**IASC Standards for Collective Feedback Mechanisms:** Principles and Standards for Collective Management of Community Feedback

# Background

The IASC Standards for Collective Feedback Mechanisms comprises the elements listed below, which are all available on the IASC portal together with supporting resources and examples:

* The IASC Standards for Collective Feedback Mechanisms: An Introduction
* Principles and Standards for Collective Management of Community Feedback
* The Annexes:
  1. The *Template Logbook* for community feedback
  2. The example analytical framework
  3. The template action tracker

These standards are founded on years of consultations with a range of actors on the common challenges experienced in how community feedback is managed (gathered, processed, analyzed, and used) to inform response programming. A comparison and review of these with existing resources – including strategic documents, guidance documents, standard operating procedures (SOPs), feedback data, reports, tools, and templates – allowed us to define the key concepts in community feedback and the processes supporting a collective feedback mechanism at different levels. The workstream of the IASC Task Force 2 on AAP dedicated to this area of work (co-led by UNHCR, IFRC, UNICEF and WFP) developed and socialized the standards further, working with multiple countries across five regions to ensure its relevance to both leadership and practitioners working in the community feedback space. The standards are well-aligned with other inter-agency frameworks and standards such as:

* The [Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability](https://aap-inclusion-psea.alnap.org/core-humanitarian-standard-on-quality-and-accountability)
* The [IASC Commitments on Accountability to Affected People and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](https://aap-inclusion-psea.alnap.org/help-library/commitments-on-accountability-to-affected-people-and-protection-from-sexual)
* The [IASC Definition & Principles of a Victim/Survivor Centred Approach](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2023-06/IASC%20Definition%20%26%20Principles%20of%20a%20Victim_Survivor%20Centered%20Approach.pdf)
* The [IASC Inter-Agency Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Referral Procedures (IA SEA RP)](https://aap-inclusion-psea.alnap.org/help-library/iasc-inter-agency-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-referral-procedures-ia-sea-rp)
* The [IASC Collective Accountability to Affected People (AAP) Framework](https://aap-inclusion-psea.alnap.org/help-library/iasc-collective-aap-framework) and associated Operational Guidance
* The [IASC Operational Guidance on Data Responsibility in Humanitarian Action](https://aap-inclusion-psea.alnap.org/help-library/iasc-operational-guidance-on-data-responsibility-in-humanitarian-action)
* The IASC Guidance on Gender and Inclusion[[1]](#footnote-2)

The package will continue to evolve based on feedback and findings from colleagues in the field. It will be reviewed every two years to ensure it remains relevant and appropriate.

# Description of contents

The IASC Standards for Collective Feedback Mechanisms support collective approaches to community feedback management by providing actors a means to aligning individual, joint, and inter-agency approaches to documenting, sharing, analyzing, and acting on feedback data and findings to strengthen AAP in a response. The standards encourage actors to employ protection principles when establishing and implementing feedback mechanisms that promote meaningful participation of crisis-affected people, ensure safety and access to all regardless of age, gender and diverse characteristics, while respecting the principles of do no harm, non-discrimination, and data privacy.

**The principles**

These are the overarching statements that guide people responsible for mainstreaming accountability standards in activities and operations. Each principle follows a stage of the feedback cycle and is part of a full ecosystem of response adaptation. Commitment to the operational guiding principles ensures a common intention is set among different actors in the collective. It involves establishing a common terminology and approach around community feedback and its management. The glossary of terms at the end of this document can be adapted as a first step in setting the foundations for collective work in this area.

### **The standards**

These are the minimum actions under the five principles and are for the attention of practitioners setting up and managing mechanisms for feedback, both at agency level and in inter-agency settings. Individual agencies should verify that their own standards meet those set out in the package. Between agencies and at the collective level, the standards can help establish a baseline understanding between various response actors on what different avenues for feedback exist, what purpose they serve in achieving common objectives and how this links to response planning. They also support a coordinated approach to communicating around the feedback process, managing, and referring feedback between each other, and making decisions based on feedback findings. The response-level structures for coordination and decision-making determine how these elements are discussed and operationalized to suit context-specific needs.

