Digital AAP - Feedback, Complaint and Response Mechanisms in MENA:

Mapping and Way Forward

The case of Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

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I. Introduction

Being accountable to refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced people, returnees, stateless persons, and other persons with international protection needs, is increasingly understood as an essential element and approach for the implementation of safe, inclusive, and effective delivery of humanitarian and development interventions in all settings in the MENA region and beyond. Related research and pilots have been launched in recent years, notably touching upon the use of digital tools for communication, information management, and coordination among aid workers and community members. The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the interest in maximizing digitalization to reach at-risk persons including those in remote and hard-to-reach areas, as well as people living with disabilities.

Digital innovation has reached community centers, community networks and organisations, as well as provided a platform for the continuation of registration, health and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), education, and protection case management, including sensitive issues such as gender-based violence (GBV), child neglect and abuse, or misconduct related matters. This has also led to the use of digital tools to enhance participation and AAP, including Feedback, Complaint and Response Mechanisms (FCRM), such as call centres, info desks, hotlines, social media, bulk SMS, dedicated websites, and automated services, as well as technologies to improve the collection, storage, analysis, and response to the community.

Humanitarian and development workers have identified challenges in AAP procedures, which becomes even more evident when promoting the inclusion of certain groups of populations who face different types of barriers. The legal and social status of the individuals involved, the setting where they live, and their access to economic opportunities, coupled with their age, gender and background are factors that limit or expand their engagement and participation in decision making processes, and their access to digital and also physical face-to-face FCRM leading to isolation, confusion, and mistrust amongst displaced people, while limiting the ability of humanitarian and development actors to improve dialogue and respond to the needs of affected communities. Moreover, the array of new channels and information tools has brought efficiencies as well as new considerations and challenges that can ultimately defy the purpose of AAP.

To strengthen its capacity to engage with all persons of concern safely and responsibly, UNHCR and partners have invested in innovative mechanisms, a part of this larger effort to improve inclusion and participatory approaches, placing a greater emphasis on digital AAP, as defined in this report as the use of digital tools to enhance the ability to take account, give account, and be held to account.

To continue enhancing AAP in the MENA region and in consideration with the new challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, with the support of the Dutch PROSPECTS partnership, the UNHCR MENA Regional Bureau led a mapping of digital feedback, response and complaint mechanisms tools and research in the MENA region, with a focus in Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan (the PROSPECTS countries).

The "Digital AAP - Feedback, Complaint and Response Mechanisms in MENA: Mapping and Way Forward" report assessed the use of digital tools and technologies in FCRM across MENA.[1] Contributions were provided from multi-functional staff from UNHCR country offices and international and local NGO partners working with refugees and other displaced communities. This report serves as a critical step to improving FCRM through digital technologies and innovations across MENA, and for better understanding how people with specific needs and diverse profiles, such as women, girls, youth, people living with disabilities, and people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities (SOGI) can access information and feedback mechanisms through the most suitable tools and in a safe and confidential manner. Finally, by presenting various cases to date, as well as opportunities and challenges that technology presents, this mapping offers

[1] Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Turkey, Yemen, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait.

avenues for future research and action.

Key findings of this report include advancement and progress towards effective FCRM and AAP, but also limitations for collecting, managing, or responding to feedback, and when applying a multifunctional strategy to integrate or innovatively deploy digital technologies. Moreover, existing channels largely rely upon very labor intensive and physical face-to-face approaches that is difficult to fully cater to the diverse needs of varying AGD groups. There are opportunities to strengthen both existing digital FCRM, as well as digitally enhance feedback and complaints channels that solely rely on physical presence. This will ultimately strengthen and improve AAP across MENA in an inclusive manner. This report, however, highlights that digital tools and technologies should not replace but serve to complement face-to-face approaches, and face-to-face channels should be maintained and prioritized overall as a critical component of FCRM and engagement with affected populations.

I.I Methodology

To effectively map FCRM across the expansive and diverse humanitarian response in the MENA region, a mixed methods approach was employed to gather data from different stakeholders and build an understanding of the use of digital tools and technologies currently employed. The mapping collected both quantitative and qualitative data through an extensive desk-based review of AAP literature combined with remote interviews with UNHCR staff and an online survey.

A total of 31 organisations participated in the online survey. The 31 respondents to the survey were represented across 14 countries with the greatest participation from 32% Syria (10), 19% Turkey (5) and 10% Egypt (3). 16 (52%) of the respondents were from UNHCR country offices and operations. *(Please refer to Annex 1 for the list of participating organisations)*.

Desk-based Review: A desk-based review was conducted to analyze and review critical literature on AAP with a focus on FCRM, such as the recently published UNHCR Operational Guidance on AAP (UNHCR/OG/2020/02); UNHCR AAP initiatives across MENA; UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity Policy (2018); IASC guidelines and frameworks (2012, 2016, 2018); AAP sector-wide studies, assessments and research; and FCRM policies, procedures, tools, and templates.

Key informant interviews: Key informant interviews were conducted remotely in the four focal countries: Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Iraq. Interviewees were identified through UNHCR's MENA Regional Bureau and UNHCR's networks.

Online Survey: UNHCR, humanitarian organisations, and aid and service delivery partners were also requested to complete an online survey to complement the key informant interviews.

Research Limitations: The following presents some research limitations of the mapping:

- The scope of this mapping does not encompass the wider field of AAP, and only focuses on the component of feedback and complaints, and within that subject area, the use of digital tools and technologies. This study contributes to a broader AAP strategy implemented through different activities supported by UNHCR in 2019 and 2020 that address other AAP aspects.
- As a follow-up on the earlier activities implemented, the first phase of the Digital FCRM project focused on four countries (Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Iraq). Following phases will allow for deeper assessments and further support to other country operations across UNHCRs MENA Regional Bureau.
- Following phases of this initiative will place greater emphasis on refugees' experiences, preferences and perceptions interacting with digital FCRM, with a particular focus on ensuring inclusion when employing any use of digital tools or technologies.
- Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and organisations response to PSEA is a major

component of AAP. However, this phase of the project did not place a special focus on this topic, which is specifically targeted in other initiatives.

I.II AAP Policy Framework and Approaches

UNHCR Operational Guidance on AAP (UNHCR/OG/2020/02) details the objectives of each AAP area of focus as outlined in core actions 2-5 of the 2018 Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) Policy, which requires that all segments of populations of concern have equitable and non-discriminatory access to protection, assistance, and solutions programmes, and have a say in decisions that affect their lives.[2]

UNHCR's AAP Core Actions 2-5 of the 2018 Age, Gender and Diversity Policy:

- Core Action 2- Participation and Inclusion
- Core Action 3- Communication and Transparency
- Core Action 4- Feedback and Response
- Core Action 5- Organisation Learning and Adaptation

While AAP has been an established principle of humanitarian action for two decades, the sector has faced challenges to achieving its commitment 'to use power responsibly by taking account of, giving account to, and being held to account by the people they seek to assist' (UNHCR, 2015). There is a general agreement among humanitarian stakeholders that AAP is a mix of participation, feedback mechanisms, and the provision of information. However, AAP is often equated with feedback mechanisms, even if feedback and complaint mechanisms are clearly defined by both UNHCR and IASC as just one component of AAP. The wide-ranging definition of AAP has resulted in the lack of a common standard or criteria to evaluate AAP.[3]

Participation and Inclusion: UNHCR strongly prioritizes participation and inclusion that need to be in place throughout the operations management cycle. The 2018 UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) emphasizes the importance of establishing and implementing effective AAP systems and Gender Equality (GE) interventions in all humanitarian and development programmes, for refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced people, stateless people, people in mixed movements and host communities, in coordination with relevant stakeholders.

As per the policy, UNHCR and partners need to be accessible to all groups in a community, with particular attention to at-risk groups, such as people with disabilities, and people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, as well as under-represented groups such as adolescents, youth, and older people. Giving a voice to all members of the community allows UNHCR to identify and incorporate the capacities and priorities of persons of concern in the development of programmes, thus minimizing the risk of exclusion. In turn, the quality of participatory processes will increase community ownership of programmes, thereby allowing monitoring and course corrections to be driven by the communities.

Feedback, Complaints and Response Mechanisms (FCRM): As per UNHCR's Operational Guidance (2020), feedback mechanisms are defined as "accessible formal systems through which persons of concern can safely communicate with, and receive responses from UNHCR and its partners," and is committed to:[4]

- Establishing means of continuous and **meaningful participation** at all stages of the operations management cycle (assessments, planning, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation) that are accessible to all groups in a community, paying particular attention to ensuring that potentially marginalised groups are included, such as women, minorities, people living with disabilities, and persons with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities (SOGI).
- Promote **equal and non-discriminatory access** to protection, assistance, and solutions programmes for persons of concern and promote the resilience and achievement of self-reliance for women, men, girls, and boys of concern of different backgrounds.

[2] UNHCR, "Operational Guidance on Accountability to Affected People (AAP)," September 2020.
[3] 1) leadership and governance; 2) transparency; 3) feedback and complaints; 4) participation; and 5) design, monitoring, and evaluation
[4] UNHCR, "Compact Guidance for Senior Managers: Accountability to Affected People (AAP)," April 2020.

- Identify and **include the capacities and priorities** of persons of concern in the development of protection, assistance, and solutions programmes.

While FCRM is probably the most common way organisations implement AAP, there is also no universally accepted definition of feedback, despite several organisations attempt to define feedback and no standards to measure or evaluate FCRMs. The inconsistent use of terminology to define feedback handling in humanitarian contexts presents a problem, and Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) proposes the following definition and guidance on what constitutes an effective feedback mechanism: "A formal system established and used to allow recipients of humanitarian action (and in some cases other crisis-affected populations) to provide information on their experience of a humanitarian agency or of the wider humanitarian system. Such information is then used for different purposes, in expectation of a variety of benefits, including taking corrective action in improving some element of the response."[5]

The limited integration of FCRM across agencies and settlements in MENA, as well as weak systems for logging and analyzing feedback, subsequently impact the response to affected populations, program adaptation, and learning have been also underscored in internal and country-based self-assessments in the region.

I.III Overview of humanitarian situation and accessibility to digital AAP channels in case study countries

The conflicts in the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, the deteriorating security situation in Libya, the violence and instability in Iraq, political unrest in Algeria, as well as a host of countries facing protracted conflicts, civil unrest, and political transition has led to extensive displacement and a humanitarian crisis on an unprecedented scale across the MENA region. Syria's ongoing war in particular, with 6.6 million people displaced internally and over 5.6 million registered refugees displaced in surrounding regions, is one of the most pressing challenges to the humanitarian community, as it remains the largest displacement crisis in the world.[6] Moreover, complex irregular flows across North Africa towards Europe,[7] and from the Red Sea to the Arabic Peninsula expose refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons and others of concern to UNHCR to safety and protection risks, including detention, push-backs, trafficking and smuggling, torture, GBV and other forms of abuse and exploitation.

In recent years measures were put in place to address the needs for urgent and sometimes emergency life-sustaining information and two-way communication in a systematic and harmonized manner and to increase the provision of feedback, response, and complaint mechanisms systems. Following the advancements and progress made in different contexts, but notably in the countries affected by the Syrian and Iraq refugee situations, an updated Regional CwC Strategy was developed, building on effective and innovative activities undertaken at operational level, and emphasizing the need to step up AAP and two-way communication with communities affected forced displacement: "The principle of accountability requires that humanitarian actors involve persons of concern meaningfully in key decisions and processes that impact them, and ensure transparency by continuous communication. These principles of accountability are achieved through the meaningful participation of persons of concern in all phases of the programme cycle."[8]

The implementation of the strategy supported further developments to increase capacity and coordination in the region, such as the 2019, self-assessments of AAP systems and strategies in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and

[5] ALNAP, "Humanitarian Feedback Mechanisms - Research, evidence, and guidance report", by Bonino, F., Jean, I. and Knox Clarke, P., March 2014.
[6] Of the 5,551,698 registered Syrian, 1,956,717 are registered across the four focal countries: Lebanon (892,310), Jordan (657,287), Egypt (130,042) and Iraq (245,421); https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria
[7] 94,950 arrivals to Europe from North Africa in 2020. https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean
[8] UNHCR, "Regional Communication with Communities Strategy," 2017.

