



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

# COMPACT GUIDANCE FOR SENIOR MANAGERS ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED PEOPLE (AAP)

**1.**

PARTICIPATION  
& INCLUSION

**2.**

COMMUNICATION  
& TRANSPARENCY

**3.**

FEEDBACK  
& RESPONSE

**4.**

ORGANIZATIONAL  
LEARNING  
& ADAPTATION

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Accountability to affected people is a commitment to the intentional and systematic inclusion of the expressed needs, concerns, capacities, views of persons of concern in their diversity, in all protection and assistance.

AAP Operational Guidance, April 2020.

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# INTRODUCTION

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Accountability to affected people (AAP) is defined as an active commitment by humanitarian actors and organisations to use power responsibly by taking account of, giving account to, and being held to account by the people they seek to assist.<sup>1</sup> It entails being answerable for the relevance, quality and impact of all protection and assistance services that persons of concern are entitled to throughout the operations management cycle. For UNHCR, the term “affected people,” which is common in inter-agency settings, translates in general terms to “persons of concern”.

Collectively and individually, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and its member agencies, including UNHCR, have undertaken to advance AAP through the [2017 Commitments on Accountability to Affected People and Protection from Sexual Abuse](#), which focuses on the key areas of: leadership; information, feedback and action; participation and partnership; and, results.

The objective achieved through actions in each of these areas is a partnership with the communities we work with for appropriate and better quality humanitarian programming. Furthermore, after having coordinated the IASC Task Team on Accountability to Affected People and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, UNHCR has been co-chairing the IASC Results Group 2 on Accountability and Inclusion since its creation in 2019. UNHCR also supports the 2015 [Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability](#), which sets out nine commitments that organisations and individuals involved in humanitarian response can use to improve the quality and effectiveness of the assistance they provide.

It is critically important to understand the diversity in persons of concern in order to provide the best possible assistance and protection, without undermining their existing capacities. In this regard, UNHCR situates AAP within the broader protection work of the organization and is mindful of the need to consistently review and improve accountability systems.

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<sup>1</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), [IASC Revised AAP Commitments, 2017](#), 13 July 2018.

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. UNHCR's AAP Framework is also reflected in the 2018 Age, Gender and Diversity Policy<sup>2</sup> (core actions 2-5).

AAP can only contribute to better and more effective programming if the systems in place capture, record and relay the expressed risks, priorities, needs, capacities and aspirations of the communities we serve. AAP is an essential element of quality assurance, not a one-off event. It requires direct and sustained engagement with communities, through transparent and continuous two-way communication. It requires actions and approaches that enable all communities, including those that are marginalized or at-risk, to meaningfully participate in key decisions throughout the operations management cycle.

This guidance details the definition and objectives of the four components in UNHCR's AAP framework, outlining the key elements of each. It includes recommended implementation steps and adaptable tools to implement the concepts introduced, based on country examples, both in refugee and IDP situations.

Whenever possible, UNHCR should take a lead role in establishing, funding and coordinating accountability mechanisms, either directly or in partnership with other entities.

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<sup>2</sup> UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), [UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity](#) ["AGD Policy"], 8 March 2018.