### **The annexes**

1. **The *Template Logbook* for community feedback:** This template includes the minimum information and standard classification that must be used to document community feedback across various channels and can be adapted to suit different forms of feedback data collection. The *Template Logbook* provides:
   * Names and descriptions for the minimum data points required to support safe and efficient sharing of community feedback for referral and response, and to support common thematic analysis of feedback in addition to monitoring of a feedback mechanism’s performance with respect to honoring established protocols for individual loop closure.
   * Standard categories for classifying community feedback, along with recommendations for further sub-categorization of these main categories, to support analysis and discussion for potential inter-operability of different digital solutions supporting feedback management, where this is desired and appropriate.
2. **The example analytical framework:** This is an example of how different sources of information can be considered together with available community feedback data to support constructive use of formal and informal (or structured and unstructured) information in building a complete picture of needs for the response. This can feed into the formulation of recommendations and actions to adjust programs, re-prioritize, or re-allocate resources as needed.
3. **The template action tracker:** This template should be used to record suggested actions and adaptations and feed them into key decision-making and review processes in the response. This tool can serve a variety of purposes at different levels, including for review and adjustment of the collective mechanism itself. It enables a clear line of sight between findings obtained through community feedback, operational feedback from different kind of response actors and community-facing teams, and the operational and programmatic decisions that are made in response to them.

