



Alsawaid Alkhadara Organization (AAO) Community feedback and complaints Mechanisms

A **feedback mechanism** allows recipients to express their concerns or displeasure with the commodity distribution process (for example, the distance to the FDP or rudeness of distribution staff) or the ration quality or size. Common feedback mechanisms are **suggestion boxes** or **help desks** located at the distribution site.

A **complaint mechanism** allows recipients to **confidentially report corruption or abuse of power** (especially regarding sexual exploitation), and to seek redress. A complaint mechanism may be formal or informal, written or verbal, signed or anonymous, but it must always be culturally and politically appropriate. Examples of complaint mechanisms include a complaint committee, locked box, telephone hotline, or direct complaints to project staff members trained to act as “focal points,” receiving complaints sensitively and without judgment, and ensuring the complainant’s safety. Do not require recipients to complain via local leaders or authorities, who may themselves be the source of corruption.

A successful and effective beneficiary feedback and complaint system will only be established when it is developed in participatory manner and includes all relevant stakeholders.

KEY MECHANISMS PRACTICED BY AAO MEMBER AGENCIES a successful and effective beneficiary feedback and complaint system will only be established when it is developed in participatory manner and includes all relevant stakeholders.

1. Beneficiary help desk
 2. Letter boxes
 3. Emails and websites
 4. SMS
 5. Focus group discussions
 6. Individual interviews during the field visits
 7. Open meetings with communities or partner agencies
 8. Individual home visits, especially to female beneficiaries
 9. Project staff phone numbers
 10. Inter-agency coordination meetings
 11. Surveys/questionnaires
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AAO-Community Feedback and Complaint Mechanisms GUIDELINES

Why have a Beneficiary Feedback and Complaint (BFC) Mechanism?

It is very important to be accountable to the beneficiaries regarding the assistance an agency provides.

- Helps to resolve issues and concerns raised by beneficiaries
- Strengthens relationships with communities
- Identifies gaps and areas for improvement
- Provides an opportunity to improve programming
- Improves aid agencies reputation

Beneficiary feedback and complaints mechanisms are all the more important in operational environments such as Afghanistan, where insecurity can impact access to beneficiaries for assessment, design, implementation and monitoring, and affects beneficiary access to aid agency personnel.

Beneficiary Feedback and Complaint mechanisms can be formal or informal. Some of the AAO member agencies which do not have formal systemized mechanisms remain open to receive feedback and complaints through any possible channel including village Development Committees (VDCs), Community Education Committees (CECs), Parents Teacher Associations (PTAs), Water Committees, volunteer dedicated persons etc.

The decision of whether to use a formal or informal mechanism, or which combination of mechanisms, should take into consideration gender and protection issues including for example cultural appropriateness of face-to-face communications between people of different gender groups, public mobility and participation, access to mobile phones for different gender and age groups, and what risks beneficiaries may face if it is found that they provided feedback or made a complaint.

HOW TO ESTABLISH AN EFFECTIVE BFC MECHANISM —

Policies: Having a strong policy foundation is important in all areas of humanitarian action, and BFC mechanisms are no exception. A well designed policy on handling complaints and feedback should clearly state the organization's commitment to beneficiary feedback, define terms and establish appropriate processes and procedures. The policy should be disseminated to all staff.

Resources: Agencies should ensure that all organizational staff members are aware of the BFC mechanism and how it works. A staff member should be assigned as 'focal point' to deal with complaints and feedback. That staff member must be trained in communications skills in receiving complaints, to gather all necessary information in a sensitive and appropriate manner. —

Recording and Tracking: All complaints should be recorded (a simple spreadsheet or database is sufficient), analyzed and investigated. Where possible information should be triangulated (confirmed by three separate sources). Care should be taken to avoid placing complainants at risk during the investigation phase. Complaints should be tracked and follow until resolved or finalized.

AAO-Community Feedback and Complaint Mechanisms GUIDELINES

➤ Processing a Complaint:

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- ☐ Whenever a complaint received, the AAO agencies acknowledge the complaint but collect all the required information of the matter/issue and the complainant
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- ☐ Assess and analyze the complaints received and investigate if required
 - ☐ Report to the relevant program head
 - ☐ Either program head or senior management discuss, agree upon an appropriate action and decision
 - ☐ Respond to complaints
 - ☐ Follow the matter if it has been solved or still existing
 - ☐ Case closed

Commit to Confidentiality

All communications and complaints from the community are confidential with disclosure of the information on a strict need-to-know basis. Secure complaints/suggestion boxes without a specific designation, should be used for various complaints

Written complaints should be kept in locked filing cabinets in a safe location. The aim is to respect and protect the complainants, potential witnesses, alleged perpetrators and the offices and agencies involved. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if allegations are going to be pursued to their logical conclusion (e.g. police involvement or legal action), so the need for confidentiality must be balanced against the need for transparency. Any disclosure must be made in consultation and with the permission of the complainant.

Approval Committee :

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Date: 29/10/021

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