Client-Responsive Programming Framework

IRC's Approach to Accountable Programming

Beta Version, December 2016

Executive Summary

Background

The following document was commissioned by IRC's Client Voice and Choice (CVC) Initiative. The document was developed through a partnership between CVC and a team at CDA Collaborative Learning Projects. CDA is well known in the humanitarian sector for Do No Harm and the Listening Project, as well as 2012 book *Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid* and 2014 practitioner guidance on humanitarian feedback mechanisms. This initial Client Responsive Programming Framework has been developed based on an extensive IRC document review and multiple consultations with IRC staff and with peer agencies. The authors would like to thank everyone for their valuable contributions.[1]

The document in this current form is in beta version and will be iterated, refined, and developed through testing and feedback from users at different levels at IRC. IRC staff feedback is invaluable in the process of refining this framework. Please send your feedback and questions to Chloe Whitley – chloe.whitley@rescue.org

What is Client-Responsive Programming?

"Client-Responsive" describes programming in which IRC staff systematically collect the diverse perspectives of our clients; use those perspectives to inform programme design and delivery; and in which we are accountable for those decisions and our subsequent actions. Our intent is to develop and deliver assistance which is more responsive, appropriate and effective in meeting the needs of people affected by crisis.

Why is Client-Responsive Programming Important for the IRC?

We want to serve our clients in ways that are appropriate and useful in their eyes. The IRC has committed under its 2020 Strategy to becoming more responsive to the people it serves. Responsiveness is a key objective for the IRC: placing people affected by crisis at the centre of our decisions about what aid to deliver, to whom, where, when, how and why. Through investment in research, strategic partnerships and the development and testing of new practice, the IRC seeks to transform our humanitarian aid in support of more accountable and effective assistance to people affected by crisis.

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[1] See: Annex 1 for the complete list of people consulted during the development of this framework.

What is the Client-Responsive Programming Approach?

This is the IRC's methodology for delivering Client-Responsive Programming. The Approach comprises two main elements:

- **Client-Responsiveness Actions:** Seven Actions which we implement in order to collect and use the perspectives of our clients to inform programme design and delivery. The quality of the Actions are measured through reference to the CR Standards, and are supported in their delivery by the associated Guidance.
- **Client-Responsiveness Enablers:** The internal and external operating conditions which enable the Actions to be effective in delivering Client-Responsive Programming. CR Standards provide measure of the extent to which we have optimised those conditions; and associated Guidance provides advice on how to understand and positively shift these conditions.

What to Expect from the Client-Responsive Programming Framework?

This framework articulates the IRC's Client-Responsive Programming Approach. The Framework provides an overarching direction, systematises practices and sets a quality benchmark for the IRC in delivering client-responsive programming. It provides organisation-wide, coherent standards, alongside guidance which can be contextually interpreted. The Framework provides suggestions for roles and responsibilities with respect to the Actions and Enablers, and references existing IRC and external resources which can be used in support of client-responsive programming.

Overview of the Content of the Framework:

Following the introduction in Part I, Parts II and III outline the IRC's Client-Responsiveness Actions. These seven actions are: 1) assessing the operational context and local communication preferences to plan client engagement processes; 2) informing clients about the IRC and how to communicate with the IRC, and systematically collecting their input on the IRC's programming; 3) compiling and presenting those perspectives in an actionable format to decision-makers; 4) interpreting client perspectives alongside other sources of information; 5) using those interpretations to generate options and make key decisions; 6) implementing those decisions in the field, while remaining open to new feedback; and 7) periodically reviewing how well this system is working for clients, IRC staff, and other key stakeholders.

Part IV, Client-Responsiveness Enablers, identifies the conditions which can hinder or enable the IRC in being responsive, and provides guidance on how to shift these conditions in our favour. This section includes topics such as: allocating roles and responsibilities, defining internal and external pathways for information, managing data and human resources, financing client responsiveness, demonstrating leadership, and facilitating external cooperation. Links to existing resources and relevant annexes are referenced throughout.

Contents

Part I: Introduction

What is Client-Responsiveness, and Why is it Important?

"Client-Responsive Programming" describes programming in which the IRC systematically collects the diverse perspectives of our clients; rigorously uses those perspectives to inform programme design and delivery; and in which we are accountable for those decisions and our subsequent action. Client-responsive programming is achieved through application the Client-Responsive Programming Approach, and contributes to assistance which is more responsive, appropriate and effective in meeting the needs of people affected by crisis.

Research suggests[2] that client-responsiveness is not only ethically 'the right thing to do', but that it also improves the effectiveness and efficiency of our programming. It does this by providing us with mechanisms through which to gather, understand, and act upon information related to the performance of our projects. It contributes to building trust in the IRC and supports the empowerment of crisis-affected populations. Client responsiveness also makes the IRC more competitive as many donors are requiring a demonstration of accountability to affected populations.[3] The Framework provides a pathway towards the IRC's 2020 Strategy objective of being responsive to our clients and other key stakeholders, and its implementation aligns with and contributes to the effective implementation of other IRC 2020 Objectives and initiatives.[4]

Key Definitions

- **Clients:** people for whom the IRC provides, or intends to provide, services.
- **Stakeholders:** other individuals and groups in the crisis-affected area who are affected by, and can affect, the decisions that the IRC makes. This includes people in aid-recipient communities who do not receive IRC services, local governments, civil society, other organisations, etc.[5]
- **Client Responsive:** a project is considered responsive if we: are systematic, deliberate, and effective in collecting the perspectives of our clients at key points in the life of a project; give those perspectives due weight when making our decisions; report back to our clients about those decisions; and are transparent and accountable for our actions.

> Client-responsiveness does not mean that the IRC will do everything that every client asks. Client perspectives will be balanced with the IRC's values, mandate, and local context (such as funding, legal, and operational constraints).

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[2] See: Anderson, M.B. et al. 2013 Time to Listen: Hearing the People on the Receiving End of International Aid. ALNAP-CDA Feedback Mechanism Research and Guidance, WV BFM Pilot findings, Featherstone, Andy. 2013. Improving Impacts: Do Accountability Mechanisms Deliver Results? Christian Aid, Save the Children, and Humanitarian Accountability Partnership.

[3] For more see Annex 2: IRC's commitment to client responsiveness

[4] For more see Annex 3: How Client Responsiveness fits into other practices

[5] Note: local actors may be clients if, for example, the IRC is supporting them with organisational development.

Who is this Framework Intended for?

This document is intended for IRC staff at all levels.[6] Given the different staffing structures and human resources of our country programmes, the suggestions that are provided on roles and responsibilities should be tailored to the individual country programme. However, the primary responsibility for responsiveness should always rest with those taking key decisions about the design and delivery of our assistance in the field.

More specific tools will be developed, based on users' feedback and requirements, to assist different teams and individuals within the IRC to implement key aspects of this approach. This is a living document that will be tested and revised based on internal feedback from the IRC stakeholders at all levels given their experience implementing this approach.

