

INTERNATIONAL LANDSCAPE SCANS ON THE CURRENT STATE OF THE “FEEDBACK FIELD”

Country Report: Mexico

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Erick Monterrosas | Susana Donaire | Pavel Vallejo

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INCUBA
— ONG —

ABOUT NOS CATALYST

NOS Catalyst is a multidisciplinary team of specialists with a Global South perspective. We catalyze processes of regeneration of the social fabric, the positive transformation of conflicts, the resignification of Peace, and capacity building for the defense of Civic Space and Human Rights. For more information, check out: www.nos-catalyst.com

ABOUT INCUBA ONG

Incuba ONG is a non-profit dedicated to the strengthening of the local civic space in Mexico, through actions that allow the incubation, development, and institutional sustainability of non-profit community-based initiatives. For more information, check out: www.incuba.org/

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For more information about this research, contact:

Melinda Tuan | Managing director
Fund For Shared Insight
melinda@fundforsharedinsight.org

Erick Monterrosas | Cofounder & Principal Consultant
NOS Catalyst
e.monterrosas@nos-catalyst.com

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BC- Beneficiary Communities
 CSO- Civil Society Organizations
 FG- Focus Groups
 FSI- Fund for Shared Insight
 GK- Informant GateKeepers
 MEL- Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
 NGO- Non-Governmental Organizations
 SC- Specialist Consultant

INTRODUCTION

Commissioned by the *Fund for Shared Insight* and funded by *Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors*, this independent report is an exploratory scan of the feedback field prepared by consultants of *NOS Catalyst* and *Incuba ONG*. The inquiry included ecosystems of donors, specialists, consultants, organizations, and beneficiary communities in Mexico served by programmatic work on the following thematic issues: a) Gender, b) Peace & Security, c) Human Rights. The aim was to understand current practices as well as the plausible potential for viable future feedback strategies in Mexico. We sought to facilitate dialogue and participation from the diversity of stakeholders for every ecosystem to develop the exploratory analysis that encourages constructive questioning and informing about the feasibility of potential work on feedback in Mexico. This inquiry aims to delve into the formal and informal mechanisms of feedback processes in the interventions of the stakeholders, to explore the existing dynamics between the different actors, recognize examples of best practices, as well as the areas of opportunity in the design and implementation of projects concerning feedback in Mexico.

METHODOLOGY

This exploratory scan of feedback was developed between June and August 2021, relying on mixed methods research (Robson 1993). Five guidelines were key in the methodology: 1) participatory and inclusive, 2) contextualized in specific selected programmatic lines of work, 3) providing an intersectional analysis relevant for the reality in Mexico, 4) highlighting people-centered approaches by served communities of beneficiaries, and 5) embracing collective learning and interaction processes involving the different stakeholders of the ecosystems. The team took into consideration ethical research standards and informed consent processes including privacy and data management. The methodology purposely intended to expand participation, recognition, and power redistribution (Capelazo 2012; Fraser 1996) avoiding paternalistic dynamics over the distinct phases of inquiry related to the feedback loop process (Listen4Good 2019). Our research considered a participatory process, particularly with communities of programmatic beneficiaries. This allowed us to involve the participants in the exercise of actor mapping, analysis of perspectives, and validation of findings.

A South,¹ de-colonial, and people-centered perspective guided the inquiry process thus paying attention to the redistribution of control over resources, and decision-making. We considered an intersectional analysis of gender, race, and class barriers to accessing human rights and resources by bridging philanthropy and rights (Davis 2008; Ananthapadmanabhan & Madhan 2017) in often violent, risky, and restricted civic space contexts for organizations and communities (Pearce, 2007; Sandin &

¹ On August 10, 2021, the Mexico consultancy team organized an informal virtual exchange with consultants of the national feedback landscape scan initiatives with consultants from Brazil, India, Philippines, and Tanzania. This South-South dialogue served to share salient challenges and issues related to our respective contexts of implementation discussing similarities and divergences. We are thankful with our fellow consultants for their insights and feedback which was useful to address the methodological challenges in Mexico.

Baumunk, 2018). The methodology was aligned with the possibilities of the L4G initiative to accompany the mainstreaming of feedback processes together with meaningful connections in terms of equity, diversity, and inclusion for organizations, communities, and beneficiaries (ORS Impact 2018; Aspen Planning and Evaluation Program 2019). The methodological framework aimed to understand the existing relevant feedback practices contextualized in the very terms of the participants' cultural values, perceptions, and quotidian realities concerning programmatic work in the field (Fund for Shared Insight & Threlfall Consulting 2017).

Instead of “evaluating performance” and beyond just looking for “ideal” or “perfect” feedback loops, we looked for gaps and windows of opportunity for feedback work in the current quotidian Mexican context. Our research analyzed formal and institutional mechanisms of feedback (Listen4Good, 2019), but also included informal mechanisms that could represent a good prospect for investment in the different thematic lines analyzed. The research methodology tried to find meaning in collective organizational reflections prioritizing processes beyond outcomes (McAdams 2021). Moreover, to strengthen cooperation and trust with underserved communities in Mexico, we critically delved into the narratives and the organizational possibilities that make it possible to reimagine the role of funders to embrace learning and experimentation (Gomez & Coombes 2019).

Finally, we incorporated a section that seeks to reflect, from a first-person collective voice, the thoughts and experiences of the beneficiaries, victims, families, and communities that participated in this study. The incorporation of their contributions was inspired by the methodologies of knowledge co-production from below, developed by academics, members of social organizations, and communities of Medellín and Mexico (Angarita C. *et al* 2016; Kloppe-Santamaria & Abello Colak, 2019).

PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTION

Based on a preliminary actor mapping done by our research team, we identified more than 400 actors among; a) CSO/Collectives b)Beneficiaries/Users/victims/Communities c)Donors d)Consultants & Specialists e) Multilateral organizations f) Government agencies working across the Mexican territory related with programmatic work on at least one of the predefined thematic ecosystems.² After the incipient actor mapping, the research team narrowed the selection for a snowball sampling with key informant gatekeepers (GK) identified to be approached formally for participating in the study.³ This in

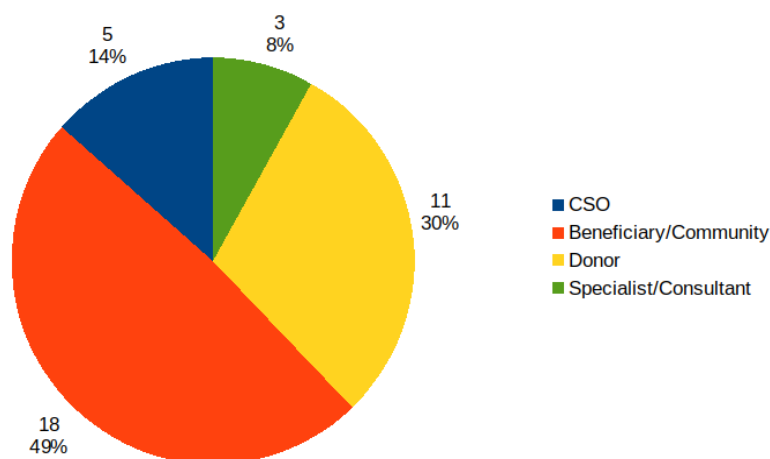
² At least 30% of the 253 civil society organizations identified in the preliminary actor mapping had a thematic overlap thus working simultaneously in minimum two of the three predefined thematic lines of: a) Gender, b) Peace & Security, c) Human Rights. Of the 69 preliminary identified donors 54% were international foundations and 32% were national foundations.

³ Due to the limited time for the execution of the consultancy, barriers of access to governmental information as well as the lack of availability of rapid response with the governmental and the multilateral sector contacts, the subsequent narrowing on the sample deliberately excluded those sectors and prioritized focusing on the rest of the actors. Notwithstanding, it is important to acknowledge that there are also Mexican government agencies working at both the Federal and local levels as well as multilateral organizations with programmatic delivery that may include feedback actions and cover the thematic lines of this study. Further research with those types of actors can shed light and complement the actual analysis on feedback dynamics in Mexico.

turn resulted in the first round of donors participating in semi-structured interviews. The main objective of this first round of interviews with donors was to identify their practices around feedback, on a second level the aim was to pilot and refine the data collection instruments and their questions. On a third level, the GK's first round of interviews served to get further referrals and recommendations on subsequent actors of different sectors that could provide relevant knowledge for the inquiry. This information was again analyzed by the consulting team through the light of the actor's initial mapping to select the second round of actors comprising other donors and CSOs and formally approaching them for carrying on in-depth interviews.

