

JOINT PROGRAMME EXCELLENCE AND TARGETING HUB



DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING JOINT FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

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INTRODUCTION

Community members should always be able to raise **questions, feedback, suggestions, concerns or complaints** with humanitarian and development actors through a **feedback mechanism** in a **safe and confidential** way.

Effective feedback mechanisms are central to strengthening our accountability to affected people. Establishing feedback mechanisms contributes to **community members feeling more respected and empowered** since their ideas, suggestions, concerns and abilities will be taken into account, while the assistance they receive will be **better adapted to their needs, capacities and context**.


Both **WFP** and **UNHCR** are committed to being accountable to affected people in their operations, including through the establishment of feedback


mechanisms. The two agencies aim to ensure that **all formal and informal communication** from community members, both **positive and negative**, informs protection, assistance and solutions programming, and that **corrective action** is taken based on **feedback and complaints data** that is fed into **programmatic and senior management decision-making** to continually adapt and improve assistance at agency as well as response level.



The primary **purpose** of this document is to guide **WFP and UNHCR country operations** on how to maximise accountability, effectiveness and efficiencies through the design and implementation of joint feedback mechanisms. The guide can also be used to navigate the participation of other UN or NGO partners in any closely coordinated or joint feedback mechanisms.

WHY JOINT FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

Coordinated or joint feedback mechanisms, which can be introduced as an **add-on to existing feedback mechanisms** managed independently by different organisations in a given area or as entirely **new and standalone mechanisms**, have the following advantages:

 **Accountability:** They make it easier for people to share feedback and complaints, improving experiences of communicating with humanitarian and development actors.

 **Effectiveness:** They provide a **comprehensive overview** of feedback and complaints shared by community members, and follow-up required by relevant actors through **centralised data and referral management**.


 Centralised data and referral management facilitates **joint feedback data analysis** and **joint reporting**, including on **key trends**, providing **comprehensive information** to **inform programmatic and strategic decision-making** so assistance is continuously adapted and improved through **more consistent actions**.



Efficiency: They can also lead to **time and cost savings** by reducing complexity and associated coordination needs as well as the duplication of staffing, office rent, equipment, training needs, etc.

FEEDBACK MECHANISM AND CHANNELS



A **feedback mechanism** is the overall system that manages feedback and complaints, including the processes, methods and tools that are in place to ensure that feedback is **received, processed, addressed** and **responded to**.



Feedback channels are the different ways people can provide feedback and complaints, such as by speaking with a staff member or community committee member or by calling a helpline.



OPTIONS FOR JOINT OR COORDINATED FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

Required elements of a feedback mechanism	Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D
	Fully merged joint mechanism	Joint information management	Joint reporting	Closely coordinated
Common entry points for feedback and complaints				
Common feedback and complaint categories				
Joint Client Relationship Management (CRM) database				
Coordinated answers to FAQs (frequently asked questions)				
Coordinated referrals				
Joint coordination				
Joint quality assurance				
Joint reporting				
Joint monitoring of community satisfaction				
Joint awareness raising				

The above table displays **four options** to **join** or **closely coordinate** feedback mechanisms. The table lists **different elements of feedback mechanisms** that are roughly ordered by the flow of information: from the reception of feedback and complaints to reporting. The **four columns on the right** indicate **what elements will have to be joined or coordinated** for each option.

This document discusses key considerations for **fully merging feedback mechanisms** (Option A), while presenting additional options (B-D) that can be **considered in contexts where fully merged joint feedback mechanism are not feasible**.

The four options are not exhaustive, as the different elements of feedback mechanisms can be combined in different ways. For example, Option C could be pursued without coordinated FAQs or joint awareness raising.

Options B, C and D provide a choice for different levels of integration or coordination that are feasible from a technical perspective. Each option achieves certain benefits such as **integrated data management** for Option B, which facilitates the secure and quick referral of feedback and complaints, or common feedback and complaint categories in Option C, that facilitate **joint analysis and reporting** on trends to inform decision-making.

Option D focuses on **coordination**, including of responses to frequently asked questions (FAQs), referrals and awareness raising. The four options can be used as **progressive steps towards integration** (moving from Option D to A).

Details on each of the **four options** are covered in [four separate documents](#). It is recommended to **start by reading Option A** to familiarise yourself with each of the different elements.

KEY ISSUES TO KEEP IN MIND FOR ALL FEEDBACK MECHANISMS



Feedback channels

Community members will have **different communication preferences** due to a range of reasons such as **literacy, trust, culture, disability**, other **access** factors, etc. It is therefore essential to **offer a variety of ways for community members to share their feedback and complaints**, including different face-to-face feedback channels as well as the possibility to submit feedback and complaints in writing (and anonymously). This helps build **trust** with community members and ensure that they feel **comfortable** and **safe** sharing their questions, feedback, suggestions, concerns or complaints.

