CARE International – Somalia/Somaliland

The use of ICT to receive and address beneficiaries' feedbacks and complaints in a fragile context

- Feedbacks, complaints and Response Mechanism (FCRM) policy
- SMS/On-line System

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Key Features of the two systems

FCRM Policy

- **Internal** policy for CARE Somalia/Somaliland
- Built on the previous experience of the Emergency Program, now applied to other programs
- Designed to address both **non-sensitive** (program related) and **sensitive** (child protection, SEA, fraud) complaints
- **Free toll lines** available in each field office
- **Awareness raising** conducted during community meetings
- **1 FP in each location** to record the information and 1 Advisor to consolidate the cases on a monthly basis
- To be linked to the new CO on-line MIS system to automatically generate reports
- **Piloted** in several Emergency projects
- No sensitive complaints received
- Non-sensitive complaints received mainly related to cash distribution, CFW, participants' registration

SMS/On-line system

- **Donor** established system (to be used by all implementing partners)
- Developed and managed by a **LNGO** (Shaqadoon)
- Feedbacks/Complaints gathered through **free SMS** that participants and other community members can send in **Somali language**
- Feedback/Complaints gathered through calls to LNGO and then written for partner to answer (310)
- SMS translated into English, forwarded to CARE to be addressed
- CARE's answer translated into Somali and answer sent to the complainant
- Complaints and response **published on the website** http://ssf.onlinefeeds.org/ for immediate access and reporting
- **Awareness raising** of the communities organized by the LNGO that manages the system

Example CARE Somalia/Somaliland Flow Chart

Complaint Flow Chart for External Non-Sensitive Complaints
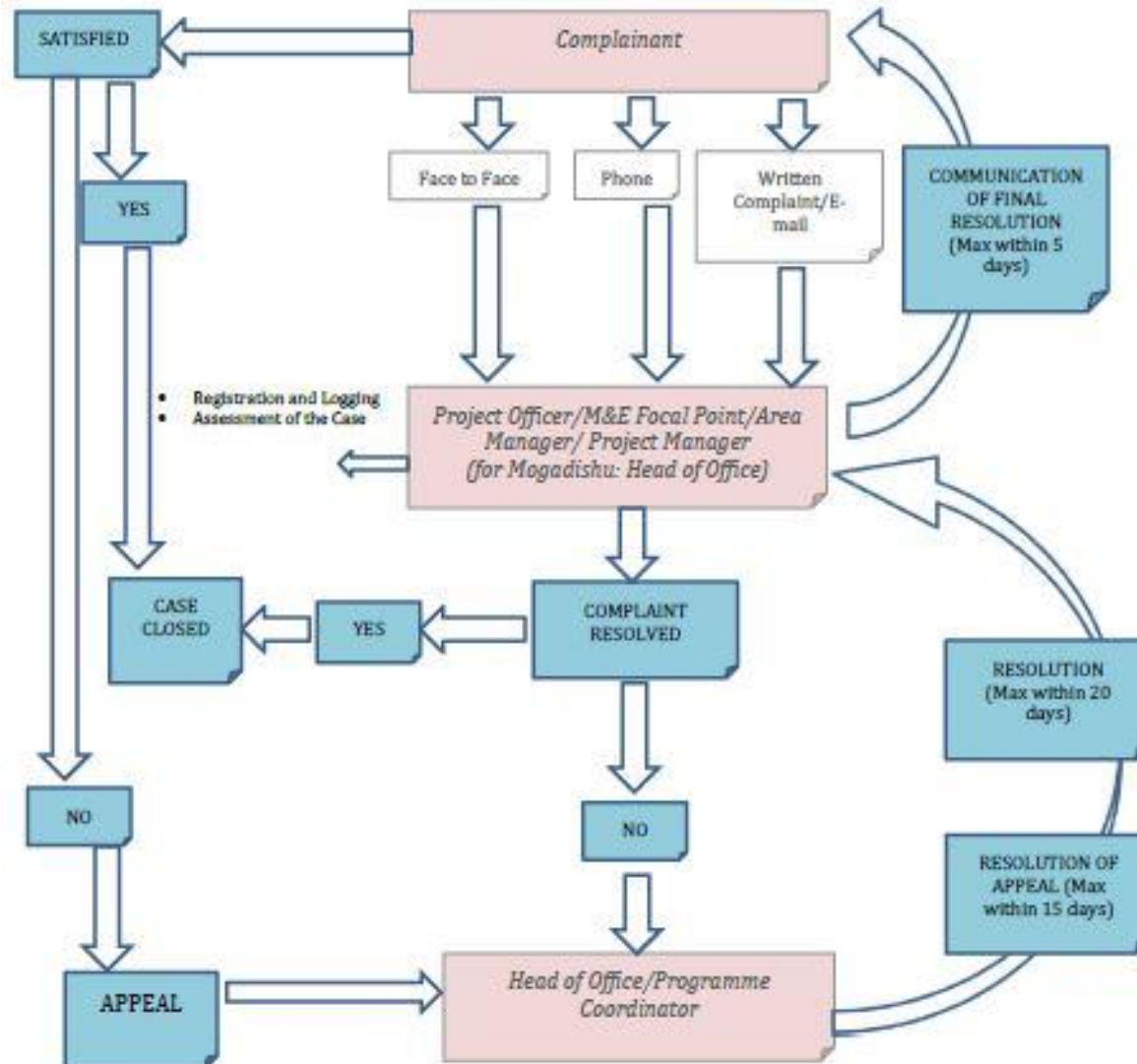
Complaint Example