| **Operational Guiding Principle # 1**  **We define and agree on the objectives, functional roles, and key responsibilities for the** [**community feedback mechanism (CFM)**](#CFM) **at the collective level. We establish common performance indicators to support oversight, monitoring, and adaptation of the processes and tools that link the different systems for gathering, sharing, and actioning** [**community feedback**](#Community_feedback) **together.**  *Terms defined in the glossary are underlined in blue and linked below.* | |
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| **We set collective intentions and establish foundations.** | **Notes** |
| * 1. Define how a collective strategy for the meaningful engagement of affected communities is supported by bringing together different planned and existing systems for feedback (including agency, joint- and/or inter-agency where they exist), ensuring there are clear links to response plan outcomes and supporting activities. | *Defining how different systems for feedback can contribute to a collective strategy provides a strong foundation for a collective mechanism that supports common objectives for the response.* |
| * 1. Define specific measurable objectives and associated performance indicators for the CFM and include them in monitoring frameworks and strategic plans. The indicators should allow for the monitoring of the core functions of the CFM: * Performance of different [feedback channels](#Feedback_channel) and tools to facilitate an inclusive two-way information exchange with the communities. * Performance of the processes for documenting, referring, and responding to feedback to [close the loop](#Closing_fb_loop) with individuals and communities. * Performance of the supply of information to the decision-making processes intended to support coordination and evidence-driven adjustment to programs. | *Within any body performing this oversight, different stakeholders (including affected people, technical sectors and implementing partners, and local actors in the response community where possible) are engaged and represented to ensure feedback data feeds into decision-making processes and decisions are communicated back to communities.* |
| * 1. Define specific [protocols](#Protocol) that establish: * The purposes for which community feedback is gathered and processed, including for communicating with communities, feedback management and accountability, and trend monitoring, analysis, and advocacy. * The pathways and procedures for performing and coordinating [feedback management](#Feedback_management), which outline the different standard actions to be taken by all the different feedback systems depending on the type of feedback encountered. These will be multiple and should be defined by the appropriate authority, e.g. the pathways and procedures for feedback relating to food assistance should be defined by the actors coordinating these activities at the level of response. * The means and frequency of reporting on community feedback findings and action taken in response. This includes how the different systems of feedback link together to regularly report on what information is coming in, what may be missing, and what can be done to improve existing processes. * The means and frequency for monitoring adherence to the protocols and periodic measurement of performance outlined above. | *These protocols should be supported by* [*data sharing agreements*](#DSA)*,* [*information sharing protocols*](#ISP) *or equivalent instruments (such as a* [*memorandum of understanding*](#MoU)*) for the sharing of feedback data and information between different units and organizations to ensure they adhere to international standards, national laws (where applicable), and internal policies for data protection and privacy.* |
| **We review and prepare our feedback mechanism.** | |
| * 1. Ensure the minimum core functional roles are established and resourced. Consider which roles should be responsible for: * Gathering community feedback and performing [loop closure](#Closing_fb_loop) activities as needed, such as community-facing staff, volunteers and monitors, hotline operators, feedback desk agents, focus group moderators, and other relevant facilitators. * Feedback management, including for receiving, verifying, actioning, and reporting on the status of [referrals](#Feedback_referral) and loop closure. * Collating and preparing community feedback data for further processing. * Processing and analyzing the data to meet intended uses. * Sharing, tracking, and reporting on findings and decisions made in response to them. * Overseeing CFM operations, performing [quality control](#QA_QC), and ensuring regular and ad-hoc adjustments are made to procedural documents, tools, and or systems supporting core functions and roles. * Coordinating any of the above activities with the different stakeholders interacting with the CFM. This includes working with the necessary stakeholders in defiing the parameters for standard protocols, establishing, and reviewing feedback management procedures, providing inputs for [service mapping](#Service_mapping) and [referral systems](#Referral_system), and specifying the information needs and outputs for decision-making and adjustment. | *These roles may have dedicated staff, or the corresponding responsibilities may be distributed among different staff members, depending on the organization and the resourcing model.*  *Irrespective of how they are allocated, the roles outlined here covering these responsibilities are the minimum required to support CFM functioning (at any level).* |
| * 1. Ensure basic capacity requirements for community-facing staff (including those with responsibilities listed in 1.4) are met by: * Ensuring community-facing staff and those likely to encounter community feedback understand the community context, and ensuring that team composition adequately represents the target community in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, and language abilities. * Providing onboarding training or orientation to ensure familiarity with:  (a) program specificities, such as who is involved in assistance delivery and how response activities are carried out (b) the principles and means of operationalizing accountability to affected populations, and the role of CFMs in achieving that (c) the different modalities for interaction and collection of feedback, and the techniques required for these (such as active listening, handling [sensitive feedback](#Criticality_sensitivity), dissatisfied or distressed feedback providers) (d) the feedback management process, including procedures for [data collection](#Data_collection), [referral](#Feedback_referral) and [loop closure](#Closing_fb_loop). * Providing additional thematic trainings, refreshers, and updates of relevance to the feedback process and/or supporting tools (including for [standard messaging](#Standard_messaging), referral, or specific feedback case management) as needed and these needs discussed during regular meetings. | *Additional training should be sought on the following topics for specialized knowledge beyond feedback management and response procedures:*   * *Principles of protection, including for child protection and safeguarding, gender-based violence, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, and other key thematic areas.* * *Psychological first aid.* * *Language training.* * *Awareness raising and strategies for the prevention of work-related stress and trauma (such as vicarious trauma).* |
| * 1. Ensure that the protocols established in 1.3 are translated into responsibilities within tailored [standard operating procedures (SOPs)](#SOPs) for each of the core functional roles. This allows for the monitoring and adaptation of the feedback mechanism and ensures that: * [Feedback channels](#Feedback_channel) are functional and equipped for two-way communication, and there is periodic review of the processes and tools for data collection, [storage](#Data_storage), [transfer](#Data_transfer), and overall management, including for user-controlled visibility and access to feedback data. * Protocols for feedback management and loop closure are adhered to, and are reinforced by SOPs for responding to feedback, handling, and referring [feedback tickets](#Feedback_ticket) of a specific nature (including highly sensitive ones), and that standard timelines and responsibilities for individual loop closure are upheld. * Appropriate and timely reporting of feedback data and findings satisfy the requirements of decision-makers, and the performance of the mechanism is adequately measured at different levels. | *Example (PSEA): Feedback collectors are required as aid workers to report any known or suspected allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in line with the victim/survivor-centered approach and be aware of their organizational policy. For detailed guidance on how to handle SEA complaints, refer to* [*the Inter-Agency SEA Referral Procedures*](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/IASC%20Guidance%20Note%20on%20Inter-Agency%20Sexual%20Exploitation%20and%20Abuse%20Referal%20Procedures.pdf)*.* |