Part II: Client-Responsiveness through the Programme Lifecycle

Client-Responsive Country Strategy Action Plans

At the country level, key decision-makers can set policies and standards, allocate resources, and create a culture conducive to client-responsiveness. This provides an important enabling environment for client-responsiveness to become a reality at all levels of programming and administration. In addition, the very process of strategic planning – where we identify priority outcome areas and programme objectives – is strengthened by incorporation of the perspectives of our clients, partners, staff, and other stakeholders.[7]

Client-Responsive Project Assessment, Design and Planning

Project design is often our first chance to 'walk the talk' of client-responsiveness. When clients are excluded from the design phase, they have no meaningful influence over what assistance the IRC is providing in their communities. For example, once a project is approved, clients may be asked what colour they want the new clinic to be painted, but they had no say in whether they even wanted a clinic in the first place. This phase of the project cycle provides an opportunity to be client-responsive in the project design process itself; it is also the point at which we would budget and plan for the resources necessary for client-responsiveness throughout the project's lifecycle. While there is often limited opportunity for participatory design in response to a Request for Proposals (RFP), it is important that our project designs are informed by our clients' perspectives about the intended intervention. Staff need to ensure that diverse opinions and perspectives from clients are represented in project designs. This means disaggregating feedback according to gender, age, ethnicity / nationality, and any other variables important in the context. This helps us to ensure that our interventions are tailored to the differing needs and perspectives of these various groups. In collecting the feedback from clients, we also need to be careful to manage clients' expectations about what potential future projects may be able to accomplish, including the possibility that the funding application may not be awarded.[8]

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[6] Including field staff, country programme coordinators, regional coordinators, and those at headquarters.
[7] See Annex 4 for a Strategic Action Plan Assessment and Prioritisation Tool.
[8] See Annex 5 for a Project Design Assessment and Prioritisation Tool.

Client-Responsive Project Implementation and Monitoring

Our projects will need to be adapted in various ways during implementation due to changes in the operating context, clients' needs and perspectives, and our ability to respond to them.[9] It is fundamental for us to maintain a 'pulse check' on our clients' perspectives throughout project implementation to ensure that we are being responsive to their preferences, aspirations and expectations.[10]

Client-Responsive Project Exit and Evaluation

Ensuring responsiveness while we end a project is critical to maintaining trust, ensuring that the exit process goes smoothly, and utilising lessons learned from client perspectives in our future work. Using two-way communication channels to proactively seek client feedback and respond to ongoing requests is one way to combat challenges that arise with project exit.[11] Registering and reflecting on 'big picture' feedback is key during this phase because it may help us design the next phase of our projects. It is important to collect perspectives from staff about their experience of being client responsive, as much of this knowledge can be lost during the staff turnover that is common at this phase.[12]

Part III: Client-Responsive Programming Actions

Client-responsive programming will look different in different contexts, countries, and crises. However, there are key elements that are considered universal and cross-cutting across the different phases of a project lifecycle, and which are essential to our programming. Our Client-Responsive Programming Approach has 7 Actions, which are to: 1) assess the operational context and local communication preferences to plan client engagement processes; 2) inform clients about the IRC and how to communicate with the IRC, and systematically collect their input on the IRC's programming; 3) compile and present those perspectives in an actionable format to decision-makers; 4) interpret client perspectives alongside other sources of information; 5) use those interpretations to generate options and make key decisions; 6) implement those decisions in the field, while remaining open to new feedback; and, 7) periodically review how well this system is working for clients, IRC staff, and other key stakeholders.

In our strategic planning and at each phase of a project (or larger programme), these 7 Actions guide how we think about and undertake our projects. Since our projects are not linear, knowledge about and adaptations to one part of the cycle must feed into and affect other parts of the project cycle. Below, is a detailed explanation of each of the seven Client Responsive Programming Actions, and a set of minimum standards for their application during each phase of our strategic planning and project lifecycle.

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[9] E.g. for reasons of increased or decreased security levels, changes in access to communicates, technology available to our clients, and even our client's needs.

[10] See Annex 6 for a Project Implementation Assessment and Prioritisation Tool.

[11] For more about the importance of being client responsive during project exit see: IRC-Ground-Truth Solutions: Pilot Case Study: Protection Programme, Juba South Sudan. June 2016.

[12] See Annex 7 for a Project Exit Assessment and Prioritisation Tool.

Action 0: Assess and Prepare

It is at this stage that our team examines our context and our programme, interprets the available client responsive guidance in the Framework (and elsewhere), and makes decisions about how we will put that guidance into practice. In a sense, Action "0" helps us prepare for Actions 1-7. There are many factors to consider at this stage: what kind of programme we are running (livelihoods, WASH, education, etc.), what point in the project lifecycle we are at (SAP, design, implementation or exit and evaluation), the operational context (geography, crisis type, access), available human and financial resources, and, of course, the preferences of our clients. There are several important decisions to make at this stage:

Selecting Feedback Channels: We need to deliberately plan how we will collect and use client feedback in a way that is comprehensive, equitable, and logistically feasible at each phase of our programme cycle. At this stage, we should engage our clients in selecting the most appropriate channels for sharing their perspectives and feedback as the project phase moves forward. Use focus group discussions, brief surveys, and face-to-face meetings to inform the selection of the feedback channels through which you will solicit and receive client perspectives, and to better understand how your clients prefer to communicate with the IRC. If your programme has already been engaging with this group of clients, you can build on your existing knowledge.

Types of channels through which clients can provide feedback to the IRC:

Channel	Description	Examples	Strengths	Weaknesses
Proactive	Actively soliciting feedback from clients.	Surveys, focus groups, community meetings, individual interviews, etc.	Information is more actionable, nuanced, and easier to analyse.	We are limited to hearing feedback on issues the IRC is interested in and may miss broader and important trends.
Reactive	Providing a safe channel through which clients can reach us when they wish.	Suggestion boxes, toll-free hotlines, walk-in office hours, SMS lines, etc.	Clients can raise concerns as they arise about whatever concerns *them,* at a time which they choose*.*	Is often seen as only a complaints mechanism. Good management requires time, especially when there is high volume of feedback.
Open	Collecting feedback shared with staff in an ad-hoc manner during daily interactions in the field.	Conversations during project activities, listening exercises, etc.	Spontaneous and direct way to hear what clients think.	Difficult to systematically document and analyse, requires high degree of trust with field staff.
Indirect	Information about community perceptions that may be drawn from other sources.	M&E data, government surveys, community surveys conducted by partners or other INGOs, etc.	This provides supplemental information that can help inform what we know about our clients and the context.	It should rarely be used on its own to represent client perspectives. Often not available when agencies do not share information, and can be difficult to validate.

Setting-up Internal Mechanisms

In addition to selecting collection channels, we need to decide on ways to store different kinds of perspectives: those that relate to day-to-day implementation and are immediately actionable, which is often about the quality and type of assistance at the project level (called Type I feedback);[13] and those that are not immediately actionable and relate to broader review of programmatic approaches and strategies and may challenge our very programming (called Type II feedback).[14] Establish a protocol to immediately flag any information that might be sensitive (relating to corruption, sexual exploitation and abuse, etc.).

Feedback Registry

Establish a feedback log for recording feedback from clients (gathered through multiple channels). Keep track of who is responsible to address feedback and respond to communities which may not be the same person. The registry should note actions taken by staff and partners. Feedback registries can greatly aid in seeing patterns of Type I and Type II feedback, which can then be used for project and programme reviews and for advocacy with internal and external stakeholders. Registries can be used in performance assessment of the feedback mechanism itself by looking at volume, response rate and "fix rate" of issues

Deciding on roles and responsibilities: Based on the human resources available in your country programme and at your specific phase of the project cycle, decide on who will be responsible for what in each of the Client-Responsive Programming Actions 1-7 (e.g. Who will check the suggestion box? Who will input the information into the feedback registry? Who will facilitate the listening exercises? Who will perform a basic qualitative analysis?).

