

Module 3: Community Based Complaints Mechanisms

Facilitation Guide

Purpose: This module focuses on participants developing a basic understanding of the elements that make up a community-based complaints mechanism [CBCM], including, the non-negotiable characteristics (“4”), the principles guiding the development of an **effective** CBCM (“10”) and the steps to be taken, to ensure you have an effective system (“6”). “4-10-6” is a mnemonic [memory tool], a short-hand for remember the components for any good CBCM.

Training Audience: Module 3 is principally designed for use with Agency staff. However, it can be modified for use with beneficiaries. Suggestions on how to modify this unit for use with beneficiaries is found below.

Timing: Depending on the audience, this module may take 60 minutes [e.g. senior management] or go to 180 minutes [programming staff; beneficiaries; partners]. A key part of tailoring this training is assessing the audience’s needs and then deciding how much time to devote to each of the three sessions in this module.

Materials: If needed, the handouts should be translated into the relevant local language. If this is not possible, it will be important to have a co-facilitator who can provide oral translations of these materials, for those who are not able to work in English, if you the trainer cannot do this.

Agenda:

- Session 1: Four Characteristics of an effective CBCM
 - Opening discussion
 - Handout 1: Four Characteristics

- Session 2: Ten Principles for a CBCM
 - Handout 2: Ten Principles
 - Small group work on principles
 - Plenary discussion of challenges

- Session 3: Six Steps in developing a CBCM
 - Opening discussion
 - Handout 2: Six Steps for a CBCM
 - Small group work on engaging community and barriers
 - Plenary discussion

Session 1: Four Characteristics of an effective CBCM

Begin by introducing the general purpose of this training unit [i.e. when you leave this session, you will have a basic understanding of what is an effective community based complaints mechanism and key elements that need to be considered when designing a CBCM].

On a flipchart, write the four characteristics of an effective CBCM [just the following words]: CONFIDENTIAL; ACCESSIBLE; TRANSPARENT; SAFE. In plenary, discuss why these concerns are important. Given limited time, move quickly through the four headings, to ensure all are covered. Participants will have time to return to these characteristics throughout this training unit.

Give participants Handout 1: Four Characteristics of a CBCM

Session 2: Ten Principles for a CBCM

Give participants Handout 2: Ten Principles

Divide participants into small groups and assign each group 2 or 3 of the principles [depending on number of participants]. Ask them to discuss the assigned principles, to ensure there is a good understanding of these. Then ask each group to identify challenges in meeting these principles – these could include challenges specific to the context in which the CBCM is being implemented, challenges related to the kind of program being implemented or even related to agency practices. Ask groups to be ready to offer one or two key challenges during the plenary. Give the groups 15-20 minutes for this exercise.

In plenary, ask each group to list the principles they discussed [just the headings] and share one challenge for being able to uphold these principles. Allow 15-20 minutes for this before moving onto the final session. Write up the challenges identified on flipchart paper.

Session 3: Six Steps in Developing a CBCM

Begin by noting that the challenges identified by the groups are typical concerns, when you are looking to have an effective community based complaints mechanism.

Distribute Handout 2: 6 Steps in Developing a CBCM.

Review the Six steps in plenary. It would be good if you have these previously written up, on flipchart paper or on chalk boards, so everyone is not reading the handouts. Take 10-15 minutes to do this.

Ask everyone to go back into their groups and, using Handout 2, discuss the following questions [post these up on a whiteboard/chalk board/flipchart paper]:

- Given the challenges identified previously, what are some practical things you/your agency has done when setting up your CBCM(s)? Were you able to follow all of the steps?
- With regard to engaging the community, how did you go about this? Who all did you involve? Did any group not participate and if so, why?

Give the groups 15-20 minutes to do this exercise. Then, in plenary, ask groups for their responses to the two question areas – practical steps taken; engaging the community.

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Handout 1: Four Characteristics of an Effective Complaints Mechanism

These are the key characteristics of an effective complaints mechanism [CAST]. They are all essential, the **non-negotiable critical elements** for any effective complaints mechanism.

Confidential

- Restricts access to/dissemination of information
- Helps create environment enabling witnesses to engage
- Information should be available to limited number of people

Accessible

- Available to be used by as many people as possible in operational area
- special access measures in place for children, elderly, disabled, etc.
- Communities must be informed how to complain and encouraged to complain as necessary

Safe

- Considers potential dangers/risks to all parties
- Incorporates ways to prevent injury and harm
- Includes ensuring confidentiality, offering physical protection and addressing potential retaliation
- A safe space (also used for other purposes)

Transparent

- Members of affected community know it exists, input into its development, know how to access it, ensure it is adhered to

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Handout 2: Ten Principles for Establishing a CBCM

These are the 10 principles, as outlined in the PSEA Task Force Guidance document. The '10' criteria are a combination of principles and critical elements needed to establish an effective CBCM. It is the **framework for the ideal system**.

