Module 1.4: Monitoring and Feedback

Topic 2. Grievance Redress Systems

A grievance redress mechanism (GRM)\(^1\) is a system by which queries or clarifications about the project are responded to, problems with implementation are resolved, and complaints and grievances are efficiently and effectively addressed. The structure that the GRM ultimately takes will depend on the available resources and nuances of the operating environment such as the capacity of local government, technological constraints, and cultural attitudes toward lodging complaints. GRM is known by different names in various projects, and may be referred to as a Conflict Resolution System, Communication Tree, Community Report Card, or Community Assessment Process.

In CDD-based projects where activities are mainly taking place in remote areas, it is important to have a sound GRM to solve problems first at the community level. If the first step is to report complaints to the project head office located miles away in the capital city, community members may feel discouraged from making any complaints or queries. It is also simply difficult to address complaints from far away.

Complaints collected through a GRM are also a good source of information that allows the project management team to adjust the ongoing technical assistance. If, for example, there are multiple complaints from villagers that they are not getting sufficient information on the usage of funds provided, then the project team might have to look at the existing reporting and information system at the community level.

The purpose of the GRM is to:

- Enhance the project’s legitimacy among stakeholders
- Promote transparency and accountability
- Serve as a conduit for soliciting inquiries, inviting suggestions, and increasing community participation

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\(^1\) For more resources on this topic please see the following publications:
• Collect information that can be used to improve operational performance
• Deter fraud and corruption and mitigate project risks

One thing to bear in mind is that if complaints and queries are not responded to in a timely manner, and the GRM fails to produce results, beneficiaries will not take it seriously. Also, poor and marginalized communities face numerous barriers in accessing GRMs. They may not voice grievances because they lack knowledge about their rights, mistrust government and fear retribution, or because of transaction costs and cultural constraints.

BOX 1
The Complaints Handling Mechanism in the Afghanistan National Solidarity Program (NSP)

The National Solidarity Program (NSP), a nationwide effort in Afghanistan to address the needs of rural communities, reaches 16 million people in all of the country’s 34 provinces, or 68% of the population. The program empowers citizens to make decisions about their development priorities.

Village-level elected Community Development Councils (CDCs) select priority rural infrastructure sub-projects that are then funded through block grants in a transparent manner. Since the first NSP program in 2003, 22,000 CDCs have been elected and 17 million rural people in all of Afghanistan’s provinces have benefitted from improved infrastructure. Given the vast scope and scale of the program and the fragile context, the NSP Project Management Unit realized that there was a need to establish a robust complaints handling system that would help to identify problems, raise awareness, improve service delivery, and enhance project effectiveness.

As a result, a six-person Complaints Handling Unit (CHU) was set up at NSP headquarters, reporting directly to the NSP Executive Director’s Office. At the regional level, Regional Offices and facilitating partners are responsible for receiving and resolving complaints; complaints received elsewhere are forwarded to the NSP-CHU or the Regional Offices.

At the community level, CDCs are also informally involved in complaint resolution. Complaints are investigated at different levels (e.g., headquarters, regional, provincial, and local). In most cases, complaints are resolved at the regional or local levels. Serious complaints are escalated to the next higher level for investigation. The concerned parties are either contacted individually or in coordination meetings at the provincial level. After the complaint has been amicably resolved, a certified written agreement between the concerned parties is generated, filed, and reported to the NSP-CHU.

Source: Project Documents of the Afghanistan National Solidarity Program (NSP) – Phases One, Two, and Three.
CASE STUDY 1
Problem Solving Communication Tree in the Sri Lanka Community Development and Livelihood Improvement Project

What
In the Sri Lanka Community Development and Livelihood Improvement “Gemi Diriya” Project – Phases One and Two, a “Problem Solving Communication Tree” provides a step-by-step approach, with a stipulated time limit for each step, for resolving complaints and conflicts in the village among target beneficiaries.

Why
Often, existing social and economic divisions within a village community can lead to conflicts. If these conflicts are not addressed, dissatisfaction and grievances can lead to the erosion of unity among the poor and extreme poor in the village and can weaken their institutions. As a result, the Gemi Diriya project introduced a simple hierarchical tool called the Communication Tree to serve as a systematic conflict resolution and complaint redress mechanism.