Considerations for Selection Feedback Channels

When selecting channels, it's important to consider who will have access to these channels and who may be excluded. Barriers may include literacy levels, access to phones, cultural dynamics and power relations within community (influenced perhaps by gender, age, ethnicity / nationality and other factors specific to the context), physical accessibility issues (distance or disability), etc. Also, consider to what degree these channels can or

Action 0 – Assess and Prepare: Minimum Standards			
SAP & Design:	**STANDARD – Selecting Mechanisms**		
SAP and Project Design usually require client input during a defined period (before the updated SAP or proposal is drafted). These stages usually rely on planning for proactive methods of	**Good Practice:** Use existing knowledge about client communication preferences to select methods.	**Great Practice**: Ask clients about how they would like to be consulted during this process.	**Responsibility: SAP Phase:** Country Management and Regional Management
	Good Practice: Plan at least one proactive mechanism to collect client input (such as a focus group, a survey, etc.).	**Great Practice**: Plan several proactive mechanisms to collect client input. This is important because certain groups may not feel comfortable speaking in	

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[13] **Type I:** Day-to-day/Operational feedback is often about the quality, type of assistance and requests for project level adjustments, i.e. changes in existing programme entitlements and services, targeting criteria, scheduling of distributions, type of NFIs distributed or shelter options.

[14] **Type II:** Big Picture Feedback is often about strategic issues at the broader level of the humanitarian response and strategies that agencies adopt to support local relief, recovery and reconstruction efforts. This type of feedback may challenge the very premise of a programme or its relevance and context appropriateness. Often such feedback is provided about intended and unintended impacts of the programme (i.e. 'your assistance is undermining local capacity', 'assistance is causing tensions in the community' 'we need livelihoods not hand-outs'). Most agency feedback mechanisms risk overlooking such 'big picture' feedback, because it often touches on issues beyond the scope of work or remit of a single agency, or of a single cluster.

gathering client perspectives.		certain settings (e.g. women may not feel comfortable speaking in mixed gender focus groups or at all).	**Design Phase:** Project Team and M&E Staff
		**STANDARD – Selecting Stakeholders**	
	Good Practice: Plan to engage with a representative sample of current and past clients.	**Great Practice**: In addition, plan to engage community members who are not served by the IRC, local civil society, local implementing partners, and/or local authorities.	**Responsibility:** Project Team and Frontline Staff
Implementation & Monitoring: It is likely that you will use a combination channels during this phase. Your channel selection should be based on your existing understanding of client communication preferences, context analysis, and your own implementation capacity.		**STANDARD – Selecting Channels**	
	Good Practice: Plan for at least one reactive and one proactive. Each should be contextually appropriate and selected by the community. Also think about how to use Open and Indirect feedback.	**Great Practice**: Select multiple channels (that were identified and verified by clients) to ensure access for all clients (e.g. gender, ethnicity, children, elderly, disabled etc.).	**Responsibility:** Frontline Staff, Project Staff, and Clients
		**STANDARD – Channels for Sensitive Information**	
	Good Practice: Establish at least one special channel for sensitive information (allegations of code of conduct violations, SEA, etc.) from clients, partners, and staff.	**Great Practice**: Establish an ethics committee to conduct a periodic review of this mechanism to ensure it is performing as it should.	**Responsibility:** HR staff, Country Management, and the Project Team
		**STANDARD – Channels for Non-Clients**	
	Good Practice: Establish a channel for staff and partners to provide their feedback.	**Great Practice**: Establish a channel through which community members who are not direct clients of the IRC can also provide their input.	**Responsibility:** Project Staff
Exit & Evaluation: This project phase will benefit from the project team's knowledge about the best way to engage with clients. However, this project phase is likely to be constrained by resources and time, and clients may be feeling anxious about the end of the project. Plan your client engagement channels with this in mind.		**STANDARD – Reactive and Open Channels**	
	Good Practice: Plan to leave at least one reactive channel and open channels of communication in place during this phase.	**Great Practice**: Plan to leave all reactive channels and open channels of communication operational throughout this phase.	**Responsibility:** Project Team and M&E Team
		**STANDARD – Proactive Channels**	
	Good Practice: Share with evaluators the aggregated trends and analysis of client perspectives collected during previous project phases to help shape their questions, evaluation methodologies, and data analysis.	**Great Practice**: Engage the Client Advisory Group[15] in validating of your evaluation lines of inquiry and to make sense of contradictory findings and conclusions.	**Responsibility**: M&E Team, Client Advisory Group, and Frontline Staff

[15] A Client Advisory Group is a consultative body that is representative of our client population. This group can be engaged quickly when RFPs come up to solicit input, or to help interpret contradictory information. However, be mindful of the power dynamics within the Client Advisory Group and between them and other members of the community.

Resources:	✓ Annex 8: CDA resources on common barriers to participation in feedback mechanism ✓ Annex 9: Definitions and Key Concepts for building Feedback Channels ✓ See World Vision's Guidance for more about how to decide on feedback channels ✓ Use the IRC Context Analysis, Conflict Sensitivity and Social Networking Analysis Tools to understand what communication channels are appropriate for different clients ✓ If already operating in the geographical area, see IRC Protection Mainstreaming "Beneficiary Assessment" as a way of gauging clients' participation in previous interventions' programme cycles ✓ See IRC Protection Mainstreaming "Project Design Assessment" as a reminder of key participation and feedback mechanisms to have in place before, during, and after project submission ✓ Review existing M&E data collection tools and adapt them for feedback collection (e.g. include 2-3 additional questions to existing survey). Consider a menu of options and the EPRU and SRR tools for feedback channels ✓ See CDA-ALNAP practitioner guidance of effective feedback mechanisms in humanitarian contexts. ✓ See IRC Protection Mainstreaming "Beneficiary Assessment" ✓ CDA Listening Exercise Guidance ✓ IRC Protection Mainstreaming "Self-Assessment" and "Staff Assessment" to identify key gaps in IRC practice or staff capacities at the country level ✓ See World Vision and Oxfam GB feedback registry templates

Action 1: Inform and Collect

Inform clients about how their perspectives will be collected and used. Set expectations about how client feedback will be acknowledged and responded to. Clearly communicate the timeframes for response to project-specific, day-to-day feedback, and broader feedback to the IRC on programmatic approaches and strategies. Remember that clients communicate and provide feedback in multiple ways, and these are not always the same channels through which clients prefer to receive information and response. Use the information gathered in Action 0 to make decisions about how to communicate information to clients. Then, systematically and deliberately collect and record client perspectives according to the channels and processes identified in Action 0.

When collecting feedback, consider the following:
- When using an open or reactive channel, it's important to acknowledge that feedback has been received. This can be a simple verbal recognition, or more systematic (providing clients with a 'receipt' that they can use to ask for follow-up).
- Ensure that you have established a channel through which clients can provide anonymous feedback, particularly in situations of high insecurity. Remember that even with anonymous channels, we should respond to the feedback, even if it is not directly to the client.
- Client perspectives can come from unexpected sources, including through staff from different programmes. Consider sharing client perspectives between teams to ensure information is not lost.

