[Country Operation/Organization]

Feedback, Complaint and Response Mechanism (FCRM)

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)

[month and year]

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# Introduction

*[****Note:*** *Use this template for developing your SOP. The elements in* ***yellow*** *should be adapted to your context and then removed.]*

The [organization name] is committed to being accountable to affected populations in its operations, including through the establishment of feedback mechanisms. Formal and informal communication from community members, both positive and negative, should inform protection, assistance and solutions programming, and adaptations implemented accordingly. Accountability to affected populations (AAP) can be understood as an active commitment by the humanitarian actors and organizations to use power responsibly by taking account of, giving account to, and being held to account by the people they seek to assist.

A feedback, complaints and response mechanism (FCRM) is a key component of AAP as endorsed in the AAP Framework adopted by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in 2011. The IASC AAP Operational Framework summarizes key concepts for increased accountability at field leave. The framework is designed to find practical entry points for improving AAP. Effective FCRM are central to strengthening accountability to affected populations[[1]](#footnote-2) and contribute to community empowerment while their suggestions and concerns inform and tailor protection and assistance.

The [name of the feedback mechanism] covered by these standard operating procedures (SOPs) is managed by [organization name] as well as [add other partners participating in the management of the feedback mechanism if applicable]. The SOPs aim to explain how the feedback, complaints, and response mechanism (FCRM) works and how and by whom it is managed. The SOPs detail how the FCRM receives and responds to feedback and complaints through a variety of channels and the roles and responsibilities of those involved.

These SOPs will be reviewed by the [AAP multifunctional team] every [six] months to ensure their accuracy and relevance.

# Objective

The overall objective of the FCRM is to ensure a coordinated and effective response to community members’ questions, feedback, suggestions, concerns, and complaints. More specifically, the FCRM aims to:

* Enable [organization name] to effectively manage questions, feedback, suggestions, concerns, and complaints from community members in [country] and to provide timely and appropriate responses.
* Increase accountability to affected populations through adaptation of programming as needed based on the expressed needs and priorities identified by community members.
* Provide an accessible, responsive, and trusted means of two-way communication with community members.
* Ensure that community members’ questions, feedback, suggestions, concerns, and complaints are systematically recorded, analyzed, referred, and responded.
* Provide an accessible, safe, and confidential mechanism for reporting sensitive complaints, ensuring confidentiality and safety of community members and personnel.

# Scope

The feedback mechanism receives and responds to questions, feedback, suggestions, concerns, and complaints from community members across [country], including from [Asylum-seekers, refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs), stateless persons and affected host community members]. The [country] operation assist [IDPs and refugees] in [settlements/camps in departments and/or urban areas where IDPs and refugees reside].

Topics to be addressed may include:[[2]](#footnote-3) Cash, Health, MHPSS, Education, RST, RSD, Wash, Shelter, etc

*[Note: Adapt the above list to the context and operational settings]*

Complaints can also be of a sensitive nature and may include fraud, corruption, sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by humanitarian or development workers.

# Feedback channels

Different community members have **different communication preferences** due to a range of possible reasons, including literacy, culture, disability, trust issues and other access factors. It is therefore essential to offer a variety of ways for community members to communicate with us, including different face-to-face communication channels as well as the possibility to submit feedback and complaints in writing (and anonymously).

The [name of the feedback mechanism] offers the following feedback channels:

*[Note: Adapt the below list to the context and add the information relevant for each channel to explain why it was chosen, who is managing it, how it can be accessed, locations, opening hours, etc for all locations.]*:

* **Complaint/Suggestion boxes:**
* **Help desks:**
* **Community committees:**
* **WhatsApp, Facebook, email:**
* **Community outreach volunteers:**
* **Community-based organisations:**
* **Helpline/hotline/Call Center:**
* **SMS:**
* **Other:**

The above feedback channels were chosen in consultation with a diverse range of community members and population groups amongst the people we serve, including [women, men, girls, boys, youth, older people, illiterate people, people with disabilities, ethnic and religious minorities, indigenous peoples, LGBTIQ+ people[[3]](#footnote-4) and people living in remote locations].

*[Note: Add/remove any specific groups as relevant to your operational context]*.

Communication should take place in the languages understood by community members and through inclusive strategies. The above channels are accessible in the following languages and communication strategies: [add main languages spoken by population groups, sign languages, voice recording, captions, ease to read, etc.].