Participant complaining of not having received hygiene promotion incentive for the last three months.
The project manager followed up and realized that it was a mistake on CARE side as they hadn't included this participant in the proper list. The incentive was paid within 1 week.

On-line system web-page
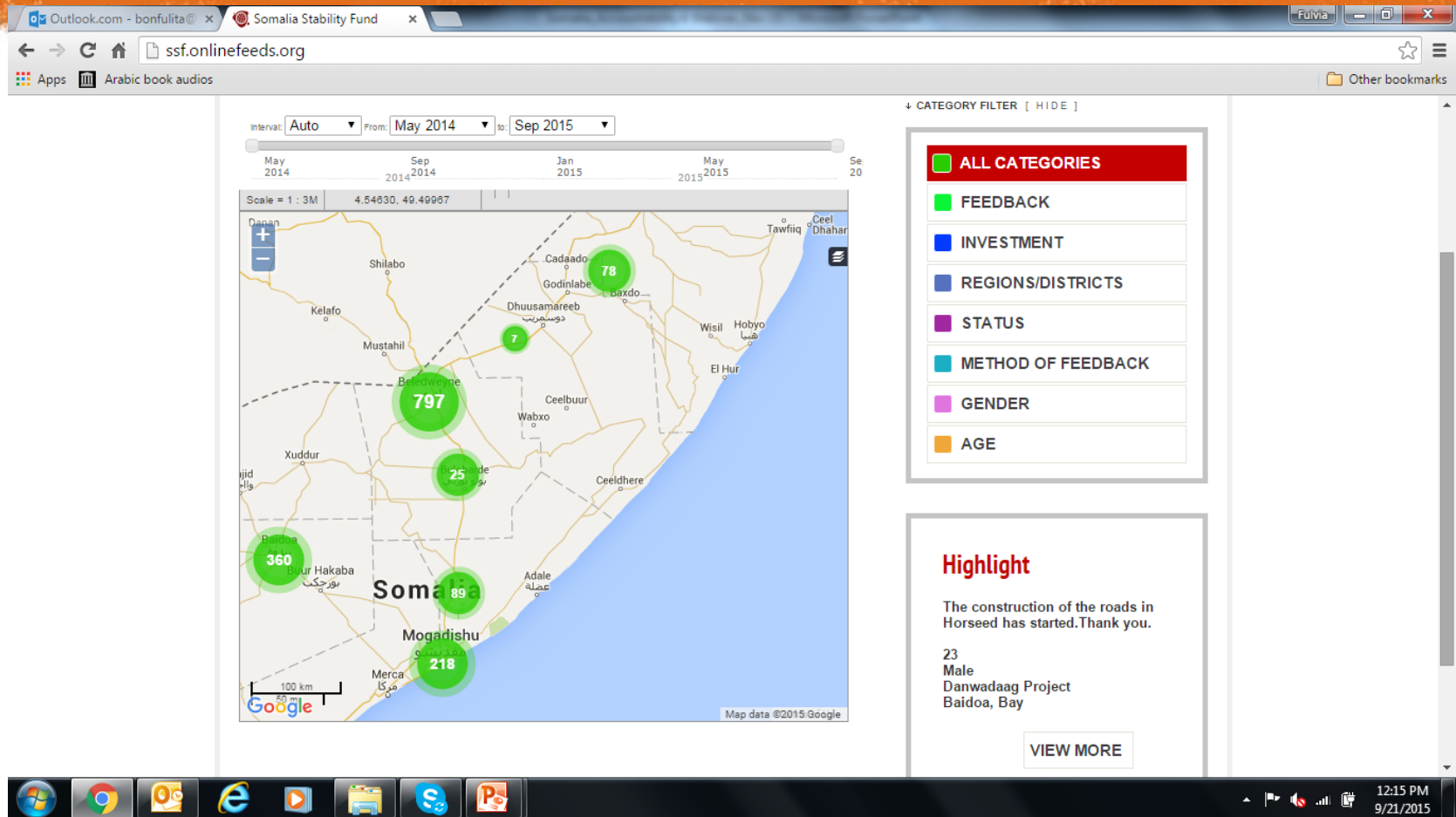
Complaint Example

