HORN OF AFRICA INSTITUTE

Ideas Beyond Borders

ACCOUNTABILITY, FEEDBACK & COMPLAINTS MECHANISMS GUIDELINES.

HORN OF AFRICA INSTITUTE (HAI).

CONTENTS:

I. INTRODUCTION

WHY THIS GUIDANCE?

Accountability to affected people is at the heart of humanitarian and development actions. Accountability cannot exist unless organisations create the space and opportunity for people to provide feedback about programmes and services, or to complain about its quality, relevance, and timeliness, or the respect and dignity shown in its delivery.

As obvious as this may seem, it is not always easy to deliver. The profound power disparities between service providers and affected people means that extra efforts must often be made to ensure people feel safe and empowered to specify what they need, and to demand better if it is not delivered.

STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDANCE

The first part of the guidance provides an overview of accountability to affected people and where feedback and complaints mechanisms fit.

METHODOLOGY

The development of this guidance was based on a review of existing literature, including research studies, guidelines and training materials.

SECTION 1
UNDERSTANDING FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS

II UNDERSTANDING FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS MECHANISMS.

ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED PEOPLE

This guidance focuses on the challenges of implementing feedback and complaints mechanisms as proposing solutions to it.

While this guidance focuses on the details of implementation, this should be put in the context of the broader principle of accountability to affected people, which should permeate organisational culture and approach.

FEEDBACK, COMPLAINTS AND SERIOUS COMPLAINTS.

Feedback and complaints are critical in ensuring an organisation and its programmes are accountable to the people they assist, the communities around them, and their own staff and volunteers. They serve different purposes, with feedback giving more general information about how people have experienced services, staff or systems, and complaints systems allowing for the expression and follow up of specific grievances. These can be about the quality, quantity or delivery of services, but can also be about more sensitive issues, including inappropriate, unethical or illegal activities.

Many countries and societies simply have no culture of complaint, and beneficiaries may be particularly reticent to complain, often not perceiving themselves as having a right to the assistance they receive.

ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS AIM TO:

TAKE ACCOUNT	GIVE ACCOUNT	BE HELD TO ACCOUNT
Ensure that both beneficiaries and the communities have meaningful influence over programme decision-making in a way that is inclusive and non-discriminatory and allows for the voices of the most vulnerable to be included.	Ensure that beneficiaries are aware of their rights and entitlements, and that agencies are transparent and clear about who they are, how they work, and what they can and cannot do.	Affected people should have the opportunity to assess what agencies are doing and how they are providing assistance, to provide feedback that is meaningfully considered and incorporated, and to sanction abuses and poorly delivered assistance, wherever possible. This means that people should also be informed about how agencies have responded to their feedback.

Many organisations avoid the word ‘complaint’, and recommend consultation to identify the word that resonates most with the affected group(s).

Both feedback and complaints must be acknowledged and responded to, but complaints require a more formal response.

Feedback can be collected in a variety of ways. It can be actively solicited through interviews, focus groups and surveys, or reactively collected using tools such as physical or electronic (email) suggestion boxes and hotlines. It is important to use a combination of active and reactive tools. Some advantages and examples of each type are included in Figure 1.

Feedback may be collected formally face-to-face, by telephone or email, or using tools such as suggestion boxes. Feedback can and should also be collected informally. This might be conveyed directly through comments made at the point of service delivery, or indirectly, e.g. through word of mouth or by uptake/lack of uptake of services. Either way, it should be recorded and actioned.

Categorisation:
It is important to make a distinction between sensitive and non-sensitive complaints:

- *Non-sensitive complaints typically relate to programmes, and often capture concerns about who is targeted and why, or quality of products and services, for example.*

- *Sensitive complaints relate to issues such as exploitation, abuse or harassment, including sexual exploitation and abuse, discrimination, corruption, and fraud, among others.*

Feedback, non-sensitive complaints and sensitive complaints may arrive through the same channels, but must be processed differently. Programme staff must not act as gatekeepers for complaints, and complainants’ concerns and information must be handled sensitively and confidentially. This is particularly true for sensitive complaints about the conduct of staff or volunteers.

While the channelling and processing of feedback and complaints is very important, it is also very well covered in other pieces of guidance.

FIGURE 1:
ACTIVE AND REACTIVE MECHANISMS

ACTIVE

ADVANTAGES:

- Tends to elicit more responses
- Helps ensure feedback is representative of the affected group and allows for targeting of people less likely to offer opinions and complaints
- Assures service-users their views matter and will be taken into account.

EXAMPLES

- Exit interviews
- Follow-up interviews
- Perception/satisfaction surveys
- Focus groups
- Community meetings
- Community visits/consultations
- Radio – live call-in show
- Social media
- SMS surveys
- Feedback questions included in other data collection activities

REACTIVE

ADVANTAGES:

- Allows feedback to be given at the convenience of the service-user rather than the organisation.
- More likely to be used by people who wish to make anonymous complaints or are concerned about possible stigma.
- Provides more space for feedback about any aspect of programmes or other issues of concern.