*[Note: Also explain here how you are ensuring that people who speak minority languages have access to at least some of the feedback channels]*.

Furthermore, personnel with different ages, genders, and backgrounds are made available when providing counselling and advice.

*[Note: To decide which feedback channels to use, findings from recent communication preferences and information needs assessments should be reviewed.]*

# Roles and responsibilities

The below table details the main roles and responsibilities of the persons involved in managing feedback and complaints received through the FCRM:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Role** | **Responsibilities** | **Name/Surname** | **Contact Information** |
| FCRM Coordinator/Focal point | Responsible for daily oversight and management of the feedback mechanism. |  |  |
| Backup FCRM Focal Point | Responsible for FCRM as backup of Feedback Mechanism Coordinator/Focal Point. |  |  |
| Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Focal Point | Responsible for PSEA complaints and all related issues, including confidential follow-up with IGO or the relevant investigative body. |  |  |
| Backup PSEA Focal Point | Responsible for PSEA complaints and all related issues, including confidential follow-up with IGO or the relevant investigative body as backup of PSEA Focal Point. |  |  |
| FCRM Database/ Information Management Focal Point | Responsible for FCRM database maintenance, training, data analysis and storage. |  |  |
| Backup FCRM Database/ Information Management Focal Point | Responsible for FCRM database maintenance, training, data analysis and storage as backup of FCRM Database Focal Point |  |  |

#

# Quality assurance

All feedback mechanism staff, including field staff dealing with feedback and complaints, helpline operators and technical focal points, as well as relevant community outreach volunteers and representatives [add/remove categories as appropriate] are required to sign a Code of Conduct[[4]](#footnote-5) and a confidentiality and privacy agreement.

Feedback and complaint mechanism personnel and community outreach volunteers and representatives receive regular training and refreshers on the Code of Conduct and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), the local context and culture(s). They are also required to regularly review the responses to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) – so that they fully understand the assistance being provided by [name of organization/operation] – and feedback and complaints referral pathway, including sensitive and highly sensitive complaints.

While all trainings are coordinated by the [Feedback Mechanism Coordinator], protection and AAP experts from the country, regional and global level are involved in preparing and conducting the trainings as much as possible. The training materials are regularly updated by key technical experts from [organization/s] in accordance with global and regional standards. The training materials are adapted to the specific information needs of different audiences, including community outreach volunteers and representatives.

The performance and responsiveness of field staff, helpline operators, technical focal points and community outreach volunteers and representatives [add/remove categories as appropriate] engaged in the FCRM is regularly monitored through the data base analysis [database or other feedback or complaints tracking tool, digital form or other], satisfaction surveys, and management.

Anyone receiving and managing feedback and complaints is vetted during the recruitment processes to ensure that conflicts of interest are avoided. Where there are conflicts of interest that could compromise the protection of community members, they are dealt with by the FCRM Coordinator/Focal point directly or the relevant body.

The FCRM Coordinator/Focal point ensures that any allegations of misconduct, lack of compliance or fraud that are raised by community members or other stakeholders are submitted to IGO or the relevant investigative body

# Information CASE management

Personal information, feedback and complaints content, status feedback and complaints focal point, and actions taken are recorded in the [database or other FCRM tracking tool, digital form or other. These may include UNHCR’s proGres or other third-party software solution] (“IM system” from here on). The IM system facilitates referrals and feedback/complaints case management.

## Data protection and Information sharing

*[Note: Adapt following section with your organization’s Data Protection and Data Sharing policy as appropriate.]*

UNHCR has a comprehensive [Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR (2015)](https://www.refworld.org/docid/55643c1d4.html), commonly referred to as the UNHCR Data Protection Policy (DPP), that provides rules and principles on the processing of the personal data of people we serve. The DPP is complemented by [Guidance on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR (2018)](https://www.refworld.org/docid/5b360f4d4.html), commonly referred to as the Data Protection Guidance (DPG) that further expands on the Policy’s implementation, supervision, and accountability. Additionally, the more recently published [General Policy on Personal Data Protection and Privacy (2022), referred to as the GDPP](https://intranet.unhcr.org/en/policy-guidance/policies/UNHCR-HCP-2022-02.html), applies to the processing of personal data by UNHCR and on behalf of UNHCR by establishing an overall framework for the processing of personal data by UNHCR.