Information Provision

Clients and other stakeholders need information about the IRC, our mandate, project timelines, selection criteria, and eligibility. They also need information about available feedback channels and how feedback will be used. Consider establishing two-way communication channels, so clients can ask questions and receive an immediate response. Evidence suggests that when people are informed, their feedback is also better informed and more relevant to project teams

Action 1 Inform and Collect: Minimum Standards			
	STANDARD – Information Provision		
All project phases: These processes are carried out during limited time periods during SAP, Project Design, and Exit & Evaluation. They are carried out on a more ongoing basis during Implementation.	**Good Practice**: Provide a one-way channel with clients to share information about the IRC, its mission, vision, and projects that will affect the community.	**Great Practice**: Provide a two-way channel with clients to encourage dialogue. Create a safe space for clients to ask questions about the information being provided and respond to their feedback.	**Responsibility:** Project Team and Frontline Staff
	Good Practice: Inform clients about how the feedback mechanisms work and what they can expect; ensure all groups have access to this information through an appropriate channel (i.e. women, illiterate persons, children).	**Great practice:** Allow time for clients to ask questions about the feedback mechanisms throughout the project's lifecycle.	
	STANDARD – Staffing for Effective Collection		
	Good Practice: Ensure staff have necessary skills to manage the selected channels (e.g. interview skills for surveys, facilitation skills for focus groups, etc.) and that staff reflect the gender, language, socio-economic, and ethnic diversity in order to effectively facilitate feedback collection and response to communities.	**Great Practice**: Provide orientation about establishing client expectations and developing relationships to for appropriate staff. Provide extra training to enhance the capacities and skills of the staff responsible for client feedback collection.	**Responsibility**: Country Management and HR Staff.
Resources:	✓ Use COMET to record quantifiable information being obtained by clients ✓ See CDA-ALNAP Guidance for consideration regarding frontline staffing		

Open Feedback

Requires excellent listening skills and rapport with local community. It is the hardest to document in a systematic way. Provide staff with a special notebook to record any spontaneous feedback they hear, and encourage them to enter it into a database on a regular basis (daily, weekly, etc.)

Action 2: Compile and Present

Client perspectives collected through different channels need to be shared in a way which facilitates effective and efficient interpretation and decision making by different staff.[16] Internal referral pathways need to be established to define what kinds of feedback will be communicated to whom, at what frequency, and in what format.[17] It is essential to have a separate pathway for escalating and addressing sensitive information. When compiling and presenting information, consider the following:

- Conduct an institutional mapping exercise to see how information is currently being shared in the country programme. Use this analysis to see how to build upon those internal communication pathways.
- Examine external referral pathways for sharing information with peer organisation, other service providers, and relevant local government unit for addressing Type II feedback.

Data Management

Protecting our clients' confidentiality is essential in ensuring that we respect the rights of our clients, while also maintaining their trust. It is critical for their security and our ability to implement projects

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Action 2 Compile & Present: Minimum Standards			
SAP and Design:	**STANDARD – Collecting Information on "Big Picture" Issues**		
Compile summaries from client feedback data sets, including feedback solicited in Action 1, existing sources of information about client perspectives,[18] and data from staff and partner feedback (indirect channels). Present this feedback in accessible formats with the appropriate level of detailed as required by the decision maker(s).	**Good Practice**: Review Type II feedback collected during previous programmes and project cycles to see how it can be used going forward.	**Great Practice**: See if there is any additional data about your clients (through indirect channels)[19] that can help you identify "big picture" issues. Include data from any channels that collected staff and partner feedback.	**Responsibility**: Country Management, Regional Management, Project Staff, and M&E Teams
Implementation & Monitoring: It is often hardest to process client feedback during the project implementation phase. Ask key decision-makers at different levels what kind of feedback they want to see, how often, and in what format. Develop systems with clear timelines and responsibilities about	**STANDARD – Managing Feedback Data**		
	Good Practice: Maintain a specific safe space to store sensitive information.	**Great Practice:** Invite periodic reviews of the channel by ethics committee to ensure it is performing as expected.	**Responsibility**: M&E Team and Project Team
	Good Practice: Build on existing systems to manage project data (i.e. M&E data management platforms). Ensure that you have a system to code and categorise data as it is entered into the feedback registry. This will enhance	**Great Practice**: Build and maintain a separate feedback registry for non-sensitive information. Have a specific place to store Type II feedback data.	

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[16] Note that the decision-maker can and will change depending on the phase of the programme cycle

[17] Setting up these pathways is further discussed in Part III.

[18] i.e. participatory M&E data, existing client feedback mechanisms.

[19] Perhaps carried out by academics, the government, or other agencies.

how data on client perspectives is to be managed, compiled, and shared, both vertically and horizontally throughout the organisation.	your ability to sort and analyse information later		
	STANDARD – Data Presentation		
	Good Practice: Develop templates that set a standard for how to deliver the information in accessible and actionable formats to decision-makers at different levels.	**Great Practice**: Develop a digital feedback dashboard that can breakdown client data in various ways so that decision-makers can use it when they want.	**Responsibility**: M&E Teams, Project Teams, and Country Management
	STANDARD – Data Sources		
	Good Practice: Include data collected from clients, partners, and staff into your feedback registry.	**Great Practice**: Include information collected from community members who are not clients, other humanitarian actors, and government into your feedback registry.	**Responsibility**: M&E Teams and Project Teams
Exit & Evaluation: You will likely get feedback on the exit process itself, and perspectives on the project's overall outcomes – be sure to disaggregate for clarity. Stepping back to look at the bigger picture with retrospective analysis and multiple data sources will help you make sense of client data collected throughout all four phases.	**STANDARD – Compiling Feedback**		
	Good Practice: Purposefully compile client feedback about the exit process. Share this information immediately with programme teams so they can act quickly to address any final, pressing concerns.	**Great Practice**: Compile Type II client feedback separately, and sort it by who can address it (the IRC HQ, other partners, government). Identify ways to work with partners to share and address this feedback.	**Responsibility**: M&E Team and Project Team
Resources:	✓ See CDA case studies and WVUK BFP Pilot Practice Notes on Internal Referral Pathways ✓ IRC's Beneficiary Protection from Exploitation and Abuse Policy ✓ IRC's Guidelines for Conducting Investigations into Allegations of Beneficiary Exploitation and Abuse ✓ IRC Child Safeguarding Policy ✓ IRC Protection Mainstreaming Organisational Self-Assessment		

Time to React

Remember, different kinds of feedback have different timelines for reaction. Any sensitive information needs to be addressed immediately. Non-sensitive feedback that is immediately actionable (i.e. the jerry cans that we just distributed are defective) could be reviewed weekly. Non-sensitive feedback that is actionable but requires a change in strategy (i.e. the women want to form mothers' support group) could be reviewed monthly. Type II feedback could be reviewed quarterly

Action 3: Interpret

It is at this stage that decision-makers analyse client perspectives to identify important patterns and trends. They will compare this initial analysis with other sources of information available to them to develop an overall picture of what clients are saying and how it fits with our understanding of the reality on the ground. These other sources of information may be formalised (e.g. M&E data, contextual analysis and the OEF evidence base), and informal (e.g. decision makers will reflect on their own past experience, and the perspectives of colleagues).

