

Fact sheet¹ Commitment 3

Feedback and Complaints

FAO is committed to offer means for communities to provide feedback on programmes and to submit complaints, and to ensure that they receive a timely response

Appropriate and inclusive channels for feedback should be available to affected communities and their representatives through each phase of the project cycle. Feedback ensures timely information regarding, for example, whether targeting was correct, programmes are being implemented appropriately, and what impact programmes are having on participants, intended or unintended, positive or negative. Feedback channels not only respect the right of affected communities to have a say, but also very often improve the efficiency and effectiveness of aid delivery.

Complaints and response mechanisms, when well constructed and operated, are means for an organisation to ensure that there is a safe and confidential way for people to raise concerns and receive some kind of response, from everyday problems with the quality of the services to sensitive complaints regarding corruption, misuse of assets, staff misconduct or sexual exploitation and abuse. Obstacles such as social or cultural restrictions, including those related to gender or a disability, literacy limitations or lack of free access to a cell phone should not exclude community members from being able to raise a concern, and access points should be designed with all segments of the community in mind. Complaints and feedback systems need to be effectively tailored to each context with particular attention to the communications environment. Reliable response mechanisms complete the feedback loop, and overall, the mechanisms need be carefully explained to communities to account for cultural differences and nuances.

FAO is committed to:

- Actively and routinely seeking the feedback of the people it seeks to assist in emergencies at every stage of the project cycle. All segments of a community, including women, men, girls, boys, people living with disabilities, young people and the elderly must have access to feedback mechanisms, with particular attention to access by the most vulnerable and marginalised. Feedback is used to adjust and improve policy and practice in programming at a local and global level in an ongoing and timely way and communities are informed as to how their feedback will be used, or who it will be referred to. Means for receiving feedback are built into each emergency programme and project and suited to each context, including through asking the communities how best to obtain their feedback and how often.
- Ensuring that complaints mechanisms are established, streamlined, appropriate and accessible to all relevant interest and special needs groups as above and that they are encouraged to use them. Procedures for handling sensitive complaints will be developed in line with FAO's commitment to the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse and allegations will be investigated and handled appropriately.
- Working with its partners to communicate expectations regarding feedback, complaints and the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse. This includes collaborating with partners to help them achieve and maintain higher standards. FAO works with partners, peer agencies and the cluster system to establish joint mechanisms, when appropriate, that offer coherent, unified, entry points for communities and joint approaches to processing, managing and responding to feedback and complaints.

Additional Notes

Feedback or complaints contain useful information for agencies to guide and adjust project implementation. They can highlight good practices, underline where activities are not working, alert to corruption or misuse of inputs, etc. Agencies can learn from the information received, either through individual cases, or through

¹ This document supports the FAO in Emergencies Guidance Note on Accountability to Affected Population (AAP) and the IASC CAAP(Commitments on AAP) Tools. It includes: Each FAO commitment as presented in the Guidance Note, Further detail and explanation from other sources, Case studies and examples on each commitment in practice, and Links to external resources.

trends in feedback and complaints, and should consider them as valuable management information and potentially project cost saving strategies.

Involving communities and individuals in the design of feedback and complaint mechanisms can support the establishment of an appropriate, context specific and accountable process.

Complaints-handling procedures should include information regarding:

- The right of beneficiaries and other specified stakeholders to file a complaint;
- The purpose, parameters and limitations of the procedure;
- The procedure for submitting complaints;
- The steps taken in processing complaints;
- Confidentiality and non-retaliation policy for complainants;
- The process for safe referral of complaints that the agency is not equipped to handle;
- And the right to receive a response.

Case studies

A Feedback and Complaints Desk set up by Oxfam

While implementing a WASH project in Jamam camp, South Sudan, the Oxfam Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning and Public Health team designed various methods to obtain complaints and feedback from beneficiaries. Options included through on-going monitoring data collection and weekly complaints and feedback desks at the camp. The desks were set up with the participation of the community WASH committee members who identified suitable locations and agreed on a days and times to operate them. This process allowed stronger community ownership. An Oxfam flag was placed in the areas to make each desk visible from a distance and specialised staff was allocated to each of them. A one page format was used to collect complaints and feedback, then stored in a database. Information included the type of complaint, date, location and contained a column where to report when the complaint was responded to. The updated information was shared with concerned programme staff for action. In one case, the weakness of the latrine structure had been raised as safety issue, so the sanitation team responded, redesigning the latrines and adding a structure to strengthen them. As a part of response cycle, the team also shared the actions and responses with the communities during information sessions at the camp locations and also through the desk.

Feedback mechanisms via SMS – Danish Refugee Council in Somalia²

The “SMS Beneficiary Feedback” programme allows beneficiaries to give feedback about projects funded or services provided by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) using an SMS system. A specialized local professional visits project areas to explain the activities and the possible outcomes of it to the communities. Having a staff member meet them in person ensured clarity on the aim and scope of the text messaging service and allowed a better management of community expectations. This system aimed at finding out how and if beneficiaries of the DRC program were satisfied by the services provided to them and what could be improved. Once the SMS reached the central server, they were translated into English and channelled to the right department/office inside the organization. Each message was reviewed and answered. Once the relevant person provided a response to the question/comment, the team delivered it via SMS or through a phone call. This process is documented step by step on a Ushahidi platform, where all SMS are mapped and all responses/commentaries are shown (<http://somcdrcd.org/hif/>).

