FEEDBACKS, COMPLAINTS AND RESPONSE MECHANISM (FCRM) POLICY

1. PURPOSE
This policy aims to enable CARE Somalia/Somaliland to have a formalized Feedbacks, Complaints and Response Mechanism (FCRM) to provide a safe, accessible and effective channel for individuals, especially project participants, to exercise their right to give feedbacks and raise complaints and for a response or redress to be given. This will assist CARE Somalia/Somaliland, its partners and employees to improve the quality of its services and its accountability to stakeholders.

The feedback, complaints and response mechanism (FCRM) policy will help CARE to:
- Learn from project participants, communities and other stakeholders and be responsive to their views, opinions and complaints, so improving the quality and impact of our work
- Contribute to the real time analysis of the impact of our work, including satisfaction of project participants, and the extent to which the most vulnerable are being reached and their needs met
- Identify problems as early as possible – from the less serious to the most serious, such as: Assistance not reaching the most vulnerable and abuse and exploitation of children respectively.
- Protect the safety and dignity of those who make a complaint, as well as those who are complained about; and provide a non-judicial but respectful means for addressing grievances, and the provision of redress where it is required
- Share information through the process of receiving and responding to feedback and complaints
- Support project and field staff to effectively manage feedback and complaints and to respond appropriately to less serious and more serious complaints, that can otherwise put certain staff under a great deal of stress
- Demonstrate our commitment to the rights of communities and our humility and commitment to achieving our goals

2. SCOPE
This policy applies to all CARE Somalia/Somaliland employees including those designated as contract staff and its partners. This policy provides guidance on how to treat project participants, employees and other stakeholders, acknowledge their right to give feedbacks and raise complaints and handle complaints professionally.

3. POLICY STATEMENT
This policy will create an effective and efficient feedback and complaints mechanism that will ensure CARE remains committed to maintaining its responsiveness to the needs and concerns of project participants, staff and other stakeholders and continues to deliver high quality and accountable services.

4. POLICY DETAILS
The policy details the principles, steps and processes to be adopted from the time a feedback is given or a complaint is raised, up to the time a response is given and/or a resolution report is finalized. Special attention is also dedicated to identifying child friendly systems to enable even young project participants to share their opinions.

5. DEFINITIONS
ACCOUNTABILITY: CARE defines accountability as the means by which we fulfill our responsibilities to our stakeholders and the ways in which they may hold us to account for our decisions, actions and impacts¹.

CHILD: for the purpose of this policy, a child is considered to be any person below the age of 18

CHILD ABUSE: includes all forms of physical and emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, and exploitation that results in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, development or dignity. Within this broad definition, five subtypes can be distinguished – physical abuse; sexual abuse; neglect and negligent treatment; emotional abuse; and exploitation.

FEEDBACK: Feedbacks can be both positive and negative and are generally related to minor issues. They are community inputs which are not due to grievance; they are rather suggestions, comments or viewpoints. Feedbacks can be considered, discussed, challenged, used or disregarded; it is not mandatory to respond to them. They can be given informally or formally expressing, for example, a satisfaction on a certain activity, an appreciation for a particular CARE staff or activity or a suggestion to improve a specific aspect of CARE’s intervention. COMPLAINT: participants may be dissatisfied or have concerns about the level or quality of services provided by CARE or may have been victims of abuse and exploitation and therefore may wish to lodge a complaint. A complaint is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction made to CARE, related to its services and goods, or the behavior of a CARE staff, or the complaint-handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly needed”. For the purpose of this policy, according to the nature and urgency of taking the action these are divided into “valid” complaints and “non-valid complaints”.

- Valid Complaint: ‘Valid’ complaints are defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction directly associated to the commitments and promises made and therefore within the control of the organization.” In other words, a complaint has to be about some action which CARE Somalia/Somaliland is responsible for, or is within CARE Somalia/Somaliland’s sphere of influence and control. Valid complaints include (1) ‘non-sensitive’ and (2) ‘sensitive’ complaints.

  1) Non sensitive complaints would generally be concerns from stakeholders about the quality of program delivery such as:
  - Issues related to poor quality of products or services
  - Issues related to services or products not received as promised and with no explanation given
  - Issues related to poor quality of the infrastructures built at the project site
  - Issues related to targeting and selection of beneficiaries

  2) Sensitive complaints are those related to a gross misconduct or malpractice of CARE staff. These may include, but are not limited, to the following:
  - Issues relating to child abuse and exploitation
  - Issues related to physical misconduct by staff or volunteers of CARE Somalia/Somaliland which include sexual harassment or abuse
  - Issues relating to other types of abuses of power by CARE’s staff or volunteers
  - Fraud/ misuse of funds
  - Corruption/ Nepotism
  - Aid diversion
  - Any act which violates basic principles of humanity and impartiality (discrimination based upon religion, ethnicity, clan, gender and others).