Who, When, and How
The Social Audit Committee is responsible at the village level, and at each higher level, the responsibilities are defined in the Communication Tree itself. Small groups and other community members are responsible for approaching the different tiers, displacing rumors, gossip, anonymous complaints, or fighting.

Step 1: The community tries to resolve the issue by interacting and mediating among themselves. It is expected that most routine issues are clarified, understood, and resolved by the community themselves.

Step 2: Unresolved issues are brought to the attention of the chairperson of the village organization, who discusses the issue and facts with the appropriate committee (such as the Village Poverty Reduction Committee) and involves the Social Audit Committee to find facts. A recommendation is then made to the next level up to resolve. It is expected that 80% of issues formally taken by the village organization are resolved.

Step 3: Unresolved issues are referred to leaders who help the community resolve them. If an issue persists, the community can take it to the next level.

Step 4: Issues are referred to the District Project Manager who will try to find a solution within a week’s time.

Step 5: Unresolved issues are referred to the Project Director who personally intervenes and helps solve the issue. About 99.5% of the cases are resolved by this step and only exceptional cases reach Step 6.

Step 6: The issue can be sent to the World Bank via an email to the project’s Task Team Leader (TTL), who will try to resolve the issue within 72 hours.

The steps of the whole cycle are graphically painted in prominent places in all project villages. The displays include names of the people responsible at each level, and their addresses, phone numbers and email addresses.

(Continued next page)
Case Study 1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>The tool has been displayed in more than 4,000 villages. So far, most of the issues have been resolved before and by the time they reach the district level. Very rarely issues have gone up to the Project Director level.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lessons</td>
<td>The Communication Tree brought about better cooperation and unity among poor and extremely poor community members, especially in villages with ethnic divisions and inter-community conflict. The problem solving mechanism has promoted better communication of eligibility criteria and reasons for selecting beneficiaries for particular programs throughout the village. This has led to better transparency and wider acceptance of the rules. Within the Project, the number of anonymous complaints to district and state level offices from the villages was drastically reduced, and in many districts, reduced to zero.</td>
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Source: *The Sri Lanka Community Development and Livelihood Improvement "Gemi Diriya" Project – Phases One and Two.*
FIGURE 1
Problem Solving Communication Tree in the Sri Lanka “Gemi Diriya” Project

Gemi Diriya Problem-Solving Communication Tree

Step 1: If a problem is found – or – a dispute occurs...
If not resolved within the community, follow step 2

Step 2: Take to Maha Sabha or BOD Chair or Social Audit Committee
Allow 2 weeks for action, before step 3
85% cases expected to be resolved

Step 3: Take to HUB leader
Tel: 0* *********
Address: Gemi Diriya Foundation, Which Road, Which Town, Which district, Sri Lanka
Allow 2 weeks for action, before step 4
10% of cases may go up to this level

Step 4: Take to District leader
Tel: 0* *********
Email: ********@district.lk
Address: Gemi Diriya Foundation, Which Road, Which Town, Which district, Sri Lanka
Allow 1 week for action, before step 5
3% of cases may go this level

Step 5: Take to Project Director
Tel: 011 2689947
Email: babyxita@uhel.lk
Address: Gemi Diriya Foundation, 7A Reid Avenue, Colombo 7, Sri Lanka
Allow 1 week for action, before final step 6
2% cases

Step 6: Take to World Bank
Email: wnms@gemiworldbank.org
Address: 1616 H St NW, Washington DC 20433, USA
Response will be provided Within 48 hours
Exceptionally 0.5% cases
In a village in Tamil Nadu, a “problem tree” displayed on a tree near the project office gives the designations, email addresses and phone numbers of all the responsible project functionaries on the block, district, and state levels. The tree even carries the name, telephone and email address of the project Task Team Leader from the World Bank. This facilitates an open channel through which villagers can make complaints or report malpractices in the project and seek appropriate redress or corrective actions. The redress system also spells out a maximum time frame within which the person who has made the complaint is expected to get a response. Failing this, she or he can appeal to the next higher authority. Having clear cut time frames for the escalation and resolution of problems is one of the essential cornerstones of good governance and social accountability.