EXAMPLES

- Suggestion/complaints box
- Hotline
- Social media
- Help desks
- Ombudsman

SERIOUS COMPLAINTS AND INTERAGENCY MECHANISMS

Addressing exploitative and abusive behaviour has long been neglected in the humanitarian and development sectors. There remains a great deal to do, but there has been an encouraging increase in efforts to provide service users with the opportunity to raise concerns, and to address these concerns in a timely and appropriate way. Feedback and complaint mechanisms are key to this process.

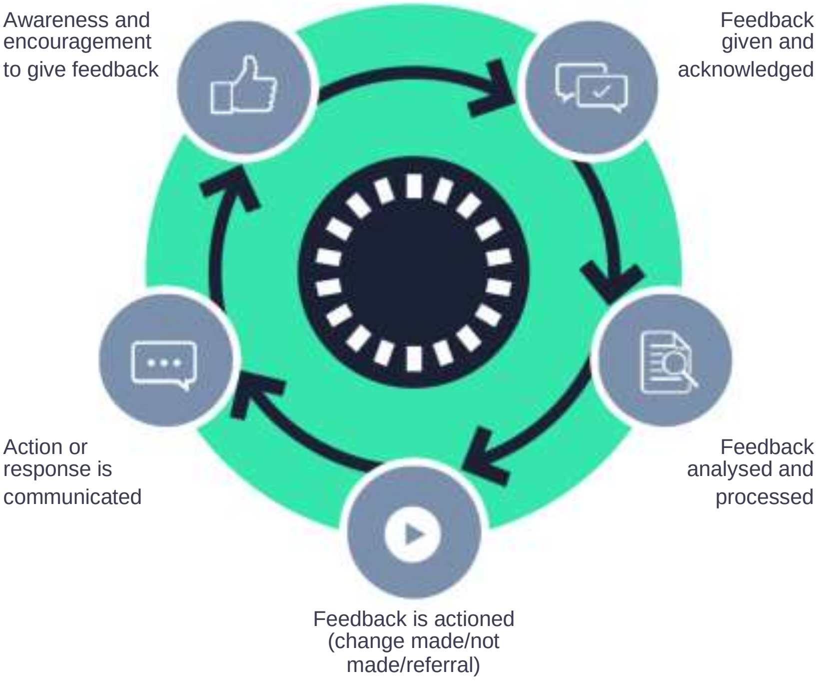
One innovation has been the arrival of interagency reporting mechanisms, which channel and follow up complaints on behalf of a number of organisations and agencies. These mechanisms are systems, rather than specific tools, serving to channel feedback from a variety of sources, including feedback channels ‘owned’ by different organisations. However, sometimes a shared tool will be established in locations where multiple organisations are working – a hotline, for example, or a suggestion box in a geographical area.

THE FEEDBACK LOOP

Incorporating and managing feedback is a cycle. As illustrated in Figure 2, input is:

- *Received from a programme’s stakeholders and acknowledged;*
- *Referred for action and deliberated by the appropriate persons or department;*
- *Actioned, and action communicated to the stakeholder.*

FIGURE 2: THE FEEDBACK LOOP



LEARNING FROM FEEDBACK

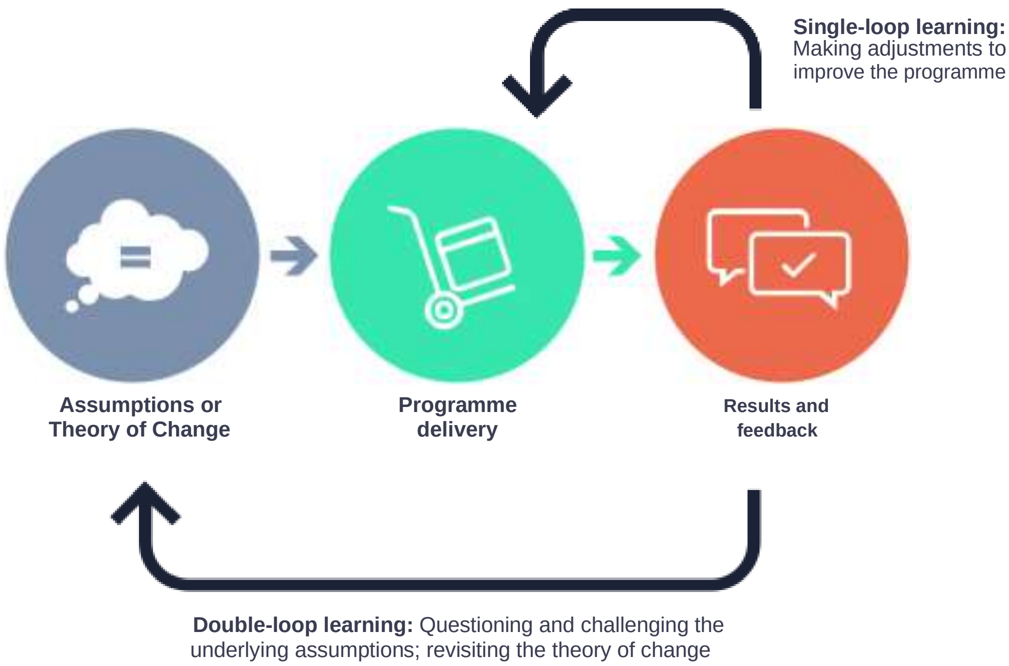
An important part of the feedback cycle is channelling input into changes and innovations that improve the quality, relevance and effectiveness of programmes.