After having contacts and interviews with CSO actors working on the three selected thematic lines, the team outreached beneficiaries of the programs. These communities (BC) were interviewed in three different Focus Groups (FGs) comprising beneficiaries of vulnerable communities related to programmatic delivery such as victims of human rights violations and women with disabilities. A fourth FG comprising consultants' specialists (SC) was also interviewed. The consulting team carried on 16 in-depth individual and 4 FGs interviews⁴ comprising a total of 37 participants (80% women) from different sectors.⁵ The data collected at the in-depth individual interviews and collective FGs was systematized looking for significant findings for the core qualitative analysis in this study. All the interviews, focus groups and surveys were carried on in Spanish by our consultancy team. The excerpts of testimonies presented in this study were translated by our consultancy team.

Graph 1. Individual interviews & FGs participants disaggregated by sector

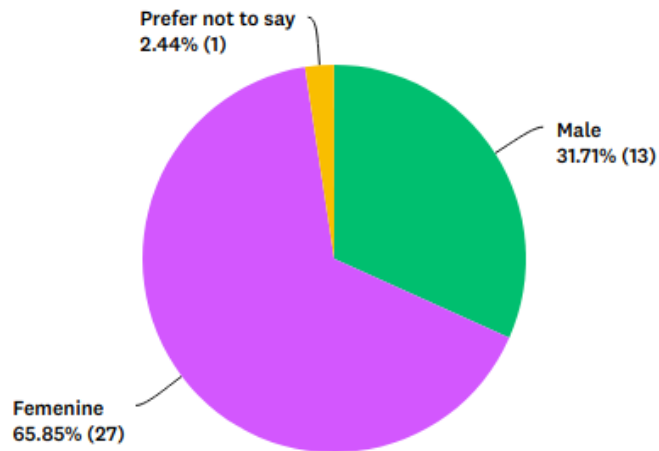


⁴ The interviews were held virtually due to sanitary preventive measures associated to Covid-19, particularly as August 2021 marked the third peak of the pandemic in Mexico with new infection records. The in-depth interviews ranged from a duration of 45 minutes to 100 minutes.

⁵ The viewpoints expressed by participants of this study are those of the author(s) and may not necessarily reflect the perspectives and policies of their institutions.

The research team also designed an online survey in Spanish that compiled basic data as well as information from open, multiple, and single option questions around feedback conceptions and practices.⁶ A total of 41 participants took part in the survey,⁷ the online survey data was used principally for quantitative analysis, data visualization, and complementary qualitative analysis.

Graph 2. On-line survey participants disaggregated by gender

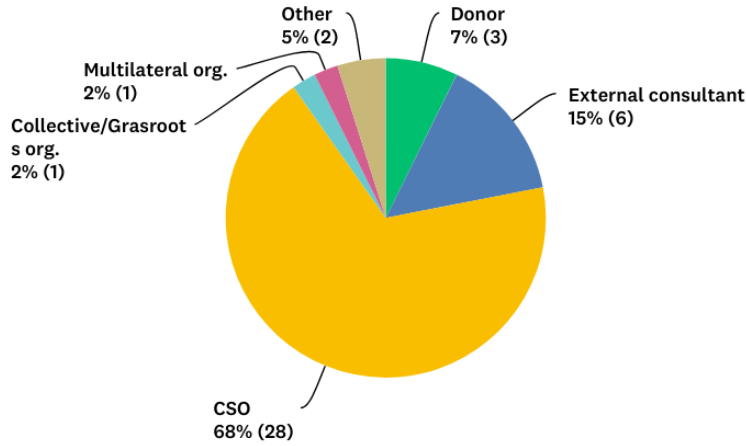


**Self-identification. No participant identified as non-binary nor trans.*

Graph 3. On-line survey participants disaggregated by sector

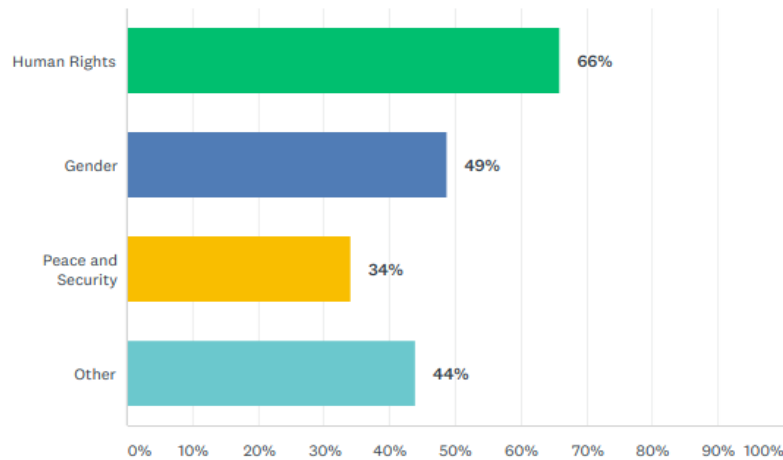
⁶ This survey was disseminated by e-mail with +250 targeted actors identified both in the initial actor mapping and after the primary round of interviews. The on-line survey was also disseminated via professional *LinkedIn* networks to target users working on the three predefined thematic working lines for this study. A preview of the designed survey and its original questions in Spanish can be accessed at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Preview/?sm=EyOW5hDHIRwfyMNbjZ8l4_2BBzZ1uLuU65A_2B56qxiWN3XONoFOSyUAF_2B1OUQ8TA4eg

⁷ Of those, 36 were filled exhaustively, while 5 surveys were not completely responded to. The on-line survey included 5 respondents who also participated in the qualitative in-depth interview/FGs process.



The online survey was predominantly responded to by CSOs actors (68%) and counted with the participation of actors working mostly at the broad national Mexican territory level, but also with participants having programmatic work in different Mexican subregions or even abroad. Human rights counted for two-thirds of the programmatic work reported by participants, gender the half, and peace and security for one-third.⁸

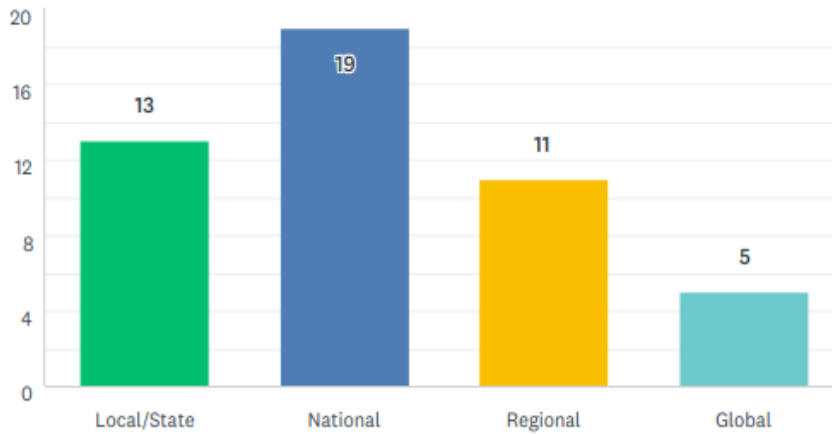
Graph 4. Thematic lines of programmatic work (On-line survey)



**Respondents had the option to select multiple themes of work.*

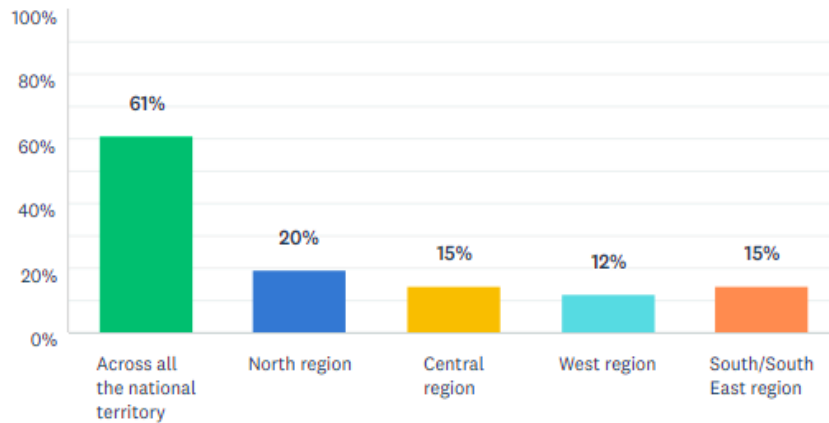
⁸ For many participants there was also an overlap in at least two of the lines of programmatic work for the survey respondents. This reflects the dynamics of ecosystemic work of Mexican CSOs addressing more than one thematic line of work e.g., merging Human Rights agendas with Gender issues and/or Peace & Security.