# OPERATIONALISING ACCOUNTABILITY

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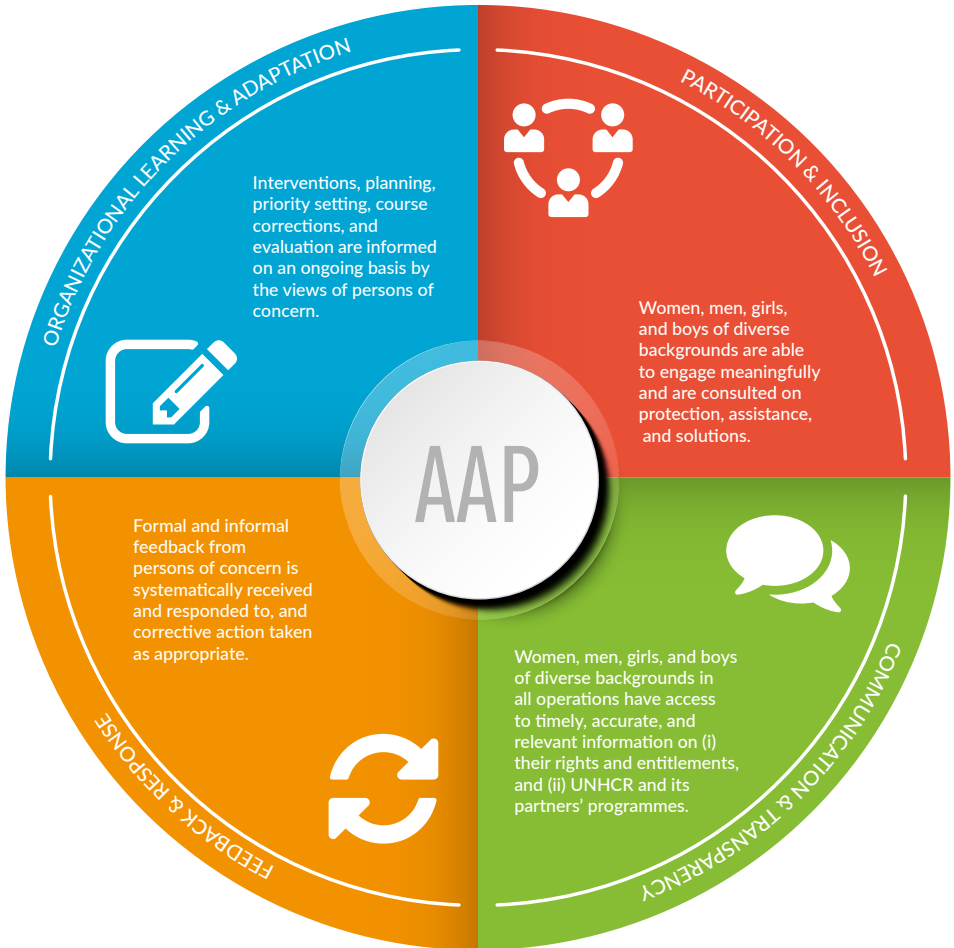
AAP is most effectively operationalized through actions tailored to each specific context. In some contexts, there are obstacles to engaging directly with communities of concern. Insecurity and lack of humanitarian access pose enormous challenges to working directly with communities and persons of concern, and point to the need to develop innovative strategies to assist communities. Consequently, UNHCR asks individual offices to develop and implement the most optimal AAP tools for their context.

The AAP framework, components serve to develop consistency in the standards UNHCR applies for AAP during all stages of the operations management cycle.

Training for staff in key functions and at different levels, including senior staff, is important for the success creation and maintenance of a culture of AAP and for building an understanding of the principles and purpose of AAP as outlined in this guidance.

# AAP Framework Components

AAP implementation in UNHCR focuses on four key components:



## 1.

### PARTICIPATION & INCLUSION

At a minimum, country operations will employ participatory methodologies at each stage of the operations management cycle, to incorporate the capacities and priorities of women, men, girls, and boys of diverse backgrounds into protection, assistance, and solutions programmes

UNHCR is committed to:

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

## 2.

### COMMUNICATION & TRANSPARENCY

At a minimum, all country-level protection and solutions strategies will detail the operation's approach to communicating with women, men, girls, and boys of diverse backgrounds, through means that are appropriate and accessible to all groups in a community

UNHCR is committed to:

- Facilitate two-way communication and dialogue among UNHCR, its partners and people of concern at key stages throughout the operations management cycle;
- Share information and communicate in languages, formats and media that are culturally appropriate and accessible for all groups in a community;
- Ensure women, men, girls, and boys of diverse backgrounds have access to timely, accurate, and relevant information on (i) their rights and entitlements, and (ii) UNHCR and its partners' programmes.