Lebanon, which identified enablers and barriers to achieving the Core Actions of the AGD Policy. Additional challenges were presented by the COVID-19 pandemic reinforcing the need for further innovation in the area of digital feedback, response and complaint tools, channels, and mechanisms. In light of physical gathering and movement restrictions, digital and remote tools, such as bulk SMS, WhatsApp, mobile helpdesks, and call centres were considerably expanded.[9]

As a testament of the effectiveness of these systems, in Lebanon, UNHCR handled over 90,000 calls between March and April 2020, while in Jordan, where an artificial intelligence response system was put in place allowing to respond to a higher number of calls with pre-recorded responses based on queries, calls exceeded 206,000 over the same period. The use of WhatsApp to engage refugees is another mechanism which proved to be particularly useful for COVID-19 risk communication. UNHCR established new WhatsApp groups in several operations, allowing to respond to over 130,000 refugees and host community queries on legal and social protection matters in Jordan and in Lebanon over 1 million persons were reached through the use of virtual communications and outreach volunteers with key COVID-19 risk communication messages.

The below paragraphs provide a snapshot of the humanitarian situation, the information and communication technology landscape (ICT), and key digital feedback and complaint channels in each of the case study countries.

A) Egypt

Humanitarian Overview: Egypt has a long history of receiving refugees and asylum seekers. Due to its geographical location, it has also been a transit country for irregular movements of mixed populations towards Europe. Currently, 258,821 refugees and asylum-seekers are registered with UNHCR Egypt from over 56 different countries, with half of them from Syria and sizeable communities from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, South Sudan, Sudan, and Yemen.[10] Most of the refugees and asylum seekers live in urban areas alongside host communities. They are mainly concentrated in the greater Cairo region, Alexandria, Damietta, and other towns in the North.

The government grants all refugees and asylum-seekers regardless of nationality access to primary and secondary health care at par with Egyptian nationals, and Syrian, Sudanese, and Yemeni refugees and asylum-seekers are also granted full access to public education. Egypt's 2016 economic reforms however resulted in a significant rise in the cost of living, which have impacted the daily life of ordinary people and increased the dependence of refugees and asylum-seekers on assistance.[11]

As a part of UNHCR's 2020 Protection and Solutions Strategy, community-based protection, and response initiatives, informed by ongoing Communication with Communities (CwC) efforts and community outreach, have been prioritized. UNHCR's CwC efforts reached more than 10,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in 2019 with information about services provided, and enable UNHCR to directly monitor protection concerns, coping mechanisms, and identify possible solutions aimed at improving living conditions.

ICT Landscape: Egypt's information and communication technology (ICT) environment are accessible and characterized by high rates of ownership and usage, particularly in urban centers where the majority of refugees and asylum-seekers reside. With 49,231,493 Internet users in December 2018, Egypt has a 48.7% penetration rate, and around 35,000,000 Facebook subscribers. Of the overall Internet users 67.04% use Facebook, 22.36% YouTube, 4.6% Twitter, 3.28% Instagram, and 22.2% of the population alone uses Messenger.[12] Additionally, according to the Information and Communication Technology Indicators Bulletin,

[9] UNHCR MENA, "Protection Outreach Update," August 2020.
[10] UNHCR, "Egypt Global Focus," http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/2540
[11] UNHCR, "Egypt Global Focus," http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/2540
[12] Global Stats, "Statcounter, Social Media Stats Egypt," 2019, https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/egypt

Egypt's mobile phone penetration rate was 111 percent during 2017, amounting to over 101 million mobile subscriptions, as well as 32 million mobile Internet subscriptions.[13]

B) Iraq

Humanitarian Overview: While Iraq continues to steadily recover from years of conflict, thousands of vulnerable families across the country remain displaced and in acute need of protection and assistance to cover basic needs. As of 31 December 2020, the total number of PoC included: 242,163 Syrian refugees; 40,903 refugees of other nationalities; 1,224,108 IDPs; and 4,831,566 returnees. With over 99% of Syrian refugees located in the Kurdistan Region (KR-I), UNHCR's humanitarian assistance in Iraq is gradually transitioning from an emergency response to longer-term development. Nevertheless, the protracted Syrian crisis and poor economic situation have exacerbated protection concerns and reduced livelihood opportunities for refugees, with many families facing difficulties meeting basic needs despite inclusive policies in KR-I. Concurrently, durable solutions for refugees and asylum-seekers of other nationalities (primarily Turkish, Iranian, and Palestinian), many of whom have been hosted by Iraq for over 20 years, are limited. In this context, compounded protection challenges in camp and urban environments persist, reinforcing the need for community-based approaches that draw on community strengths and skills.

UNHCR is committed to promote AAP in Iraq, and both the Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for IDPs and the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) for refugees integrates key elements related to AAP in the response strategy and in each cluster or sector plans. To that end, UNHCR deployed a range of AAP models in 2020. Alongside longer-standing FCRM—help desks/IFPs, complaint and feedback boxes, official email accounts, community-based outreach including WhatsApp/Viber groups, social media—efforts to establish centralized CFM for all PoC materialized with the expansion of the countrywide Iraq Information Centre (IIC) to include refugees and asylum-seekers, in addition to the prior caseload of IDPs and returnees. In parallel, as remote CwC and accountability mechanisms became more critical due to COVID-19, UNHCR launched help.unhcr.org/Iraq for expanded outreach and bolstered bulk SMS, radio, and digital messaging.

ICT Landscape: Findings from the 2020 remote protection monitoring of refugees found that while over 90% of refugee households own at least one smart device (with over 80% reporting access to internet), access to these devices is limited to roughly half of spouses and a quarter of children within a household, underscoring secondary implications of access to FCRM and information. Among IDPs, access to smart devices and/or internet is much lower in some areas.

C) Jordan

Humanitarian Overview: Jordan hosts an estimated 753,282 refugees, with 46.2% of this population under the age of 18. This community consists of 57 different nationalities, 664,414 (88%) are Syrian refuges, living in urban areas (80.7%), mainly in Amman and Irbid, and in three camps (19.3%): Zaatari (79,026), Azraq (42,441), and the Emirati Jordanian camp (6,533).[14]

While Jordan has been welcoming towards refugees, the influx and overall presence particularly of Syrian refugees, has significantly affected the country.[15] The Syrian crisis has greatly impacted Jordan's national resources and infrastructure, while high unemployment and slow economic growth add further challenges.

Jordan Facts & Figures

Jordan hosts the world's second highest share of refugees relative to its population, with 89 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants (Global Focus)

[13] Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, National Telecom Regulatory Authority, Egypt ICT Indicators Portal, http://www.egyptictindicators.gov

[14] UNHCR, "Global Focus, Jordan," https://reporting.unhcr.org/node/2549

[15] There are also around two million Palestinian refugees in Jordan registered by UNRWA; GSMA, "The Digital Lives of Refugees: How displaced populations use mobile phones and what gets in the way," 2019.

ICT Landscape: National figures from Jordan's Telecommunications Regulation Commission (TRC) in 2016 estimated that 8.7 million Jordanians have access to the Internet, resulting in a penetration rate of 87% there are over 16.7 million mobile phone subscriptions (168% penetration). 90% of all Internet subscriptions are mobile broadband subscriptions, with the number of fixed-line ADSL subscriptions steadily decreasing.[16] According to a study conducted by the German Cooperation Agency (GIZ in German) and Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP), mobile phone penetration for refugees is widespread (85% SIM card penetration).[17] Overall, social media penetration in Jordan is around 58% with 54% of Jordanians accessing social media via mobile phones. Facebook and YouTube are among the top 10 most visited websites in Jordan. As of April 2016, 89% of all social media users in the country used Facebook, 71% used WhatsApp and YouTube, while 25% used Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter. A survey conducted by the Department of Statistics demonstrated that women made up 47.2% of Jordanian Internet users in 2016.[18]

D) Lebanon

Humanitarian Overview: Ten years into the Syrian crisis, Lebanon hosts the largest number of refugees per capita in the world, with an estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees and approximately 16,000 refugees from Iraq, Sudan, Ethiopia and other countries, as of December 2020.[19] The presence of such a large refugee population in a small country that is also struggling economically as well as to maintain its own demographic balance, is testing the acceptance of the host population and placing an enormous strain on Lebanon's infrastructure, public services, environment, and labour market.[20]

Lebanon Facts & Figures

An estimated 73% of refugees reside in cities or rural settlements, while the rest live in tented settlements or non-residential structures, including garages, shops, worksites, and farm buildings

http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/2520?y=2020#year; www.unhcr.org/lb/shelter

ICT Landscape: Lebanon suffers from a weak telecommunications infrastructure, expensive communication services, and a digital divide between urban and rural areas. However, Internet penetration is quite high, 84%, with 71% of users accessing the internet via a mobile device. There are 3,736,000 Facebook users in Lebanon, which account for 60.6% of its entire population.[21] Mobile phones are widely used by Syrian refugees in Lebanon, where over 90% of refugee households have access to a mobile phone, and in many cases an internet-enabled smartphone. In big cities, like Beirut, "only internet" SIM cards are available, which can be used with WhatsApp and other social media without needing any airtime for calls or messages.[22] Previous research in Lebanon has demonstrated the prevalence of gender and age disparities regarding access and possession of phones, as well as digital literacy. Syrian refugee women, for example, tend to have less access to phones when compared to their male counterparts, and children, adolescents, and older persons also have less access to mobile phones in general. Even in cases where women and older persons may have access, the phone might be controlled and monitored by a male head of household or a caregiver.

[16] Freedom House, "Freedom of the Net, Jordan," 2018, https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2018/jordan
[17] GIZ, "Partnering with the Private Sector to Extend Digital Financial Services to the Unbanked," http://microfinance-mena.org/
[18] "Facebook most popular social media site in Jordan — report," The Jordan Times, 2016, https://www.jordantimes.com.
[19] UNHCR Lebanon, https://www.unhcr.org/lb; https://www.unhcr.org/lb/at-a-glance; Lebanon also hosts more than 200,000 Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's mandate,
[20] UNHCR Lebanon, https://www.unhcr.org/lb
[21] Global Stats, "Statcounter, Social Media Stats Lebanon," 2019, https://www.internetworldstats.com/me/lb.htm
[22] Netherland's Institute for International Relations, "Apping and resilience: How smartphones help Syrian refugees in Lebanon negotiate the precarity of displacement," July 2018.

II. Digital Feedback, Response, and Complaint Mechanisms in case study countries and beyond: Identified challenges and opportunities

II.I Key Findings and Considerations

The following section highlights key findings from the key informant interviews and online survey that was conducted with individuals and agencies across the MENA region to enable a deeper understanding of the regional context and its influence on the design and implementation of Feedback, Response and Complaint Mechanisms. The following analysis focuses on: a) Policy and Procedures; b) Resource Allocation; c) Coordination and Integration; d) Two-way communication channels; and e) Innovation, Technology, Data Information and Security.

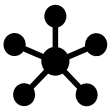
Where does AAP fit within your organisation?