Sensitive complaints are to be treated with utmost confidentiality and will often involve more detailed investigation. It is possible that with sensitive complaints the local laws of the country may come into play.

- **’Non-valid’ Complaint:** ‘Non-valid’ complaints are usually related to issues outside the control of the organization, for example:
  - Two rival IDP group leaders bring their complaints to the project team.
  - A land dispute.
  - A food vendor complains that other food vendors are undercutting his prices in the market by selling their food rations at lower prices.
  - Someone writes to complain that he/she was not hired for a position he had applied in the organization.

- **WHO IS ENTITLED TO GIVE FEEDBACK AND/OR TO COMPLAIN:** This FCRM policy is global in application. A complaint can be made by:
  - a) Community or individual with whom we work
  - b) Any member of the public whether an individual, company or other entity.
  - c) Partner organizations
  - d) Contractors/consultants

### 6. PROCEDURES

#### 6.1 PRINCIPLES

**a) General Principles**

- **NON DISCRIMINATION:** The FCRM is accessible to all stakeholders, irrespective of their age, gender, religion, opinion, ethnic, background, etc... and without prejudice to their future participation.
- **RESPECT:** All complaints and constructive feedback will be taken seriously and handled as swiftly as practicable. Complainants will be treated courteously and kept updated on the progress of their complaint throughout the feedbacks and complaints-handling process. All complaints are addressed in a fair and equitable, objective and unbiased manner. Issues of conflict of interest will be identified to ensure objectivity.
- **INTEGRITY:** We recognize the importance and value of listening and responding to feedbacks and complaints, commit to assess and respond honestly and transparently and accept responsibility for our collective and individual actions. Information about the process for giving a feedback or raising a complaint will be clear and well publicized to all relevant stakeholders.
- **COMMITMENT:** CARE will strive to ensure that sufficient resources and expertise are provided to handle complaints. Staff will be briefed on the nature and purpose of the policy, dissemination of the policy will be guaranteed to make sure that all relevant stakeholders are aware of the procedures to file a feedback or complain and responsibilities for handling and responding to feedbacks and complaints will be clearly defined among CARE staff.
- **EXCELLENCE:** CARE will challenge itself to the highest levels of performance to achieve greater impact and continuously improve accountability towards beneficiary and the overall quality of CARE Somalia/Somaliland’s work.

**b) Data/Case Management Principles**

These principles apply to all complaints raised, but have particular importance when dealing with sensitive cases of child abuse and gender based violence.
• CONFIDENTIALITY: Confidentiality will be respected in all circumstances, this is of utmost importance to maintain the complainants’ confidence and protect their privacy. Information about the complainant will be protected. Confidentiality relating to the complainant will be safeguarded so far as reasonably practicable including the person(s) to whom the complaint is addressed.
• SAFETY AND SECURITY: Sensitivity to the safety and security of complainants will be a priority and obligation for CARE Somalia/Somaliland always. Complainants will be protected as much as possible from the risk of possible threats of retaliation. Information related to complaints and complainants will be stored and kept in a secure place.
• INFORMED CONSENT: Informed consent is the voluntary agreement of an individual who has the capacity to give consent, and who exercises free choice. When handling a complaint, consent will be sought from complainant. To provide “informed consent”, children must be able to understand, and take a decision regarding their own situation; otherwise, consent from the family must be obtained.
• NEED TO KNOW: CARE Somalia/Somaliland, in handling complaints, will limit information that is considered very sensitive and will share it only with those individuals who need the information to be able to support efforts to protect the complainant. Sensitive and identifying information collected on children will only be shared on a need-to-know basis with as few individuals as possible.

STAFFING
There is obviously a time factor to be considered for staff responsible for handling complaints in addition to their regular duties. Failure to think this through carefully will compromise our duty to respond to complaints in a timely manner and jeopardize the confidence in the FCRM.
In terms of staff time dedicated to setting up and managing a FCRM, the experience indicates that approximately 10% of the time of the senior manager leading the process and probably 20% of the time of the staff receiving, recording and forwarding the complaints (complaints focal person or complaints committee) should be dedicated to this process.
Experience shows that we should be prepared to allocate more resources at the beginning of the CRM implementation process to avoid being stuck in the bottle neck of suddenly having a lot of complaints to respond to at the beginning of the pilot (although this is not always the case). Delays in responding to complaints will damage the pilot.
Resolving complaints efficiently at an early stage is an effective way of managing limited resources. The cost of handling complaints generally increases steeply as complaints proceed to a higher level within the organization.