One important consideration: If there are significant contradictions within client perspectives or between client perspectives and another data source, invite partners and Client Advisory Group members to help make sense of those contradictions.

Client Advisory Group

This is a consultative body that is representative of our client population. This group can be engaged quickly when RFPs come up to solicit input, or to help interpret contradictory information. However, be mindful of the power dynamics within the Client Advisory Group and between them and other members of the community.

Action 3 Interpret: Minimum Standards			
All project phases: During design, look for how client priorities fit into the IRC's ToC[20] and evidence about what works and doesn't in the context. During project implementation, use this to monitor and address emerging challenges and opportunities. At the exit phase, share the synthesis of client perspectives with relevant units for learning and future proposal development. A compelling report will offer interpretation of the data, and provide options for future programming.	**STANDARD – Participatory Analysis**		
	Good Practice: Check your interpretations with frontline project staff and/or Client Advisory Groups. They can flag misinterpretations in data trends. At the close of a project, use the end-of-project reviews as an opportunity to get key staff to review and interpret client perspectives gathered during previous stages.	**Great Practice**: Conduct your analysis in a participatory way. Invite frontline project staff, representatives of client groups, and partners to make sense of the data with you.	**Responsibility**: **SAP Phase:** Country and Regional Management **Other Phases:** Project Team and M&E Staff
Resources:	✓ [CDA-ALNAP Darfur Case Study](#) – highlights the importance of data triangulation		

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[20] Theory of Change

Action 4: Decide and Plan

Based on the interpretation process described during Action 3, decision-makers will generate options for whether and how to make changes based on client perspectives. Relevant stakeholders should be engaged to make the final decision (this can include key staff, partners, and representatives of client groups) and develop a plan for implementation that includes responsibilities, timelines, and resources.

> **Documenting versus Over-Proceduralising**
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> Being client-responsive should not require instituting multiple onerous procedures and protocols. It is critical to maintain a balance between the need to document decisions and changes in support of institutional learning against the risk of over-proceduralising such processes, which creates administrative burdens for staff and pulls them away from direct work with clients

Action 4 Decide & Plan: Minimum Standards			
All Phases: During SAP & Design, generate options to address the principle issues and opportunities identified in Action 3. Determine what options are feasible given the operational constraints and donor priorities/restrictions. At implementation phase, decisions about how to respond to feedback may take place either on a scheduled basis (e.g. during a planned project review meeting) or on an ad hoc basis (e.g. an urgent issue that requires attention). At project exit, decide and plan how to integrate the key lessons learned into subsequent project design and Strategy Action Planning, and how to share learning with other teams.	**STANDARD – Participatory Decision-Making**		
	Good Practice: Test the options generated with frontline staff, partners, and clients to understand their feasibility.	**Great Practice**: Make your decisions in a participatory way. Invite frontline staff, representatives of client groups, and partners to weigh in on the decisions while you are making them, instead of after.	**Responsibility**: **SAP Phase**: Country and Regional Management **Other Phases**: Project Staff and Frontline Staff
	STANDARD – Tracking Decisions		
	Good Practice: Keep track of the decision you have made based on client feedback.	**Great Practice**: Keep track not only of what decisions were made, but why, how, and by and with whom they were made.	**Responsibility**: Country Management, Regional Management and M&E teams
Resources:	✓ ADAPT Programme decision-tracker ✓ IRC Management Response Plan ✓ RASCI Sheets		

Action 5: Explain and Discuss

It is important to "close the loop" by explaining to and discussing with clients, project staff, and other stakeholders the decision which was made and the rationale on which it was based, and to discuss the implications of that decision. Consider the following when explaining and discussing decisions:

- Explain not just what decisions were made, but the rationale behind them. This may also help you to check whether the actions you are planning to take will indeed address clients' preferences and whether you've correctly understood what those preferences are.
- Think about whether and how to share these decisions with broader stakeholder groups.
- There are several ways to share these decisions with clients. At a minimum this includes one way channels such as flyers, a website or radio shows, but great practice entails dialogue with the client group about the decision made and its implications. Use your existing analysis of preferred client communication channels from Action 0.
- Think about the ways you can share and discuss decisions and actions internally with staff in the project (including field staff and M&E team members) as well as across projects and to managers. Options for sharing and discussing this information may include staff meetings, all-staff emails, monthly reports to staff etc.

Tip

Use your existing understanding of client communication preferences to select a channel to explain and discuss your decisions. Remember your information-provision channels are not necessarily the same as your feedback channels

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Action 5 Explain: Minimum Standards			
SAP, Project Design & Implementation: Close the loop by presenting decisions made from feedback to clients, staff, partners, and other key stakeholders. This can be done at key points (e.g. before you finalise a strategy or proposal), periodically (for non-urgent issues during implementation), or on an ad hoc basis (for more time-sensitive feedback). During your project design make sure to inform clients if the proposal is not accepted by the donor.	**STANDARD – Communication Channels**		
	Good Practice: Explain any decisions related to client feedback through one-way communication channels (e.g. noticeboards, radio, posters, etc.).	**Great Practice**: Explain any decisions related to client feedback through two-way communication channels (such as meetings) to allow for a dialogue. Record the reactions and feedback to the decision.[21]	**Responsibility**: Project Team

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[21] This is also a form of client feedback.

Exit & Evaluation:	STANDARD – Close the Loop		
Close the loop on your evaluation processes and findings with clients and other key stakeholders. Share the lessons with relevant technical units in a proactive manner to inform thinking about good practices and programme re-design in other locations.	**Good Practice**: Plan a final community meeting to share how Type I and Type II feedback was shared and used. Address any potential next steps. Allow time to answer client questions.	**Great Practice**: Produce a concise and jargon-free summary of key evaluation findings related to project relevance, quality, and implementation and share it with clients, partners, and other stakeholders.	**Responsibility**: Project Team
Resources:	✓ ALNAP-CDA Practitioner Guidance on Effective Feedback Mechanisms ✓ CDA-WVUK BFM Pilot Practice Note 5: Communicating a Response to Feedback.		

Institutional Learning

Staff turnover is a factor that can negatively impact institutional learning. Develop a process for capturing lessons that have implications for organisational policies, strategies, and programming in the future. Some questions to consider at each stage

Action 6: Act

Implement the plan developed in Action 4, and document actions for internal learning.

Action 6 Act: Minimum Standards			
	STANDARD – Implementation		
All Phases:	**Good Practice**: Implement the action as it was planned in Action 4.	**Great Practice**: Ensure flexibility in planning and implementation to adapt your project work plans and targets as you move forward.	**Responsibility**: Project Team

Action 7: Review

Periodically review this cycle with clients, staff, and other stakeholders to see how the approach is working, where it is underperforming, and how it can be improved. A review may lead to short-term changes in how client perspectives are collected and acted upon, or may contribute to general institutional learning about challenges and best practices in client-responsiveness.