Graph 5. Level of programmatic work
(On-line survey responses)



**Respondents had the option to select multiple levels of work*

Graph 6. Geographic scope of work in Mexico
(On-line survey)



Counting the participation by in-depth interviews (individual + focus groups) and online surveys, a total of 73 unique participants provided insights and information for this inquiry. Given the number of organizations, donors, and beneficiaries with programmatic work across the vast Mexican geography, the participants of this study are not to be taken as a representative cohort of the diverse ecosystems across the predefined working thematic lines.

Common grounds regarding Feedback

Throughout the investigation, we identified common approaches about the meanings of feedback between different stakeholders of the ecosystems.

Feedback is an honest, open, and horizontal communication process. A collective active listening exercise:

- **To Understand and to Build Trust-** It allows diverse actors to know diverse perspectives, contexts, challenges, expectations, and needs of the actors involved in a process. In this regard, information serves to improve decision-making and strengthen strategies in its different stages (Design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation).

“Dialogue and exchange with organizations and activists on accompaniment, strengthening and how we link and link them with each other and with other movements; joint reflection and subsequently within the team on these exchanges to improve our processes, making them more accessible and responsive to the needs of organizations and movements.” (Donor)

- **To Share and Engage-** It allows participants to exchange opinions, reflections, experiences, points of view, recommendations, suggestions, and comments. Know the degree of satisfaction, fulfillment, and impact that their activities have had on their life and their dynamics.

“Procedure through which we compile successes, errors, strengths, and weaknesses of the various actions that we do such as workshops, meetings, accompaniments, advocacy, etc.” (CSO participant)

- **To Improve and Correct-** Identify areas of opportunity, strengths, review objectives, goals, activities, and verify compliance with what is planned. analyze the progress, obstacles, challenges, successes, and errors of the interventions to make the pertinent adjustments in strategies and objectives.

“A tool to evaluate the activities, especially the impact for the allied people with whom we work. It allows us to continue improving and strengthening our work, focusing on the needs of the communities and allied people.” (CSO participant)

- **To Give Back** –To return to the communities with inputs and outputs that allow them to strengthen capabilities so that they communicate in an accountable and sustainable way the impact of their opinions and the decisions taken.

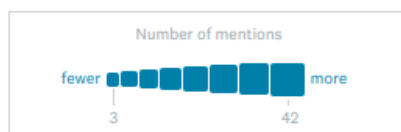
“Give back to the communities and beneficiaries elements that are useful to them and that allow them to continue enhancing the development of their capacities so that they are maintained over time.” (Specialist Consultant)

Common trends regarding Feedback

There is no ample consensus or knowledge about “High-Quality Feedback” [*Retroalimentación de Alta Calidad*] more than 80% of the survey participants have not heard about it. Across all the sectors, the most common strategies for listening to the voices, perspectives, proposals, and needs of project beneficiaries are surveys (*encuestas*), interviews (*entrevistas*), and focus groups (*Grupos focales*).

Graph 7. Aggregated word cloud (in Spanish) about strategies for listening by number of mentions (On-line survey)

para necesidades o sesiones de grupos focales espacios de con de trabajo
entrevistas los y proyectos de reuniones de las grupos
Encuestas con los en Mesas de retroalimentación en los que
como que se

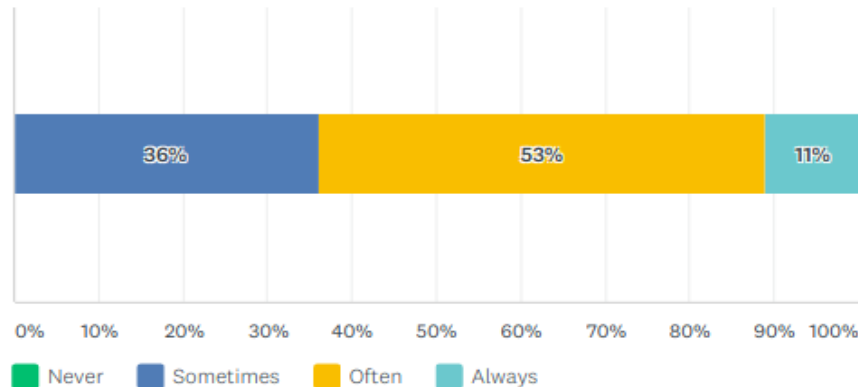


There is evidence that feedback is considered as something important and viable among the participants of this study in Mexico. At the aggregated level most of the respondents of the survey across sectors consider relevant (14%) or very relevant (83%) to implement feedback systems with clients, beneficiaries, or communities so that this feedback can lead to programmatic changes in practice. In addition, survey respondents consider either viable (53%) very viable (42%) or “somehow” viable (6%) the implementation of feedback systems.

Feedback is not always for producing programmatic changes; however, it was recognized that on occasions it led to adjustments for “closing the loop”. When asked about the frequency of significant changes that have been made in the programmatic or in the implementation of projects based on the feedback of beneficiaries or communities the respondents of the survey at the aggregated level did not mention “never”, roughly one third mentioned “sometimes” while more than the half

reported that there were “often” changes after feedback. 1 out of 10 respondents mentioned that feedback always led to changes.

Graph 8. Aggregated participants’ declared frequency of significant programmatic implementation changes after receiving feedback from beneficiary communities (On-line survey)



Key questions on feedback

1. What does feedback look like between ...?

... CSOs and the people they serve

- Given the nature, diversity, and complexity of the different interactions between NGOs with beneficiaries and donors, there is a great diversity of methodological resources and formal processes for feedback enunciated by participants.
- The predominant methodology for feedback processes with communities is associated with Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL). This has a lot to do with international standards used by development cooperation agencies and the technical requirements of the operation of services, activities, or the generation of products aimed at a particular population.
- organizations identify the importance of prioritizing participatory methodologies both in the preparation of diagnoses, activities, and return of results, but also recognize that it is not always easy to respond to funding opportunities while co-designing with the community.
- CSO actors also position the importance of feedback within the teams, especially those that are operating directly in the field.

- The context generated by the COVID 19 pandemic relegated face-to-face practices and field visits to the almost exclusive use of remote mechanisms.

... Donors, Funders, and the people they ultimately seek to serve

- Having feedback and consultation with NGOs/communities is perceived as crucial by funders for impact and horizontality. Although it is recognized that there are important gaps in its execution, it is identified as a fundamental and necessary issue, however, time investment and loads for workflows are important for considering adopting feedback strategies.
- There is a recognition that NGOs as intermediaries have a better understanding of the needs of beneficiaries in the field. In some cases, donors avoid influencing the conceptualization and design of projects (funder led grant-making).
- There is general clarity amongst participating donors about the basic understanding of high-quality feedback, knowing it is not only about listening but also about acting on it and generating programmatic outcomes and giving information back to organizations.
- Gender and intersectional analysis matters while feminist funding approaches have the potential for inquiry on feedback and participatory methodologies involving communities.

2. In the Mexican context, do people use the term “feedback” or some other term? And when they use whatever word, what do they mean by it?

CSOs

- The nearest translation in Spanish of feedback is *retroalimentación*. However, the Spanish term has an informal connotation, not necessarily identified with a systematic set of steps or a formal methodology.
- The most common terms associated with feedback refer to project and program evaluation (MEL) and accountability mechanisms for donors. Among the most mentioned words by CSO actors in the survey about the understanding of feedback and related terms are actions [*acciones*], persons [*personas*], needs [*necesidades*], activities [*actividades*], processes [*procesos*], listening [*escuchar*], and suggestions [*sugerencias*].
- CSO actors identify that the donors do not refer to a specific feedback methodology, but that they do ask questions about the involvement of the communities in the design of the projects in the financing requests and programmatic follow-up.

Donors and Funders

- Most donors used the term feedback while referring to the process in the interview, but it's more common for them to use terms related to MEL methodologies.

- When they did use the term feedback, they made references to active listening, responding to the needs of what was identified in this listening and the return of what was heard.

3. How common is high-quality listening and feedback?

CSOs

- Just 4 organizations of the CSO survey respondents reported knowing about High-Quality Feedback methodologies [*Retroalimentación de Alta calidad*].
- Some organizations reported that they mostly operate in the first three levels of High-Quality Feedback, where they design, collect, and interpret data, but efforts are less dedicated to response and closing the loop.
- There are fewer organizations that have more advanced feedback methods, in which they involve the entire community in the process of identifying needs, designing, implementing, and closing the loop.

