CARE's On-line Feedback Commons

CARE Nepal Community Feedback Collector Training, during Constituent Voice Pilot Photo: CARE
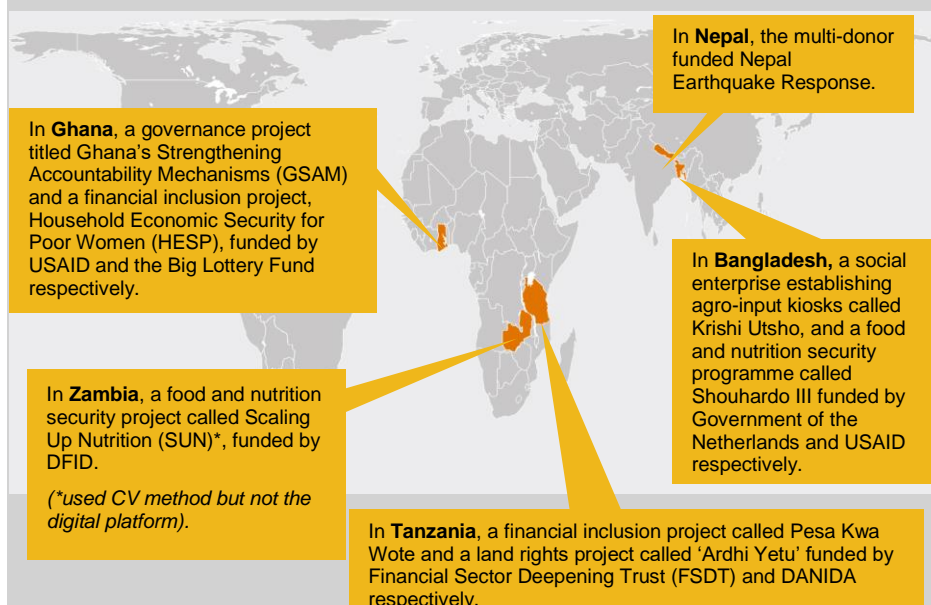
Introducing CARE's 'Constituent Voice' (CV) Feedback Mechanism Pilot

In FY16-18, CARE piloted the CV methodology resulting in an on-line platform for benchmarking CARE projects globally against stakeholder feedback. The Constituent Voice (CV) methodology helps to action CARE's commitment to improving accountability to, and among, programme stakeholders, and to take concrete steps to foster more equal partnerships. The CV pilot tested a process that could be applied across CARE.

The CV feedback mechanism is a flexible tool used for reflecting on the feedback of key programme stakeholders, engaging in open dialogue with them as a regular part of stakeholder relationships, and acting on the findings regularly. Based on the Net Promotor Score (NPS) index, Constituent Voice proactively asks a few questions on a regular basis through tailored micro-surveys. In this way, the CV methodology responds to the growing support for more 'adaptive development', providing faster and more cyclical check-in junctures, where feedback can be used as a management tool.

Digital Platform: CARE's feedback system operates on a digital platform within Keystone's Feedback Commons. It consists of two main tools. The Survey Builder tool in the system supports the creation of simple micro-surveys. The Data Explorer tool enables programme and partner staff to analyse feedback and create data graphics that can be used during dialogue sessions and management meetings.

Which CARE programmes are piloting the CV Feedback method?

In **Nepal**, the multi-donor funded Nepal Earthquake Response.

In **Ghana**, a governance project titled Ghana's Strengthening Accountability Mechanisms (GSAM) and a financial inclusion project, Household Economic Security for Poor Women (HESP), funded by USAID and the Big Lottery Fund respectively.

In **Bangladesh,** a social enterprise establishing agro-input kiosks called Krishi Utsho, and a food and nutrition security programme called Shouhardo III funded by Government of the Netherlands and USAID respectively.

In **Zambia**, a food and nutrition security project called Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN)*, funded by DFID.

*(*used CV method but not the digital platform).*

In **Tanzania**, a financial inclusion project called Pesa Kwa Wote and a land rights project called 'Ardhi Yetu' funded by Financial Sector Deepening Trust (FSDT) and DANIDA respectively.

What is Constituent Voice?

Constituent Voice: a method developed by Keystone Accountability to promote continual feedback and structured dialogue between stakeholders.

CV generates regular perception data from partner staff and members of programme impact populations, helping to flag problems early; support adaptive management; improve partner and community relationships; and make programming more accountable.

How does it work?