One of the core organisational challenges is that AAP related functions are a part of the larger roles and responsibilities of most positions. Thus, AAP spans across departments and is typically disbursed among numerous positions ranging from Community-based Protection Officers and Programme Officers to M&E Managers at UNHCR and implementing partners. When there are no focal points responsible for AAP within an organisation, the responsibility for advancing AAP within the organisations or among the wider humanitarian community is unclear.

Policy & Procedure

Resource Allocation

Coordination & Integration



Two-way Communication Channels

Innovation, Technology, Data Information and Security

a) Policy and Procedure: This mapping noted a wide variation across the sector about what constitutes an effective mechanism, and several organisations implementing FCRM do not have SOPs to govern these activities. "SOPs formally establish the internal process flow of the feedback and response system, including response timelines, roles and responsibilities regarding referrals, and procedures for dealing with different types of feedback and complaints."[23] 17% (5 out of 30) of respondents from the online survey were not aware of an existing, organisational-wide policy on AAP, and 19% (6 out of 31) of organisations/operations do not have SOPs and/or policies for operating/managing Feedback, Response and Complaint Mechanisms.

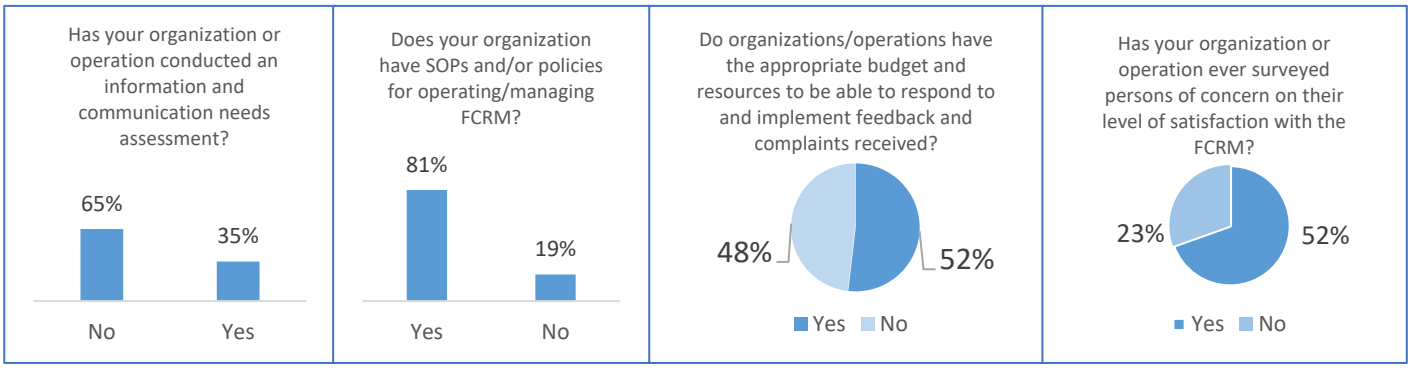
b) Resource Allocation: Organisations frequently cited staffing and budget as a constraint to implementing robust and effective FCRM. However, FCRM does not necessarily require a large increase in staffing and budget, but rather can be achieved through more creative and coordinated arrangements of human resources and most of all with more collaboration with communities themselves. 52% (12 out of 23) of survey respondents stated that they did not have the appropriate budget and resources to be able to respond to and implement feedback and complaints received. With additional funding or time, respondents stated the following potential activities for improving FCRM:

- Conduct training on how to utilise technological tools to facilitate communication.
- Hire dedicated staff for data collection and communicating with the community.
- Conduct follow-up visits by staff to be more engaged with the communities.
- Allocate and prioritize resources for digital information management tools for collection,

[23] UNHCR, "Operational Guidance on Accountability to Affected People (AAP)," September 2020, https://www.unhcr.org/handbooks/aap/

compilation, and analysis to save time and ensure high quality and timely reports.
- Send messages using Interactive Voice Recording (IVR) system.
- Improve access to persons with disabilities to complaint mechanisms.
- Create new digital platforms such as Chatbots.

Though there has been increased emphasis on the AGD policy and AAP practices across UNHCR and partners, accompanying resources and budget realignments have not been prioritized. For example, many organisations and operations do not have a full-time staff member assigned to AAP or AGD specific intersections or systems strengthening.



c) Coordination and Integration: While redundancy can be positive and reinforcing by offering choice and validating information, redundancy can also be negative.[24] It is critical to have different types of channels, particularly to ensure diverse inclusion and participation among affected populations. Redundant channels, however, (e.g., multiple and competing hotlines, suggestion boxes, and monthly community dialogues) can serve as a source of confusion for affected persons.

The integration of FCRM is often contentious and will continue to remain a significant challenge in the competitive humanitarian and aid environment. "Despite the effectiveness or weakness (e.g., low community usage, likelihood of being sustained beyond the project, etc.) of an agency-managed channel, past research has noted agency's lack of willingness or incentives to surrender their connection with the community and integrate their FCRM with others; thereby sacrificing ownership and their organisations' business and programmatic competitive advantage."[25]

d) Two-way Communication Channels: UNHCR and partners have been utilizing and proactively scaling complex one-way, digital communication channels as tools to enhance FCRM and more broadly AAP. There is a long history in the humanitarian sector of frontline workers and volunteers serving as the main conduits of information and providing critical two-way feedback and response through different two-way communication channels with communities, including physical locations such as community centers, safe spaces, reception centres, helpdesks, and community meetings, among others.

> In 2020 there were over **24,000 outreach volunteers across the MENA region,** giving information about services, raising awareness, and listening to the concerns of persons of concern.

This and previous research, however, has noted a limited digital feedback and response through two-way communication channels, and more limitations when it comes to the development and implementation of

[24] World Vision, "Using beneficiary feedback to improve development programmes: findings from a multi-country pilot," July 2016; Levin, Adam and Iacucci, Anahi, "Desk-based Review: A Mapping of Accountability to Affected Populations Mechanisms in Uganda's Refugee Settlements," International Rescue Committee, 2020.

[25] Levin, Adam and Iacucci, Anahi, "Desk-based Review: A Mapping of Accountability to Affected Populations Mechanisms in Uganda's Refugee Settlements," International Rescue Committee, 2020.

systematized processes for formally gathering, analysing, and responding to feedback and complaints in consideration with digital solutions of different organisations, as well as access and preferences of communities. Digital solutions, however, can offer a means for managing two-way interactions more effectively. Moreover, while social media may be an excellent tool for AAP, and Communication with Communities (CwC) in particular, the mere presence and usage of a social media platform does not necessarily constitute a FCRM if it does not provide two-way communications and does not lead to formal and efficient processes for receiving feedback and providing a response.

e) Innovation, Technology, Data Information and Security: Organisation's feedback channels largely rely upon very labour intensive and physical face-to-face approaches, making it challenging to cover expansive geographical areas. Harmonized data collection tools that can be implemented with tablets or mobile devices to support the collection, storage and analysis of feedback would provide instant analysis, and greatly reduce the lead-time in closing feedback loops.

The diversity of data protection policies, as well as different monitoring and evaluation and management practices pose challenges to data and information sharing among humanitarian and development actors, which is further complicated when referring to joint FCRM implementation or broader joint AAP analysis. The outcomes of the survey Digital FCRM in MENA showed that 11 participants were not able to easily share the findings of their assessments on digital literacy, access to ownership of ICTs, and preferences of community members due to the diversity of policies and conceptualization of AAP among partners.

II.II Designing Digital FCRM

Through the different phases of this mapping and research, a great interest, and efforts to setting up or enhancing digital FCRM mechanisms in the four case study countries and beyond was confirmed. This was however limited by the challenges faced by participants when developing and implementing time-bound strategies, with well-defined allocated resources and appropriate sustainability plans for FCRM. It was also noted that participants to the study had focused during the last years, and particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, in implementing digital channels to increase outreach and enhanc e AAP.

The following section highlights reflections and elements to consider when designing digital FCRM in MENA in light of the outcomes of the regional mapping and research on digital FCRM. Those include: a) Importance of Geographical, Demographic, and Contextual considerations; b) Understanding Technology and Digital Barriers; c) Age, Gender and Diversity Considerations; and d) Conducting ICT and Information Landscape Assessments

Steps in Setting up a Feedback and Response System from UNHCR's Operational Guidance on Accountability to Affected People (AAP)

Step 1 - Context Analysis and Mapping of Existing Mechanisms

Step 2 - Community Consultation

Step 3 - Select the most appropriate feedback mechanisms that are accessible to all community groups identified

Step 4 - Establish Internal Support Structures

Step 5 - Establish SOP/guidelines

Step 6 - Raise Awareness

Step 7 – Consistently receive, acknowledge and respond to Feedback

Step 8 - Consistently monitor the appropriateness and effectiveness of the feedback and response system, and report on data and findings to ensure it informs programme design.

A) Importance of Geographical, Demographic, *and* Contextual *Considerations*

AAP systems and mechanisms will only be effective when capable of reaching all persons of concerns, and particularly communities with specific needs, providing timely response, and ensuring coordinated evidence-based approaches for the incorporation of feedback and the participation of communities in humanitarian

and development programming. In this regard, several points were often highlighted as essential elements to consider when designing digital FCRM:

- Impact on increased accessibility for persons of concern to participate, particularly for persons with visual, hearing, mobility, or intellectual difficulties.
- Improve the experience and simplify the process for individuals of all ages, genders, and backgrounds to provide feedback and complaints.
- Establish systems and procedures that reduce the time needed to collect, manage, and analyse feedback and complaints.
- Prioritize regular, systematic, and multifunctional analysis of feedback and complaints, resulting in evidenced-based, decision-making to respond to persons of concern more effectively.
  Coordinate with and among partners providing aid and delivery services to persons of concern, as well as government agencies, civil society, and community networks to enhance accessibility, timeliness, safety and security, and sustainability of digital FCRM and broad AAP systems.

B) Understanding Technology and Digital Barriers

***i) Digital Divide*:** There is a great assumption that due to the enthusiasm to use technology, the introduction and availability will translate into actual use by affected populations and result in providing voice and agency to persons of concerns.[26] However, in insecure or remote humanitarian environments multiple factors were highlighted as barriers to consider. This includes access restrictions, high costs, poor infrastructure and high levels of uncertainty when tools require regular and constant electricity supply, and internet along displacement cycles and hard-to-reach areas, as well as advanced computing skills.[27] Feedback mechanisms can also have a distorting effect on accountability processes, whe re feedback gathered through technological means is more likely to be acted upon compared to feedback expressed in other settings, especially face-to-face contexts.[28] This is particularly relevant when operations and agencies are unable to record or log feedback and complaints received through informal or face-to-face interactions.

UNHCR's Digital Access, Inclusion and Participation Programme

Together with Bureau and operations, UNHCR's Innovation Service, supports a programme to ensure that refugees and the communities that host them have the right, and the choice, to be included in a connected society, and can have their voices heard in the design and implementation of humanitarian response. The Programme brings together efforts to date on UNHCR's Connectivity for Refugees initiative, which focuses primarily on access to digital channels and connectivity, and UNHCR's Innovation Service's work on Communicating with Communities.

The incorporation of digital tools and technologies into FCRM can result in tremendous possibilities, but also result in exclusion and unintended consequences. Therefore, careful consideration must be incorporated at the design stage. The digital revolution is transforming the world, and no one doubts the potential that digital tools and technologies can have to promote inclusion, as well as enhance and empower the lives of affected populations. With the limitations on physical interactions, COVID-19 in particular has validated the critical role of digital AAP. The rising usage of basic mobile phones and smartphones in volatile environments offers greater channels for reaching difficult-to-access populations.[29] The fact that most refugees in urban areas live in places that have 2G or 3G mobile coverage also presents a range of exciting opportunities.