### 3.

## FEEDBACK & RESPONSE

**At a minimum, all UNHCR operations will establish and promote feedback and response systems, including for confidential complaints**

**UNHCR is committed to:**

- ➔ Establish multiple communication channels or modalities that are tailored to the different needs and capacities of persons of concern, including, for example, children, older persons, and persons with disabilities;
- ➔ Use confidentiality safeguards, to ensure that matters such as sexual exploitation and abuse are handled in a protection-sensitive manner;
- ➔ Have standard operating procedures for the collection, acknowledgement, assessment, response and referral of feedback, setting out roles and responsibilities.

### 4.

## ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING & ADAPTATION

**At a minimum, all UNHCR operations will adapt programmes and strategies in response to feedback and other inputs from persons of concern, and document this in Country Operations Plans and Annual Reporting**

**UNHCR is committed to:**

- ➔ Adapt programmes and strategies in response to input from persons of concern, and document this in Country Operations Plans and Annual Reporting;
- ➔ Document lessons learnt from continuous engagement with communities and/or persons of concern;
- ➔ Measure and improve accountability to persons of concern through assessments of organisational performance on AAP.



# PARTICIPATION & INCLUSION

Participation enables persons of concern to take part in the identification of priorities and the planning and implementation of appropriate protection, assistance and solutions programmes.

Women, men, girls and boys, including older people, persons with disabilities and other diversity groups should be engaged in programming activities and decisions, securing their ownership, with acknowledgement of their existing capacities. This applies to decision making in interventions from priority setting, identification of interventions, and monitoring or evaluating programmes.

## KEY OBJECTIVES

- ➔ Decision making on strategy and programme activities is based on the expressed priorities of persons of concern in their diversity.
- ➔ Collaborative and sustainable assistance programmes that build on the capacities of the community.
- ➔ UNHCR is accessible to all community groups as and when they require, through their preferred and trusted channels (face-to-face, group meetings, telephone calls, online, etc).
- ➔ Community, group and individual level concerns and expectations are heard, integrated into the programme cycle, and managed through open and interactive dialogue.
- ➔ All persons of concern participate in evaluating programmes and identifying indicators of success.

## Risks of a Lack of Participation and Inclusion

- ⦿ Ineffective programming: Persons of concern have capacities, and the most relevant and up to date knowledge of their situation, needs, and context. They are best placed to identify the main risks, threats, needs and concerns they have, as well as the most effective responses and sustainable solutions in their context.
- ⦿ Community indifference: Meaningful participation and partnership increases community ownership of assistance programmes and their sustainability.
- ⦿ Lack of credibility and goodwill: Inclusive participation can build relationships based on trust with communities of concern. The alternative is an atmosphere of mistrust, frustration and unmanaged expectations.
- ⦿ Exclusion: All persons of concern have the right to participate. Not paying attention to inclusivity and a community's diversity results in the exclusion of groups with specific concerns and failure to implement UNHCR's policy to protect and assist persons of concern using a rights-based, non-discriminatory approach.

🔧 [UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations](#),  
UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), May 2006, First edition.

🔧 [A Review of UNHCR Participatory Assessments in 2012](#),  
UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), December 2013.

## | **LEBANON**

### **REFUGEE OUTREACH VOLUNTEERS**

**In Lebanon, refugees working as outreach volunteers are playing a key role in protection monitoring and response, engaging in a wide variety of interventions across different sectors**

#### Background

With the large-scale and dispersed nature of the refugee population, UNHCR Lebanon has turned to refugees to play a greater role in their own protection and promote direct contact with them, through its Refugee Outreach Volunteer (ROV) programme. The role of ROVs is to provide insight into their communities' capacities and protection and solutions priorities; to assist in the identification of persons at risk; to disseminate information about services and programmes to their communities; and to contribute to the assessment, planning, design, prioritisation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of protection and assistance programmes. With their permanent presence in and knowledge of the communities, the ROVs enable timely response to serious protection cases in a wide geographic area.

#### Building on existing capacities

ROVs have been able to use the skills and capacities they had developed prior to displacement, by working in specific sectors or targeting particular groups with specific needs. Examples include volunteers with a background in education providing homework support or identifying out-of-school children, and volunteers with a background in health conducting sensitization on vaccination campaigns.