CV turns **feedback into data** and **data into voice**. It does this via a five step process:
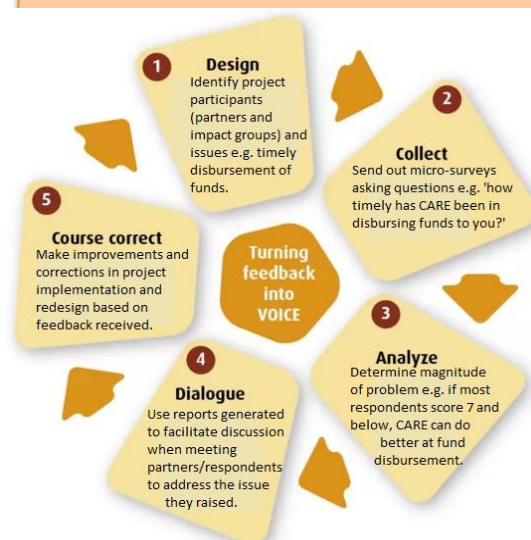
Net Promoter Score

The CV method relies on a Net Promoter Score (NPS) for each survey question. The NPS is used to easily interpret feedback data. A positive NPS indicates that there are more 'promoters' than 'detractors'. A negative NPS indicates more detractors than promoters.

Showcase: Feedback Commons in Nepal and Bangladesh

Feedback Loops: Participating pilot programmes chose to collect feedback about the following key 'relationships':
• Partner staff feedback about CARE – including formally-contracted CSOs, government departments, and local entrepreneurs.
• Target group or impact population feedback about CARE and partners – various members of targets groups that the given programmes have engaged with directly.

Impact: In the case of Krishi Utsho in Bangladesh, entrepreneur partners said they can now listen to farmers' needs better, allowing them to adapt to meet those needs more effectively. For example, the project has now adapted the package size for fertilizer, based on feedback from farmers, and is now selling greater volumes. Customer satisfaction has improved, and sales increased.

In Nepal, partners commented on feeling unhappy at the start of the pilot. Yet, in CARE Nepal's second survey with partners, the relationship scores were significantly higher. In their own words… '[The] quality of the relationship is significantly enhanced [in areas] such as: consultation with partners in planning, technical backstopping and culture of mutual cooperation' (CARE Nepal partner, August 2017).

Key Lessons:

1. **Ask fewer questions** (no more than 5) in individual surveys and conduct surveys regularly to ensure more actionable information. Regular micro-surveys were popular across pilot programmes as they allowed a faster response time to issues raised.
2. **Sync feedback with natural project rhythms:** It's important to schedule feedback dialogue sessions as part of routine meetings with partners and communities. Not only does this save time and money but it also ensures that CV is part of the project cycle rather than a separate exercise.
3. **Invest in tech to make response more agile:** The feedback and response time was slower as most surveys had to be printed on paper, especially for impact populations and for partners without email addresses. Where possible investing in tablet technology is more efficient and enables a more agile feedback process.
4. **Build relationship and accountability indicators into results frameworks:** We need to be accountable for accountability. And there must be consequences for parties not acting on commitments made. Unless there is follow through and change in response to their feedback, communities and partners will not continue giving feedback. Build indicators on trust and satisfaction into log frames, rather than as a separate feedback system. Or add a simple question like 'How well have we implemented the things we promised to do after the last survey?'
5. **Attention must be paid to inclusion and power:** For example, where countries use different scripts, where language skills vary, and/or where connectivity is unreliable, the option to undertake paper-based questionnaires in addition to using the electronic system must be considered. Pilot participants also often commented on their cultures of politeness, respect of hierarchical relationships, and the difficulties around giving feedback 'upward' to managers. Preference would be for less direct questions.
6. **Institutional commitment and investment is critical:** This means committed leadership, willing to listen and act on feedback as part of programme management, and committed investment in the technical accompaniment required to build the appropriate capacities. Capacities include simple technical skills for using the Survey Builder and more complex skills such as: phrasing and translating survey questions; collecting feedback data; exploring, analysing and sharing data; and facilitating learning dialogues.

What's next?

Tapping into CARE's rich and expansive diversity of experience of using different models and systems from across CARE, in FY20, the Global Inclusive Governance team want to facilitate an internal, collaborative process to build a feedback system that can foster a **unified global system** that improves CARE's forward accountability.

Our vision is to use the Feedback Commons as part of a unified, CARE-wide digital feedback platform bringing together the strengths of the various digital platforms across CARE. This platform would be **inter-operable and adaptable for use across humanitarian and development programming**, from a country office operating base. Specifically, such a feedback system would:

1. Use digital technology to generate data on various relationship loops within CARE at a programme, and ideally, country office/national entity level;

2. Analyse the data and present it in formats that would promote dialogue aimed at improving accountabilities and relations;

3. Foster dialogue within CARE at various levels and between various teams on ways to improve accountabilities and relations using the data generated by the proposed feedback mechanism.

To do this, the Global IG team would like to coordinate a conversation with key experts and leaders across the CARE Confederation to facilitate this goal. In the coming months, we will be reaching out to establish an informal Coordination Committee to support this ambition. Amongst others, this could include staff from the CI Secretariat, Regional Quality Control/Change Management Directors, MEAL leads, digital innovation leads, and accountability leads from across the Confederation.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- **For more information** on CARE's Constituent Voice Feedback Mechanism Pilot, contact Gilbert Muyumbu, CARE's Inclusive Governance Senior Advisor for the ECSA region, working with the Governance Global Technical team at muyumbu@careintenational.org