Questions to Consider - SAP Review

- Were there conflicting client priorities? How were these reconciled? Could client perspectives be reconciled with existing IRC Theories of Change or evidence from the OEF?
- Were clients' priorities realistic given the operating context and the IRC's mandate? Could better information-provision about the IRC help to mitigate unrealistic expectations?
- How did we solicit client perspectives without raising expectations?

Questions to Consider - Project Design:

- What did clients most want to see for future IRC projects? Where are we housing this feedback so it can be utilised when developing future projects?
- Were there conflicting client priorities? How were these reconciled? Could client perspectives be reconciled with donor priorities as expressed in an Request for Proposals?
- How did donors respond to requests for flexibility to accommodate client-responsiveness in the future? If the answer is not well, how can we work on educating our donors about the importance of being flexible?

Questions to Consider - Implementation & Monitoring:

- How are the priorities of our clients evolving? Is there flexibility to adapt projects to meet those changes?
- Where are institutional strengths and weaknesses to respond to changes in our clients' priorities? How can we correct for those weaknesses?
- Do staff have the appropriate capacities to be responsive? If not, what skills need to prioritised?

Questions to Consider - Project Exit & Evaluation:

- What are the key lessons from our monitoring, feedback, and evaluation data that have immediate use in improving our responsiveness in this programme or country programme? What are the lessons that need to be shared with others at the IRC globally?
- How can we best document lessons from a range of sources for easy retrieval in the future?

Action 7 Review Responsiveness Mechanisms			
SAP, Project Design & Implementation:	**STANDARD – Participatory Reviews**		
Identify clients who felt that their voices were heard in this process. Evaluate what obstacles you faced in collecting actionable client perspectives. During implementation, periodically review if the current system is working well. Evaluate which channels are being used and which are being neglected, if certain groups are not using the mechanisms, if there are gatekeepers, if information flow within the office is working as it should. Make corrections to the feedback mechanisms and internal referral	**Good Practice**: Ask clients (especially from marginalised or vulnerable groups) if they feel that we have been responsive and if they like the mechanisms through which they communicate with the IRC.[22]	**Great Practice**: Ask IRC staff and partners about how they felt the internal processes of client responsiveness worked and what could be improved.[13]	**Responsibility**: Project Team, Frontline Staff, Clients, and Country Management

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[22] This can be done at key moments (close to the end of the project or strategy design) or periodically (during implementation).

pathways as needed, and inform clients, staff, and partners of any changes that may occur.			
Exit & Evaluation:	STANDARD – *Reviewing Responsiveness*		
Review how well we were able to take clients' perspectives into consideration in project exit and evaluation, and document learning to inform subsequent exit processes.	**Good Practice**: Include at least one question in evaluation ToRs and data collection instruments that assesses clients' satisfaction with how responsive IRC programme and staff were.	**Great Practice**: Use an indicator for client-responsiveness that allows country teams to self-assess client-responsiveness at the end of the project.	**Responsibility**: M&E Teams
Resources:	✓ IRC Monitoring for Action Project Learning Reviews		

Part IV: Client-Responsive Programming - Enablers

This section details several critical factors that will enable Actions 0-7 to occur smoothly throughout the project lifecycle. These factors are largely internal to how the IRC operates, and in many cases, we can strengthen existing processes in order to improve our ability to be client responsive. Factors discussed below include: allocating staff roles and responsibilities, defining internal and external pathways for information, managing data and human resources, financing client responsiveness, demonstrating leadership for client responsiveness, and facilitating external cooperation.

Enabler A: Roles and Responsibilities

The primary responsibility for client-responsiveness lies with our **Field teams.** The **Programme Coordinator or Project Director** is responsible for ensuring that the work of their team measures up to the IRC's standards, including client-responsiveness. The different **Managers**[23] within the programme teams are responsible for helping the Programme Coordinator carry out this vision. Our **Frontline Staff** are the face of the IRC, and are the ones building trust with our clients by both listening and responding to them. However, everyone has a role to play in supporting programme teams in being client-responsive:

> **Frontline Staff**
>
> Remember, in some cases, our frontline staff may be from the same communities as our clients. They therefore can play a unique and critical role in gathering and sharing client perspectives

In the Field:

- **Country Management:** Supports through resource allocation, advocacy, and setting policies that facilitate client-responsiveness. They are also in a unique position to create a culture of client-responsiveness by requesting and using client feedback data to make decisions. Management can be a model by being responsive to staff and stakeholders, and by integrating client perspectives into major programming decisions and Country Strategy Action Plans.

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[23] Or other people responsible for certain field sites or areas of programming.

- **Monitoring & Evaluation Teams:** As the experts in gathering and analysing information about our projects, M&E teams are critical in helping project teams set up the mechanisms to collect, compile, and make sense of client perspectives.
- **Grants and Compliance Teams:** Help ensure that proposals budget adequate amounts for personnel, technology, and activities that will allow us to collect and analyse client perspectives. Help structure grants in a way that allows for flexibility during implementation. They can support project teams to ensure that donor commitments to client-responsiveness are met.
- **Human Resources:** Support project teams search for and identifying potential staff that have the qualities needed to be client-responsive. Once staff are on board, they can help supervisors to design capacity-building initiatives and monitor performance.
- **Logistics & Procurement Units:** Clients often have a lot to say about the goods and services that the IRC provides. Logistics and procurement staff can take client feedback into account when making decisions about what, from whom, and how goods and services are purchased. They also play a key role in ensuring that the Field Teams can adapt quickly based on client feedback that they have heard.
- **Security Teams:** The IRC can only be responsive if they can build relationships with clients. Security teams can find ways to maintain security protocols while allowing project teams the space, time, and flexibility to build relationships. Stronger communications channels with clients may strengthen our understanding of the security context.

Regions and HQ:
- **Regional Management:** Supports country management in implementing client-responsive programming, by advocating for their needs, and holding them to their commitments. They can play a role in lobbying donors, governments, and other humanitarian actors to create a broader enabling environment.
- **Client-Responsiveness Team:** This team work on issues at the heart of client-responsiveness and can provide additional technical support, training, and tools that support the application of this framework.
- **Measurement Team:** Provides standards and tools for the Regional Measurement Action Coordinators (RMACs) / Regional MEAL Coordinators to provide technical support to M&E staff so they feel prepared to support programme teams in capturing, managing, and making sense of client perspectives.
- **Other Technical Units:** Other Technical Units can help programme staff to think about how to apply the framework in their particular sector, share examples of best practices, and provide advice on technical tasks.[24] Units such as the Protection Mainstreaming team and the Governance Technical Unit can bring particular experience and expertise to bear in applying the Framework.
- **Awards Management Unit:** Help programme and grants staff interpret donor requirements and satisfy them, and craft proposals that are competitive *and* include the resources that are important to client-responsive programming. They can help lobby donors in contract negotiations for the kind of flexibility that facilitates client-responsiveness.

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[24] For instance, the VPRU can give guidance on handling sensitive information.

Enabler B: Internal and External Systems and Pathways

It's critical to build strong internal systems and channels through which information can be passed, housed, managed, and utilised. This is a common area where client-responsiveness breaks down, as information can be lost or ignored if it is not clear who needs to see what information, when, and how.