It is important to think about this not just in terms of how it affects current programming, but also how it can orient the overall approach. Humanitarians and development actors should be constantly looking for ways to make their interventions more rapid, effective, safe and dignified. Sometimes this is about making changes to programmes, but sometimes it requires a radical re-imagining. This can be described as double-loop learning, as illustrated in Figure 3.

Some recent examples of double-loop thinking at work include things like cash programming, approaches to urban contexts, or innovations in communication in crises. These show how experience in different contexts and situations has been channelled not only into better programme delivery, but into entirely new approaches. Embedding this kind of approach into humanitarian/development processes can ensure that organisations leave space not only for necessary programmatic 'tweaks', but also for the big innovations that can be transformational.

It is in the spirit of this kind of transformation that this guidance was created, and it is hoped that it will help service providers to reimagine their programming.

FIGURE 3:
DOUBLING THE LOOP



SECTION 2

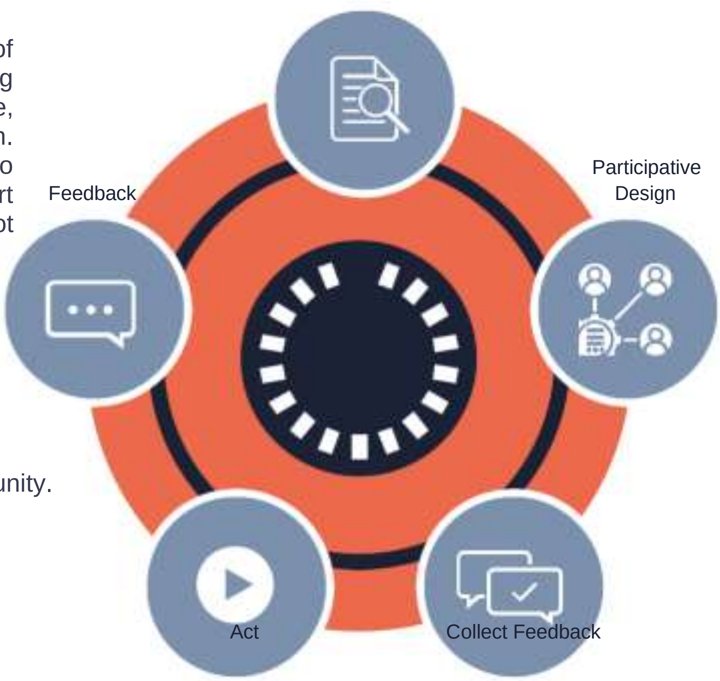
III.IMPLEMENTATION

PLANNING

TOP TIPS

- Accountability isn't an activity; it is a culture. Make sure its importance is reinforced by leadership at all levels, and that it informs everything you do.
- Take the time you need to recruit and train staff, including interpreters. Don't forget to support and protect staff – the more they are trusted by beneficiaries, the more distressing tales they may be exposed to.
- Building trust takes time. If you can't stay present in the long-term, can you partner with someone who will?
- Build feedback and complaints mechanisms into your design, right from the start. If mechanisms are not implemented immediately, plan for ways of capturing and responding to feedback and complaints conveyed informally.
- Budget for all the resources you need, including technical and physical resources, but also people's time, training and support. Don't assume it can be covered by existing resources.
- Anticipate you may receive complaints, including sensitive complaints, through any channel, about anybody. Be prepared to manage these sensitively and confidentially, but also transparently.

BUILDING AN ACCOUNTABLE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE: Effective planning and preparedness is the key to delivering well. The bedrock of effective feedback and complaints systems is a strong organisational culture of accountability to affected people, committed leadership and established systems to draw on. When these are in place, collecting and responding to feedback becomes a reflex, even when programmes start at short notice and formal mechanisms were not established.



HUMAN RESOURCES: Reinforcing the culture of accountability is therefore a core part of the planning process. This means having policies in place, and providing training, guidance and support.

This includes people recruited from the beneficiary community. Often these people are recruited because they bring knowledge and understanding of the affected people and are trusted by them. You are borrowing their good name, and they are borrowing yours. Make sure they understand what you stand for and how you work.