Donors and Funders

- In Mexico, most donors do not know about nor have used the L4G high-quality feedback methodology, even those who belong to the global initiative.
- Through in-depth interviews, we only found two donors that were familiar with the L4G methodology. One participant knew it firsthand while working in the non-profit sector with US actors in the past, not in Mexico. The second knew about the methodology when she was on the board when the L4G initiative was on its first stage. None of the participants knowing the methodology implemented it directly in Mexico.
- Most donors recognize the importance of having feedback processes.
- Donors with advanced local capabilities of operation tend to have more advanced feedback methodologies. Usually, they manage to incorporate it in the different phases of the High-Quality Feedback methodology.
- In the case of US donors, they reported carrying out feedback processes with organizations through The Center for Effective Philanthropy.

Concerning the feedback loop there are certain dynamics worth highlighting:

Design

- One of the key aspects of program design is context analysis, where interviews are conducted with other foundations, organizations, specialists, and community leaders to better understand and respond to funding needs.
- Most donors conduct surveys on the operation of funding programs to identify areas for improvement. They report that feedback is considered for the new financing cycles.
- The feedback process has prior planning and design. In some cases, internal monitoring and evaluation teams carry out this stage, in others, external consultants are hired.

- After a call for proposals, a foundation reported conducting a feedback process carried on by an external consultancy.

Collection

- During the implementation of the projects, methods such as mid-term reports, meetings with the organizations, and field visits are used.
- In general, donors reported that at the end of the financing, they request final reports as well as surveys, but there are also feedback “spaces” directly involving organizations.

Interpretation

- Donors carry out systematization of the information collected, which is transformed into reports and recommendations for the changes that need to be carried out according to what they heard. In this process, the program officers and the general management usually participate, and the board of directors is usually informed. These last two actors are the ones who have the decision of the changes that can be carried out.
- Donors also report using external consultants to carry out evaluations of the processes of accountability, quality of service, and analysis of context and specific needs.
- In some cases, they pilot the feedback instruments with relevant experts and stakeholders.
- Donors did not report that the interpretation of the data was segmented demographically.

Responding

- It was identified that the feedback received from organizations matters for the design of financing programs and in the way in which the relationship and accountability processes between both parties' work.

Closing the loop

- Donors carry out feedback processes on what they listen to. In some cases, they do it through reports and in others in individual or group meetings.
 - Another finding is that donors tend to share their findings with other ecosystem actors or ask for their feedback in the context analyzes they carry out. They also state that they tend to request recommendations or referrals about organizations requesting funding.
- Informal consultations are privileged over formal methodologies and strategies to develop feedback. The most common mechanisms at the formal level commonly used

for this purpose are reports (mid-term and final), field visits, and surveys with different levels of engagement.

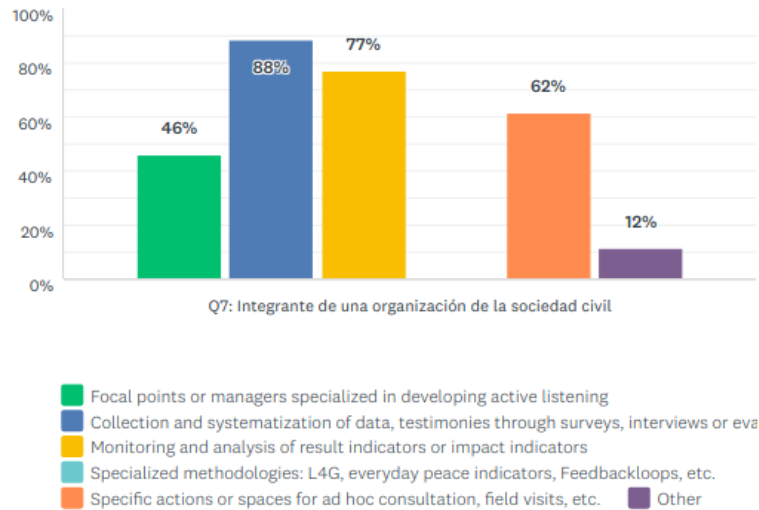
- Feedback processes are conditioned to the relationship between the parties. In most cases, they have been personalized to the current officer and “handcrafted” to the situation of each project.
- Some donors, particularly those with more installed capabilities for MEL or with active listening exercises for incorporating CSOs perspectives, manage to incorporate work across different phases of the High-Quality Feedback methodology.
- Some donors reported conducting an exploratory analysis with the best national and international practices for the development of feedback processes.
- A few donors reported active listening methods other than the more traditional feedback processes. For example, one donor informed that instead of narrative reports, set collective learning spaces between the organizations, and with that, the donor made a report, which was later returned to the organizations. An international human rights donor working with grassroots groups reported continuous active listening for context analysis that could influence better programmatic outcomes for advocacy and implementation. A local consultant working for an international donor reported collective learning through in situ visits for programmatic delivery involving organizations and beneficiaries.

4. What tools or infrastructure are used?

- **Standard tools**
 - **Surveys, inquiries and questionnaires** of entry and exit, both in digital, physical, or telephone mechanisms.
 - Different modalities of **individual or group dialogue sessions**, highlighting focus groups, semi-structured interviews, workshops, forums, conversations, dialogue circles, and worktables.
 - **Field visits** that include participant observation strategies and the generation of informal spaces for dialogue (talks or direct conversations)
- The inputs generated through these strategies are regularly accompanied by documentary research processes and incorporated in the evaluation mechanisms and in the partial and/or final systematization of the implementation of the projects, which incorporate findings in the results reports presented to donors.
- Process and result indicators within project planning and tools to measure progress.
- Impact evaluations, usually conducted by external consultants and requested-funded by donors.
- **Specific projects** - Specific proposals for tools, methodologies, or processes aimed at linking and interacting with beneficiaries.
 - Digital Apps
 - Popular education strategies
 - Peace circles

- Communication and awareness campaigns (either through digital tools such as teaser campaigns, social media management, photovoice, etc. or documentary tools such as life testimonials, brochures, simplified reports)
 - Peer support processes
 - Product review and validation groups
 - Development plans for beneficiaries with a human security approach.
- **Specific adjustment actions**
 - The hiring of local liaisons that serve as communication bridges between the communities of beneficiaries and users and the organizations.
 - Incorporation of beneficiaries to the Board
 - Invitation as co-applicants in fund calls.
- The top tools mentioned in the survey by CSOs were: 1) Collection and systematization of data and testimonies through surveys interviews or evaluation instruments (88%), 2) Monitoring and analysis of result indicators or impact indicators (77%), and 3) Specific actions or spaces for *ad hoc* consultation, field visits, etc. (62%) and 4) Focal points or managers specialized in developing active listening (46%). Specific specialized methodologies (among them L4G) were not selected by participants as those implemented.
- CSO actors surveyed about the implementation of any feedback strategies in the past including beneficiaries and communities for their programmatic work selected the top following strategies: 1) Data collection mechanisms, testimonies, and impact evaluation (24 participants) 2) Incorporation of project managers, consultants, or project assistants to contact beneficiaries (17 participants) and 3) formal channels for listening and incorporation of voices and perspectives (13 participants).
- Informal *ad hoc* mechanisms are a more common tool to listen to NGOs (and in some cases to communities), for example, collective or one-to-one dialogue in unstructured processes.

Graph 9. CSO Tools and Mechanisms used for giving and receiving feedback with communities and beneficiaries (On-line survey)



5. How are stakeholders acting on feedback?

CSOs

- The feedback that CSOs carry out at the end of the projects is mainly reflected in the changes in program design.
- In some cases, they report that what was heard is not returned to the community. This may respond to the fact that they cannot always involve the same people to participate in the processes.
- When asked about the frequency of significant changes that have been made in the programmatic or in the implementation of projects based on the feedback of beneficiaries or communities, CSO respondents of the survey mentioned that changes were made “sometimes” (34%) while “often” predominated in 54% of responses. Just 11% of CSO respondents mentioned that feedback “always” led to changes.

Donors and Funders

- When the potential for learning in the field is identified, there is a perception that time and resources are worth investing in identified issues, sometimes with exploratory approaches.
- The donors responding to the survey question on frequency of changes implementation post feedback reported that after receiving feedback from communities’ programmatic changes were made often (50%) or sometimes (50%).