1. Integrated complaints mechanism
 - SEA CMs operate within the overall complaints or feedback mechanism
 - Community structures involved in the overall complaints system
2. Participation, not just consultation
 - SEA CMs operate within the overall complaints or feedback mechanism
 - Community structures involved in the overall complaints system
3. Effective community awareness raising
 - Demystify SEA
 - ✓ training staff
 - ✓ Community awareness-raising on codes of conduct
 - Demystify complaints mechanism
 - ✓ Translate information into local languages
 - ✓ Communicate mechanisms to all stakeholders
 - ✓ Information campaign for all – visual/aural tools etc.
4. Multiple channels
 - Adapt existing systems (e.g. GBV reporting)
 - Incorporate staff with beneficiary contact roles
 - Opportunity for written and verbal complaints
 - Ensure there are a range of options that meet needs of all groups, e.g. teachers might be one option for school-going children
5. Trained staff
 - Early deployment of [SGBV] staff (trained on SEA) with understanding of CBCM
 - People receiving complaints well-trained (esp. for dealing with children)
 - Senior staff to deal with SEA referrals
 - Management ready/committed to respond
6. Commit to confidentiality
 - Trust is critical – confidentiality linked to protection
 - All communications/complaints confidential & disclosed on need-to-know basis
 - Suggestion boxes must be secure and receive other issues as well as SEA
 - Written complaints must be locked away
 - In some cases confidentiality may not be assured – e.g., if it necessitates police involvement.
7. Safety of complainant and staff

Complaining may expose people to risk of retaliation – this affects willingness to complain – therefore CBCM must protect.

 - Conduct risk assessment

- ✓ **immediately...**
 - Provide urgent medical assistance
 - Address urgent safety/protection concerns
 - Refer children to child protection specialists (agency)
- ✓ **...and subsequently**
 - Identify who may be at risk, and how
 - Prioritize risks – which are most urgent?
 - Minimize risk – how to respond

Important to have safety plans in place for those at risk of retaliation

8. Information clearinghouse

- A system for agencies to share information:
 - When complaint received about another agency
 - For sharing information related to receiving/recording complaints
 - For making referrals
 - Not necessarily investigating

9. Feedback to communities/individuals

- Community role must be acknowledged by agencies in how they facilitated the CBCM
- Trust in system reinforced when complainant receives feedback
- Community feedback should be provided based on programming changes as a result of their input

10. Resourcing the CBCM

- A CBCM is mandatory according to the UN's Secretary General's Bulletin
- CBCM-related costs (training, staff time, materials) can be resourced under separate projects
- Essential for accountability purposes and better programming
- Consider too – costs incurred by complainants

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Handout 3: Steps in Developing a CBCM

This is the suggested process. There is no point in raising awareness of beneficiaries, for example, if staff are not ready and trained. Similarly, don't design the system and *then* consult with beneficiaries – it will be perceived as top-down. The six steps outline **the sequence to be followed, to move forward** with establishing an effective community based complaints mechanism.

The process reinforces some of the principles already discussed and is meant to reinforce the key messages, notably coordination and participation – essential elements of a CBCM.

1. Consultation/coordination

- A joint CBCM is preferable because:
 - ✓ It is cost-effective
 - ✓ It is simple -beneficiaries do not necessarily differentiate between different agencies.
 - ✓ It promotes coordination
 - ✓ It might be seen as independent
- If a PSEA in-country network (ICN) is in place under the UN resident coordinator, link with this. It may provide additional technical support and resources.

Note: ensure your Agency agrees to participation in the ICN [may require headquarters consent]

2. Participatory approaches with community

Barriers to reporting are site-specific and vary dramatically.

- A wide range of perspectives should be captured, especially the most vulnerable
- Try to ensure that “gatekeepers” do not take the lead
- Community representatives are important, but may also have their own agenda and not fully represent all perspectives
- Ask people how they would like to report
- Use variety of participatory methodologies (focus group discussion, key informant interviews)
- Beware of superficial consultation

3. Design mechanism in partnership

This is a key requirement, especially if a joint mechanism.

- Ensures that the expertise of all stakeholders is factored into process
- Ensures buy-in by all (beneficiaries included)
- Removes possibility of an imposed structure

4. Training

- **Staff**
 - knowledge about processes
 - SEA and protection
 - Skills for receiving complaints and carrying out risk assessments
 - Preferably select staff with those profiles for receiving complaints, but all staff are required to know about the CMs and potentially receive complaints
- **Key community member focal points**, depending on role they will take