#### Inclusive participation

The ROV programme is a model for inclusion of persons with specific needs, including persons with disabilities. It has several volunteers with disabilities, which has boosted their confidence and demonstrated to their communities that they can play an active role in supporting their communities.

## Efficient two-way communication

ROVs are key actors in disseminating accurate and up-to-date information within their communities and directing persons to vital programmes and services. The ROVs also feed information back to UNHCR through regular meetings, helping the operation to better understand the needs and capacities of the communities as well as their opinions on UNHCR interventions, in order to monitor and evaluate programmes and better tailor them to the needs and capacities of communities.

The information collected by the outreach volunteers is analysed, together with information from participatory assessments, surveys or field monitoring, and informs the development of UNHCR programming.

## Results

Lebanon's ROV programme has helped UNHCR to integrate the specific concerns of persons with disabilities, through their full participation. It has helped to manage community expectations through two-way communication between community members, ROVs, and UNHCR staff. It has built on refugees' existing capacities to create collaborative and sustainable interventions.



*As ROVs we are exposed to the problems of the community from the beginning, so we know how to solve them, and it gives us more confidence to deal with our own individual problems"*

Refugee Outreach Volunteer in the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon



## COMMUNICATION & TRANSPARENCY

Communication and Transparency is the consistent and intentional sharing of timely, accurate, and relevant information between UNHCR, its partners, and people of concern.

Persons of concern are entitled to being informed about and engaged on issues affecting their lives. This entails receiving information on their rights and entitlements and how to access them, and being kept aware of protection and assistance programmes as they evolve, thereby making information an aid deliverable in itself.

Access to transparent, accurate information allows persons of concern to make informed decisions for their safety and protection, and to hold humanitarian actors accountable. Effective communication between UNHCR and people of concern also serves to manage expectations about the type and level of assistance that can be provided, to whom, and why.

Fulfilling this benchmark requires planning expressly for the purpose of ensuring communication with people of concern from the outset of designing and planning for an intervention. To ensure the provision and reception of clear and consistent information, communication standards must be applied with corresponding indicators of success to measure progress.

**The importance of ongoing or regular face-to-face interaction with persons of concern including through regular meetings with the various community groups and individual/ personalized counselling cannot be over emphasised. Other means of sharing information and communication with people of concern cannot replace regular and continuous face-to-face dialogue.**

## **Key Objectives**

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- Diverse groups in the community are engaged, as partners, in a dialogue between UNHCR and persons of concern.
- Persons of concern have safe access to timely, accurate and contextually relevant information.
- Persons of concern are able to make informed decisions on the basis of the information available to them.
- Persons of concern are aware of the means by which they can meaningfully participate and give feedback.
- Persons of concern have a say as to the forms and channels of communication, and what types of information they need, and how they receive it.
- Communication initiatives are designed and delivered in a way that acknowledges the gendered nature of information access. Information needs are identified and analysed based on an understanding of the diversity.

## **Risks of Poor Communication and Transparency**

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- An information vacuum and the absence of dialogue can create rumours or misinformation that may lead to mistrust, frustration, and harm.
- Insecurity and protection risks may be exacerbated as individuals or groups in the refugee, IDP or stateless community can act on incomplete or incorrect information.
- Lack of continuous dialogue and communication with the persons of concern may result in unrealistic expectations about the assistance and services that they are entitled to. It also means that UNHCR and its partners are poorly informed about the protection and assistance priorities and gaps that communities are concerned about and wish to inform humanitarian and other actors about.

## COSTA RICA

### INNOVATIVE INFORMATION SHARING WITH REFUGEES

**Provision of accurate, transparent and up-to-date information to refugees through culturally appropriate and accessible formats, media and languages.**

#### Background

Participatory assessments and focus groups with refugees and asylum-seekers in Costa Rica, who live in dispersed urban areas, revealed that one of the main challenges hindering their local integration was the lack of access to information on their rights and duties. In order to improve two-way communication with refugees, the UNHCR Office developed a number of complementary initiatives, using a variety of culturally appropriate and contextual tools.