6. In how many languages does feedback collection happen?

CSOs

- CSO actors report that in both English and Spanish depending on the profile of the donor and if they have Spanish-speaking people on their team.
- In the case of organizations that work with the indigenous population, they usually have operational staff from the communities that speak the native language or specialized translators.
- In the case of persons with disabilities, it was mentioned that sometimes feedback processes were carried contemplating needs for people with disabilities (signs, Braille) or with adequate conditions for deaf, blind, or mobility limitations etc. for example tools with CAPTCHA were reported by participants with visual disabilities. Despite noticeable exceptions mentioned by people with disabilities, inclusive languages were not widely included by donors and CSOs.

Donors and Funders

- Considering that an important source of funds for Mexico comes from international donors, feedback processes are conducted in English, unless the program officers are native speakers or bilingual. This represents a challenge for many community-based organizations that do not have personnel who can translate projects or reports, and may generate an additional cost, which is not usually covered by funders. This language barrier can be seen within the dynamics of power, since the organizations with more funds and based in the capitals, are those who have more opportunities to access international funding by having bilingual staff.
- Cultural or access barriers, such as language, could alienate communities from feedback processes, for example with indigenous communities or when Program Officers from Donor Institutions are not locals.

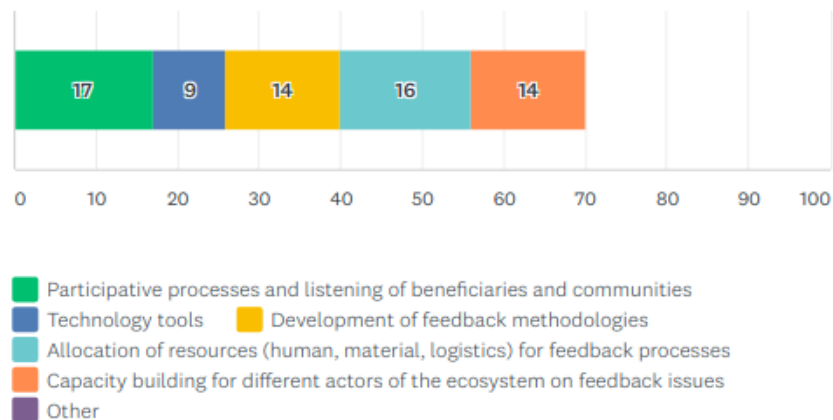
7. What is most needed to accelerate and improve high-quality feedback work?

CSOs

- That it needs to be an exercise with the impulse of the foundations, and that specific financial resources are to be provided for that.
- That the feedback is planned and that all the people in the organization understand the importance and dedicate time constantly to carry it out at all stages of the project.
- When asked to select the areas that should be considered priorities for investment and implementation of feedback strategies in their work and projects survey respondents from CSOs prioritized:
 - Firstly: Participative processes and listening of beneficiaries and communities
 - Secondly: Allocation of resources (human, material, logistics) for feedback processes
 - Thirdly: Development of feedback methodologies

Fourthly: Capacity building for different actors of the ecosystem on feedback issues.

Graph 10. CSO participant selected priorities for investment and implementation of feedback strategies (On-line survey)



Donors and Funders

- Trust and “safe spaces” are considered a cornerstone for giving and receiving feedback among actors.
- Donors report that, as far as possible, the feedback on the foundations' processes should be anonymous so that they do not feel that there may be retaliation in their funding.
- The need for specific financial resources for these processes, and for them to be led by donors.
- Dialogue of collective construction where progress and challenges that organizations face are needed.

8. How does power operate in these relationships?

CSOs perspectives

- Beneficiaries fear that by giving negative feedback they may lose the services they get from the organizations.
- Although organizations report having relationships of trust with donors, there is always the latent fear that they may stop financing a project. In that power relationship, the feedback could have negative effects for them in financial terms.

- There is also a concern related to communication between donors, in which if a funder has a negative opinion of the work of an organization, it could negatively impact relationships with other current or potential donors.

From de Donors perspective

- There are power dynamics between NGOs and international donors that negatively impact horizontality and this, in turn, could have repercussions on feedback dynamics e.g., fear of losing funds, exclusive communication with high-level actors, and disconnection with communities, digital gaps.
- It was accepted that beneficiaries should be the first to be involved in program design processes but they are rarely included.

9. Whose voices are least heard?

CSOs

- All the organizations report conducting feedback processes with the beneficiaries, but it's uncommon to include them in decision-making processes. The information they receive does not always influence changes in the design and implementation of projects.
- Vulnerable beneficiary communities such as women, people with disabilities, people deprived of liberty and face great challenges to be heard at full. Also, victims of human rights violations such as relatives of victims of enforced disappearances still confront difficult barriers for being listened to at the financial and programmatic delivery directly impacting on them.

Donors and Funders

- Despite exceptions, there is an ample perception that the direct beneficiaries of donors are organizations, therefore, feedback with ultimately served communities is not widely practiced.
- organizations act as intermediaries for feedback processes, so there may be a bias in the information that donors receive, given power dynamics, especially those related to money allocation.
- When field visits are carried out, they are usually arranged by the organizations, so the foundations admit that it is difficult to obtain reliable information from the communities since there is prior preparation and the same organizations may have prepared the beneficiaries to respond positively.
- In some cases, not all voices are being heard when the feedback process occurs. Some donors report that communication is sometimes directly with the management personnel of the organizations and not necessarily with the people who are operating the programs in the field.

- When there is feedback directly with the communities, it is often directed to community leaders and those voices that are traditionally excluded are not necessarily listened to, such as women and children.

10. How do issues of equity and justice play out in this context and how could high-quality listening and feedback advance equity and justice?

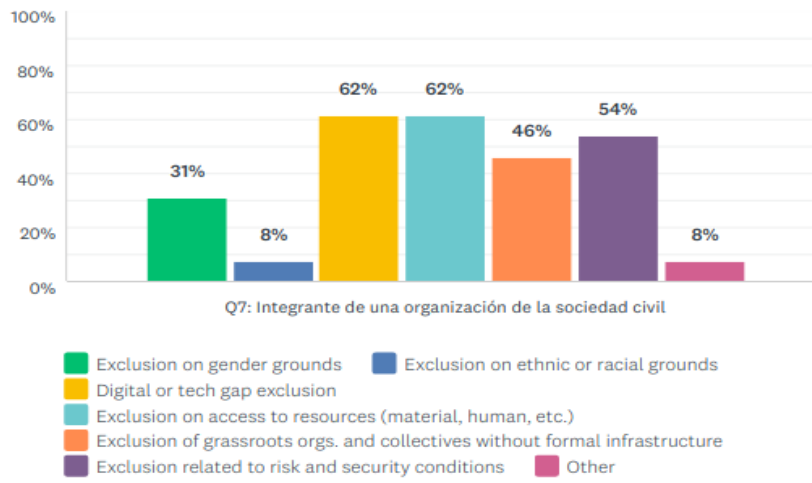
CSOs

- There is an understanding that feedback mechanisms serve not only to direct the efforts of the organization and donors, but also to broaden the voices of those who are least heard.
- According to the perceptions of CSO actors, there are salient barriers to the full inclusion of perspectives, opinions, and voices of the communities served by their projects. Digital gap, access to knowledge, human and economic resources, and exclusions related to risk and security among others matter for full feedback inclusion.

Donors and Funders

- An important issue that was rarely discussed was knowing the negative effects that projects can also have on communities, so evaluation and feedback from beneficiaries can be useful to prevent it.
- Across the thematic lines composed by the national study, there is a relevant debate in Mexico about who has legitimacy for having their voices privileged in feedback programmatic work i.e., victims, activists, lawyers, social movements, institutionalized NGOs?.
- Involving historically excluded sectors in the feedback, such as the elderly, women with disabilities, and children can play an important role in making them agents of change and that their opinions are included in the strategies.
- Empowering the communities where projects operate, especially in making decisions about funding programs, can bring about a major change in the way philanthropy is done.

Graph 11. CSO perspectives on main barriers for full inclusion of communities and beneficiaries (On-line survey)



11. Which are the main challenges in Mexico?

CSOs

- Creating a mechanism that incorporates all voices can be thorny, since reaching a consensus between the organization's strategy and the different perceptions on communities' needs can be a challenge, these needs may not always be addressed.
- Some foundations are more rigid in their internal processes and accountability, with a punitive approach, making it difficult to make changes to projects.
- To build feedback processes with the communities, a long-term relationship of trust is needed so CSO actors feel that they can speak without retaliation, this takes a considerable investment of time.
- It is not so easy to bring beneficiaries together for feedback, it takes time, and nonprofits are usually overloaded by work and other monitoring activities.
- Feedback exercises should not represent an additional burden to the administrative work of organizations. Considering the context of community organizations, which do not have enough staff, adding these processes without a commitment from the funders to support them with technical and financial resources could lead to overloading the work of the staff.
- Feedback from communities is not always of high quality nor can be used efficiently.
- One of the top challenges perceived by personnel of organizations remains in the possibilities for donors to make their funding more flexible, or for foundations to make significant changes in their programs based on the incorporation of feedback from communities or beneficiaries.