MAXIMISING

COORDINATION AND

REDUCING DUPLICATION

Responses are often established in countries or regions where humanitarian responses or development projects are already in progress. There may be a temptation to remain siloed when the target populations are different, but it may be useful and appropriate to join coordination and interagency complaints mechanisms, where they exist. This can reduce confusion for service-users about who to call if they have questions or concerns and can ensure that complaints disappear in a gap between systems.

It is important to consider, when connecting with government-run hotlines or complaints mechanisms. Being perceived as connected with government systems may also affect the perception of your neutrality.

It may also be worth considering whether third-party or independent collection of feedback can be conducted by external actors: peer organisations, donors or private sector. If this service is visibly independent, it can help avoid 'courtesy bias, which occurs when users feel obliged to be positive about services in the face of those that provided them.

Plan resources for processing feedback and information management: It is not enough to collect data if you don't use it effectively. This requires both technical and human resources, and these should be planned and budgeted from the start. Do not forget that these are ongoing costs as, too, are those related to translation and interpretation.

CONTEXT AND STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS: Good planning also means having a good context and stakeholder analysis. Word-of-mouth and long-term reputation are critical when trust is at a premium. If you are not going to stay, are you better off to work in partnership?

RISK ASSESSMENT AND PREPAREDNESS: Think not just about the context overall, but also how each feedback or complaints mechanism or tool could potentially expose beneficiaries to risk, particularly if they are raising sensitive issues.

PLANNING FOR PARTNERSHIP: Partnerships with local organisations and, often, government organisations can be crucial in certain contexts, where service provision is often as much about facilitating access to existing services as it is about putting new ones in place. How will you assess the accountability frameworks partners have in place and ensure they collect and monitor feedback and complaints in a way that is compatible with your values and requirements?

PUT MECHANISMS IN PLACE FROM THE START: Feedback and complaints mechanisms are often not designed early enough to embed them in the programme. This should be avoided wherever possible, as it takes more work to put them in later, and often far more time. Questions about how people want to receive information and give you feedback should be part of the initial assessment.

PLAN FOR HOW YOU WILL COLLECT AND MANAGE INFORMAL FEEDBACK: The majority of information and feedback comes from informal exchanges or observations at the point of service delivery. Too often this is not captured and only acted on in an ad hoc manner. Design simple tools for tracking informal input and your responses to it.

DESIGN:

TOP TIPS

- Consult with beneficiaries and other stakeholders to identify how they want to communicate with you. Don't forget to consult with a variety of people, including men, women, younger and older people, people with disabilities, and people from groups that are often discriminated against, such as sexual and gender minorities.
- Have more than one mechanism for receiving feedback and complaints. Each of them should be tailored to the needs, and capacities of the target groups.
- Ensure you have both active and reactive mechanisms in place, and that at least some mechanisms provide the space for people to raise issues you may not have thought of.
- Meet people where they are – use systems with which service-users are familiar and comfortable.
- Don't overstretch – Don't design a system you can't maintain or keep up-to-date.
- Be aware of the importance of both informal and mobile feedback in program/project settings

POINT 1:
THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE TRYING TO ACHIEVE

When you proactively engage beneficiaries, what do you want to know about your programme and its stakeholders? Who should you ask? Do you have specific questions about how a service was experienced, or are you trying to under-stand more broadly what people need? Be as precise as possible.

Seek out information actively, but also provide opportunities for people to find you. This may yield more and broader information and concerns, including about issues you may not have thought of.

Consider also how to receive feedback and complaints from other stakeholders. People living close to where you are providing services may be frustrated Or you may be inadvertently creating protection risks by providing vocational skills classes for young men around the same time young girls are going to and from school.

POINT 2:
IDENTIFY THE RIGHT TOOLS

Numerous mechanisms can be used to collect feedback and complaints. Each has its strengths and weaknesses, and only consultation with affected people will determine what will be most effective in your context. Consult with a variety of people, including men, women, younger and older people, people with disabilities, and people from marginalised groups such as sexual and gender minorities.

Use several different ways to collect information. Not only do people have different ways of communicating, they also use different tools for different purposes. For example, they may prefer to give programmatic feedback face-to-face or informally, but make a complaint more formally or anonymously. In addition, people's perception of services will evolve with time, so it is useful to get their views not just at the moment they are receiving assistance, but also later on.

Think about how and how much you use technology. Technology can be an extraordinarily valuable tool in contexts, allowing feedback to be collected even after project end, but it can also be alienating. Experience shows people prefer face-to-face, two-way communication, and are more likely to give feedback that way. People on the move use mobile technologies.

Largely for peer-to-peer exchange of information and to keep in touch with family and friends, so it is important to capitalise on familiarity with different tools, but not to make assumptions about how they want to communicate with service-providers.

Don't forget to keep on top of changes in context and the demographics of the people you are working with. Consult with people regularly to ensure your mix of tools and mechanisms is still right.