Feedback channels should be **chosen in consultation with community members**, including women, men, girls, boys, youth, older people, illiterate people, people with disabilities, people with serious medical conditions, ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTIQ+ people, and people living in remote locations, among others.

To decide which feedback channels to use, findings from recent **communication preferences and information needs assessments** should be reviewed or such an assessment should be carried out. It is important to **monitor community members' communication preferences** over time, for example as part of regular post-distribution monitoring, and to adapt the feedback channels based on monitoring findings whenever necessary.



Language, gender and age

Feedback channels should be accessible in the **languages spoken by community members**.

For feedback channels where live interactions with community members take place, there should be a balance between **female and male** as well as **younger and older** representatives who receive and respond to incoming feedback and complaints, which helps build **trust** with community members.



Data protection

Feedback mechanism staff and relevant community representatives must sign a **confidentiality and privacy agreement** that includes provisions on the **protection of personal data** in line with [WFP's](#) and [UNHCR's](#) data protection regulations, and regularly participate in **trainings** on data protection.

Feedback mechanism users must be informed about the **purpose for collecting their personal information**, how it will be used, by whom, and give **consent** to its **collection** and to any **referral of their feedback or complaint to a trusted focal point**.

If feedback mechanism users prefer not to share any personal information, they should be able to submit their feedback and complaints **anonymously**. At any point in time, feedback mechanism users should be allowed to request to have their information removed from the feedback mechanism's database (they have the "**right to be forgotten**") – and must be informed about how to make such a request.

When collecting personal information, the **data minimisation principle** should be applied, meaning that only necessary data is collected for the purpose of the data collection (responding to a feedback or complaint). To ensure **data quality**, the information in the database should be regularly updated.

Before the establishment of any feedback mechanism, a **Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA)** should be carried out to better understand the context and map feedback mechanism data flows and transfers, data access and associated risks.



Data sharing

Based on the results of the PIA, a **Data Sharing Agreement (DSA)** should be established to clarify roles and responsibilities, what data will be shared (non-personal and personal feedback data), data sharing channels, intervals, data protection and

security measures, and who will access and manage this data.

WFP and UNHCR have a [Global Data Sharing Agreement](#). However, this does not cover personal feedback data, so the two agencies must agree on the **sharing of personal feedback data for referrals** at country level in writing.



Database user profiles

The database used to record and process incoming feedback and complaints should allow for the creation of different **database user profiles** to determine **different levels of data access**, data management and database user actions to compartmentalise data according to different database users' roles and responsibilities.

The **visibility of sensitive complaints and referrals should be restricted** to specific database users only. The database should **protect the name of the feedback mechanism user**, the feedback category and the contents of the feedback or referral.

The **referral of sensitive complaints**, including about fraud, corruption, security issues, gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by humanitarian or development workers, should be clarified in detail in the feedback mechanism's standard operating procedures (SOPs).

Referrals of sensitive complaints should be made only to **focal points that have the appropriate knowledge, skills and capacity** to follow up, fully considering protection concerns.



Use of third-party service providers for helplines

Both WFP and UNHCR work with third-party service providers – usually private sector call centres – in their operations to set up and run agency-specific or inter-agency helplines.

Data protection concerns related to third-party service providers can be addressed by the same measures that are taken when ensuring data protection internally within WFP and UNHCR,

including the establishment of **data sharing agreements**, the signing of **confidentiality and**



THIRD-PARTY SERVICE PROVIDER HELPLINES - EXAMPLES

UNHCR & WFP:

- [Awaaz Afghanistan](#) (UNOPS)
- [Iraq Information Centre](#) (UNOPS)

WFP:

- [Cameroon's green line](#) (LMT Group)
- [DRC's green line](#) (Congo Call Center)
- [Mozambique's green line](#) (Howard Johnson Call Centre Agents)

UNHCR:

- [Kenya's protection helpline](#) (Techno Brain)
- [Lebanon's call centre](#) (TeleSupport International)
- [Uganda's Inter-agency Feedback, Referral and Resolution Mechanism](#) (Techno Brain)

privacy agreements by all feedback mechanism staff, **regular trainings** on data protection and protection more generally for all feedback mechanism staff, and by choosing a **database solution** that allows for the creation of different database user profiles to determine data access, data management levels and database user actions.

[Cost comparisons](#) from the private sector indicate that **using a third-party service provider instead of setting up an in-house call centre** can lead to **significant cost savings** in areas such as human

resources and recruitment services, benefits, call centre workspace, equipment, IT support, etc.



Standard operating procedures

SOPs that guide the collaboration between WFP, UNHCR and other partners must be developed, regardless of which option is chosen. WFP and UNHCR technical, legal and data protection units as well as senior management must approve the SOPs (see [joint feedback mechanism SOP template](#)).