#### Actions

- **Help.unhcr.org.** UNHCR launched the website help.unhcr.org as a pilot project. It contains key information specific to refugees and asylum seekers in the country. The online platform was conceived through a participatory process, which included the feedback and recommendations from refugees, UNHCR implementing partners, government agencies, website developers, and UNHCR staff.

Website content includes information for recent arrivals (i.e. RSD process) obtaining permanent residency, naturalization, livelihoods programmes, the asylum claim process, additional support programmes and the rights and duties of refugees or asylum seekers.

- **Mobile outreach teams.** In addition to the help.unhcr.org website, the Office deployed mobile outreach teams to inform persons of concern about the different projects of UNHCR and its partners, to identify persons of concern who had not been in touch with the office for several years, to confirm the population size, and to locate families in border areas that may be entitled to international protection.



- A **social media campaign** called “Ser refugiado es como ser tico” (Being a refugee is like being a Costa Rican) was developed to reinforce the idea that refugees and citizens enjoy the same rights and duties. It reached more than 3 million viewers through videos, billboards and printed materials.
- A **two-way communication system**, “Ascend”, which uses the online platform frontlinesms.com, was launched. It enables UNHCR and partners to be in contact with refugees through SMS messages.
- **Digital information stands** were placed in strategic points in the greater metropolitan area of the capital as well as in border points/towns with Nicaragua. These stands provide the same information that can be found at [help.unhcr.org](http://help.unhcr.org).

## Results

The communication initiatives provided persons of concern with **relevant and easily accessible information** about their rights and duties as well as the services available to them. Persons of concern can get in touch with UNHCR and its partners for additional information, and for **feedback and complaints** regarding services or interventions. The Government of Costa Rica worked closely with UNHCR on efforts to improve communication with persons of concern, who can now access information from the General Directorate of Migration or from UNHCR.



# FEEDBACK & RESPONSE

Feedback is formal or informal communication from persons of concern received through feedback mechanisms. It can either be positive or negative (complaint) and informs programming or requires corrective action (response).

Feedback mechanisms are accessible formal systems through which persons of concern can safely communicate with, and receive responses from UNHCR and its partners.

Safe and accessible systems are required for the collection, storing, documenting, and analysis of feedback and response, with appropriate referral pathways.

UNHCR has foundational approaches that advance the meaningful participation of persons of concern in the determination of protection and assistance priorities and the design of related programming.<sup>3</sup>

Feedback and response mechanisms enhance the gains of participatory approaches by providing a consistent, structured and predictable means of dialogue throughout the operations management cycle, which provides UNHCR with actionable information that allows it to adapt and improve its programmes.

It is critical that UNHCR knows how the community communicates and develops and maintains accessible and trusted channels for feedback systems, while avoiding unnecessary duplication. UNHCR operations should put in place systems that offer inclusive ways for all persons of concern to provide feedback.

Recording and analysis of feedback generates useful information that can be used for programme monitoring. Programmes can then be adapted accordingly, to be more appropriate and more effective.

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<sup>3</sup> As reflected in UNHCR, *UNHCR Manual on a Community Based Approach in UNHCR Operations*, March 2008; and, UNHCR, *Understanding Community-Based Protection*, 20 June 2013.

**Feedback Loops: Complaints or feedback need first to be acknowledged, then actions taken or referrals made, followed by a response to the individual.**

**This communication cycle is a feedback loop. The goal is to consistently close the feedback loop. Closed feedback loops require that data on feedback is collected, stored, processed, analysed, responded to, and reported on.**

## Key Objectives

- Dignity of women, men, girls and boys of concern is affirmed, their right to be heard, and the value of doing so, by seeking their views, feedback and complaints on our actions.
- Learning from persons of concern adjusts our programming to better address their concerns, meet their needs, and build on their capacities.
- UNHCR is alerted to any serious protection issues that need to be addressed, notably PSEA.
- Measure the effectiveness and impact of protection and assistance programmes.
- Organisational learning and institutional memory is promoted through reporting on feedback.