POINT 3:
INTRODUCE YOURSELF

Don't forget that engagement is a two-way process. This should include information about the organisation's commitment to accountability and what that means in practice. It should emphasise why their feedback is valued, how it is used, and what you can and cannot promise in terms anonymity, confidentiality and follow up.

POINT 4:
DON'T NEGLECT INFORMAL FEEDBACK

Informal feedback is a vital part of any humanitarian response, where it can be more difficult to follow up with service users or have them give more formal feedback or complaints.

While individuals may not stay and become frequent or recurrent users of programmes, they may pass information through word of mouth. Interviews and studies show that information from trusted friends and acquaintances is among the most important.

Unfortunately, informal feedback is often not – or not consistently – collected, analysed or acted on. The first step is to make sure that there is a time and space for capturing informal feedback. Some organisations use tools like a shared spreadsheet or log. These may be hard or soft copy, local or online, so long as the whole team can access it. Data collection tools such as ODK or Kobo that are used by field workers for other work can be used to collect informal feedback as well. Another method used by some organisations is to hold a meeting at the end of every shift or workday to exchange information or feedback that staff and volunteers have received, and brainstorm about how to incorporate it. The important thing is to use something light touch, with which the team is comfortable and familiar, or it will not be maintained.

Having captured informal feedback, it is also important to track how it has been actioned and report this back to service-users. This is worth doing even if the person that shared their concerns has moved on, as will be discussed in section VIII. Information about how humanitarian organisations have taken action on the basis of this kind of feedback is also useful for internal monitoring and evaluation purposes, and to illustrate to donors and other partners how beneficiary input is taken on board.

RUMOURS AS INFORMAL FEEDBACK

Rumours provide important and valuable insight into what the community thinks of the humanitarian/development response, what they do not understand, and what information gaps exist.

TOP TIPS FOR COLLECTING AND USING INFORMAL FEEDBACK

- Train and support staff in collecting informal feedback. Ensure there is extra capacity to be available to beneficiaries and hear what they have to say.
- Create a space for sharing and recording informal feedback, and routinely review and action it.
- Ensure action taken in reaction to informal feedback is reported alongside responses to formal feedback.
- Track rumours about context and maintain channels to address information gaps and dispel risky or dangerous misinformation.
- Track rumours about fraud, corruption, exploitation and harassment, including sexual misconduct, and investigate.

Because people's information needs are to make rapid choices and act on misinformation.

Not tracking and responding to rumours can also lead people to assume that organisations don't have the most current information and, as a result, increasingly rely on information that may be false or biased, coming from sources with their own interests.

Rumours may also be the main or only source of information about problems in behaviour of staff, volunteers or authorities. People may hesitate to make formal complaints if they feel they have been treated incorrectly or have become aware of fraud, corruption or (sexual) exploitation, but often this will surface in the form of rumours. Organisations should be aware of rumours like these and ensure that they are investigated. This must be carefully managed to avoid fostering a culture of gossip, but it is important to remember that allowing rumours to circulate will do more damage to the reputation of staff and/or the organisation as addressing them openly and transparently.

POINT 5:

THINK ABOUT LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

Mechanisms in any project setting will need to be adapted to cope with a range of levels of literacy and technical literacy.

It is also important to test communications and ensure that language is being used appropriately. Organisations tend to use words like ‘feedback’ or ‘input’, but emphasise that this is highly contextual, and that the right terms need to be identified in consultation with people themselves.

POINT 6:

BE REALISTIC IN YOUR EXPECTATIONS

Accept that the systems will not be perfect. For example, in static contexts a variety of sampling techniques are used to ensure that surveys and similar beneficiary feedback tools reach a sufficient number and diversity of people to be representative and reliable. In contexts where people are on the move, sampling simply cannot be as robust. Follow up will also be more difficult given the importance of anonymity to people who may not want to be detected. Accept that there will be an impact on the efficacy of feedback and complaint mechanisms, but also that this does not cancel out the benefit.

POINT 7:

DON’T LOSE SIGHT OF THE INVISIBLE

Women, young people, older people, and people from sexual and gender minorities feel intimidated to participate in focus groups or interviews, making it difficult for them to input into programme design, give feedback, or make a complaint.

Moreover, since the first contact is often made up largely of men, organisations will not capture these voices if they neglect to reassess communication needs and adapt programmes to changing demographics. Constant analysis is required to ensure mechanisms and tools are still fit for purpose.

POINT 8:

MAKE YOUR FEEDBACK LOOP AS SHORT AS POSSIBLE

Operational contexts change with great rapidity, so it is vital to be constantly collecting and processing data, and to keep the time between receiving feedback and adapting programmes as short as possible. There are numerous ways to do this. For example:

- *Monitor and react continuously to information as it arrives. This can be supported by good information management, as discussed in the next chapter.*
- *Empower staff and volunteers to make simple changes without extensive consultations*
- *Provide field staff with the necessary tools (e.g. smartphones or tablets with Kobo or ODK technology) to digitise feedback immediately so that it can be referred and followed up*
- *Ensure that each stage in the feedback cycle has a maximum time limit*

VI. DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING

BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND INSPIRING TRUST.
It is often said that trust is a form of currency, and this is particularly true, where people routinely put their lives at risk, and in someone else's hands. A variety of factors affect how willing beneficiaries are to trust actors, including some issues that have been discussed in the sections above.