Project participants in two villages (Ceelbuuh/Xingalool) reported dissatisfaction of the community with the members of the Village Council and CARE immediately referred the issue to the Mayor and Governor for action (in one location, new members were elected, in the other, the changes were rejected)

FCRM policy specific challenges

- Implementing the policy in a CO that operates in 4 different "contexts" (head office in Kenya, field offices in Somaliland, Puntland and South Central Somalia) demands a lot of resources, coordination and commitment.

- FPs are not 100% dedicated to FCRM, they do it in addition to their other jobs with challenges related to priorities and availability of time

- Reporting and responding to sensitive complaints requires a lot of capacity building, of both CARE staff and the communities

- Standard information flow is not always applicable in field offices where CARE implements projects from different programmes and where the hierarchy and responsibilities change.

- Somalia/Somaliland is an oral culture, so people may not be convinced of the importance of recording complaints for the purpose of better programming and reporting

SMS/On-line System specific challenges

Outsourcing the management of the system to a third party (LNGO) creates challenges such as:

- Many complaints received are **not valid/not relevant to the project**, due to the fact that community mobilization and awareness on the system and on the types of feed-backs/complaints is done by a Shaqadoon representative who doesn't have full understanding of the project CARE is implementing.
- **Issues of translation** from Somali to English and vice-versa
- Issues related to **initial screening of complaints** by the LNGO (they decide which complaints to forward to CARE and which don't require support).
- All community members, not just project participants, can send complaints. This creates challenges in checking **reliability of the sources and veracity of the complaints**
- **Little flexibility on the timeframe for response**, which hinders the capacity to carry out a proper investigation of the case before answering the complaint
- **Time consuming** especially because of the high number of non-valid complaints that still need to be addressed according to the system's rules.

General Lessons Learnt

- Building trust of the community to report **requires time and dedication**

- Use of ICT is not very effective for feedback on quality and relevance of actions - **better collected through traditional ways** (community meetings, monitoring visits)

- Different reporting mechanisms should be used complementarily (SMS, toll free lines, community meetings, etc.)**; informal feedback mechanisms should be used more systematically**, ensuring that information is aggregated and analysed

- Need to have **adequate resources (costs are high)** and clear processes in place

- **Capacity building** is very important within CARE and in the communities

- **Use of different channels to raise awareness** of the community is fundamental (community meetings, beneficiaries cards, organized capacity building sessions)

- There's little coordination among different organizations operating in Somalia/Somaliland on systems, leading to **fatigue and confusion for participants** targeted by different organizations with different systems

- When trust is built, possible conflict situation/gatekeepers/instable environment don't seem to prevent participants from reporting complaints to CARE.