STANDARD - Handling of Non-Sensitive Information	
Good Practice: Have clear designations of what kinds of feedback are communicated, by whom, to whom, and at what frequency. Communicate shared responsibilities to overall project team and M&E staff.	**Great Practice**: Conduct institutional mapping to understand how information is currently communicated in your office. Build upon this when necessary to ensure that information moves vertically and horizontally through the office.
Resources: WVUK BFP Pilot Practice Notes on Internal Referral Pathways	
Responsibility: Project Team.	

STANDARD - Handling of Sensitive Information	
Good Practice: Establish at least one system to handle sensitive information using the IRC's existing processes (including: allegations of code of conduct violations, SEA, etc.).	**Great Practice**: Establish an ethics committee to conduct a periodic review of this mechanism to ensure it is performing as it should.
Resources: IRC's Beneficiary Protection from Exploitation and Abuse Policy; IRC's Guidelines for Conducting Investigations into Allegations of Beneficiary Exploitation and Abuse, Child Safeguarding Policy; Protection Mainstreaming Organisational Self-Assessment, Ethics Point.	
Responsibility: Project Team	

It's also important to build processes for dealing with Type II feedback. These channels may include sharing information with peer humanitarian organisations, partner agencies, the government, or within the IRC (from country level to HQ).

STANDARD - Handling Type II Feedback	
Good Practice: Periodically review Type II feedback throughout the project, and make recommendations to Country Management about future programmes.	**Great Practice**: Develop external referral pathways for communicating Type II feedback to other actors who may be in a better position to respond or advocate for the requested changes.
Resources: See CDA-ALNAP Practitioner Guidance on Effective feedback in Humanitarian Contexts (pg.21-22)	
Responsibility: Programme Coordinator and Country Management	

Enabler C: Data Management

Client perspectives need to be compiled and stored so they can be used efficiently by decision-makers. It is essential that data is managed in a simple, accessible, and safe way.

STANDARD - Data Safety	
Good Practice: Any data collection that includes personally identifying information needs to be guided by a responsible data policy.	**Great Practice**: Ensure there is adequate encryption and data security in place so that sensitive information cannot be hacked.
Resources: Beneficiary Protection from Exploitation and Abuse Policy; Guidelines for Conducting Investigations into Allegations of Beneficiary Exploitation and Abuse; COMET Guidance.	
Responsibility: Programme Coordinator and M&E Staff	

STANDARD - Data Disaggregation	
Good Practice: Ensure that client feedback is disaggregated by location, age, and gender.	**Great Practice**: If possible, disaggregate feedback by other factors that will help you analyse the views of certain vulnerable groups (disabled persons, members of a certain caste, etc.)
Resources: [Sex and Age Matter: Improving Humanitarian Response in Emergencies](#), IRC Gender Equality Guidance on the importance of gender disaggregation	
Responsibility: Programme Coordinator and M&E Staff	

Enabler D: Leadership

Country Management can create a culture of responsiveness by being responsive to staff, as key staff have valuable perspectives that can improve the quality of the project. Modelling responsiveness internally may help staff see the significance of being responsive with clients. Creating a culture of responsiveness can aid staff to understand that negative feedback is not a threat. By requesting client feedback often, leaders can communicate to their staff about the importance of responsiveness.

STANDARD - Staff Feedback	
Good Practice: Identify a standard process for soliciting and responding to staff perspectives. Consult the findings from most recent IRC-wide staff survey.	**Great Practice**: Establish multiple channels for staff feedback; consider some anonymised channels.
Resources: Past HR staff surveys templates and recently collected IRC-wide staff feedback.	
Responsibility: Country Management	

STANDARD - Model Good Responsiveness Practices	
Good Practice: Regularly request and acknowledge a summary of client perspectives. This lets staff know that client feedback is valuable to management.	**Great Practice**: Regularly update staff about what decisions have been made in response to client perspectives. This lets staff know that client feedback is actionable, and closes the loop.
Resources: See [CDA-ALNAP Case Study. 2013. Investing in Listening: IOM's Experience with Humanitarian Feedback Mechanisms in Sindh Province, Pakistan.](#)	
Responsibility: Programme Coordinator and Country Management	

Enabler E: Human Resources

Client-responsiveness is ultimately about people listening to people, so it is important to ensure that we appropriately invest in the quantity and quality of staff across all programme levels to facilitate this. Client-responsiveness can be an important consideration in decisions about who you hire, how you manage staff, and how you evaluate their performance. Capacity-building is often in high-demand from staff who want to be client-responsive but may lack certain critical skills (listening, facilitation, qualitative analysis, etc.).

STANDARD - Job Descriptions	
Good Practice: Job descriptions of all client-facing staff should include relevant responsiveness skills and aptitudes (listening, facilitating group discussions, etc.)	**Great Practice**: Job descriptions of all staff should include relevant responsiveness skills and aptitudes for their work (i.e. procurement officers being able to assess the cultural appropriateness of purchases).
Resources: Relevant HR resources on attitude/aptitude recruitment	
Responsibility: Supervisors and HR Staff	

STANDARD - Hiring for Responsiveness	
Good Practice: Ensure your field teams are representative of the diversity of your clients (gender, language, ethnicity, etc.).[25]	**Great Practice**: Before you start hiring, solicit input from clients about what kinds of diversity they would like to see represented in your team.
Resources: ProMMs Organisational Assessment – see section on staffing structures (question #7, page 9)	
Responsibility: Programme Coordinators and HR staff	

STANDARD - Performance Reviews	
Good Practice: Integrate responsiveness as assessment criteria in staff performance reviews.	**Great Practice**: Provide incentives by recognising and rewarding staff who embody the practice of client-responsiveness.
Resources*:* forthcoming HR guidance on core competencies	
Responsibility: Supervisors and HR staff	

STANDARD - Capacity-Building	
Good Practice: Include briefings about IRC's client-responsiveness during on-boarding process.	**Great Practice**: Provide professional development and training opportunities to increase skills important for responsiveness (listening, facilitation, qualitative analysis skills).
Resources*:* TBD	
Responsibility: Country Management and HR Staff	

Enabler F: Financing Client Responsiveness

Budgeting

If client-responsiveness is all about people, it's vital that we budget and plan to support the people who will ultimately be interfacing with our clients. Support is needed for staff in the field (to properly engage with clients) and in the office (to properly document, analyse, and advocate for client perspectives). Budgeting for staff (personnel and their time) with responsiveness in mind does not mean a series of new posts, but rather in allocating a percentage of staff time to support client responsive practices. It is also important to ensure that we budget for the costs associated with administering the feedback channels, noting that many can be implemented quite cheaply.

STANDARD - Budget for the Appropriate Staff	
Good Practice: Budget for staff time allocation necessary to run selected client engagement channels (e.g. call centre staff), manage data collection and analysis, perform participatory analysis and decision-making, etc.	**Great Practice**: Budget for capacity-building opportunities for staff. Budget for technical unit support staff to advise country teams on embedding CR cycle into new programmes.
Resources: IRC CVC Briefing Note – Resourcing Client Responsiveness	
Responsibility: Programme Coordinators and Grants and Compliance Teams	

STANDARD - Budget for the Appropriate Activities	
Good Practice: Budget for the running costs of your client feedback channels. This should include multiple channels (reactive, proactive, and open-ended).[26]	**Great Practice**: Have a modest discretionary budget to carry out small activities that are recommended through client feedback.
Resources*:* IRC CVC Briefing Note – Resourcing Client Responsiveness, ADAPT Budget Flex Approach Guidance	
Responsibility: Programme Coordinators and Grants and Compliance Teams	

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[25] This helps to build trust and facilitate a more open sharing of perspectives.
[26] Consider contracts with local radio station to host call-in show, snacks for focus groups etc.