Donors and Funders

- Reaching primary feedback information from communities and final beneficiaries of programmatic work is a prominent challenge, especially in the COVID 19 pandemic context. It's important to highlight that in most cases, donors are not deeply involved in the feedback processes between NGOs and communities.
- It was recognized that often feedback received by donors from NGOs lacks full accountability, agile response, or subsequent devolution/adapting processes at the fieldwork implementation level.
- Risk matters for feedback especially in the insecure Mexican environment, for example for Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), journalists, and victims of human rights violations involved in programmatic work.
- The current political juncture of animosity between the Mexican federal government and NGOs especially on the Human Rights agenda highlights the need for a politicized context analysis for the viability of implementation of feedback strategies.
- In the case of international foundations that do not have offices in Mexico, receiving direct feedback from the communities is complicated and would mean having more staff and higher operating costs.
- Not all foundations have staff dedicated to feedback processes, many foundations operate in Mexico through one in-country external consultant or one single project officer managing varied portfolios.
- In general, feedback is not conceived as a priority concerning programmatic delivery, so funds are not redirected to establish a specialized feedback area or to undertake a feedback process with external consultants.
- There is a lack of knowledge of formal feedback methodologies, often feedback dynamics take place in informal settings.
- Establish a feedback practice for all the people involved in the operational and directive part of the foundations. It is difficult to operate a methodology of this nature, if not all the people collaborate, or have conflicting interests and there is no basic understanding of the importance and necessity of these exercises.
- Failure to act on what was heard, that participants in the feedback process may feel "used" and that their opinion is not considered.
- The difficulty of providing feedback on different topics and contexts in which the beneficiary organizations operate. It is not always possible to respond in a way that all organizations are satisfied with.
- The bureaucracy in the processes that foundations have, where they often have to have the approval of the boards of directors or global offices, can impact how feedback in-country is carried out, but above all impose limitations on the response that is given to the received feedback for closing the loop.
- Donors perceive that the digital or tech gap exclusion is still a prominent barrier that may represent challenges for the inclusion of perspectives and opinions from communities and beneficiaries.
- Non-profit diversity and different feedback needs among ecosystems is a commonality, even between NGOs addressing similar issues.

12. Which are the main Opportunities in Mexico?

CSOs

- organizations emphasized the importance of implementing feedback exercises, and that they would be willing to participate in further processes of this nature.
- organizations declared that they have a good relationship with donors, especially those that are international. They consider that there is openness in communication channels and trust to talk about challenges and complications that arise in the implementation of projects and agree that donors may show flexibility when making changes in activities and budgets.
- In recent years there have been improvements in the processes of the funders. For example, the use of digital platforms for the exchange of information; and more flexible and long-term donations.
- According to CSO sector respondents by counting with feedback from communities and beneficiary populations there are prospects for areas with positive potential for improvement such as 1) Effectiveness in the project and programmatic implementation, 2) Counting with interactive mechanisms from design to implementation, and 3) Decision making processes

Graph 12. CSO perspectives on areas with positive potential outcomes for including the feedback of communities and beneficiaries (On-line survey)



Donors and Funders

- Flexible funding could provide better opportunities for responding to the needs perceived by communities.
- There are ample gaps for MEL in Mexican CSO, however, there is potential for investing in capacity building with NGOs to foster impact and effective programmatic implementation; investing in capacity building for MEL could scale up feedback methodologies.

- Feedback processes could help break down punitive accountability practices that donors request. Instead of being a control mechanism, it becomes a collective learning space where all parties have a voice, and they can build a strategy that truly responds to the needs of the communities.
- An ample subset of donors responded that they were interested in learning more about the methodology, having tools and training in this regard, and even participating in a project of this nature.
- The adaptation of feedback strategies according to each context and each group of beneficiaries, considering the native language, the education of the people. The simpler, inclusive, and more understandable, the easier it can be to get high-quality feedback.
- The High-Quality Feedback methodology was designed for the US context, so piloting it in the Mexican context to adapt it could be an interesting exercise.
- It was perceived that having local staff at international foundations could create better conditions for connection and trust and in turn more opportunities for implementing feedback strategies.
- Also, specialists and consultants working in multisector initiatives of donors, government, organizations, and communities expressed interest in participating in feedback initiatives.

Feedback in practice from the perspectives of Beneficiary Communities

The consulting team undertook the task of contacting beneficiaries, users, or participants of funded CSO projects related to the thematic areas of this study. Through three collective focus groups with beneficiary communities, it was possible to retrieve voices and testimonies that describe their experience and interaction with various programmatic initiatives.⁹

From the practices and strategies systematized, below we highlight some experiences and testimonies that, from a collective voice of beneficiary communities, users, or participants, entailed positive impacts or good practices related to feedback. On a second level, we also devote attention to experiences and testimonies that shed light on the gaps as perceived by beneficiary communities in which current practices expose challenges related to feedback.

Good practices: What has worked in terms of feedback from the perspective of beneficiary communities?

It is possible to identify significant practices that have incorporated feedback as a fundamental exercise in programmatic design and operation. The most immediate effects result in the beneficiary communities' willingness to participate, positive changes in the self-perception and empowerment of the beneficiaries. Furthermore, this promotes greater confidence in programmatic sustainability and the recognition of civil society organizations.

1) When organizations **recognize the importance of our wisdom and knowledge about our contexts and needs** for the co-production of intervention proposals.

"Nobody knows what we really need, we have to tell organizations in such plain and simple words so that they can understand it. From my family perspective, I tell you my needs and you tell me what you can do with them. They also do the same and propose specific activities to us and we see how it is working. From their experience in strategic litigation and human rights, we help them to give dimension to the idea they have of prisons, but with the accuracy that just we can provide."

⁹ The presented messages, analysis, and proposals of the participant communities of beneficiaries respond to specific situations that should serve for reflection and improvement of practices among Donors, organizations, and communities. Notwithstanding these experiences and testimonies should not be taken as representative of the prevalent dynamics and interactions among donors and organizations in Mexico. In this token this section does not intend to elaborate broad conclusions valid for the complex ecosystems included in this scan. The key points synthesizing the testimonies of BCs are deliberately presented through a collective narrative methodology in first person (Angarita C. et al 2016; Kloppe-Santamaria & Abello Colak, 2019).

“We forget that feedback is the role of various actors and not only of the association. The project does not flow without that feedback and when the organization does not give you the appropriate channels, we must generate them. Being able to state the areas of opportunity.”

“As women with disabilities we are hardly taken into account, but at least I work for the benefit of women and I give my feedback, [...] I put myself on the map so they can see me [...] for example, women with disabilities are not very much on the maps of feminism, but we are making ourselves visible, and I do it for women with disabilities, for their families.”

“Over time, we have also specialized, we have become experts in our subjects, that is the good part.”

2) Our formal **participation as part of the CSO team or as a member in specific projects of the organization, including decision-making capacity.** Overcoming the ideas that normally place us in a passive or operational role, to strengthen our participation as agents of dialogue with the communities and promoters of spaces that can generate opportunities to enhance our agency, develop our creativity and explore the different needs, which are not always considered in project proposals.

We highlight the cases in which someone in our community has the opportunity to participate on the Board of a CSO or to build and lead specific spaces within organizations to have a permanent channel of communication and organization with the community.

“It has placed us not only as observers but as peers.”

“It is our role to let you know what we saw, good and bad. And there are channels that, although they are not formal, can also be effective. And maybe not make a harsh criticism, but raise your voice, push for feedback, especially when it is a simulation. But if we don't let them know, they may not even notice. Therefore, we always have to look for that feedback, because when you participate in something, your job is to let them know your opinion. They have to get used to receiving constructive criticism and recommendations.”

“I have seen good results where judicial matters are involved, where there are laws. Because they have a process. [...] We involve people who could make decisions, you work strategically, touching all possible fronts, with CSOs, families, the media, with deputies, senators, international organizations, you are doing a little bit of work. We were incorporating various actors, dialogues, including voices of people who contribute to these negotiations. You are triggering these interactions and feedback by involving several people and when you give them their level of prominence, things work.”