[26] UNHCR, "Connecting Refugees: How Internet and Mobile Connectivity can Improve Refugee Well-Being and Transform Humanitarian Action," UNHCR, September 2016.
[27] Rahel Dette and Julia Steets, "Innovating for access: the role of technology in monitoring aid in highly insecure environments," Humanitarian Practice Network, April 2016
https://odihpn.org/magazine/innovating-for-access-the-role-of-technology-in-monitoring-aid-in-highly-insecure-environments/
[28] Price, R.A. "Improving beneficiary feedback mechanisms for refugees," K4D Helpdesk, Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies, 2018.
[29] Price, R.A. "Improving beneficiary feedback mechanisms for refugees," K4D Helpdesk, Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies, 2018.

Given the number of urban refugees in MENA, as well as connectivity, a self-assessment of social media systems and strategies in MENA in 2019 showed that UNHCR is increasingly using mobile phone technology and digital platforms in response to the growing use of mobile phones. COVID-19 has further witnessed UNHCR and humanitarian partners further rely on mobile technologies, particularly "WhatsApp Trees" as a part of their digital AAP strategy.

To successfully promote digital inclusion, designers and managers must understand digital divides, and how specific barriers such as affordability, literacy, and digital skills can when deploying these technologies actually exacerbate inequalities associated with gender, age, and literacy, denying those who are most vulnerable from these life-enhancing opportunities.[30]

Findings from a Pilot Study conducted with Refugees in Egypt (June 2020)

Even when information was publicly available on websites, social media, and WhatsApp, some said they faced challenges accessing it. They did not have a mobile or an internet connection, they did not have the technological skills to access the internet, or they had disabilities preventing them from watching or listening. Survey participants with disability stated they mostly depended on their family and other people for information.

ii) Infrastructure and Accessibility: There are 16 million forcibly displaced refugees and internally displaced persons living without the requisite digital infrastructure, reliable internet, and mobile connectivity, particularly those in rural areas. UNHCR research indicates that refugees are around 50% less likely to own a smart or internet-enabled phone than the global population, and that 29% of refugee households have no phone at all.[31] While internet and mobile network coverage in urban centers is not a barrier, rural infrastructure and connectivity is a major barrier for refugees. Indeed, 20% of rural refugees (0.9 million people in total) have no coverage at all, and 63% have only 2G access (2.8 million people in total).[32] Expanding coverage to rural areas not only serves refugee, other forcibly displaced, and stateless populations, but also benefits the hots community and can be a strategic business opportunity for mobile network operators.

iii) Affordability: There is a cost to stay connected. Buying a mobile device, owning an internet-enabled phone, charging the devices, and purchasing data packages, all come at a price. While digital infrastructure may be available, without affordable connectivity, refugees, and other persons of concern to UNHCR will not be able to connect and will not likely be able to afford the cost of engaging with digital FCRM. When displaced communities can connect, their usage is limited as the cost to staying connected would represent a signification portion of their income. A key barrier to ownership and use is limited livelihood opportunities for persons of concern, particularly for women, unemployed youth, older people, and persons with physical or mental difficulties, which makes them disproportionately affected by the cost of connectivity.

C) Age, Gender and Diversity Considerations

As per the UNHCR's AGD Policy, the AAP Operational Guidance, and the Regional Community-based Protection Guidance note, it is critical that all community groups, including women, girls, boys, youth, older people, minorities, people living with disabilities, and persons with diverse SOGI are able to meaningfully access and participate in protection, assistance, and solutions programmes. When designing digital FCRM, it is critical to ensure that the diverse AGD groups are reflected in the design and the feedback and complaints handling procedures from the onset.[33]

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[30] ICRC, The Engine Room and Block Party, "Humanitarian Futures for Messaging Apps," January 2017; GSMA, "The Digital Lives of Refugees: How displaced populations use mobile phones and what gets in the way," 2019.
[31] UNHCR, "Connecting Refugees: How Internet and Mobile Connectivity can Improve Refugee Well-Being and Transform Humanitarian Action," UNHCR, September 2016.
[32] UNHCR, "Connecting Refugees: How Internet and Mobile Connectivity can Improve Refugee Well-Being and Transform Humanitarian Action," UNHCR, September 2016.
[33] IASC AAP/PSEA Task Team and REACH, "Menu of Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Related Questions for Multi-Sector Needs Assessments (MSNAs)" 2018.

i) Age: While higher illiteracy rates and lower ownership of rates of technologies, particularly full-feature or smart phones are common among older people, digital services, particularly digital FCRM can greatly serve the needs of these persons. If the digital access and literacy of older people is incorporated into program design, digital FCRM can overcome impairments that affect older people, such as mobility, sight, and hearing difficulty, by offering audio-visual functionality and the ability to access remote services. Age should therefore be factored in as an enabling/disabling criterion to access digitally enabled FCRMs with digital literacy constituting a fundamental element in accessing and use them in a direct, participatory manner. The decreasing likelihood of accessing and using ICT devices and services as age increases and the constant use of digital technologies as part of FCRM, bring about the need for people of all age groups to acquire ever higher levels of digital literacy and attend specific trainings to maintain their sense of inclusion and fully access FCRMs.

***ii) Gender*:** Literature about the ownership of and access to technology by women in refugee settings frequently notes a digital gender divide due to socio-economic factors as well as traditional gender and social norms.[34] Therefore any digital FCRM would without careful consideration be less accessible for women as compared to men. There is a clear gender gap in ownership and access to mobile technology and mobile internet services among refugees and other persons of concern. For example, in Jordan, GSMA research shows a significant gender divide in mobile phone ownership where women in Jordan are 21% less likely than men to own a phone and an estimated 74% of women SIM owners do not have their SIM registered in their own name compared to 40% of men.[35]

***ii) Disability**:* Under-identification of persons with disability is a common concern in humanitarian settings. In 2018, 1.6% of UNHCR's persons of concern in the MENA region were registered as persons with disabilities, and if persons not registered but possibly disabled were included, the rate rose to 4.4%. In the four countries covered, the corresponding percentages stretched from Egypt 1.7% (4.3%) to Lebanon 3.8% (14.6%).[36] It is critical to "ensure that persons with disabilities are engaged with as partners; have safe access to timely, accurate and contextually relevant information; are able to make informed decisions on the basis of the information available to them; are aware of the means by which they can meaningfully participate and give feedback; have a say as to what types of information they need and how they receive it. Ensure that information is accessible. Use appropriate forms of communication, and clear messaging."[37]

UNHCR Jordan has a Disabilities Task Force for developing and disseminating information materials,

Digital AAP, which can offer ease of access for persons with visual, hearing, mobility, and intellect difficulties, can serve as inclusionary, as well as exclusionary. Persons living with disabilities may be less vocal in providing feedback in physical face-to-face meetings due to stigma and social exclusion and prefer digital communication technologies. Lack of ICT ownership and poor usability for people with disabilities can also lead to exclusion and isolation among disabled persons. The UNHCR MENA Protection Outreach Update, 2020 highlighted this limitation and how it has been addressed through targeted and door-to-door visits, engaging community members and networks to support the FCRM. Digitally enabled FCRMs must consider persons with hearing, sight, and mobility difficulties, as well as those persons with MHPSS needs to participate in community dialogue, receive feedback and access to complaint mechanisms.[38]

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[34] UNHCR, "Connecting Refugees: How Internet and Mobile Connectivity can Improve Refugee Well-Being and Transform Humanitarian Action," UNHCR, September 2016; GSMA, "The Digital Lives of Refugees: How displaced populations use mobile phones and what gets in the way."
[35] GSMA, "The Digital Lives of Refugees: How displaced populations use mobile phones and what gets in the way," 2019.
[36] UNHCR, "Power of Inclusion: Mapping the Protection Responses for Persons with Disabilities in Refugee Populations within the Middle East and North Africa Region," UNHCR MENA 2019, pp. 13 and 14.
[37] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Handicap International, "Need to Know Guidance: Working with Persons with Disabilities in Forced Displacement," 2011.
[38] As of November 2018, there are 6,734,615 people of concern to UNHCR residing in the MENA region and Turkey. According to UNHCR

D) Conducting ICT and Information Landscape Assessments

Before implementing a community facing digital FCRM or deciding upon a specific channel, organisations must fully understand the digital needs and preferences of people affected by crisis, how they are currently accessing and using technology, and the barriers they encounter. In-depth context analysis is at the core of a rights-based, non-discriminatory approach to protection and assistance and the achievement of solutions. The application of the 2018 Age Gender and Diversity Policy, participatory assessments, and community-based protection approaches, provide tested pathways for the meaningful participation of communities as rights holders.[39]

This assessment should be conducted across "AGD disaggregated groups to better understand how different demographics of PoCs do or don't engage in existing communication channels based on access, customs, affordability, preference, familiarity, or habits among other factors."[40] Additionally, the satisfaction and feedback of PoC should be assessed. It was surprising to note that 30% (7 out of 23) of survey respondents stated that despite having a FCRM, they have never surveyed persons of concern on their level of satisfaction with the FCRM.

i) AGD Assessment: UNHCR's Participatory Assessment (PA) and Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) reflect the strongest and most systematized AGD-disaggregated data collection, targeting, and use across country operations and across UNHCR as an agency. Annual budgets and programs are set by and tailored toward information generated from these two processes, albeit in significantly different ways. The VAF is linked with programs based on targeting across varying degrees of AGD access and vulnerability. The PA synthesizes qualitative opinions and experiences from PoCs in a systematized way across AGD-disaggregated groups and intersectional profiles. Operations across Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, a nd Jordan have enhanced their approach to conducing Participatory Assessments through digital collection, analysis, and management tools. Specifically, in MENA the online Participatory Methodologies tool that has been piloted in Algeria, Israel, and Morocco, facilitates comparative analysis across time and space.

Emerging practice of conducting AGD-disaggregated communications context assessments

Lebanon conducts a context assessment conducted every 1.5 years to gauge use habits, familiarity, and behaviours of refugees with specific digital or technology channels among a diverse cross-section of communities. Both the Jordan (since 2019) and Lebanon (since 2018) operations have included AGD-disaggregated information and communications context assessment tailored questions in their annual Participatory Assessments.

ii) Information and Communication Needs Assessment: 35% (11 out of 31) of organisations/operations who participated in the survey have not conducted a response and communication needs assessment to understand the digital literacy, access to and ownership of ICTs, and preferences of persons of concern. In order to support organisations in this endeavor, UNHCRs Innovation Service, as well as the Syrian operation and others in the MENA region, have developed a 'question bank' on Information and Communication Needs that can inspire more contextualized tools for deployment in different geographical locations and settings. This tool is built on the work undertaken on Information and Communication Needs Assessments by actors such as the CDAC Network, ACAPS, and Internews, and the assessments undertaken by community centres in Syria.[41]

registration data, as of November 2018, 93,494 persons are registered with a disability code; UNHCR, "Power of Inclusion: Mapping the Protection Responses for Persons with Disabilities Among Refugees in the Middle East and North Africa Region," November 2019.

[39] UNHCR, "Compact Guidance for Senior Managers: Accountability to Affected People (AAP)," April 2020.