CARE Complaint phone line in Peru

CARE International established a free complaints telephone line in Peru after the 2007 earthquake. They reported that this resulted in more feedback from the community, on top of the traditional feedback mechanism. The results of this feedback collection were reflected into new programming design, resulting in better programming outcomes. CARE was able to reach a wider portion of the population by setting up these phone lines. Their feedback was useful to incorporate views of those who were not directly interviewed about interventions.

² <https://crisismapper.wordpress.com/2012/06/18/the-very-first-humanitarian-customer-calling-center/>

Feedback and Complaints Useful Links and resources

Hap Website Resources for Complaints handling

<http://www.hapinternational.org/case-studies-and-tools/handling-complaints.aspx>

Examples and links about handling complaint from HAP members the joint initiative

Lesson Learnt from DanChurchAid

<http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/dca-malawi-lessons-learned-february-2009.pdf>

This presentation provides an overview of the lessons learnt relating to DanChurchAid's implementation of Complaints and Response Mechanisms with partners in Malawi

Tearfund North Kenya Programme Suggestion boxes for community feedback

<http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/tearfund-north-kenya-programme-suggestion-boxes-for-community-feedback.pdf>

A case study on the establishment a channel by which sensitive complaints could be raised anonymously, complementing a Beneficiary Reference Groups.

Save the Children Video on Setting up Complaint and Response Mechanisms in Dadaab Camp

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXvln3rddmA>

This video walks through all the steps carried out to set up a Complaint and Response Mechanisms (CRM) following Save the Children experience in Dadaab Camp, Kenya.

Danish Refugee Council's example of Complaint Mechanisms Handbook

<http://www.drc.dk/about-drc/publications/manuals/>

This handbook focuses on how to establish complaint mechanisms in humanitarian projects. Aimed at practitioners and managers, it includes a step-by-step guide, as well as practical tools and exercises to help staff think through the process of designing a tailored complaint and response mechanism

Save the Children Guide for setting-up Child Friendly Complaints and Response Mechanisms

<http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/guide-to-a-child-friendly-crm-lessons-from-dadaab-kenya-final-draft.pdf>

This case-study presents a child-friendly system set up in Dadaab Refugee camps in northern Kenya and how children and care-givers have responded to it.

Steps in Complaint Handling by World Vision

<http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/steps-in-complaints-handling.ppt>

One page document used to highlight key points for staff in emergency settings.

The 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management -

<http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/2010-hap-standard-in-accountability.pdf>

The HAP standard sets some guidance for organisations intending to comply with the HAP Principles of Accountability. The resource is also a means to assess organisations against recognised benchmarks of accountability and quality management and to improve its practice.

The Interim Guide to the 2010 HAP Standard in Accountability and Quality Management -

<http://www.hapinternational.org/pool/files/interim-guide-to-the-2010-hap-standard.pdf>

According to international standards, guidelines and principles of continual improvement, the HAP 2007 Standard underwent an extensive revision process. The review reflects learning of applying the Standard and accountability practice since 2007. A more comprehensive guide to the HAP 2010 Standard is forthcoming.

The Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response

<http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/>

The SPHERE Project's core standards describe conditions that must be achieved in any humanitarian response in order for disaster-affected populations to survive and recover in stable conditions and with dignity. The inclusion of affected populations in the consultative process lies at the heart of Sphere's philosophy.

People In Aid's Code of Good Practice - <http://www.peopleinaid.org/code/>

The Code of Good Practice is a management tool that helps humanitarian aid and development agencies enhance the quality and accountability of their human resources management.

The Joint Standards Initiative: Humanitarian Standards for Aid Workers - <http://www.jointstandards.org/>

The Initiative aims at supporting the humanitarian system in providing accountable programming that meets accepted standards of quality, both in the immediate humanitarian response, and in the development and implementation of organisational and operational strategies for short and long-term recovery and the prevention of future crises.

Sphere Quality and Accountability Best Practices Guidelines - <http://www.sphereproject.org/resources/>

A set of materials to be used in training workshops or as an introduction to the range of quality and accountability initiatives for humanitarian response. The materials enable participants to understand the approach to quality and accountability of 8 main Accountability initiatives (such as HAP, ALNAP or the Sphere project).

ALNAP's Evaluating Humanitarian Action - www.alnap.org/resources/guides/evaluation/ehadac.aspx

This guide was developed after discussions within the evaluation community about how to strengthen evaluation of humanitarian practice, and how to foster more effective use of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria. The objective of this guide is to provide practical support on how to use the DAC criteria in Evaluation of Humanitarian Action (EHA). It draws on good-practice material on evaluation and on EHA, including other guides, handbooks and manuals.

The ECB Project's Good Enough Guide

<http://www.ecbproject.org/the-good-enough-guide/the-good-enough-guide>

In this guide, accountability means making sure that the women, men, and children affected by an emergency are involved in planning, implementing, and judging the response to their emergency. This helps ensure that a project will have the impact they want to see. The *Good Enough Guide* was developed by the Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB). The ECB is a collaborative effort by CARE International, Catholic Relief Services, the IRC, Mercy Corps, Oxfam GB, Save the Children, and World Vision International.