3) **Participate in the design and development of the different tools, products, and materials** both technical (guides, manuals) and informative or formative (reports, testimonials) that recover our voices, knowledge, and proposals, especially when the messages are directed to the same communities. Also, to **involve us in the planning of activities to make the necessary adjustments that favor accessibility to all people.**

“I have given my testimonies, my experiences and they have served to make guidelines, we have participated in events in which we have met more family members, we have realized that being united strengthens us.”

“[Organization staff] let us know about the projects they have or ask us what we need as family members and according to what we feel they make a project to support us with that.”

“We as people with disabilities support each other. Probably instead of making all the adjustments that are so expensive, we would propose to attend with someone who supports us. Dare to meet people, make us a questionnaire before, to know what needs we have. If you are contemplating a sign interpreter and only one deaf person is going, maybe we can make specific changes to make the budget more efficient. Orient the budget to more strategic adjustments.”

4) Recognize **the importance of language and communication strategies that are more accessible, appropriate, and adequate to the needs of the communities** in all the processes of the organizations. In many cases, it is more efficient and effective to incorporate ourselves in the design and implementation of communication mechanisms and strategies.

“We review documents so that the language is simpler without “legal slang” [legal terms] that is very complicated to understand”

“A few months ago, I took a leadership course with a Latin American association. They went to great lengths to make the content and sessions as accessible as possible for all disabilities. Although there were many things to correct, I really enjoyed the effort. They made surveys of the outputs of each module, the course ended a while ago and they asked us again to do another module.”

“My opinion and my suggestions have been taken into account in such a way that they make me participate when a brochure is going to be elaborated, they ask me if it is understandable, if the language is adequate, and if it is necessary to change one question to another. They have taken our experiences into account and have included them in our brochures. I have been invited to participate in conferences where I give my testimony and my points of view. There I see that what I feel and what I think has been taken into consideration”

5) Create **local support and organization spaces that favor exchange between peers and foster collaborative focal points for permanent feedback**. In these cases, organizations should transfer their leadership to the communities that are served and recognize that it is necessary to privilege the voice of those who regularly do not have it.

“We do it from different means, we advise each other, and we give recommendations, to know what we can do. Both legally and emotionally, the family members support each other a lot because we know what we are feeling. Making a safe space where what is spoken there stays, to strengthen ourselves in situations that let us down to frightening levels.”

“I have felt a greater sense of security than before. I know that I am no longer alone, I have the support of knowledgeable people next to me, because they have supported me.”

“One characteristic of the network is that we love each other. But as in a family, we have conflicts but never to the degree of breaking apart. There is a deep feeling. We recognize our differences, we respect them, sometimes we confront each other.”

- 6) Dedicate many **efforts to develop capacities with the different communities** in which the projects are developed. The projects end, but the processes continue, and we are the ones who will continue the work in our contexts.

“I like being in this type of association because they have guided us with various activities, consultancies, accompaniment, and support our self-esteem as family members so that we have the capacity. Although the confinement of my son hurts a lot, every time I visit him, I stand strong because I am there for him, and I’m not alone, it is something that is not fully assimilated, but participation in [Name of human rights organization] has helped me a lot to learn to open myself in certain ways to guide my son [...] To me [Name of a human rights organization] has given me back part of what I already lost.”

“We participated in a workshop on psychosocial accompaniment [...] we had face-to-face activities where we did team building activities. We all left there wanting more. In those hours something happened, and it surpassed our resistance barriers in a very intimate way.”

“I asked for advice because we always have doubts, I ask for workshops to learn from the smallest to the most developed topics, to leave without any doubt [on jail transfers, human rights, restorative justice, emotional support] that helped to redefine what we go through as a family. We have also had human rights workshops [...] it is very rich to understand what then sounded so far away for us.”

- 7) Know that **feedback is not only used to evaluate projects**. When it is reciprocal and constructive, it also helps us to grow and improve in our activities

“For me, feedback has been important because I have learned to know more about the law, that there is an enforcement law, that I must use it and I have used it to defend my child's rights, such as the right to health, previously I was unaware that even existed. Now I don't say please, I demand it by law.”

“What works for me, when things occur to me, I tell them. I tell what I think, give my comments, and sensitize people in the process [...] I have pushed for these changes, these feedback at least so that they do better the next one.”

“The support of international organizations through NGOs, to help families of victims of disappearance, has strengthened our processes. The training has allowed the victims to transcend.”

Gaps in practice: What has not worked in terms of feedback from the perspective of beneficiary communities?

It is also necessary to share those practices that concern or have hurt the trust of BCs. Different situations in which BCs felt that their voices are not heard, some dynamics between donors, organizations, and communities that reproduce the violence that communities are trying to combat. We are aware that these experiences do not apply to all organizations, however, as part of our feedback to the ecosystems, we believe that it is important to state them, recognize them and take positive actions that allow redirecting the path in those spaces where the voices of communities need to be listened to.

What is just not working

- **When the agendas of different organizations are already built without the voices of the communities, they try to align us with their processes or impose predefined projects on us.** In many cases we have perceived that if our opinions do not coincide with the interests, plans, or programs of the organizations, they exclude us, eliminate our opinion, or ignore us.

“The organizations that receive funds already have their agenda from the past, present, and future. We are their raw material and molds us to their agenda, they already know that they want us to respond”

“The agendas are not built on the needs of the victims as those are preconceived. They want us to fit in their survival strategies.”

“They make us participate in what is already foreseen to be build and not in what we need.”

“There are workshops, surveys, or sessions in which they ask you for your opinions, they make you stick little post-its with your ideas, they ask you questions and read the card to the plenary. But these results and opinions are not a substantive part of the final agreements [...] are always selected by the organizations themselves according to their interests.”

“If you, as a family member or organization, think differently from how they want, they won't even invite you again.”

- **When we feel used.** On several occasions, they treat us as an ornament or justification for their projects. They simulate spaces, indicators, or actions that lack our substantive participation or the inclusion of our opinions. In other cases, we are the ones who do a large part of the work without due recognition.

“If they want a report, they invite us to a focus group, we feel like animals being watched. Please don't use me to gather groups of people to fill out data or reports, [...] (sometimes) I feel used. Sometimes I'm embarrassed to invite my friends to participate.”

“An organization that did not work on disability issues proposed a project and they got funds for it. But it frustrates me a lot because, for the event, they invited me and colleagues with visual disabilities two weeks before. I felt used because it had like eight sponsors and a fund. That money, in the name of disability, could be used much better, because they improvised a lot.”

“Those of us who are in the middle, we are not a report, we are lives [...]”

“They get feedback from what we express in the plenary sessions and then they take all the credit saying - we promote, we create - [...] When you read the notes, they say that such organization did all the work, and they don't give credit to your proposals. Those are justifications so that they demonstrate that the money was properly spent. I feel that we are used.”

“There are other (organizations) [...] that ask you a final survey, but it seems that they don't even read it.”

“I am still processing my emotions; I wasn't sure if I wanted to give feedback. As I am so eager for things to change and I would like to help, but there came a point where I said Damn! It's enough. Because sometimes they use me to simulate”

• **When the funds, benefits, or resources of the projects are used discretionary to privilege certain groups, families, or communities related to some organizations, generating relationships of clientelism and perverse incentives to silence critical opinions.** This has not only diminished our confidence and willingness to participate in projects but has also contaminated the dynamics between groups of families, beneficiaries, and collectives.

“[...] My perspective is that there is a situation of privilege. A preference towards groups or people who are endowed with resources, transfers, awards. They spoiled people who have a more submissive way of working that are not so critical.”

“The clientelism relationships that organizations build. The discretion with which they allocate resources for participation, representation, organizations use this as a sort of carrot for families and groups.”

“There are colleagues who wanted a [project sponsored] vehicle for their personal use, that kind of thing that distorts the project and [organizations] begin to take us as opportunistic, then we split as a community.”

• **When there is no adequate return on the impact of our participation.** We hardly receive explanations on our contributions. We do not have mechanisms to socialize the effects, changes, or suggestions to the participant and beneficiary bases, generating doubts about the value of the feedback exercises.

“[...] they have never told me – hey! about your contribution, we made progress on this matter and this little bit is reflected-. They never gave us a report on anything, they only used our information.”

“Most of the reports they generate should be known to all participating NGOs, collectives, and families. The information generated by NGOs from investigations [...] there is no dissemination [...] the processes are not explained, the methodology in which it helps the cause ... the richness of participation of the feedback ... where could areas of opportunity be found in this puzzle that is important to understand.”

