

Minimum Standards on Complaints & Feedback for the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan

People have the right to complain and provide feedback to a service provider and to receive an appropriate and timely response. Formal mechanisms for complaints and redress are an essential marker of quality service provision, giving people an element of control and inclusion over their lives. It is important for organizations operating in Lebanon to make an active commitment to using power responsibly **by taking account of, giving account to and being held to account by** crisis-affected children, young people and communities they work with.

This checklist aims to support organizations to assess whether they meet the minimum standards for having complaints and feedback mechanisms in place. Protection Mainstreaming and Accountability for Affected Populations (AAP) are Inter-Agency priorities for the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2020.

What is a complaints, feedback & response mechanism?

<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/accountability-affected-populations-including-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/documents-50>

A complaints, feedback and response mechanism (CFRM)* is a set of clear, transparent procedures that provides people in communities with access to a safe, confidential means of voicing complaints or providing feedback on their experiences with the services they use. The main objective is to increase the influence of communities over services, ensure that incidence of service dissatisfaction or misconduct are addressed, and to enhance overall programme quality and ensure sustainability of the system.

* also often referred to as a community-based complaints mechanism (CBCM)
https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/best_practice_guide_inter_agency_community_based_complaint_mechanisms_1.pdf

Steps to set-up a complaints & feedback mechanism

Plan

- 1** Secure organizational commitment to set-up a complaints, feedback and response system suitable for the targetted population group
- 2** Consult communities and individuals from different groups (men, women, girls and boys, older people, persons with disabilities, etc.) on their needs, preferences, and accessibility (specially during remote interventions, this factors Internet accessibility)
- 3** Define purpose, scope and set expectations

Consultation with communities: Communities should be consulted at the design phase to ensure the system is accessible, safe and dignified and avoids causing harm. It is essential to make provisions for the most vulnerable to advance their access to entry points and receive feedback, this means consulting with persons with disability, the elderly, female headed-households, women and children at risk among others. The community should then be consulted on a yearly basis to assess and evaluate the CFRM.

Manage expectations: This is important, as communities may believe that the complaints and feedback process can solve all of their problems. Also establish which complaints can be responded to individually and which will not, but will rather inform programmes and interventions.

Design

- 4** Identify which communication channels are most appropriate
- 5** Consider how sensitive information such as PSEA will be collected and addressed
- 6** Assign roles, set up infrastructure and staff should be trained on communication with affected/vulnerable people, should be trained on how to use the system and also be familiar with service mapping - to ensure they give beneficiaries needed info if asked
- 7** Raise community awareness on expected use, purpose of the system and how to make a complaint
- 8** Staff assigned to handle complaints should be independent of implementing teams, and any other function within the organization that is in contact with the beneficiaries and supplies. The only exception being the M&E team and would depend on who the function reports to.

Communication Channels:

Carefully consider, in consultation with the community, the pros and cons of each communication channel before selection - information/hotline, complaints box, email, facebook, whatsapp, in person. A link to an overview of various channels should be accessible for all groups.

Sensitive information:

Sensitive information (relating to corruption, sexual exploitation and abuse, or gross misconduct or malpractice) and non-sensitive information (e.g. challenges to use of selection criteria) is likely to be collected. Sensitive information received requires an urgent response to a specialized service provider. Staff receiving complaints & feedback should be trained on how to respond to sensitive information and safe referral and identification protocols. It is encouraged to have a mix of staff genders and backgrounds to facilitate response to communities in a safe, timely, and confidential manner

Data collection, analysis, sharing

- 9** Plan how to receive, log and validate a complaint or feedback while respecting confidentiality, and "do no harm" principles
- 10** Plan to collect information that staff actually need in order to make decisions and adapt programs (ex. produce a report, recommendations)
- 11** Ensure solicited and unsolicited feedback is captured and analyzed
- 12** Plan who will conduct data analysis and who will receive it
- 13** Report feedback trends and analysis to decision-makers
- 14** Data protection principles & standards should be embedded and applied throughout all stages of CRFM. It's essential to maintaining confidentiality of the complainant even within an organization to avoid retribution/retaliation and negative repercussion towards the complainant, by staff, partners and suppliers.

Status of complaints & feedback:

Complaints & feedback should be tagged as open or closed, and the date of closure of a complaint or feedback should be recorded. Staff should be trained on how to log complaints and feedback, to ensure consistent categorization and logging between staff.

Handling complaints & feedback:

After a complaint or feedback is received and recorded, complaints should be assigned to appropriate internal focal points for investigation and follow up. Only staff trained to conduct follow up and investigate should do so, if not possible national reporting systems* should be used. If the complaint or feedback does not relate to your agency's programme, it should be referred with consent to the relevant actor for action.

Providing feedback or a response

- 15 Establish methods to resolve a complaint or response to feedback (referral, informally, formally or by investigation)
- 16 Ensure there is an active and clear appeals process in place, and that the community is informed
- 17 Where possible the organization should assess the level of satisfaction of the response & action before closing a case.

Data disaggregation: All data should be disaggregated by age, gender, disability and nationality.

Suggested information to collect: date of complaint, gender, age, disability of complainant, e-card number, main and sub category type of complaint, description of problem, contact details of complainant, consent to process information, priority grading, and focal point for follow up, reference number.

This guidance has been drawn from the Core Humanitarian Standards Guidance, IASC Inter-Agency Community-Based Complaints Mechanism Guidelines, IRC Complaints & Feedback Guidance, and, ALNAP practitioners guide on Effective Feedback in Humanitarian Contexts