WORK WITH AND THROUGH MEMBERS OF BENEFICIARIES GROUPS. Organisations say bringing representatives of beneficiary's groups into the response as staff, volunteers, or as trusted interlocutors is the most important factor in developing trust, though it can be challenging to locate and retain the right people. In recruitment, it is important to consider national, cultural, linguistic and religious background.

HAVE SOMETHING TO OFFER. The best way to engage people in dialogue is to show you care about what they need. Quality service provision can be the most effective way of building trust. This can backfire, however, if what you offer is not perceived to have value, or if you are not clear from the outset about any limits of your support. Information – a valuable and valued commodity in itself – is often an excellent way to establish a rapport, but it must be relevant, up-to-date and, above all, must not increase risk.

BUILD TRUST WITH ALL STAKEHOLDERS. In some cases, it is necessary to develop a trust relationship not only with the beneficiaries but also with the gatekeepers/stakeholders. Trust is also a key component of relationships with local communities.

DON'T COLLECT DATA YOU DON'T NEED. Allow people to remain anonymous if they wish. Data that is collected should be responsibly managed, according to both law and the do no harm principle.

"PROVIDE INFORMATION TO COMMUNITIES AND PEOPLE AFFECTED BY CRISIS ABOUT THE ORGANISATION, THE PRINCIPLES IT ADHERES TO, HOW IT EXPECTS ITS STAFF TO BEHAVE, THE PROGRAMMES IT IS IMPLEMENTING AND WHAT THEY INTEND TO DELIVER."

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MANAGING INFORMATION

Feedback and particularly complaints can be incredibly sensitive and even political information. It is vital information is managed well at each stage of the process. This means it must be:

- *Channelled to the right people, ideally collected independently from programme staff, and with sensitive complaints handled entirely separately by an individual or team that is independent of the country hierarchy.*
- *Time bound, with maximum response times built into the processes.*
- *Anonymised and/or encoded as needed.*
- *Protected with adequate safeguards against hacking and data theft.*
- *Verified to ensure that it does not put beneficiaries at risk, particularly if there is any legal way that authorities can force agencies to hand it over*

Flow charts showing how mechanisms work are useful tools in developing systems – to ensure that there are no missing links – and for ensuring staff at various levels of an organisation and in different locations understand who is involved and how. These will differ from one context to another, but should include processes and timeframes for receiving information and processing it, with separate channels for sensitive complaints, as well as for closing the feedback loop, by communicating to the complainants, affected individuals and/or other service users how the organisation has responded.

Figure 7 shows a beneficiary complaints and feedback mechanism process developed and figure 8 is a referral pathway for sensitive complaints adopted by HOA.

FIGURE 7:

COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK MECHANISM PROCESS FLOW CHART

