child?</li> </ul>

<p>The aim is to understand how the community wants to be informed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How often would they like to receive information from Help a Child?</li> <li>• How would the community like to receive information about the values of HaC and regarding acceptable and non-acceptable staff behaviour?<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• What information about CBCFM is important for the community to receive?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Handling Feedback and Complaints</b></p> <p>The aim is to understand the desires of the community on how the actual CBCFM should look like.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you think you have a right to complain about Help a Child's or the partner's activities?</li> <li>• Do you know how to share your feedback or complaints?</li> <li>• What types of feedback/ complaints do people in your community want to report?</li> <li>• What is your preferred way to give confidential feedback?</li> <li>• How would you prefer to share feedback and complaints?</li> <li>• Where would you want the complaint and feedback system to be located?</li> <li>• What are some of the local perceptions of complaining generally and to "outsiders", sexual abuse matters generally, to another sex, etc.?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Inclusion and Diversity</b></p> <p>The aim is to understand the issues of vulnerability, to make sure that the CBCFM is inclusive and approachable for all community members.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who are the vulnerable groups in this community?</li> <li>• Who makes the decisions in the community and are women and vulnerable groups included?</li> <li>• Do information needs differ for different groups? For example, women, men, those with disabilities, young people, the elderly?</li> <li>• How can we ensure women in the community feel able and safe to speak out, attend meetings and share their feedback and complaints?</li> <li>• How can we ensure vulnerable groups would feel able and safe to share their feedback and complaints?</li> <li>• How to ensure CBCFM will be suitable and accessible for vulnerable groups/ individuals in the community?</li> </ul>

### Next Steps

After the community consultations, the staff involved in the consultations need to write a short report, that includes the main findings per thematic area. This report, together with the raw data/ notes from the community consultations, should form the basis for the discussions within Help a Child, for further developing the CBCFM.

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<sup>1</sup> Informing the communities where we work about acceptable and non-acceptable staff behavior is a requirement in the Core Humanitarian Standard.