Coordination

While coordination is only explicitly covered under Option A, all four options require **coordination to ensure smooth communication and collaboration** between stakeholders.

It is recommended to create a task force or working group with **protection, AAP, monitoring and other technical focal points** as well as **senior management** to ensure buy-in and strategic oversight.



Quality assurance

Feedback mechanism staff and relevant community representatives involved in managing feedback and complaints should sign a **Code of Conduct** and a **confidentiality and privacy agreement**.

Protection experts should be involved in preparing and conducting **regular trainings** for staff on:



Code of Conduct and **protection**



Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) by humanitarian or development workers



Prevention of harassment and abuse of authority



Information security awareness



The **local context and culture(s)**



Responses to **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**



How to process and refer incoming feedback and complaints, including sensitive complaints

The **performance** of feedback mechanism staff and relevant community representatives should be **reviewed continuously** based on available statistics (e.g. first contact resolution rate*, respect for established response timeframes, number of open referrals, etc.) as well as observation by supervisors, spot checks and by contacting a small sample of previous feedback mechanism users and assessing their satisfaction with the response they received and the treatment by the representative who attended them (so-called post-case surveys).



Funding

If the two agencies decide to **establish a joint feedback mechanism** as an **add-on to existing feedback mechanisms**, they will have to clarify the **available budget**, including for the following operational and technical aspects:



Expected staffing



Premises, equipment and software



Training



Oversight, monitoring and reporting



Piloting

It is recommended to start with a **pilot phase** regardless of the option chosen, to document **lessons learnt** and then **make adjustments together**. This can be done, for example, by initially focusing on one or a limited number of feedback channels or starting in a limited geographical area. A joint task force can oversee and guide the pilot.

* The **first contact resolution rate** is the percentage of incoming feedback and complaints that are addressed on the spot, without the need for a referral. If a mechanism has been set up with the aim of dealing with sensitive complaints, a high first contact resolution rate should not be an objective. However, for more general feedback mechanisms, a high first contact resolution rate is desirable as following up on referrals takes time and resources. What's most important is to ensure that all questions, feedback and complaints are treated with the attention they deserve and that appropriate responses are provided systematically.



FURTHER RESOURCES

[IASC Best Practice Guide on Inter-Agency Community-Based Complaints Mechanisms \(2016\)](#)

[IASC Global Standard Operating Procedures on Inter-Agency Cooperation in Community-Based Complaint Mechanisms \(2016\)](#)

[UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity \(2018\)](#)

[UNHCR Policy on the Protection of Personal Data \(2015\)](#)

[UNHCR Operational Guidance on Accountability to Affected People \(2020\)](#)

[UNHCR Compact Guidance for Senior Managers: Accountability to Affected People \(2020\)](#)

[UNHCR & WFP Addendum on Data Sharing to the January 2011 Memorandum of Understanding \(2018\)](#)

[WFP Protection and Accountability Policy \(2020\)](#)

[WFP Guide to Personal Data Protection and Privacy \(2016\)](#)

[WFP Protection Guidance Manual \(2016\)](#)

[WFP Minimum Standards for Implementing a CFM \(2017\)](#)

SUMMARY TABLE: JOINT OR COORDINATED FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

Elements	Key considerations	Options			
		A	B	C	D
Common entry points for feedback and complaints	<p>WFP and UNHCR will have to decide which feedback channels to manage jointly to create a joint FM, which also entails that they will jointly take responsibility for the effectiveness of the joint FM and its different channels. Possible channels include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Help desks ▪ Community committees ▪ Community outreach volunteers ▪ Community-based organisations ▪ Helpline number ▪ SMS number ▪ WhatsApp, Facebook or similar ▪ Suggestion boxes 				
Common feedback and complaint categories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To be able to jointly analyse and report on feedback and complaints at response level, agreement is needed on the feedback and complaint categories that will be used by both agencies so that feedback data will be compatible. ▪ For feedback and complaints that are received electronically, both agencies will have to use the same data fields for the categorisation of incoming feedback and complaints as well as for basic personal information (age, gender, location, etc.). ▪ Where feedback and complaints are communicated face to face, tablets or phones should be used as much as possible to record feedback and complaints digitally (with both agencies using the same data fields). Where tablets or phones are not available, a joint feedback and complaints form should be developed and utilised so that both agencies record incoming feedback and complaints in a consistent way (e.g. a common form for help desks, ideally for all incoming feedback and complaints, but at a minimum for referrals). ▪ Where no joint database is in place, anonymised feedback data collected from both agencies can be consolidated in a simple spreadsheet so that it can be used for joint analysis and reporting. (Where a joint database exists – see more on this just below –, it won't be necessary to create an additional spreadsheet to consolidate feedback data.) 				
Joint Client Relationship Management (CRM) database	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Where a joint Client Relationship Management (CRM) database ("joint database" in short) is in place, incoming feedback and complaints can be recorded and processed centrally. ▪ Jointly using the same database facilitates the central management of data, which strengthens the systematic follow-up on referrals, joint feedback data analysis, joint reporting, and the feeding of more comprehensive information into programmatic and senior management decision-making processes. ▪ The three main joint database options are: 1) WFP's SugarCRM; 2) UNHCR's proGres; 3) a third-party software solution. ▪ A key issue to consider is that proGres v4 has limitations when being used for FMs, especially in terms of the visibility of referrals: In proGres v4 visibility of sensitive referrals cannot be restricted to specific individuals, which can lead to protection risks. While the contents of a referral can be protected, the name of the complainant and the complaint category will remain visible for all proGres users who have access to the referral system. For this reason, some UNHCR Country Offices have opted to use a third-party software solution for their feedback mechanism and to manage referrals. ▪ In case a database solution other than proGres is chosen, that database should ideally be linked through an API to proGres so that FM staff can have limited access to certain proGres data fields (e.g. eligibility status). Moreover, it should be ensured that new FM data is systematically recorded in both proGres and SugarCRM either through an API or regular manual data transfers, independent of the database solution that is chosen. 				