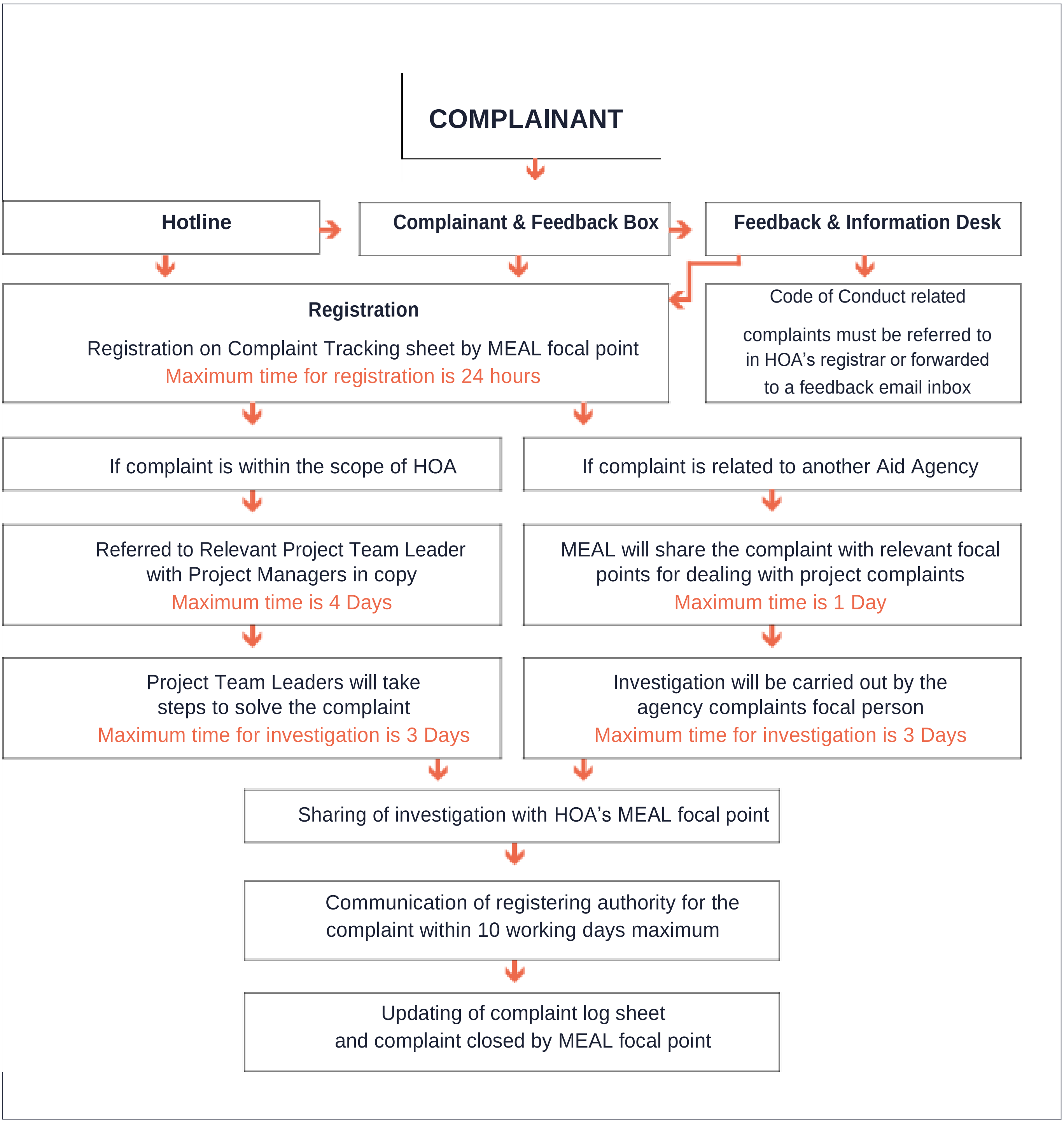
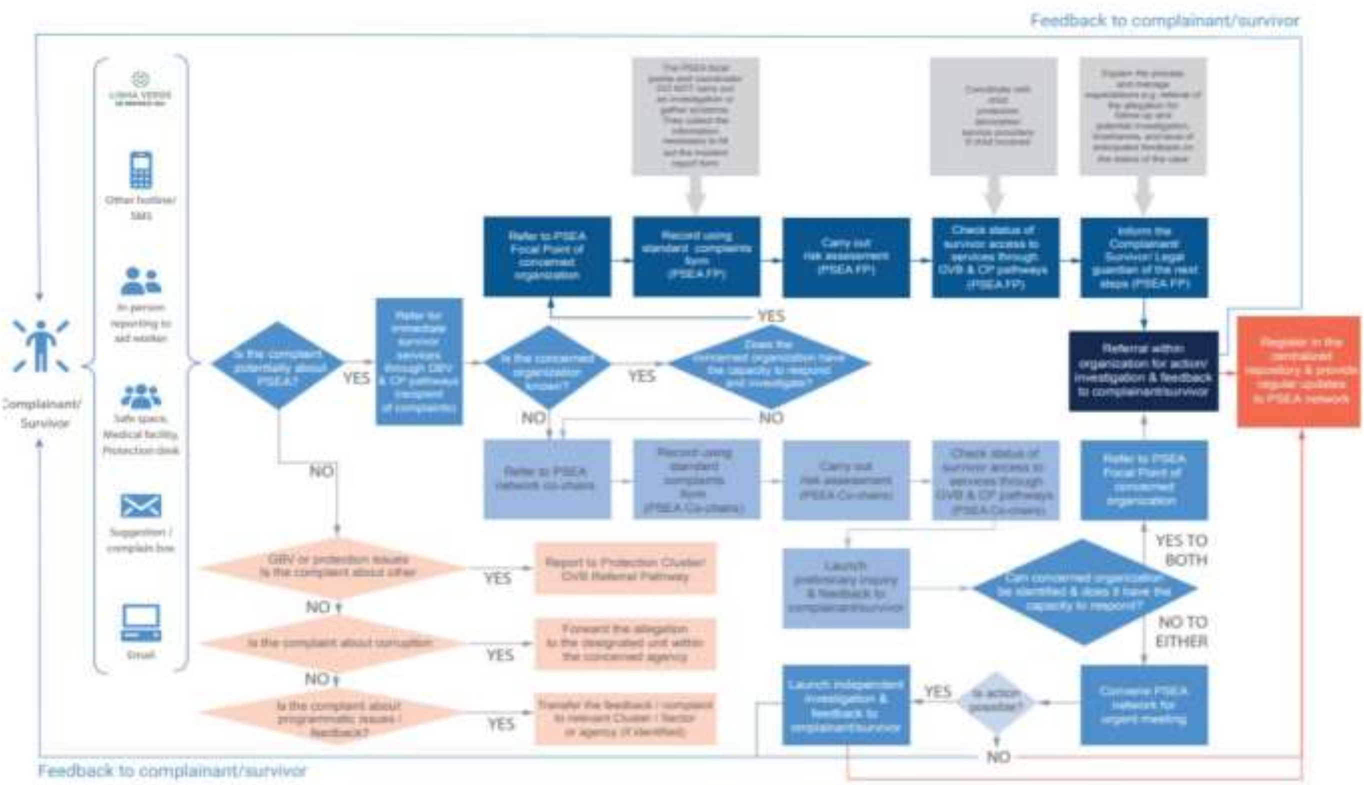