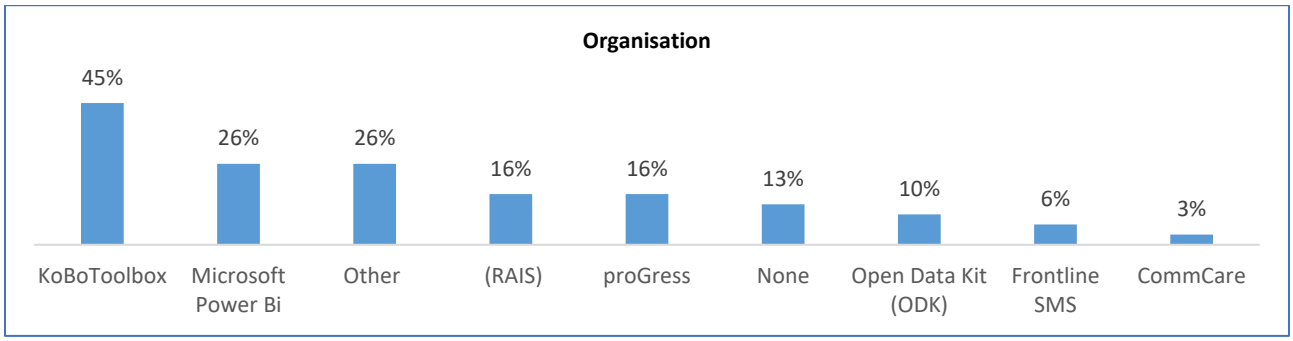
[40] Anna Levy, "[How] is UNHCR Listening and Responding? Lessons on Accountability to Affected People (AAP) from the MENA Region," UNHCR, 30 June 20.

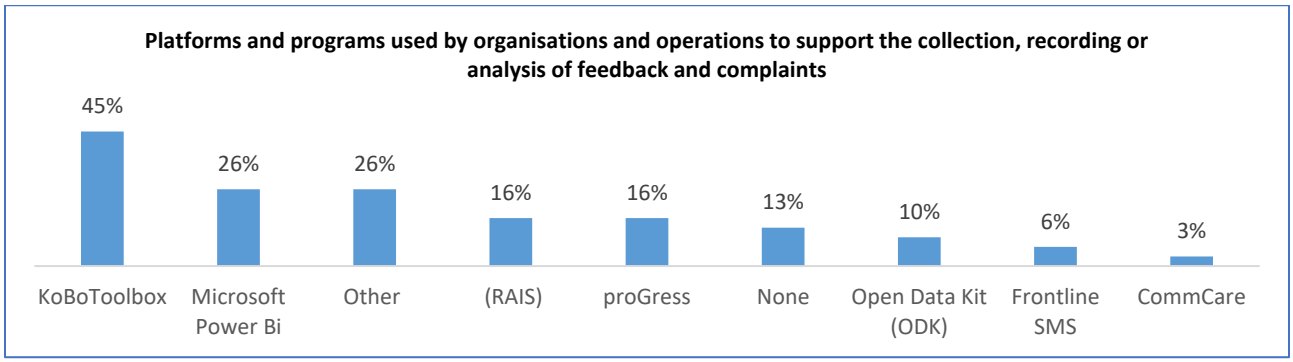
[41] UNHCR, "Information and Communication Needs Assessment Tool," https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/information-and-communication-needs-tool/

III. Profiled Digital FCRM in the case study countries and beyond

Operations covered in this report have various forms of FCRM in place. This section highlights some of the most representative digital FCRM in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and other countries the MENA region. The table below provides an overview of the specific FCRM mechanisms highlighted in each of the countries:

Egypt	Iraq	Jordan	Lebanon
– UNHCR Info-line – UNHCR WhatsApp Trees – Virtual Meetings with Community Leaders – UNHCR Facebook Groups	– The Iraq Information Centre – Localized remote platforms – WhatsApp/Viber groups – Community-based mechanisms & consultation – The Community Response Map	– UNHCR Jordan Helpline – UNHCR and Community Facebook Groups – UNHCR WhatsApp Channels	– WhatsApp Channels – UNHCR/WFP Call Centre – Dalili – Community Development Centers – Outreach Volunteers – UNHCR Facebook (closed refugee managed groups)





A) Egypt

i) UNHCR WhatsApp Trees – New WhatsApp trees were established as part of UNHCR Egypt's COVID-19 response to share official information, prevent the spread of rumours and mitigate its effects. One of the WhatsApp groups maintains over 100 diverse community representatives and youth volunteers. Refugees have also established 44 additional WhatsApp groups with over 7,000 members, including UNHCR community-based protection staff to continue direct feedback and response to the communities.[42] Despite the limitations of group communication, feedback is collected, and general responses are provided. Given the popularity of this channel, the incorporation of analytic and chatbot tools, particularly for automating feedback collection and response, is being considered.

ii) UNHCR Info-line - Refugees, asylum seekers, and persons of concern can contact UNHCR's Egypt Info-line with their questions and concerns regarding UNHCR's and partner's services in Egypt. Run by 10 info line call attendants in Cairo and 2 call attendants in Alexandria, the Cairo Info-line operates Sunday to Wednesday from 9:00 to 15:00 and Thursday from 9:00 to 12:00, while Alexandria Info-line operates Sunday to Thursday from 9:00 to 15:00. UNHCR's Egypt Info-line answers daily calls in a total of seven languages namely Amharic, Oromo, Tigrinya, Somali, Arabic, English and French. Both Cairo and Alexandria info-lines receive and respond to some 18,000– 21,000 inquiries per month. UNHCR Egypt conducts a series of community meetings once every 2 years to evaluate an array of UNHCR services including the info line. One of the main challenges is the limited number of call attendants to manage the caller caseload.

iii) Virtual Meetings with Community Leaders – Community-based protection staff organize virtual community meetings to support feedback collection. These meetings bring together more than 140 community representatives to maintain communications given the challenges with convening in-person due to COVID-19.

iv) UNHCR Facebook Groups – UNHCR Egypt maintains two Facebook pages, one targeting Arabic speaking refugees and another targeting refugees speaking English, French, Oromo, Amharic, Somali and Tigrinya. Both pages are updated regularly and have a combined following of 120K users. UNHCR Egypt also monitors more than 20 refugee groups and pages on Facebook to spot complaints and critical issues raised by our POCs as comments and report them to concerned relevant units for follow-up action to address them.

B) Iraq

i) Iraq Information Center (IIC) – Given the operating environment, the scale of humanitarian interventions and the total volume of displaced persons in refugee settings, all major humanitarian agencies recognized the need to set up a centralized mechanism to coordinate humanitarian assistance. As a result, the Iraq Information Centre (IIC) was established in July 2015 for IDPs and returnees, officially expanding to refugees and asylum-seekers under the "One Refugee Helpline" in early 2020, with refugee data entered directly into RAIS. The IIC currently operates a toll-free number (80069999) across Iraq providing information on available humanitarian assistance to all PoC, including how to register for food vouchers, request for help in dealing with GBV, as well as receiving complaints via phone and collecting feedback, ranging from how aid is distributed to suggestions on how to improve programmes. The IIC provides services in Arabic, Sorani and Badini Kurdish, Turkish, and English.[43] Trained operators can be contacted via phone, SMS and Facebook Messenger, and channels callers' feedback and complaints.

Implemented by UNOPS with support from UNHCR, WFP, OCHA, IOM, NRC, World Vision, Save the Children and the Office of the UN Iraq Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, the IIC represents the entire Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) in Iraq. Through established communication and reporting channels, the IIC also circulates regular reports on any trending issues raised by callers, as well as their feedback, complaints, and data to the HCT and the humanitarian community, and as such is one of the 'largest inter-agency accountability project of its kind with the UN system.'[44]

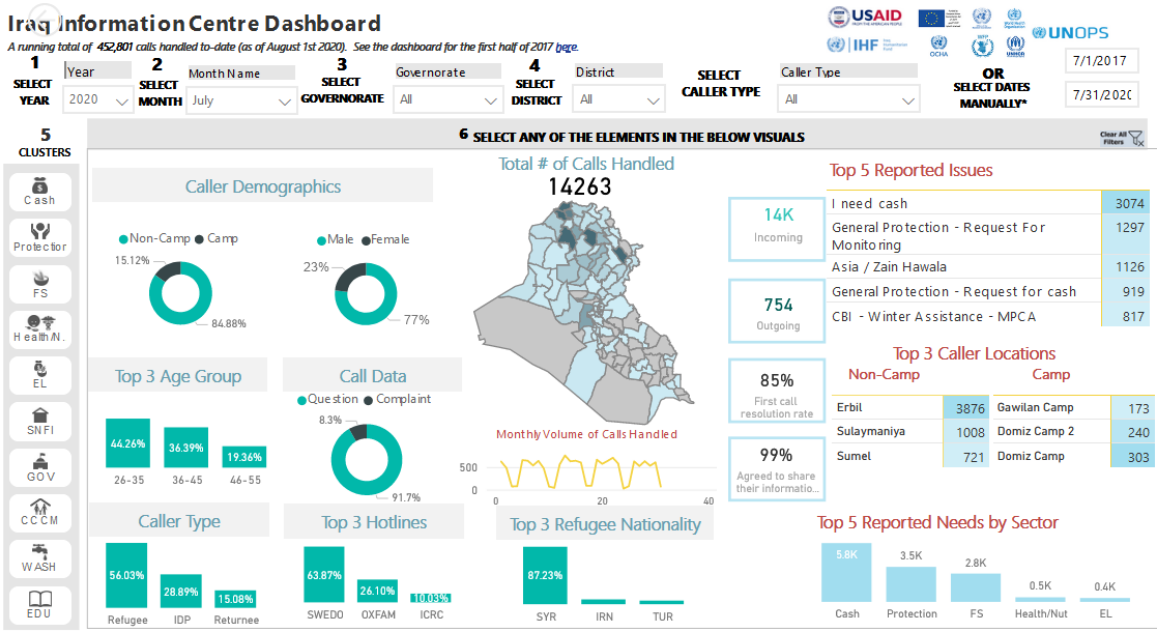
- June 2016: The IIC handled 2,373 calls: 25% from women, pushing the total number of calls since the Iraq IIC's launch in July 2015 past 22,000.[45]
- February 2017: The IIC handled 4,415 calls: 83%, from IDPs, returnees (10%), refugees (2%), host communities (5%), and representatives of NGOs (less than 1%). Of the total calls, 30% were requests for assistance, 66% were requests for information, and 4% were complaint and feedback calls. Top

[43] https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/iraq/document/iraq-idp-information-centre- report-june-2016-0
[44] 'Iraq Internally Displaced Persons Information Centre', UNOPS Project Brief, August 2016
[45] https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/final_iraq_2016_hrp_0.pdf

three caller locations were Ninewa (54%), Dahuk (12%), and Erbil (11%).[46]

- March 2020: The IIC handled 7,442 calls from refugees, IDPs and returnees, where the top five reported needs by sector were cash, food security, livelihoods, health, and shelter.[47]
- In 2020, 89,212 total PoC callers (43,252 Syrian refugees, 5,446 refugees of other nationalities, and 40,514 IDPs) were processed by the IIC. By year's end, over 50% of calls came from refugees. The high instance of male callers, particularly among Syrian refugees (87%), underscores the criticality of CFM diversification, as women generally engage with information feedback points and complaint and feedback boxes at higher rates.

IIC Microsoft Power Bi Dashboard[48]



ii) Localized remote platforms -- Across governorates, localized Facebook pages also serve as a tailored information source for PoC. Notably, the Yalla Salwa Facebook page in Erbil, available for all PoC, reports roughly 3,000 post views each quarter for messages related to the IIC, information feedback points (IFP) as a CFM mechanism, and services available from humanitarian and protection actors. Another 13 community outreach volunteers (COV)-run Facebook pages are similarly organized in Duhok, while partners support Facebook pages for PoC in the central and southern governorates. These local platforms compliment CwC-related information shared on UNHCR's official Facebook and Twitter pages.

iii) WhatsApp/Viber groups -- Across Iraq, community outreach volunteers (COVs) and partners operate WhatsApp/Viber groups for refugees and IDPs to share protection-related information and CwC key messages. While these groups are not structured into formalized "trees," they served as critical outreach, particularly during COVID-19 access restrictions. All UNHCR CwC material in 2020 was translated into Arabic and Sorani and Badini Kurdish and converted into jpg format for rapid dissemination over these groups.

iv) Community-based mechanisms and consultation - UNHCR and partners continue to support a range of

[46] https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/iraq-idp-information-centre-report-february-2017

[47] UNHCR, "Regional Bureau for Middle East and North Africa: Communicating with Communities during COVID, and what are they telling UNHCR?" April 2020.