6.2 HOW TO RAISE A FEEDBACK/COMPLAINT
There are several channels to be used to raise a non-sensitive feedback or complaint:
• Written Complain: A complainant can give a feedback or raise a complain using the relevant feedback/complaint form (Annex 1). Free Hot-Line: For communities one of the most convenient and efficient ways to complain is over the phone. In each field office two dedicated mobile line will be used to receive feedbacks and complaints. A toll free line will be used to record non-sensitive complaints and will be managed by PO or M&E Officer. The other one will be used to record sensitive complaints and will be managed directly by the Head of Office.
• Oral Complaint: During field activities (visits, community meetings, distributions and other activities), CARE staff will register complaints and feedbacks and will be escalated through the appropriate structure to be addressed.

• Complainant visit to office: If the security situation and other constraints allow sharing of the office address (as per the recommendations of the security focal person), community members can visit field offices to lodge complaints. The meetings will be held in a comfortable space where confidentiality and privacy is ensured (avoid shared offices where other people can listen to the conversation) and where all project participants, including children, can feel accepted, welcomed and comfortable (child friendly space).

• Through e mail (for partners and government): partners and government can send their feedbacks or complaints to the dedicated e-mail address: XXX. The complaint can be raised either directly from the individual or via someone acting on his/her behalf such as a community committee or a participant’s representative. All complaints and feedback should be logged in the database, eventually to be linked to or replaced by the MIS.

6.3 RESPONSE
Raising a complaint is a demonstration of trust, and should be viewed as an opportunity to learn how to improve our ways of working and programming. Responding to a complaint therefore should be done in a manner that upholds the safety of the people involved in the complaint, and demonstrates our appreciation of the trust they have placed in us.

Initial processing: After a complaint is received the complainant must be immediately informed if what he/she is reporting is a valid or non-valid complaint, meaning if the case will be addressed or not. If it is a valid complaint, then a complaint registration form (Annex 1) is filled and registered in the data-base (Annex 2) as detailed below.

Complaint investigation and Response:
1. Non-sensitive complaints: Non-Sensitive Complaints will be dealt with by the Project Officer, M&E Focal Point (depending on who is present in each location) together with the Project Manager/Area manager (depending on who is present in each location) of the project the complaint refers to. As soon as the PO/M&E Focal Point is informed of a complaint he/she will inform the project manager (for Mogadishu also the Head of Office). The PO/M&E Focal Point and Project Manager/Area Manager (Head of Office in Mogadishu) will be authorized to address all the complaints on which they will have complete clarity. Before deciding on the solution and actions to be taken for redress, the PO/M&E Focal Point and Project Manager/Area Manager (head of Office for Mogadishu), will consult with the security advisor to carry out an investigation of the case, assessing the alleged incident as well as if and how the complainant has been affected. After the investigation will be completed, the complainant will be informed of the rationale for the action taken and the final decision related to his/her case. In case the complainant is not satisfied with the response, or in case a solution can’t be foreseen by the PO/M&E Focal Point and Project Manager/Area Manager because of the complexity of the incident, they will refer the case to the Head of Office/Programme Coordinator. S/he will be responsible to come up with an adequate response for the complainant on the basis of the information gathered through the investigation or by asking for a second, more in depth investigation. Once a decision is reached, the Head of Office/Programme Coordinator will communicate the response to the PO/M&E Focal Point who will be responsible to inform the complainant. All these complaints and redress will be properly documented and filed for the sake of record.

2. Sensitive Complaints: The process of investigation and response of these complaints directly involves CARE staff at a higher level because of the sensitivity of the issues raised and the need to
ensure that participants are comfortable in reporting. Sensitive complaints will be reported directly to the Head of Office through a separate phone line. The Head of Office will take immediate measures to guarantee the safety and security of the complainant and, in case the alleged perpetrator is a CARE staff, the Head of Office will decide whether he/she will be stopped from work, according to the nature of the complaint. The Head of Office will also be in charge of coordinating, with the support of the M&E Focal Point and security advisor, the investigation of the case, which includes a comprehensive assessment of the incident. From the outcome of the assessment, a first report will be prepared and shared with the Investigation Committee. The Committee, made up of the Emergency Director or Program Coordinator (depending on which program the complaint is relevant to), a representative from the HR department, security and the Protection/Gender and Accountability Advisor, will be responsible for deciding on the redress and remedial actions, not before having analyzed the case on the basis of the initial report shared and having decided if further investigation is needed (including referral to the police). On the basis of the additional information gathered, the Committee will finalize the report of the case and will communicate the response and the actions planned to the Head of Office, who will inform the complainant. All these complaints and redress will be properly documented and filed for the sake of record. Confidentiality will be guaranteed throughout the process.