• **When the staff of the CSO is not adequately trained.** We recognize the efforts of the different people who participate in civil society projects, however, on many occasions, it is clear that the staff needs more tools, sensitivity, or cleverness to facilitate communication and exchange with us.

“Trained people try to coordinate us, unfortunately then they last for a short time. I don't know how much their staff is paid. [...] but there are times when they are not qualified enough [...] Most of the time, they hire great people but sometimes they take sides, they are not neutral with the collectives.”

“I really liked them, they are not monsters, but I am eager for something to happen for people with disabilities, but they take us with an extractivist vision, they use us for the photo, like the little monkey. I tried to be very kind and react with good vibes, I rescued her [the member of the organization] after she had a really bad performance, but I don't know if I wanted to, I don't know if it was my job.”

“From day one I felt that they were improvising. They invited me to tell them what to do. Then they asked me not to prepare anything and to talk only about my life, but then they asked us about strategies to design workshops with a disability approach, so in the end, it was not just talking about my life.”

• **When NGOs prioritize fundraising over the causes they defend. It is an ethical problem.** We are aware that organizations use resources to cover expenses and have different needs. However, when we perceive that the motivations are primarily for their economic survival, very dangerous opportunities for simulation are generated. On the other hand, there are many obstacles for smaller-scale organizations to obtain resources, with the funds generally concentrated among a small group of organizations.

“The organizations in general think, - what do I need to say to continue existing? - If I say that everything is fine, I will no longer exist. They don't say it to justify their donor giving them money.”

“[...] the truth is that not all organizations can participate in these donations. The lists are huge, the requirements are frightening, for the same reason they always fall into the same hands, because the people who have obtained a resource already know how to do it, they already know who to talk to, the numbers, desired parameters [...]”

“It is a good thing that they obtain resources, but they must not be greedy, they must be honest.”

“[...] surely the organization asked for feedback, but since it is an intermediary and needs the resource, it made up the feedback, to make it look like it worked with us and to tell the funders what they wanted to hear.”

• **When there are no direct communication channels with funders.** Most of us have not had direct contact with a donor in our lifetime. In spaces and ecosystems where trust-building processes still require more work, we identify the need to strengthen formal communication channels to promote transparency and directly share our needs.

“There are many channels, but there isn’t a formal channel whose goal is to listen. There should be a formal channel for the organizations and the donors, to bring the objectives and transparency closer together. Because they would no longer seek only to fill the checklist of the projects but to really understand and analyze the products.”

“Some organizations are very abusive because they have no respect for the people who participate, [...] that is why I suggest that they open direct channels with donors. To have a test with the beneficiaries so that you could tell those who donated what we experienced.”

“The donor should have feedback directly with the beneficiaries, to have more transparent information, because then the feedback is only photos that do not say what really happened.”

“It would be nice if there was a small evaluation for those who propose projects, they will verify that they have the inputs both in knowledge and about the subject. It is delicate. After all, if I say it before, perhaps they would not want to finance [projects] because they would say that we are very complicated [...] They burn cartridges without using them and it is very sad. ”

“It sounds bad, but it is the truth. Since the donors only review documents, sometimes they visit, some photos, and everyone is happy. Donors must strengthen accountable and transparent spending of resources.”

Conclusive Insights

- **Despite not being widely implemented, High-Quality Feedback is considered necessary, viable, and relevant.** - Overall high-quality feedback methodologies are not widely known nor implemented in Mexico. Furthermore, one of the interesting findings was that the program officers of the foundations within the global initiative are not aware of the L4G initiative and that systematic feedback methodologies are not pervasively applied. However, there is a positive predisposition to accept methodologies and exploring processes for feedback across sectors. Participative and inclusive methodologies for diagnosis, design of projects, activities, and project accountability could find fertile soil in Mexico. Ample perceptions on viability and relevance of feedback systems from the participants' viewpoints, could reflect opportunities for acceptance of the further implementation of these methodologies with organizations and donors in Mexico.
- **Taking advantage of MEL mechanisms for Feedback.** - MEL mechanisms already in place altogether with complementing informal feedback mechanisms could be taken as a base for further implementing high-quality feedback methodologies in Mexico. Current donors' focus on the monitoring and follow-up and accomplishment of objectives concerning resource efficiency are aligned with the potential development of high-quality feedback. The allocation of resources across programmatic MEL initiatives and participation of donor focal points in local initiatives with CSOs and BCs could increase the chances of integrating feedback methodologies in Mexico.
- **Foster trust-building and power balance processes as cement for collaboration on Feedback.** - Participative processes and listening of beneficiaries and communities at “safe and trust” spaces along with sufficient allocation of resources by donors could have a positive reception in the Mexican ecosystems. Horizontal collaboration without reprisals in terms of losing funding for organizations provides better conditions for the acceptance of high-quality feedback implementation. In this token feedback, methodologies could have better possibilities to germinate in long-term, non-project restricted, flexible funding schemes between donors and CSOs.
- **Implementing high-quality Feedback requires “out of the box” strategies to address multidimensional threats and human insecurities such as the Covid-19 pandemic.** - Feedback implementation remains a challenge in a difficult context for nonprofits in Mexico. Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated workloads for programmatic delivery and competition for financial resources for organizations. Virtual work and difficulties for fieldwork interaction with served communities that privilege the face-to-face in a cultural mindset of familiarity and trust make it imperative to think on pandemic constraints for getting viable feedback. Remote work dynamics and access to technology are not the standards for grassroots organizations and local BCs. Attention to strategies to adapt imaginative methodologies and dynamics for outreaching BCs in the field is crucial as often the served communities lack basic access to health services.

- **The increasingly constrained civic space and structural violence against communities highlight the need to incorporate risk analysis for feedback to succeed.** - It is important to recognize that context is changing rapidly as the legal and fiscal barriers for the operation of CSOs that the Mexican government is enacting are becoming more restrictive. Civic space is currently shrinking; governmental restrictions are more patent for non-profits while government officials even at the highest Office, disregard or stigmatize CSO and international funding actors, especially those working on the critical issues addressed in this study. Furthermore, violence is to be taken into account especially with organizations and beneficiaries that work on human rights violations, security, impunity, or violence against women. All these risk environmental challenges are to be considered for any future feedback initiative that considers the security of the CSOs and BCs.
- **The feasibility of Feedback processes lies not only in the technical dimension of its methodologies but in the ability to identify and address the complexities of Mexican ecosystems.** - Often in Mexico, the blurry frontiers between beneficiaries, victims, program managers, activists, and CSO staff constitute a complex puzzle that should be solved before understanding the role those specific actors can fulfill in the feedback loop. Organizations often characterize beneficiaries as users, allies, collaborators, communities of accompanied people, and so forth. These denominations entail divergent understandings of relationships. Some organizations question the very concept of beneficiary communities. This in turn raises fundamental questions in Mexico on the issue of the legitimacy of organizations as “intermediaries”, the power position of donors, and the harmful understandings of beneficiary communities as “clientele” versus a notion of empowered communities actively leading social change nowadays Mexican society.
- **Feedback cooperation ought to deal with competing expectations and interests; consensus building, accountability, transparency, and agile devolution are key for positive conflict transformation.** - Another factor to ponder is the expectations may vary across different actors, especially within numerous or heterogeneous groups. Diverging expectations could represent an unreachable situation on what feedback can plausibly “solve” according to different values and interests. Therefore, feedback possibilities of implementation are to be assessed not just in the light of technical feasibility standards, but also in terms of critical analysis about the interactions and conflicts between communities, donors, and organizations. If feedback is to succeed in Mexico, an accountable, transparent, and agile devolution for closing the loop with communities is a *sine qua non* condition for cooperation across sectors.
- **Addressing barriers of access in a straightforward and intersectional way will make feedback inclusive and pertinent to communities.** - Gaps and barriers on native language, cultural ethnic sets, technology, gender, disability, and rural cleavages are an everyday challenge in the reality of Mexican fieldwork. Those challenges are to be addressed with local counterparts to design and pilot sustainable and inclusive feedback tools which are pertinently tailored for the variegated communities and programmatic contexts of operation in Mexico. Donors and organizations particularly those working at the local levels already have a diagnosis about the pervasive access barriers, yet they have not solved with concrete far-reaching tactics

the conundrum of marshaling fully inclusive and accessible feedback strategies. By having an intersectional analysis of overlapping barriers of access and making visible special needs, feedback tools can foster recognition and solutions for communities confronting exacerbated exclusion. Given the opportunities and challenges in the examined Mexican ecosystems, the inclusion of the served communities at its best is an attainable goal, yet also remains a prominent challenge.

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