## Risks of Poor Feedback and Response

- The absence of feedback mechanisms – or unstructured and non-systematised approaches – risk inappropriate, unsustainable, inefficient and ineffective protection and assistance programmes.
- Moral breaches and abuse of power, including, SEA, corruption, fraud can go undetected in situations, and do harm to more people if not stopped and properly mitigated.
- UNHCR's community-based approach is only partially implemented without effective feedback, complaints and response mechanisms.

## Partnering on Accountability

The goal of improving the effectiveness of humanitarian action, based on the obligation to be accountable to the communities we serve, is shared by our partners and stakeholders. Wherever possible, UNHCR should take a lead role in establishing, funding and coordinating accountability mechanisms, either directly or in partnership with other entities.

Maintaining the accountability commitments extends to activities implemented through partners. Consequently, the selection of partners should take into account their demonstrable commitment to the areas outlined in UNHCR's AAP framework.

- The actions and behaviours of partners and stakeholders that operate with, or on behalf of UNHCR, have consequences and lasting impact on persons of concern and the organisation.
- Awareness of the standards outlined in UNHCR's AAP Framework should be discussed with partners through contractual agreements, memorandums of understanding, and partnership agreements with clear lines of accountability and performance management in AAP.
- Not all partners may have feedback mechanisms in place. Persons of concern may use UNHCR systems for feedback to other organisations and vice versa. Referral processes to safely, responsibly and purposefully share information with partners in the operating context are a necessary part of partnering on accountability.
- While UNHCR is not directly responsible for the resolution of the issues raised about other organisations, it is important to follow up and encourage that resolution occurs.

## Collective Accountability Mechanisms

In some instances, AAP is implemented through common or collective systems for the collection of feedback, which is then forwarded to the relevant organisation for action. The benefits of collective or shared accountability mechanisms are practicality, ease of access for persons of concern, and mutual accountability.

The communication component of AAP particularly lends itself to a collective approach. In some contexts it may be more practical and efficient to use a common mechanism for the capture of and response to feedback. This may be due to limitations in resources or humanitarian access.

AAP strategies should be designed around what makes the most sense to better serve people of concern. If a number of actors are working together in the same area or for the same population group, the existence of multiple feedback and complaints mechanisms can be confusing. Community consultations and assessments can be done collectively, and communication channels can be shared. The highest priority should be establishing systems that do not over burden communities, and are safest and easiest for them to access and use.

It is important to note that while collaboration is encouraged, the responsibility for resolution rests with the organisation or entity the feedback is about, or the entity delivering the services in question. Collective systems can help to capture feedback, for onward forwarding or referral. The duty to respond falls on the organisation in a position to effect the required change in accordance with its internal procedures.

## SOMALIA

### INTERAGENCY FEEDBACK MECHANISMS FOR IDPs

In Somalia, a collective beneficiary feedback system enables returnees, IDPs and other people living in the concerned areas to provide free-of-charge feedback (through calls or SMS) on services, and request information or assistance. Feedback is analyzed and responded to within five days.

#### Background

The Somalia Return Consortium's Beneficiary Feedback System is an inter-agency platform to enhance dialogue and aid accountability and transparency. The system offers a toll-free service through phone calls or SMS for persons of concern to voice concerns, report irregularities, and request information on assistance services.

Feedback processed through the call centre is primarily on the following:

- Information on the security of the return area
- Request for humanitarian assistance
- Quality and quantity of services provided
- Appreciation of support from the Somalia Return Consortium

#### Results

- The feedback mechanism is safe, accessible and culturally appropriate, as mobile phone network coverage and usage are high
- The process is highly transparent, with the publication on the online platform of reports of all the feedback received and how it has been responded to
- Systematic recording and filing on the online platform of all feedback received and responses provided enables agencies to analyse trends and adjust interventions accordingly



*MC will send their field staff to verify the issue and solve accordingly. This issue will be solved soon."*

Response from Call Centre

Calls and SMS from users are processed through a call center managed by UNHCR in Nairobi, Kenya. An operator is available during business hours to take the calls, while users are given a chance to leave a voice-recorded message outside of business hours



Once the feedback is received, a standardized case management process is initiated, and the case is referred by the call center to the focal point of the relevant agency



An initial report (without details and names) is published on the online platform within 24 hours



The concerned agency sends back to the call center a suggested response to the feedback



The call center contacts the sender to provide information about the findings and the relevant advice and solution



A final report is published on the online platform



Monthly update reports containing feedback data, main trends and complaints examples are produced and posted on the online platform

“ My family and five other families who are now in Wanla Weyn did not receive livestock distribution because we were not on the list. We would kindly request the organization to do something about this.”