6.4 TIMEFRAME

a) FILING A COMPLAINT OR GIVING A FEEDBACK
Any complaint should be made as soon as possible, when events are fresh in the mind. They must be made no later than three months from the date the complainant became aware of the incident that is the source of the complaint. This gives adequate time for the complainant to have considered their arguments, and for all relevant facts to remain fresh. Any departure from this time limit will be allowed only in exceptional circumstances, by the recipient of the complaint in conjunction with the Head of Office.

b) RESPONDING TO A COMPLAINT
CARE is committed to address complaints in the shortest time possible. CARE Somalia/Somaliland will aim to take action on non-sensitive complaints within five (5) working days of receipt.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2 – 3</th>
<th>Day 4-5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complaint registration and analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Investigation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Communicating response to complainant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the contrary, for sensitive complaints immediate action will be taken within three (3) days from the complaint and final response will be provided within thirty (30) days.

| Day 1 | Day 2 – 3 | Day 4-18 | Day 19-30 |
### 6.4 Immediate actions to guarantee the security of the complainant and of the rest of the participants

- Immediate actions to guarantee the security of the complainant and of the rest of the participants (including direct support to the survivor in case of child abuse or sexual exploitation and abuse).

### 6.5 APPEAL

A complainant will be able to appeal for the review of his/her complaint in the event that he/she is dissatisfied with the response from CARE Somalia/Somaliland. For non-sensitive complaints, appeal will be lodged with the head of office within seven (7) days of the original response received. Record of the appeals will be maintained in the data-base. The head of office, after the review of the case and of the decisions taken, will decide if the complainant view will be accepted, the original decision will be upheld or new inquiry will be undertaken. In case a new investigation is ordered, the head of office will carry it out with the help of the M&E Focal Point. The Head of Office will reply to the appeal within a maximum of 15 days.

For sensitive complaints, the appeal will be submitted to the Country Director/Assistant Country Director for Programmes within seven days of the response received. The process adopted earlier will be reviewed and, if required, the parameters of the new investigation will be finalized. The complainant will be kept updated on any action or decisions further. After the review process the response will be communicated within a maximum of 15 days.

### 7 DATA MANAGEMENT

All information related to feedbacks and complaints will be gathered through the defined tools (See annexes 1, 2, 4) and stored in the CARE Somalia/Somaliland integrated web-based MIS, codenamed Maskax, (meaning the brain in Somali), that is remotely accessible from various locations. The system will guarantee confidentiality through restricted access to sensitive information. Data management will also imply other specific measures in order to guarantee the safety of the information:

- Data belong to the person who files the complaint or whom the complaint refers to (in the case the complaint is filed by a friend/relative/community member/etc… on behalf of someone else), therefore consent will be requested to file and use these data.
- The web-based data-base is hosted on the cloud as an assurance of safely storage of data.
• Hard copies of complaints registration forms must be stored in a lockable filing cabinet in the office with access limited to staff members that are authorized to access it.
• No records or complaint archives are to be taken outside the office or loaned to parties outside CARE Somalia/Somaliland, unless with the prior informed consent of the complainant and express permission from management.
• To preserve the integrity of information contained in the original complaint, no additions or alterations of any kind are to be made to any record. This includes purging, adding or removing papers or annotating papers. If there is a need to record future developments or a change in circumstances or otherwise reflect inaccurate information or deficiencies, a further document can be generated and attached to the file.

Quantitative analysis will be automatically generated by the system; on the other hand, a qualitative analysis will be carried out by PQU on a regular basis. This analysis will assist CARE Somalia/Somaliland to determine the cause of complaints and whether remedial action is warranted. The data will, wherever possible and applicable, be used to:
   a. Adjust project activities
   b. Change organizational practices and procedures
   c. Retrain staff on product and service delivery
   d. Re-assess community information provision needs
   e. Give early warning about potential program problems