Working with Donors

Donors can play a significant role in creating the conditions in which we can be responsive – providing flexible grant agreements and budgets sufficient in amount and flexibility. Many donors are now integrating client-responsiveness and accountability into their minimum standards. There are opportunities and constraints that we should consider when working with our donors.[27] While the IRC doesn't have total control over this, there are best practices for each team who works with our donors.

- **Awards Management Units** – AMU can advocate for donors to change how they design their Requests for Proposals (RFPs) to allow more time for consultation and flexibility in their grant agreements to allow us to adapt projects based on client perspectives. The AMU can help country programme staff to use donors' own language to advocate for responsiveness.
- **Country Programme Teams** – Actively maintain a dialogue about client-responsiveness with local or regional donor representatives. Highlight client feedback and demonstrate how you put it into action. If local donor representatives are on your side, you have a powerful advocate.
- **M&E and Grants Compliance Teams** – Demonstrate that client-responsiveness has a positive impact on programme outcomes and that 'negative' client feedback is not a sign of failure, but presents opportunities for course corrections.

STANDARD – Incorporating Flexibility into Proposals	
Good Practice: Make a compelling case for adaptive management and flexibility in proposals and correspondence with project donors. When IRC remains flexible to respond to client priorities, this results in effective response and better outcomes.	**Great Practice**: Present different scenarios into proposal based on possible client feedback (similar to how the ADAPT framework present "positive" and "negative" scenarios)
Resources: See ADAPT Frame Tool	
Responsibility: Programme Coordinators and Grants and Compliance Teams	

Enabler G: Internal Operations

Logistics & Procurement

Often our clients' perspectives focus on the goods and services they are receiving. It is important to involve those who purchase and deliver our goods so that they understand the importance of integrating client perspectives into their decision-making processes, and so that they make efforts to speed up logistics and procurement processes to enable programme teams to adapt to client perspectives in a timely fashion.

STANDARD - Bid Analysis and Procurement Decisions	
Good Practice: Client preference is one of the criteria used when considering selection of vendors and products for appropriateness and quality.	**Great Practice**: Logistics and procurement work with programme staff to actively solicit client opinions on what services and goods are being procured.
Resources: TBD	
Responsibility: Logistics and Procurement Teams and Programme Coordinators	

Security

For client perspectives to be gathered in a constructive and forthright way, client-staff relationships need to be built. Often, there is a trade-off between limiting movement for security reasons and allowing staff adequate time and access to build those relationships. In addition, client perspectives can help inform Security Teams about what is actually happening on the ground. Furthermore, the

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[27] See Annex 10 for constraints and opportunities when working with donors.

improvements in IRC-client relationships can help create a more secure operating environment for our staff, by building the trust and acceptance of clients.

STANDARD - Security Assessments and Restrictions	
Good Practice: Evaluate whether movement restrictions are unnecessarily limiting the opportunity for meaningful staff-client interactions.	**Great Practice**: Undertake a participatory analysis of the security situation with key stakeholders and make collective recommendations about security.
Resources: TBD	
Responsibility: Security Teams, Field Coordinators and Programme Coordinators	

STANDARD - Assessing Community Acceptance	
Good Practice: Give Security Teams any/all information that relates to client and stakeholder perspectives of the IRC that may have an impact on the security of our operations.	**Great Practice**: Security Teams request that field and/or M&E staff actively solicit client perspectives on acceptance of the IRC in local communities.
Resources: TBD	
Responsibility: Security Teams, Field Coordinators, Field Staff, and M&E staff	

Enabler H: External Cooperation

Local Implementing Partners

Implementing partners are a critical link between the IRC and our clients and the communities in which they live, and they play a key role in the achievement of our objectives. We are responsible for supporting our partners to be client-responsive. Often, our partners are themselves members of the local community. In other instances, our partners serve as representatives of their communities, or they seek to represent the most marginalised. As such, they need to be systematic about how they listen and respond to local perspectives. Our partners' perspectives are also valuable and we need to be responsive to them as well. If we have any capacity-building / organisational development programming, or if there are capacity strengthening activities as part of a broader programme, it's especially important to treat our partners like clients and solicit their feedback.[28]

STANDARD - Partner Capacity-Building / Organisational Development	
Good Practice: Brief partners on the IRC's Client-Responsive Programming Approach and set expectations for good practice, using the standards as a reference. Consider the partner's skills and capacities to gather, analyse, respond to, use, and act on client feedback. Find ways to support partners, for example, in structuring their decision-making processes.	**Great Practice**: Provide training on key skills (i.e. facilitation, listening, qualitative data analysis) and include partner staff in any workshops on client-responsiveness.
Resources: IRC's Client Responsive Programming Framework	
Responsibility: Programme Coordinators and Managers	

STANDARD - Partner Responsiveness	
Good Practice: Regularly solicit and respond to partner feedback using structured and informal feedback channels.	**Great Practice**: With partners, establish period reviews as a standard practice that solicits feedback on how responsive we are to their requests and perspectives, and how/where we can improve.
Resources: IRC Client Responsive Programming Framework	
Responsibility: Programme Coordinators	

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[28] See Annex 10 for more about working with local partners and the opportunities and constraints we face in being responsive with partners.

Humanitarian Peers

The IRC does not operate in a vacuum, and there are often other actors (local, national, and international) that are working in the same communities or areas. How our peers engage with affected populations affects how our clients may perceive us, and how we collaborate and coordinate can increase or decrease how effective we can be at addressing client priorities.[29]

STANDARD - Information-Sharing	
Good Practice: Periodically convene to review summaries of client perspectives collected by different organisations.	**Great Practice**: Conduct inter-agency listening exercises or build joint feedback systems.
Resources*:* See CDA-ALNAP Practitioner Guidance on Feedback Mechanisms, CDA's Time to Listen, CDA's Guide to Effective Listening	
Responsibility: Country Management	

STANDARD - Referrals and Advocacy	
Good Practice: Agree with peers what referral mechanisms will be used if the IRC receives feedback that may be more relevant to another agency.	**Great Practice**: Collectively advocate for needs that cannot be met by any operating partner.
Resources*:* TBD	
Responsibility: Country Management and Regional Management	

Annexes

Annex 1 – Complete list of people consulted during the development to this framework
Annex 2 – IRC's commitment to client responsiveness
Annex 3 – How Client Responsiveness fits into other practices
Annex 4 – Excel Document SAP Priority Assessment & Prioritisation Tool
Annex 5 – Excel Document Project Design Assessment and Prioritisation Tool
Annex 6 – Excel Document Project Implementation Assessment and Prioritisation Tool
Annex 7 – Project Exit Assessment and Prioritisation Tool
Annex 8 – Common barriers to participation in feedback mechanism
Annex 9 – Definitions and Key Concepts for building Feedback Channels
Annex 10 – Opportunities and Constraints of your environment
Annex 11 – Full List of Minimum Standards

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[29] See Annex 10 for constraints and opportunities working with our peers improving client responsiveness.