[48] https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiM2I3OGVjYjItMTdkZS00MDA3LWFiYjctZTU0MDAyNTExOWMwIiwidCI6IjViNGExMjM3LWU1MjUtNDIwOS1iNWIyLTY5ZTQ0ZWM4MTk5NiIsImMiOjEwfQ%3D%3D

community-based outreach structures, including Community Outreach Volunteers (COVs), community representation structures (i.e., women and youth committees), and community-based organisations/entities. Collectively, these structures are considered trusted members of their community, with strong understanding of community composition, dynamics, and needs. In parallel, UNHCR organizes focus group discussions with outreach volunteers and PoC community leaders for feedback and dialogue.

v) The Community Response Map (Non-active) - IOM deployed the Community Response Map (CRM) in Iraq in 2017 https://iraq.iom.int/communicating-communities. This interactive feedback platform was designed to simplify the processes of collecting, analysing, and visualising feedback to enable stakeholders to respond to alerts and issues, which is aimed at enhancing community engagement and two-way communications.[49] Unfortunately, this initiative is no longer active, and the lifespan of feedback mechanisms is often dependent upon the length of the award from the funder.

C) Jordan

While Jordan offers multiple helpline numbers that are thematically based (see details below), a common feedback that emerged from a range of studies is that having different lines can also serve as a source of confusion for persons of concern. In this sense, the use of digital technologies can improve the operations of call centres and introduce one centralised number that appropriately clusters persons of concerns based upon their needs and therefore increases the overall efficiency of the system while also simplifying it for the POCs to use. Another additional measure would be to introduce software that automatically generates, collects and analyze callers' information, profiles, feedbacks.

i) UNHCR Jordan Helpline[50] - The UNHCR managed Helpline (06-4008000) employs 12 staff, receives an average monthly call volume of 350,000 calls with more than 4 million calls answered in 2020, and more than 12.6 million calls responded to since its inception in 2008. The Helpline gives support and advice on a range of issues to refugees in the Kingdom and responds to questions, complaints, as well as offers information on UNHCR activities and updates on changes to procedures. Calls include requests on the following issues: cash assistance, registration, and resettlement. The system uses Interactive Voice Response (IVR) technology, where automated information is delivered on key topics, while 10 dedicated staff are available for emergency or critical calls. The Helpline offers Arabic or English services, and agents operate from Sunday to Thursday, 8AM to 4PM with the IVR operating 24/7. In 2020, the role of the Helpline in UNHCR Jordan significantly increased due to COVID-19. Since April 2020, the Helpline has been the primary communication channel between UNHCR and refugees. The International Protection and Solutions Unit at UNHCR directly manages the Helpline. In the second half of 2021, an assessment based on a customer satisfaction survey will be conducted to ensure that UNHCR meets refugees' needs, responds to their queries in a timely and accountable manner.

In addition to the Helpline, complaints can be sent to joramafp@unhcr.org and joraminf@unhcr.org (for petitions opened by protection focal points). UNHCR also maintains the following other lines:

- The UNHCR Detention Line (079 674 2200) operates from Sunday to Thursday, 9AM to 3:30PM. Refugees can call this line to report any detention incident in order for UNHCR to provide the necessary legal and physical assistance.
- The UNHCR Child Protection and GBV Line (079 554 6383) operates from Sunday to Thursday, 8:30AM to 3PM. Refugees can call this line to report any acts of violence or abuse against children or women, as well as gender-related protection issues.
- The ARDD Legal Aid Emergency Line (0777 387 221) operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Refugees can contact this line to report any legal protection issue and for all urgent referrals.

[49] https://iraq.communityresponsemap.org/tools
[50] https://help.unhcr.org/jordan/en/unhcr-helpline/

All the helplines are free of charge through an agreement with Zain mobile operator in country.[51]

ii) UNHCR and Community Facebook Groups - In Jordan, UNHCR runs a Facebook page (UNHCR Jordan - المفوضية في الأردن), followed by over 165,000 individuals, most of whom are Persons of Concern, with a regular schedule of posts on different topics. Comments are monitored and responded to, based on a set of approved lines by functional units. Responses do not address personal enquiries because of the lack of identity verification tools through social media, but rather presents general and guiding information to users. Additionally, UNHCR coordinates with three community-run Facebook groups for urban PoC in an informal manner to verify the information they publish. These are Syrian Diaries in Jordan, Syrians Gathered in Jordan and Syrians' Affairs in Jordan, with over 69,000, 75,000 and 51,000 followers respectively. The moderators are now in constant contact with a focal point from UNHCR, and UNHCR helps the team by providing verified information about refugees' services and procedures.[52] While these platforms were initially conceived to serve a CwC function, they are increasingly being used as a limited means to collect and respond to feedback and complaints.

iii) UNHCR WhatsApp Channels - UNHCR Jordan employs a variety of information sharing and two-way communication platforms to ensure that reliable, accurate, and timely information reaches refugees and that mechanisms are in place to receive their feedback. In Jordan, a network of 23 Community Support Committees (CSCs) located in urban areas across Jordan, managed by more than 150 volunteers from refugee and host communities, are an integral part of UNHCR's overall communication and feedback efforts with refugees. These volunteers are trusted members of their communities and manage various WhatsApp groups, reaching over 51,000 refugees. UNHCR also engages with 18 refugee community leaders of various nationalities who make up the Bridges of Communication refugee group. This group manages another 85 WhatsApp groups, reaching around 11,000 refugees. Similar to other country offices, this assessment recommends the use of analytic and bot technology to better manage data and respond to feedback in a more systematized manner. UNHCR Jordan uses WhatsApp to share information related to available services, coordinate events, connect with protection actors and community volunteers on the ground, and address rumors among the community.

D) Lebanon

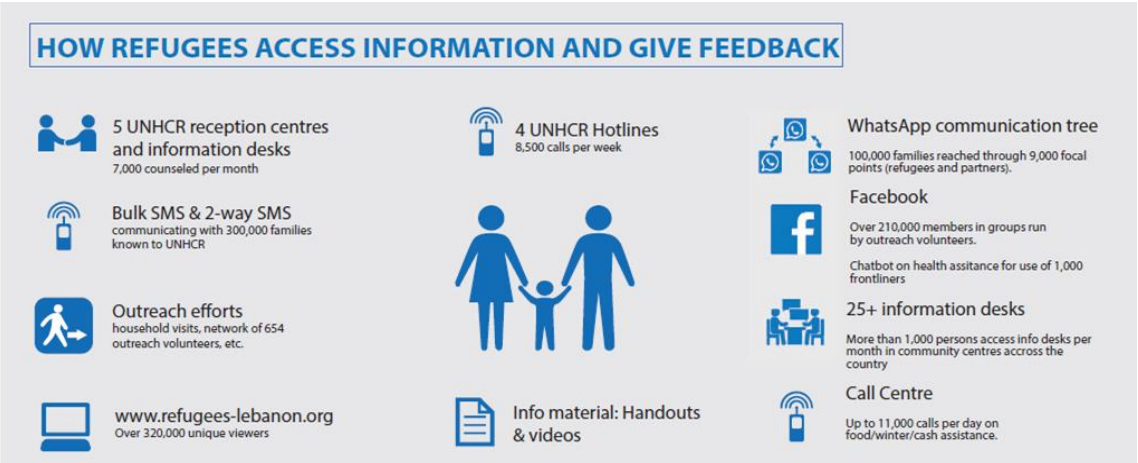
i) WhatsApp Channels- WhatsApp is an integral part of UNHCR Lebanon's operations to gather feedback and complaint. Today, the channel comprises of 9,000 focal points that reach some 180,000 families, each one in a channel managed by one Protection supervisor, that receive daily links to the resources posted on the refugees-lebanon.org.[53] Of the 9,000 focal points, 90% are refugees and 10% are partners and Lebanese representatives for the areas. Thousands of refugees mobilized as part of CBP programmes such as Outreach Volunteers and members of community groups are included in the WhatsApp community trees.

[51] See UNHCR Jordan "Useful Numbers for Persons of Concern"

[52] According to UNHCR staff in Jordan, direct engagement would be impossible given the lack of resources, both in terms of staff and in terms of skills.

[53] UNHCR, "Regional Bureau for Middle East and North Africa: Communicating with Communities during COVID, and what are they telling UNHCR?" April 2020.

ii) UNHCR/WFP Call Centre - In Lebanon, between mid-March and mid-April UNHCR/WFP call centres and UNHCR hotlines have received over 90,000 calls.[54] PROJECT X is only used at the UNHCR/WFP Call Centre to log the feedback and in this sense represents a pure feedback and complaint mechanism. The Refugee Assistance Information System (RAIS) is used by the UNHCR hotline teams to log calls received and issues/feedback raised through the calls and actions taken on them and facilitates the hotline staff's quality counseling to refugees. The following link provides information on multiple hotlines throughout Lebanon.[55]



iii) Dalili - Dalili (my guide in Arabic) is a smartphone application in Lebanon that allows shoppers to have up-to-date information on food prices at WFP-contracted shops.[56] While initially conceived as CwC service, this app can also function as feedback and complaint mechanism as it can be further promoted to include the submission of feedback related to food and market prices.

iv) UNHCR Facebook - Established in 2014 by a female, Syrian refugee outreach volunteer, the "I am a Syrian in Lebanon" group has gained over 309,000 members.[57] As one of the most active places refugees can seek information about their rights, UNHCR provides training and mentoring to the group's team of all refugee moderators who provide accurate information in response to the over 200 questions received daily.

v) Community Development Centers (CDC) - UNHCR supports 24 Community Development Centers (CDC) that provide a range of social, educational, and psychosocial services, including case management. The centers also act as hubs for feedback and complaints collection and response. In 2020, over 200,000 persons were reached through the CDCs, and in 2021, the CDCs began utilizing online and digital systems to improve accountability and collect feedback from persons utilizing the centers. The CDCs run satisfaction surveys for its activities using KoBo to adjust their services and activities, and with the use of an online tool that manages participation at the center, the CDCs can better tailor their services to the needs of different groups.

vi) Outreach Volunteers - Around 600 Outreach Volunteers were provided with tablets and internet to begin using online tools (KoBo) to record their activities and community feedback. The information is then analysed on a monthly basis and shared within operations for action. In 2020, Outreach Volunteers reached over 1 million refugees with information and referred 18,431 persons at heightened risk (50% women and girls) for further assessment and support. Due to lockdowns, around 80% of their activities were performed remotely.