Before the establishment of the feedback mechanism, a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) was carried out to understand the context and map feedback mechanism data flows and transfers, data access and associated risks. [Based on the PIA, Data Sharing Agreements (DSA) or Information Sharing Protocols (ISP) were established with partners which detail what data is shared.] Anyone receiving and managing feedback and complaints as part of the FCRM has signed a confidentiality and privacy agreement, which includes provisions on the protection of personal data in line with [organization’s data privacy policy and guidance]. Access rights to information in the database are granted based on roles and responsibilities with consideration to safety, security, and confidentiality principles and procedures.

Counselling on data protection policy, confidentiality, safety, and consent procedures is provided to all users of the FCRM.

At any point in time, feedback mechanism users can request to have their information updated and/or removed from the database.

If a third person uses the feedback mechanism on behalf of a community member and needs case-specific information, the feedback or complaint is referred to the relevant focal point to seek consent from the affected community member.

# Feedback and complaint categories and response timeframes

[Organization/s] have agreed on the below feedback and complaint categories to be used by the FCRM to ensure compatibility of collected feedback data and to be able to [*jointly]* analyse and report on feedback and complaints: *[Note: Adapt categories and timeframes as appropriate to ensure realistic timeframes are established – these are only indicative.]*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Feedback and complaint category** | **Response timeframe**  |
| 1. **Information request or request for assistance**
* Ideally response is provided on first contact by the respective counsellor or operator guided by the operation’s FAQs.
* This category includes requests to update or erase personal information. Where information is not unknown, a referral may be made to the relevant focal point to respond.
* Information requests are not considered feedback or complaints but should still be responded to by the relevant unit/sector/focal point.
* Purpose of the feedback and complaint mechanism should be explained.
 | 7 days*(in case a referral is necessary)* |
| 1. **Suggestions or recommendations**
* Important suggestions and recommendations can strengthen service provision and accountability. Once a recommendation or suggestions is made, [organization] should take action and respond.
 | 5 days |
| 1. **Non-sensitive complaint or programmatic complaint**
* Includes complaints about prioritisation, the quality or quantity of assistance, malfunctioning of a service, distribution delays, etc.
* A referral pathway should be established and updated regularly to ensure adequate follow up at internal and interagency levels.
* Assistance and information requests may not be considered feedback or complaints but should be responded or referred accordingly.
 | 3 days |
| 1. **Sensitive complaint**

*(Misconduct including fraud, corruption, issues, SEA) should be referred to IGO and action taken to guarantee safety of community members and staff.* | Less than 24 hours |

All feedback and complaints should be addressed as soon as possible or within the above stated timeframe. In life-threatening situations or in the case of serious protection risks immediate action may be required. *[Note: Create more detailed subcategories as appropriate to collect more accurate information.]*

|  |
| --- |
| **MENA recommended Feedback and Complaint Topics:** |
| * Health
 |
| * Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)
 |
| * Education
 |
| * Water sanitation & hygiene (WASH)
 |
| * Shelter (accommodation)
 |
| * Safe shelter (for GBV, trafficking survivors, etc.)
 |
| * Communication and participation
 |
| * Gender-based violence (GBV)
 |
| * Child protection (CP)
 |
| * Statelessness
 |
| * Registration
 |
| * Refugee Status Determination (RSD)
 |
| * Resettlement (RST) & complementary pathways
 |
| * Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
 |
| * Misconduct including corruption, and fraud
 |
| * Cash
 |
| * Legal and Physical Protection
 |

# PROCEDURES FOR Processing feedback and complaints

## Receiving and recording feedback and complaints

Feedback and complaints that are received through the different feedback channels of the FCRM including the [help desks, community committees, helpline, SMS, WhatsApp, Facebook, email and suggestion boxes - add/remove channels as appropriate] are recorded in the database according to the feedback and complaint categories (see section 8 above).