Feedback from Somali IDP returnee



## ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING & ADAPTATION

Organizational learning and adaptation require that we document, analyse, and report on feedback from persons of concern throughout the operations management cycle, with the aim to inform planning, course corrections, and impact evaluations.

Organizational learning and adaptation is the overall measurement of organisational performance on accountability to persons of concern. This can be measured and reported on at a strategic level, and fulfils UNHCR's organisational accountability commitment in leadership and governance<sup>4</sup>.

Senior management plays an important role in facilitating the process of learning and the adaptation that results from information that is received through community participation and feedback. This process, as with all programming outputs, requires planning and resourcing. A key responsibility for leadership is to ensure the proactive planning and execution of accountability commitments beyond a general moral imperative related to our protection work.

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<sup>4</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), *IASC Revised AAP Commitments*, 2017, 13 July 2018.



## Protection and Programme Management Accountability Roles

- ➔ Knowledge and understanding of AAP benchmarks, the standards the organisation is committed to, and their application;
- ➔ Incorporation of the AAP commitments into policies, guidelines, and procedures;
- ➔ Establishment of AAP outputs within the operational structure with relevant authority, expertise and clear reporting lines;
- ➔ Proactive monitoring of achievement of accountability standards and implementation of changes resulting from feedback;
- ➔ Responsiveness to complaints raised, including on protection issues;
- ➔ Clearly defined, effective case management procedures;
- ➔ Reporting on results of accountability activities in all four components of the AAP framework as part of periodical reporting;
- ➔ Identification of partners with a demonstrated commitment to accountability to affected people;
- ➔ Raising partner's awareness of UNHCR's AAP commitments and strengthening the capacity of partners, including national, local and community-based organisations, to operationalise AAP;
- ➔ Performance management, through the inclusion of AAP activities and outcomes in performance appraisals of staff, including at mid-management and senior levels.

## Reporting on AAP

Reporting on accountability is a pre-requisite for organizational learning and adaptation. While it is true that engagement with communities regularly takes place, evidence of this must be captured in a structured, consistent, analytical manner, and frequently enough to measure impact.

Planning for and documenting AAP activities, in line with set standards and performance indicators, allows for a robust evidence base to achieve the following:

## Tracking Progress and Trends

- By using a feedback and response system, feedback from persons of concern can be systematically documented and analysed periodically to track and report on performance in a particular aspect of programming. For example, changes in the level of participation of women can be shown through the disaggregation of feedback by gender.
- Feedback data can also be used to help measure the impact of actions or changes made by the operation in response to community requests. For example, a noticeable reduction in complaints on an issue over time can be an indication of positive impact of a managerial decision that was made in response to the issue raised in feedback.
- Feedback mechanisms store quantitative and qualitative data that can be analysed and used as evidence to prepare evaluation and monitoring reports.

## Informing Decision Makers

- Feedback mechanisms exist for the benefit of persons of concern, to give them increased access to UNHCR and its partners. They also exist for the benefit of the organisation, beyond the fulfilment of its accountability responsibilities. Accountability processes such as these function as a regular response monitoring tool for protection and assistance programmes.
- Feedback data is useful for decision making in the same way as monitoring and evaluation reports. The difference is that feedback data includes both solicited and unsolicited feedback.

## Evidence Base for Strategic Direction

- Decisions made on priorities and direction on a day to day basis at the operational level should be informed by direct feedback and interaction between UNHCR and persons of concern. Documenting the nature of this feedback and assessing the implications for the direction in which persons of concern are lead the organisation is crucial for determining country level operational priorities and protection and solutions strategies.
- An aggregation of the feedback data across operations contributes to generating a global overview on the impact and performance of UNHCR's protection and assistance programming, based on evidence directly from persons of concern.
- Feedback data provides evidence for the organisation and its partners, including governments and donors on what works and what does not.