[54] UNHCR, "Regional Bureau for Middle East and North Africa: Communicating with Communities during COVID, and what are they telling UNHCR?" April 2020.
[55] https://www.refugees-lebanon.org/en/contact/index#:~:text=Phone%20Number%3A%2001%2D594250%20for,%3A00%2D17%3A00)
[56] Dalili: WFP Innovation
[57] أنا سوري في لبنان Facebook Group; https://www.facebook.com/groups/172406933094432

E) Regional Digital FCRM Tools

i) Refugee Assistance Information System (RAIS) - The Refugee Assistance Information System (RAIS), a tool developed by UNHCR MENA, is used in Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan for different purposes, including as data collection, registration, case management, feedback and complaint handling and trends analysis. Among other functions, the system interfaces with call centers, tracking calls through a ticketing system, facilitating follow-ups and referrals. RAIS provides a full profile of the caller, including all the types of assistance that a family receives. In Jordan, the automated IVR system is linked to RAIS. After entering the file number and a security code, the caller can access his or her status on issues such as home visits or appeals.

ii) UNICEF's U-REPORT- Active in 68 countries and benefiting over 11 million users globally, UNICEF's U-Report is a messaging tool that empowers young people around the world to speak-out about what is happening in their communities; provides a forum to amplify youth voices; sends alerts to stakeholders about issues facing their constituents; and feeds back useful information to the U-Reporters, so they are empowered to work for change in their localities. As of 20th June 2020, U-Report's COVID-19 bot has been accessed by over 6 million people.[58] U-Report is a free tool that uses an SMS short-code to ask questions to communities across the country and gather their views. The SMS polling system relies on 403,303 U-Reporters to gather communities' opinions while spreading awareness about specific issues, like GBV and Health. The messages received from the short-code go to the U-Report dashboard, accessed by the focal persons. Admins can then forward the response directly to the phone of the person who submitted the text.

iii) OXFAM's "Your Word Counts" Project- The Your Word Counts programme sought to strengthen accountability through safe, confidential, and trustworthy feedback mechanisms. Beginning as a small pilot in Jordan's Zaatari refugee camp and now implemented throughout Oxfam's Middle East humanitarian response, a mobile case management tool is used to capture, analyse, and respond to feedback from people receiving humanitarian assistance.[59]

IV. Recommendations and Roadmap

This section provides recommendations and key activities for a roadmap towards improved FCRM and AAP in the MENA region, in light of the mapping and research conducted in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt and other countries in the region and the suggestions shared by UNHCR operations, other UN and non-UN partners. The below table highlights key activities as a part of the overall recommendations and roadmap:

Topic	Activities	Deliverable
Agree and clarify a taxonomy for digital AAP and FCRM	- Conduct a literature review to harmonize understanding on AAP. - Collaborate with select country offices within the MENA region to collect digital AAP/FCRM resources.	- MENA digital AAP/FCRM toolkit.
Foster AAP organisational culture and structures	- Aggregate contact information and directories across UN partners and NGOs working on AAP across the region. - Provide virtual and in-person training and workshops on a diverse range of AAP topics.	- Produce an extensive editable online directory for AAP across the MENA region. - MENA digital AAP/FCRM toolkit. - Deliver virtual and in-person trainings and workshops on

[58] https://www.unicef.org/innovation/U-Report; https://ureport.in/about/
[59] https://www.elrha.org/project-blog/the-future-is-bright-for-digital-accountability-success-with-improved-feedback-mechanisms/

		specific digital AAP/FCRM topics.
Improve coordination mechanisms at national and regional levels	- Engage with key protection stakeholders at a country, regional and HQ level to gain their buy-in for activities. - Engage multifunctional teams and organisations.	- Create jointly developed work plans between the regional bureau and country office, reflected in the Country Operations Plans.
AGD group participation	- Create a specific map of NGOs, and organisations working with persons with disabilities and support organisations working in the MENA region. - Produce guidelines and related tools on increasing participation of diverse AGD groups to improve accountability and their increased participation in FCRM. - Support for the Implementation and further development of improved tools for monitoring, evaluation and learning of digital FCRM for diverse AGD groups.	- MENA digital AAP/FCRM toolkit contains AGD specific resources.
Coordinate advocacy and collaborations with Private Sector:	- Map of private sector partners. - Create a private sector engagement plan.	- In collaboration with country offices, produce country level-private sector needs assessments and action plans
Coordinate advocacy and collaborations with Policymakers	- Create a contact list of critically policy making institutions. - Engage country-level partners to provide support and identify policy needs.	- In collaboration with country offices, produce country level-policy needs assessments and action plans.
Expand Two-way and Tech	- TORs for Short-term technical assistance to provide technical support at the regional level, for activities such as Chabot development and social media analytics. - Sharing of technical assistance learnings at the regional level	- STTA hired. - Small-Grant Competition.
Understand the local information and communication ecosystem	- Presentation conducting information and communication assessment. - Pilot an information and communication assessment to inform FCRM design in one location	- Dissemination of Information and Communication Needs Assessment.

Support pilots for innovation, incorporating digital tools, and improving existing FCRM with the community and community-based organisations	- TOR for small grant competition to solicit applications for proposals of digital AAP activities. - Selection of grant recipients to implement proposals. - Monitoring of grant programs and sharing of learnings at a regional level.	- Small-Grant Competition.

IV.1 Agree and clarify a taxonomy for digital AAP and FCRM: Despite the existences of policies and procedures by several organisations on AAP and FCRM, further clarifications and contextualization would be required to implement more coordinated and effective FCRM and broader AAP. A scan of AAP related surveys for example used by organisations across the MENA region is one example that validates this truth. This contributes to the current inability to measure how the overall response is taking account, giving account, and being held to account by communities, further limiting the ability to improve and maximise resources for the implementation of digital AAP in the country. Stakeholders would work better together when defining a common AAP and FCRM definition that allows activities to be tracked, coordinated, and evaluated across sectors. A MENA digital AAP/FCRM toolkit can support the needs for both harmonization and take stock of existing resources across the region.

IV.2 Foster AAP organisational culture and structures: All organisations and persons involved in the refugee response should have standard training on AAP principles, standards, and best practices, which include common AAP and FCRM definitions. These trainings should provide practical understanding for how AAP should be incorporated into daily procedures and activities. Internally organisations aim to ensure that all personnel understand AAP in the same way and that AAP is perceived as "everybody's job" rather than a "function of protection" or "someone else's job."

Strengthen collaborations across country-level working groups for AAP to enhance FCRM coordination and sharing. At the regional level AAP champions can support country offices with practical, results-oriented activities, such as providing coaching/support on AAP best practices, sharing AAP lessons learned, and improving AAP and FCRM procedures and systems.

IV.3 Improve coordination first and then improve coordination mechanisms at national and regional levels: More projects, activities, and platforms do not equate to a greater level of accountability to affected people and improved responsiveness. Increased consultation with UNHCR operations, partners, and communities should be pursued to develop and rollout joint strategies and projects. This may include Higher-level engagements to encourage information sharing through the understanding of the importance of joint co-creation and horizontal learning.

IV.4 AGD group participation: Despite the efforts of UNHCR and other agencies, including through the issuance of UNHCR's AGD policy and the support for its implementation, there are still limitations to implement more efficient AGD data disaggregation including for monitoring and evaluation, both qualitative and quantitative, across regularly used feedback and participation and inclusion. Greater AGD-disaggregated feedback would also contribute to programmatic decision-making, agenda-setting, adaption, and learning**.** UNHCR MENA Regional Bureau can continue providing support in consultation with HQ services, operations, and stakeholders so that AGD monitoring and reporting frameworks can be aggregated across country operations, which would create greater consistency in program design, implementation, and reporting. Without dedicated AGD resources, however, focal points with varied degrees of discretion and capacity will inconsistently incorporate these policies into AAP practice.

IV.5 AAP and Participation Toolkit: The MENA digital AAP/FCRM toolkit will have practical resources and recommendations for designing and managing digital FCRM to ensure inclusion and participation of diverse AGD groups. As per the survey findings, additional guidance on strategies and practical tools to increase inclusion of older people, girls and women, and persons with intellectual, visual, mobility and hearing difficulties in digital FCRM would be welcomed.

Given the current channels, there is a need to increase both in-person and virtual channels that have audio-visual components and ensure that the information is clear and easy to read and understand. These can include but not be limited to mobile information services (e.g., BodaBoda TalkTalk), IVR, SMS, and interactive tablets with audio and on-screen visuals to cater for persons with hearing, sight, mobility, and intellectual impairments. WhatsApp trees can also be utilized to a greater extent for elderly and PLWD through the use of less text-based content and more tailored audio and video content.

***IV.6 Coordinate advocacy and collaborations with Private Sector*:** Many digital FCRM rely on mobile telephone data, networks, and solutions. Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) should be engaged to expand their membership base and be supported to ensure that their infrastructure, agent networks, and services meet the needs of currently unconnected and underserved populations. The COVID-19 pandemic has further validated the importance of mobile and internet access, and international organisations, donors, and the private sector should work together to quickly increase connectivity, particularly in rural settings.

MNOs may be interested in jointly participating in information and communication assessments as a part of their corporate social responsibility agenda. Humanitarian organisations can also collectively organize their efforts to get the best rates (e.g., bulk SMS) which would further support digital and financial inclusion outcomes.

The wide use of social media particularly Facebook and WhatsApp have demonstrated the need to both adopt and improve analytics and current uses of chatbot technology to ensure more systematized approaches. The humanitarian community should collectively approach messaging and other app development companies to propose collaborations or partnerships.[60] Research and pilot projects should be designed to demonstrate how social media analytics, particularly qualitative and quantitative content analysis can drastically reduce staff time and better inform agencies decision-making around feedback and complaint response.

IV.7 Joint advocacy and collaborations with Policymakers: In coordination with government, stakeholders should review taxes that may exacerbate real or perceived barriers to mobile ownership and use, which have a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable.[61] Continue working with people with specific profiles and diverse profiles including women and girls with protection needs, people living with disabilities, people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, people from different religious groups, etc. to ensure digital inclusion and participation, and better understand how these groups access different digital communication tools.

IV.8 Expand Two-way and Tech: There is a heavy reliance across MENA on one-way communications, and currently UNHCR's social media presence is largely one directional. Generally speaking, UNHCR across MENA uses social media as traditional media like newspaper and TV, only broadcasting information out which does not allow nor include any form of engagement with the audience.[62]

Two-way communication systems that are actively used by PoCs are a more sustainable in the long-term term, but in the short-term will require staff time and management, particularly if labor saving technologies

[60] ICRC, The Engine Room and Block Party, Humanitarian Futures for Messaging Apps, January 2017.
[61] GSMA, "The Digital Lives of Refugees: How displaced populations use mobile phones and what gets in the way,"
[62] UNHCR, "Case Study on Digital Accountability to Affected People," 2020.

have not been appropriately incorporated into the design. The following are some considerations when adopting or expanding two-way communication platforms:

This mapping recommends promoting two-way feedback and complaint channels on social media only when the level of sophistication allows for a systematized approach that includes analytic tools, Chabot technology, and proper SOPs that outline staffing and budgeting requirements. High volume social media channels for receiving and respond to feedback cannot be managed in an unstructured manner without an army of staff and volunteers. This will not only result in an insufficient use of resources, but frustration among members of the site who may not feel they are receiving a timely and desired response.

Tech platforms and digital infrastructure receive significant resources without appropriate cost-benefit analyses. Funding for new technology must not only include the piloting and rollout but ensure dedicated resources for staff required for troubleshooting and scaling. Moreover, UNHCR is continually moving toward the creation of agency-wide or country-level systems that integrate and require the active participation of external partiers, such as international NGOs.

Greater understanding and commitment to both change management and stakeholder engagement is required when rolling out both two-way and tech solutions, particularly robust agency-wide systems.

IV.9 Understand the local information and communication ecosystem: Humanitarian agencies should rely on established resources (e.g., CDAC Network, GSMA) to conduct standardized communication and information needs assessments to better understand digital literacy, access to and ownership of ICTs, the telecom and regulatory environment, information preferences, trusted sources, influencers, and channels used and preferred by the communities. Interagency approaches for conducting coordinated assessments should be prioritized where possible. As a part of this collaboration, a survey of surveys (or meta-synthesis) should always be conducted prior to implementing an assessment that may have been recently implemented by a partner organisation.