Coordinated frequently asked questions (FAQs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In order to achieve a high first contact resolution rate, both agencies and any other relevant partners will have to continuously keep each other's FAQs up to date by regularly reviewing them and sharing updated information. ▪ Coordinating answers to frequently asked questions helps reduce the need to refer feedback and complaints to internal or external focal points who will then have to invest time to follow up on these referrals. 				
Coordinated referrals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feedback and complaints that are linked to a partner agency will have to be referred and followed up on systematically. ▪ Agreement will be needed on the referral processes, focal points, response timeframes, what information will be shared for what kind of referral, and how the feedback loop will be closed to ensure that responses are provided systematically. ▪ Particular attention will have to be paid to how sensitive complaints (including fraud, corruption, security issues, GBV and SEA) will be referred and also to linking agencies' referral system(s) to any cooperating/implementing partner feedback mechanisms, financial service provider (FSP) customer service or other inter-agency feedback mechanisms as relevant. ▪ If WFP and UNHCR are using separate databases for feedback data, referrals should be shared directly with the other agency's database by linking the two databases through an API. This requires mapping the data fields that each agency is using to understand how key data fields can be linked. 				
Joint feedback mechanism coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When setting up a joint FM, it is recommended to create a Joint FM Steering Committee or Task Force to ensure senior management buy-in and joint strategic oversight (or to merge any existing FM steering committees or task forces). ▪ A dedicated joint FM coordinator should be recruited to ensure that follow-up on any open referrals is done in a systematic and coordinated fashion. A joint FM coordinator would also be in a position to continuously engage all stakeholders (including WFP and UNHCR senior management, protection/AAP focal points, other technical focal points, etc.), which strengthens buy-in and follow-up on referrals. 				
Joint quality assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anyone involved in managing feedback and complaints should sign a Code of Conduct (CoC) and a confidentiality agreement, and be trained regularly on the CoC, protection, PSEA, the FAQs, and on how to manage feedback and complaints, including sensitive complaints. UNHCR and WFP protection experts should be involved in preparing and conducting the trainings. ▪ The performance of FM staff and relevant community representatives should be reviewed continuously based on joint database statistics as well as observation by supervisors, spot checks and post-case surveys. 				
Joint reporting (and adapting and improving assistance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Where common feedback and complaint categories are in place but no joint database is used, anonymised feedback data can be collected from both agencies and consolidated in a spreadsheet for joint analysis and reporting to jointly feed into programmatic and senior management decision-making to adapt and improve assistance. ▪ A joint dashboard and joint reporting templates (for different audiences) should be developed to report on the number and types of feedback and complaints, the types of FM users, the number of resolved/open referrals, any trends etc. for different geographical areas and sectors. Reports should be produced with data at both response and agency level. 				
Joint monitoring of community satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Where FMs are managed jointly, joint post-distribution monitoring, other perception surveys or qualitative data collection, e.g. through focus group discussions and/or key informant interviews, should be carried out at least twice a year to monitor community satisfaction with the joint feedback mechanism and its different channels. ▪ Any adjustments to the joint FM based on these consultations should be communicated back to community members. 				
Joint awareness raising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Raising awareness of FMs' purpose and functioning, how to access the different channels, people's rights (including data rights), the expected behaviour of staff, etc. should be done jointly for the same community members. ▪ This includes the development of a joint community engagement strategy which, among other things, details the key messages and communication channels to be used to reach all key stakeholders, including the most vulnerable. ▪ Monitoring data, e.g. from post-distribution monitoring, should be used to better understand where there are information gaps among community members to adapt and improve existing communication channels and key messages. 				