## Learning and Improvement

- Inter-agency sharing on best practices contributes to organisational learning. AAP provides opportunities for learning from the very people at the centre of our protection mandate. Ensuring their meaningful participation and reporting on their feedback helps us document the lessons we learn from persons of concern on where the organisation and its partners need to improve, or do things differently.

## Validation of Impact Monitoring and Evaluations

- Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems provide information on impact, and measure programme performance in line with expected outputs. Reports on feedback trends provide information to validate M&E findings.
- Feedback systems complement M&E systems to provide a more comprehensive understanding of our programmes and their impact: While M&E speaks to the “what” of achievements and outcomes, reporting on community feedback sheds light on the “why” and “who”.

## Information Sharing and Compliance

- Reporting on AAP also enables the organisation to contribute to collective accountability systems with UN and INGO and NGO partners.
- Accountability reporting includes reporting back to the persons of concern who are at the centre of our AAP efforts.
- Reporting back to communities requires the combined use of existing community structures, and targeted reporting back using communities' preferred means of communication. Particular attention should be given to reaching groups who may traditionally face barriers to accessing and/or providing information.
- Reporting back should focus on key messages on decisions made, actions to be taken, and ongoing programme updates. Information sharing with persons of concern should not be perfunctory. Incorporating the practice of regularly reporting back to communities transforms the relationship into a partnership, and constitutes an authentic expression of our accountability to persons of concern.

Operations are strongly encourage to regularly publish and widely share disaggregated data and trends from documented feedback and complaints.

## ETHIOPIA

### PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENTS RESULT IN CHANGE

In Jijiga, Ethiopia, findings from participatory assessments conducted by UNCHR led to changes in programme design and implementation, which were then reported back to the communities.

#### Background

UNHCR Sub-Office in Jijiga has placed a particular emphasis on ensuring the meaningful engagement of refugees in the planning process, notably by taking recommendations from participatory assessments into account in program design and communicating on the outcomes of the participatory assessments back to the refugees. Prior to the assessment phase, refugees, through Refugee Camp Committee representatives, are involved with UNHCR and partners in prioritizing which issues should be discussed during participatory assessments, based on a review of existing information.

#### Actions

#### **LEARNING**

Findings from participatory assessments in Jijiga had revealed issues that required either new interventions or adaptations of existing programmes. While some of these issues could have surfaced through different types of interaction or means of communication, a number of them, due to the fact that they were sensitive in nature and affected marginalized groups and women, were revealed through AGD sensitive, structured participatory assessments.

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#### **Results**

Focus group discussions with mothers revealed that children with severe disabilities were particularly vulnerable as they were often left behind and unattended at home while their mothers went to work, due to the lack of adapted day-care arrangements. Day care centres for children with severe disabilities were established

## **ADAPTATION**

Findings from participatory assessments were taken into account by UNHCR Jijiga in the design of interventions which led to improvements in the life of refugees based on their own recommendations.

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### **Results**

UNHCR and its local partner conducted a survey on female genital mutilation (FGM) in 2014 to gather more detailed information about the FGM practices among refugees. The approach emphasized the engagement of religious leaders in anti-FGM programmes, to address this protection and rights issue highlighted during participatory assessments.

## **REPORTING BACK**

Findings from focus group discussions conducted during the participatory assessments were presented and analysed at inter-agency meetings in Jijiga and in every camp with the active participation of Refugee Camp Committee representatives, who systematically participated in inter-agency coordination fora. Those representatives were then responsible for sharing the information with the wider community, which was done through focal points at the central, zonal and block levels in the camps based on the issues raised.

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### **Results**

The participation of refugees in monthly inter-agency meetings proved to be an efficient way to ensure that communication between refugees and humanitarian organizations was not limited to participatory assessments, and for the refugees to follow up on assessment findings and hold the different stakeholders to account.





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