FIGURE 8:

COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK MECHANISM PROCESS FLOW CHART



ENSURING TIMELY AND APPROPRIATE REFERRAL

It is too late once someone has raised a complaint to start thinking about how to follow up. Put processes in place **before you set up your system** for timely and appropriate referral of people who have experienced sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment.

- Consult with community members and service users about what systems exist, what they are willing to use, and who they trust for referrals of sensitive issues.
- Identify and document expert GBV service providers, existing local and national child protection mechanisms and related support services.
- Make a clear agreement about processes and procedures with any agency to which you plan to refer. Identify named individuals and know how to contact them.
- Have a back-up in case they are not available.
- Ensure you have a safe way of transferring information to referral agencies, and that their systems for ensuring confidentiality and data protection are consistent with yours.
- Investigate whether there are mandatory reporting systems for forms of violence or abuse that might be reported to you. Consider how you will manage this while taking a victim-centred approach. Discuss your position with relevant authorities before any complaints are received, and ensure staff, volunteers and potential complainants know what this is.
- You may receive sensitive complaints relating to other organisations, government structures, community or family. Each of these will require a specific approach. Think about how you will follow them up.
- Consider how HOA organisation can continue to follow up with the complainant over the longer-term, particularly if the person is on the move.

FIGURE 9:

USING INFORMATION MANAGEMENT TO ANALYSE DATA

INTERPRETING INFORMATION

Principles for management include collecting only the information you need, maintaining confidentiality and ensuring that data is protected, for example.

HOA should use the same systems for channelling data as they use elsewhere. This includes having feedback and complaints managed by staff outside of the programme hierarchy. Importantly, sensitive complaints should always be handled separately by safeguarding focal points most often entirely outside of the project team. This can also be outsourced to external agencies, if resourcing permits.

Principles of and systems for information management also remain the same, though they arguably take on even more importance in some contexts. However, it is important to remember that setting up these systems is only a first step. These should not be treated as static repositories for data, but as dynamic tools which, when constantly used to inform programming, can transform its responsiveness.

As in differing contexts, it is also important to interrogate the feedback that is received. It is easy to make assumptions about cause and effect that can lead to tweaking some-thing that was working well, while neglecting something else that needed attention. Disrespectful or rude behaviour of staff toward beneficiaries/stakeholders, for example, may be indicative of problems with organisational culture, but it could also mean that they are overworked and not getting enough support.

V. CLOSING THE LOOP:

TOP TIPS

- As much thought should be given to how you communicate when closing the feedback loop as when you collected the input in the first place.
- It is important not just to adapt, but to be seen to be adapting. This helps build trust.
- Close the loop on the loop – don't just tell people what you have done – get their feedback on whether they feel you answered their concern. Ensure your responsive action does not inadvertently create an additional risk or harm.
- Capture the changes you have made in response to informal feedback, and include those in feedback to service users and other stakeholders.
- Give an update as quickly as possible about how you have addressed feedback or a complaint both to the individual that made it and to the people using services more generally. Even if the individual has moved on, it sends a message of respect, responsibility, and transparency.
- It may take longer to address some kinds of complaints, particularly those that are complex or sensitive, but it is important to immediately acknowledge its receipt and its seriousness, and to provide information about how it is being followed up.

The feedback loop may be considered closed when the input has been processed, action has been taken, and the person or community has had a response, as illustrated in figure 2. While this kind of action-reaction seems self-evident, there is often a gap between soliciting and receiving information and taking the necessary steps to turn this into programme changes or learning.

In static contexts, the person who gave the feedback is likely to be present to see its outcome. When people are on the move, however, it is far less likely that they will be around when the loop is closed. Yet we know people are more likely to trust an organisation and its mechanisms and are more likely to contribute when they see feedback taken on board. The question is how to make this happen in programmes for people on the move?

KEEP THE FEEDBACK LOOP SHORT.

Some responses or adaptations can take place very quickly, even immediately.

WHERE APPROPRIATE, FOLLOW UP INDIVIDUALLY. This can be particularly difficult when people are on the move and may hesitate to leave contact information. Ask at the point of receiving feedback if they are happy to be contacted about it, and how they would like that too.