4 MONITORING AND REVIEW OF PROCEDURES
A key part of the complaint process is to identify any issues that need to be addressed in CARE Somalia/Somaliland’s program delivery and/or ways of working so that similar complaints do not arise. Hence a constant analysis of the complaints received and relative reports produced will be necessary for the year end evaluation, which will be carried out every year.
A revision of this document and the related tools will also be conducted regularly and mandatorily on a yearly basis to adapt it as much as possible to the needs of the different realities on the ground as well as to build on lessons learnt and constantly improve the intervention.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES (See the Flow Chart in Annex 3)
A. NON SESNITIVE FEEDBACKS/COMPLAINTS
The relevant Project Officer, Accountability Focal Point and the M&E Focal Point are the people directly in charge of receiving feedbacks and complaints and recording them. The relevant Project Manager/Area Manager and Head of Office/Programme Coordinator will be in charge of supporting the Project Officer and M&E Focal Point in the response management. Some responsibilities are the same for different staff, because not in every field location all the position mentioned are represented. In particular:

Project Officer/Accountability Focal Point and M&E Focal Point is responsible for:
   1. Ensuring that participants, affected communities and staff understand the complaints handling procedures.
   2. Contributing to the dissemination of the FCRM.
   3. Receiving complaints: (a) oral complaints, (b) phone calls (c) written complaint, (d) complaints raised during a participants’ visit to the office, (e) e-mails
   4. Filling in the complaints registration form regarding the complaints received
   5. Managing the feedback and complaints data-base and the hot-line database
   6. Informing the Project Manager of the feedbacks and complaints received regarding that specific project (in the case of Mogadishu, the Head of Office should also be informed)
   7. Together with the Project Manager/Area Manager (and Head of Office in Mogadishu) assessing the case and deciding on a response to the complainant.
8. Informing the complainant of the response.
9. In case the complainant is not satisfied with the response, informing the head of office/programme coordinator. He/She will be responsible for finding an adequate response to solve the issue. The Head of Office will still communicate the response to the M&E Focal Point who will be responsible to inform the complainant.
10. Ensuring that the complaint is resolved within the fastest possible timeframe. If timely resolution is not possible, the complainant should be notified and the reasons for delay explained.
11. Creating reports and sharing information.

**Area Manager/Project Manager** is responsible for:

1. Supporting the Project Officer/M&E Focal Point in the definition of an adequate response on each complaint raised in reference to the specific project they manage.

**Head of Office/Programme Coordinator** is responsible for:

1. In case the response provided by the Project Officer/M&E Focal Point and the Area Manager/Project Manager is not satisfactory for the complainant, the Head of Office will decide on an adequate response of the specific complaint. In the case of Mogadishu office, the Head of Office/Programme Coordinator will be responsible for supporting decisions on all complaints raised.
2. Communicating the decision of the response to the Project Officer/M&E Focal Point for him/her to inform the complainant
3. Receiving and addressing appeals from participants not satisfied with the final response.
4. Receiving and filing complaints when other staff not available: a) written complaint, b) phone calls, c) complaints raised during a participants’ visit to the office, d) e-mails

**B. SENSITIVE COMPLAINTS**

The **Head of Office** is the person directly in charge of receiving and managing this kind of complaints. He/she will be in charge of the assessment of the case, taking immediate action for the safety and security of the complainant and preparing a first report containing facts and figures. An **Investigation Committee** will be responsible for analyzing the case, deciding if further investigation is needed (including referral to the police) and will decide on actions to be taken. The committee is comprised of Emergency Director or Program Coordinator (depending on which program the complaint is relevant to), a representative from the HR department, security unit and the Protection/Gender and Accountability Advisor.

In particular:

**Head of Office** is responsible for:

1. Receiving complaints through the dedicated phone line.
2. Filling in the complaints registration form regarding the complaints received
3. Conducting a comprehensive assessment of the case, taking immediate actions to guarantee the security of the complainant and of the rest of the participants and writing an initial report to clarify facts and findings.
4. In cases of child abuse or sexual exploitation and abuse and after having obtained the informed consent of the survivor, supporting him/her to access services that he/she needs as a consequence of the incident (medical care, psychosocial support, legal aid, etc...).
5. Referring the case to the Investigation Committee, sending all relevant documentation to clarify as much as possible the incident.
6. Ensuring that the complaint is resolved as soon as possible and in any case within the set timeframe.
7. During the whole process, keeping the complainant informed on the different steps taken in the assessment and investigation.
8. Communicating the decision of the response to the complainant.

Investigation Committee (Emergency Coordinator, Program Coordinators, Security Advisor, HR Representative and Protection/Gender and Accountability Advisor) is responsible for:
   1. Analyzing and understanding the case on the basis of the initial report and all relevant documentation and information gathered by the Head of Office.
   2. Deciding if further investigation is needed (including referral to the police).
   3. Deciding on actions to be taken in response to the complaint.
   4. Communicating the decision of the response to the Head of Office.

8. REFERENCES AND LINKS
   a. Tools (Annex 1, 2, 4)
   b. Flow Chart (Annex 3)