***IV.10 Support pilots for innovation and incorporating digital tools with NGOs, community-based organisations, and community members*:** Organisations largely rely upon very labour intensive and face-to-face approaches for FCRM, utilizing channels, such as megaphones, gathering points, help desks, and community dialogues and networks. Increased use of innovative approaches, technologies, or mass communication to rapidly inform large numbers of refugee or host settlement populations should be prioritized. COVID-19 has further warranted a greater investment and consideration for digital FCRM, and organisations where possible should digitize popular face-to-face mechanism to enable two-way communication and inclusion. Additionally, instead of creating new FCRM and tools, where possible energies should incorporate or strengthen digital and technological components to enhance existing FCRM.

Considering COVID-19 gathering and travel restrictions, a competitive grant opportunity for piloting and scaling digital FCRM can be launched at regional level. The focus activities, could include:

- Develop a user's handbook and toolkit organized for specific FCRM channels across the management and operational lifecycle from design to closeout.
- Adopt more efficient and offline (and online when possible) data collection tools, tablets, or mobile devices to support the collection and analysis of feedback, retiring carbon copy forms where possible.
- Utilize radio and Bluetooth audio technologies, considering that most rural settlement areas are covered by broadcast transmissions and often have poor access to mobile and internet services.
- Increase the use of technology for automated data analysis that contributes to improving the response to feedback.
- Digital systems for integrating unstructured feedback and complaints data across partners to promote information sharing, response, and closing the feedback loop.

- Improve one-way communication systems currently utilised (e.g., social media and SMS bulk messages), and if possible, transform them into two-ways systems.
- Adopt a systematized approach to expanding the use of two-way, digital communication systems and feedback mechanisms that rely on social media channels like Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, and Twitter, etc.
- Identify, map, and address numerous cases of redundant FCRM, which are both inefficient use of donor funds and from the perspective of the community foster confusion.
- Efforts to improve integration are critical and technology is a part of the solution to improve the integration of data across feedback channels and across disparate agency initiatives.
- Feedback collection at help desks, particularly in settlements, as well as other channels, should be integrated with call-centres, to provide a larger and more representative data set that would improve analysis, decision-making, program adaption, and response.
- Develop site related feedback mechanisms, integrated in organisational feedback mechanisms. Communities should be able to access one unique system, and the burden of who needs to address the issue should be borne by the humanitarian community, not by affected communities.
- Invest in digital tools and technologies from community managed FCRM to sustainably improve community engagement. Community engagement and participation are components of AAP that require more attention, and greater support should be provided to equip community networks and representative structures with the capacity to manage digitally enabled community FCRM.

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VI. Acronyms

3RP	Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan in response to the Syria crisis.
AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
AGD	Age, Gender and Diversity
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
CAAP	Commitments for Accountability to Affected People
C4D	Communication for Development
CDAC	Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities
CFM	Complaints and Feedback Mechanism
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standards
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CwC	Communication with Communities
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FCM	Feedback and Complaints Mechanism
FCRM	Feedback, Complaints and Response Mechanism
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HAP	Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HH	Household
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IASC AAP/PSEA TT	Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Team on Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IP	Implementing Partner
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IVR	Interactive Voice Recording
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PA	Participatory Assessment
POC	Persons of Concern
PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SCI	Save the Children International
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SOGI	Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities
GBV	Gender-based violence
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WASH	Water, sanitation, and hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

VII. Annexes

Annex 1: Participating Organisations

Organization Name	Country/Location
UNHCR	Algeria
Caritas	Egypt
Terre des Hommes	Egypt
UNHCR	Egypt
UNHCR	Iraq
UNHCR	Jordan
UNHCR	Kuwait
UNHCR	Lebanon
UNHCR	Libya
UNHCR	Mauritania
UNHCR	Mauritania Bassikounou sub-office
UNHCR	Morocco
Albatoul	Syria
Bara'em Association for Children Care	Syria
Children of One World	Syria
International Rescue Committee	Syria
Namaa	Syria
St. Ephrem Patriarchal Development Committee	Syria
Syrian Expatriate Medical Association	Syria
Syrian Society for Social Development	Syria
UNHCR	Syria
UNHCR	Syria Cross Border (Turkey)
UNHCR	Tunisia
CARE INTERNATIONAL	Turkey
HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION	Turkey
Maram Foundation	Turkey
UNHCR	Turkey
WATAN Foundation	Turkey
UNHCR	UAE
INTERSOS	Yemen
UNHCR	Yemen

Annex 2: Digital Feedback and Complaint Channels[63]

Channel	Strengths	Weaknesses/limitations
Hotline	• Can be used to reach people in real-time. • Often works at the national level and in remote areas. • Allows for people with mobility difficulties to connect and access information. • Avoid the need for the user to be fully and digitally literate. • Allows for multiple organisations to use the same system.	• Often multiple overlapping hotlines serve the same population. • Limited coordination with other AAP or feedback channels and integrated mechanism. • Users need to have access to mobile phones. • Is not always an in-person channel, which is preferred by communities. • Its time and resources consuming, if not manage with sufficient coordination and sustainability plans.
Functional phone and e-mail for assigned focal points	• Easy and fast to use. • Provides a person-to-person dialogue, preferred by communities. • Provides a clear accountability line for responses.	• May overwhelm staff in their time. • Staff overturn may compromise response, confidentiality, and privacy concerns.
Digitally empowered volunteer network	• Complements and augments reach through the strategic use of physical and digital elements. • Can greatly impact behaviour and altitudinal changes across communities. • Harnesses the power of trust and community relations in utilizing persons from within the community.	• Time and investment in selection and training. • May need to provide incentives or a form of compensation. • Often high levels of dropout and varying degrees of participation. • May require high level of coordination, active supervision, and continual support.
Digitally empowered Organised Dialogues / Community Meetings	• Provides a person-to-person dialogue, preferred by communities. • Provides a clear accountability line for responses. • Does not require literacy.	• Labour intensive. • Requires physical presence and sometimes ability to move. • Recording of feedback and community inputs is often manual. • Not for individual or sensitive feedback and complaints. • Certain population groups may feel uncomfortable raising issues and may require specific attention (women, children, persons with diverse SOGI).
Help Desk/ Information Support Centres offering digital services	• Provides a person-to-person dialogue, preferred by communities. • Provides a clear accountability line for responses. • Accessible to many community members, especially if strategically located. • Can provide an immediate response, including on some sensitive matters.	• Labour/resource intensive. • Requires physical presence and sometimes ability to move. • Requires specialization and knowledge base. • Recording of feedback and community inputs is sometimes manual.
Radio	• Reaches all communities, including people	• Some Humanitarian organisations do not have

[63] See Pros and Cons of different feedback mechanisms in UNHCR, "Operational Guidance on Accountability to Affected People (AAP)," September 2020.

	with low literacy. • Does not require physical presence. • A popular/familiar medium that can provide comprehensive information. • Allows for participation through call-in shows. • Popularize and promote other feedback channels.	the technical skills to collaborate or support this type of media tools. • Radio usage and popularity varies across MENA and in some locations is viewed as traditional and a less attractive tool for some groups. • Often used as a one-way communication; channel (e.g., Public Service Announcements). • Listeners need a radio.
Two-Way Mobile Communication Systems (aside from hotlines, e.g. BodaBoda TalkTalk)	• Can reach people in real-time. • Provides a person-to-person dialogue, preferred by communities. • Provides a clear accountability line for responses. • Reaches all communities, including people with low literacy and those in remote areas or with mobility difficulties.	• Rarely used in MENA. • Organisation do not have the capacity to use these systems fully, for lack of budget or staff. Organisations fear that by using these systems, they will be overwhelmed. • Safety, confidentiality, and privacy concerns.
SMS	• Can reach people in real-time. • Cost effective. • Provides a person-to-person dialogue, preferred by communities. • Provides a clear accountability line for responses. • Does not require physical presence.	• Sometimes used as a one-way system. • Limitation on the depth of information that can be transmitted. • Requires access to phones and infrastructure. • Not effective for strategic/targeted communications if not used as two-way system. • Safety, confidentiality, and privacy concerns. • Requires greater levels of literacy.
Messaging Apps (e.g. WhatsApp, Snapchat, Viber, WeChat, Telegram, Sign, and LINE)	• Can reach people in real-time. • Provides a person-to-person dialogue, preferred by communities. • Provides a clear accountability line for responses. • Enables voice messages, as well as images, captions, and sign language videos which can be faster and easier than typing Arabic or Latin letters, and accessible to people with hearing or reading difficulties;[64] • Reaches all communities, including people with low literacy. • Does not require physical presence. • Becoming the primary mode of communication for hundreds of millions of people around the world, including people affected by natural disasters or caught up in armed conflicts.[65] • End-to-End Encryption can improve digital communications security.	• Requires internet/ mobile data. • Requires access to a mobile phone or other smart device. • Not always used by organisations as a two-way communication system. • Safety, confidentiality, and privacy concerns.

[64] UNHCR, "Connecting Refugees: How Internet and Mobile Connectivity can Improve Refugee Wellbeing and Transform Humanitarian Action," 2016: http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/connectivity-for-refugees.html.
[65] ICRC, "The Engine Room and Block Party, Humanitarian Futures for Messaging Apps," January 2017.

Annex 3: Highlights of Online Survey Findings

Designing FCRM

- Of the 31 respondents, 26% (8 respondents) reported not having a FCRM.
- 17% (5 out of 30) of respondents were not aware of an existing, organisational-wide policy on AAP.
- 19% (6 out of 31) of organisations/operations do not have SOPs and/or policies for operating/managing Feedback, Response and Complaint Mechanisms. 2 respondents have no SOPs or policies for operating/managing FCRM, yet they are operating FCRM.
- 35% (11 out of 31) of organisations/operations have not conducted an information and communication needs assessment to understand the digital literacy, access to and ownership of ICTs, and preferences of persons of concern.
- The following were the top 5 responses regarding the need the FCRM was designed: 1) Protection; 2) Mental Health and Psychosocial Support; 3) Cash and Basic Needs; 4) Livelihood & Resilience; and 5) Educations.
- The following were the top 3 responses for how organisations selected their FCRM channels: 1) informal discussion with staff and/or persons of concern; 2) An assessment on the communication preferences of communities was conducted; and 3) Channels that are most useful to the organisation were chosen.
- Nearly all the organisations/operations lack a name or brand for their FCRM.

Collecting and Analyzing Feedback

- Nearly 50% of organisations/operations who responded receive less than 100 pieces of feedback per month.
- Only 27% (6 out of 22) stated that they disaggregate the feedback and complaints by disability.
- 29% of the organisations or operations with feedback and complaints systems collect feedback and complaints on a daily basis.
- Kobo Toolbox and Microsoft PowerBi are the most popular platforms or programs for collection, recording or analysis of feedback and complaints, with 17% (4 out of 23) stating that they do not utilize any digital tools or technologies for Receiving, Storage, Analysis, and Management of FCRM

Closing the Feedback Loop

- When asked about the methods organisations or operations use to respond to persons of concern: 100% stated that they are contacted by phone, 61% (14 out of 23) stated they are directly contacted in-person (e.g., community outreach volunteers or representatives), and 39% (9 out of 23) stated they are directly contacted via SMS.
- 52% (12 out of 23) stated that they did not have the appropriate budget and resources to be able to respond to and implement feedback and complaints received.
- 30% (7 out of 23) stated that despite having a FCRM, they have never surveyed persons of concern on their level of satisfaction with the FCRM.