Source: India—Tamil Nadu Empowerment and Poverty Reduction “Puthu Vazhvu” Project.
## CASE STUDY 2

**Grievance Redress Mechanism in the Second Local Development Program Support Project for Chad**

| What | The First Local Development Program Support Project for Chad focused on establishing a decentralized, community-based approach to local development, including ensuring support from stakeholders and government officials. Once that was achieved, the second phase of the project was developed, with a focus on sub-projects in rural areas across the country. The World Bank committed $25 million of $77.25 million to this countrywide project. Local communities submitted plans for micro-projects (i.e. schools and health clinics) that are managed and monitored by local committees. Since individual projects were not defined at the time of project approval, a Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF) was developed to guide future projects. It was decided that projects would rely on existing traditional structures in the villages to handle grievances. |
| Why | Given the operating environment in Chad, the project identified the need to work with existing local systems for grievance redress. The emphasis on on-the-ground resolution and simple systems is appropriate, since a complicated GRM system in this instance would likely not be used, as the projects will impact rural citizens who likely have limited/no electricity and may be illiterate. |
| How | The villages form committees (e.g., the procurement committee, management committee) to oversee their respective sub-project. These committees are the first point of uptake. If they cannot resolve issues, grievances are escalated to the village chiefs. There is a grievance redress hierarchy: local committees, chiefs/elders, regional project implementation team, and a central team in the government ministry. There are no standard procedures, monitoring, or tracking, but the World Bank team has emphasized quick redress at the local level to avoid conflict escalation. They also have encouraged greater use of local citizens versus government employees to manage grievances in order to reduce corruption. Activities such as an outreach campaign, open meetings, public announcements, and public contracts help to educate citizens on the process and reduce conflicts. |
| Lessons | As of 2013, the project is still in its early stages, so lessons learned are preliminary. Working directly with the local committees is likely the best option for strengthening capacity to manage issues. This could include walking through the GRM Evaluation tool, which is a short checklist of questions to get clients thinking about ways to strengthen their existing systems. Similarly, putting in place timelines for responses and a basic monitoring and evaluation system (run by the villages) could improve outcomes for users in a “light-touch” manner. |


Source: *Second Local Development Program Support Project for Chad.*
## TOOL 1  
### Using a Hotline

| **What** | A local or toll-free telephone line can be set up for people to call to ask questions, make comments, and obtain information promptly about a development project or program. Some hotlines allow people to order documents. A hotline is typically used when community interest in the project, or concern, is moderate to high. Hotlines can also be used as grievance redress mechanisms for the community. |
| **Why** | A hotline can provide interested people with a relatively quick means of expressing their concerns directly to project authorities and to get their questions answered. It can also help reassure callers that their concerns are heard, and can help ease the process for people to participate and provide comments. |
| **How** | • Assign one or more staff members to handle the hotline calls  
• Consider installing more than one hotline to minimize busy signals  
• If staff is not available throughout the day, install an answering machine directing people to leave their name, number, and a brief statement of concern, and informing them that someone will return their call within a determined time  
• Announce the hotline in news releases to local newspapers, radio stations, and television stations, and in fact sheets, publications, and public notices  
• Keep a record of each question, when it was received, from whom, and how and when it was answered  
• All inquiries should be responded to promptly (ideally within 24 to 48 hours)  
• Plan on full-time remuneration for one or more staff (depending on call volume). |
| **Who** | The project’s local office should receive the calls. All members of the community should be aware of the number and when to call. |
| **When** | Throughout the project, especially during sub-project implementation |
| **Challenges/Lessons** | Challenges:  
• If the office or community is remote, and information and communication technology (ICT) is unreliable  
• Staff training to know how to field hotline questions (as well as staff turnover)  
• If the number of calls is large, responding quickly to each inquiry could prove burdensome to staff  
• Discussions over the telephone may not be as good as face-to-face  
• Dialing a hotline number and receiving a recorded message could irritate or alienate some members of the public |
| **Resources** | World Bank, Beneficiary Feedback Hotline (WB internal site)  
BOX 3
Establishing a Hotline in the Nigeria Fadama Development Project

In Nigeria, the Fadama Development Project operates nationwide and is currently in its third phase. The project is well known for its contribution to empowering local communities. Pictured below is a Fadama sub-project site with a sign clearly showing the implementing group, area, and type of sub-project. It also shows the hotline telephone number so that if any member of the community has a problem with, or questions about, the project, he or she could immediately reach the project to get clarification or resolution for the issue.

Source: Nigeria National Fadama Development Project - First, Second, and Third Phases.