Feedback mechanism users are always asked to give their consent to any data collection after being explained that their personal information will be treated confidentially and not shared with anyone without their consent. Feedback and complaints can be recorded as **anonymous.**

Where consent is provided, the following personal information may be recorded together with the details of the feedback or complaint:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Data field** *[add/remove as appropriate]* | **Purpose of data collection** |
| **ID number**, **ProGres number**, **group case number** or **ration card number** *(if available; not mandatory)* | Authentication of feedback mechanism user |
| **First and last name** *(not mandatory)* | Authentication of feedback mechanism user |
| **Age** | Key component of feedback mechanism user statistics |
| **Gender** *(Female/Male/Other/prefer not to say)* | Key component of feedback mechanism user statistics |
| **Location** *(city, village or camp)* | Key component of feedback mechanism user statistics |
| **Contact information** *(not mandatory)* | To facilitate communication during follow-up on referrals and when providing responses (where relevant), and for post-case surveys |

## Frequently Asked Questions

Field staff and helpline operators who receive questions, feedback or complaints, record the feedback mechanism users’ personal information as well as the details of the communication in the database and provide a response on the spot, if possible, based on the information provided in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). Any questions that they are not able to respond to on the spot as well as all other feedback and complaints are recorded and referred after asking for the feedback mechanism users’ consent. FAQs are continuously updated and regular trainings take place of anyone receiving and managing feedback and complaints as part of the FCRM.

The FAQs can be accessed online (e.g. through refugee knowledge base) as well as offline and are searchable so that key information can be easily found. FAQs are also available in [main languages spoken by IDPs, refugees and host communities] to make sure that this essential information is received and understood by all community members and people of all groups. [Add online/offline location and links of the FAQs if available]

## Referrals

A referral pathway is in place and known to all individuals engaged in the FCRM. The pathway includes topical areas and prioritization. Consent (assent, consent from care givers of children) should be sought prior to the referrals. Misconduct related suspected acts should be submitted to IGO or the relevant investigative body. The feedback mechanism coordinator, PSEA, and Fraud coordinator should be consulted in case of doubt. Safety and protection measures should be put in place as appropriate.

Once a feedback or complaint is referred to a focal point through the referral pathway, a notification [automatically generated by the system whenever possible, otherwise using a ticketing systems or email correspondence] is sent to the concerned focal point. The focal point can then review the details of the referral and start following up.

As soon as a decision has been made about what actions will be taken to respond to the referral, the focal point informs the feedback mechanism user, provides a brief explanation in the database about how the issue has been addressed and marks the referral as resolved.

## Closing the feedback referral loop

The feedback referral loop is closed as soon as the focal point provides a response to the original feedback mechanism user (or the wider community where appropriate) explaining how the feedback or complaint has been addressed and what actions have been taken (if any). Responses to sensitive complaints are always given individually and with care to ensure the safety and security of the individual. If individual or collective feedback or complaints have resulted in the adaptation of a programme affecting the community at large, the wider community is informed of the changes through systematic consultations and communications.

If a referral cannot be resolved within a short time period, the referral remains open and is only marked as resolved once a definite response has been provided. While the referral remains open, the focal point provides regular updates to the feedback mechanism user as well as in the database on the status of the process. [Note: add more detail here to clarify the types of referrals relevant to your context.]

Where the original feedback mechanism user cannot be reached during [one month] over [five] contact attempts, even at different hours of the day and by using all practicable communication channels (phone, email, SMS, WhatsApp or other) to communicate, the issue is marked as resolved in the database. A response is recorded in this case indicating information about the attempts to make contact with the feedback mechanism user.

# FEEDBACK ANALYSIS and reporting

An [online] dashboard and different feedback mechanism reporting templates for different audiences are used to present relevant information to key stakeholders in an appropriate format and in a timely fashion. Reports include information on the number and types of feedback and complaints, the types of feedback mechanism users (disaggregated by age, gender, and diversity [and other diversity ]), The analysis should refer to the number of resolved and open feedback and complaints, and the actions that have been taken to address feedback and complaints. Trends and other key information is discussed by a multisectoral and (interagency) task force regularly. The task force may inquire about additional analysis and plan joint responses. The task force is bound by confidentiality. Third parties inquiries may be responded as per the decision of the task force.

The [Feedback Mechanism Coordinator] leads on the analysis and reporting activities with the support of the [Information Management Focal Point] and ensures that the [monthly reports] are produced in addition to the [online] dashboards.

1. The terminology Accountability to affected *people* and accountability to affected *populations* are used interchangeably by different organizations. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Acronyms used include: MHPSS - Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, GBV is an acronym for Gender-based Violence, RSD – Refugee Status Determination, RST – Resettlement. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. For UNHCR and its partners, see the [Code of Conduct and Explanatory Notes](https://cms.emergency.unhcr.org/documents/11982/32382/UNHCR%2BCode%2Bof%2BConduct/72ff3fdf-4e7c-4928-8cc2-723655b421c7). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)