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| **Operational Guiding Principle # 2**  **We ensure communities are aware of and can access** [**channels**](#Feedback_channel) **available to ask questions and provide feedback and understand their rights in the feedback process. When feedback is provided, we systematically and safely gather it through all channels for centralized management and handle it in accordance with relevant guidelines for** [**data responsibility**](#Data_responsibility)**.** *Terms defined in the glossary are underlined and linked below.* | |
| **We confirm communities know how to provide feedback.** | **Notes** |
| * 1. Ensure communities are informed of and understand their rights and entitlements to provide and receive a response to feedback, including: * The available communication channels for doing so, and the general feedback process for different kinds of issues that groups and individuals may wish to raise. * What to expect in terms of a response (and the timelines for this) when they provide feedback, and that response may be challenging in certain circumstances or not feasible (for example, if feedback providers wish to remain anonymous or cannot be contacted). * The process for following up on feedback previously provided, updating, or withdrawing feedback, and expressing dissatisfaction with the feedback process if applicable.   Alternative means of receiving updates on actions taken to address broader issues raised by the community, through dedicated channels (for example, radio, messaging, or community meetings and postings), should be clearly communicated and made accessible to different community groups. | *Sensitization activities and communication campaigns need to adequately cover community knowledge in these areas, with regular monitoring to identify further needs.*  *No matter the channel or means of providing feedback, communities need to be notified that their feedback will be recorded if this is being done.* |
| * 1. Ensure that feedback providers have been informed of and understand their rights as data subjects before recording consent and finalizing any [feedback ticket:](#Feedback_ticket) * Why their information may need to be [recorded](#Feedback_record) or shared to address their feedback, with whom it may be shared, and for how long it may be retained. * What the potential risks of doing so (and not doing so) entail for the feedback process and for getting a response. * What their options are for this, including their right to withdraw from the feedback process if desired.   In case [consent](#Informed_consent) cannot be obtained at all, actors should weigh the “do-no-harm” principle against the protection mandate of their organization to decide if a feedback comment will be documented and processed. |
| **We systematically and safely gather** [**community feedback**](#Community_feedback)**.** | |
| * 1. Ensure the different communication channels, systems, and technology used to gather, record and store feedback data are designed to: * Reflect and adapt to the communication needs and preferences expressed by communities. * Appropriately and securely handle all forms of potential feedback, including [sensitive and/or critical feedback](#Criticality_sensitivity). * Effectively handle requests from feedback providers who wish to know what feedback data has been recorded and why, to update their feedback data, or to discuss options for having their data removed from feedback databases (and potentially other repositories for data if appropriate and feasible). |  |
| * 1. Ensure feedback data gathered across different feedback channels and systems can be collated and analyzed by requiring all organizations collecting feedback to systematically document information according to the [standard template logbook](#Template_logbook) on: * Where feedback data is coming from (the communication channel and administrative area). * What information is gathered at the time feedback is received (details and nature of the feedback, to the level that is relevant and appropriate). * What actions are taken to address the feedback, immediately upon receipt and later as follow up for the [closure of open and referred tickets](#Feedback_ticket_closure) (if applicable). | *Detailed descriptions for required, recommended, and optional data fields, as well as the considerations for their documentation can be found in the standard* Template Logbook*. The logbook includes a standard feedback taxonomy that can be used as a* [*coding frame*](#Coding_frame)*.* |

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| **Operational Guiding Principle # 3**  **We manage feedback according to its** [**sensitivity and criticality**](#Criticality_sensitivity)**. Where appropriate, we safely** [**refer**](#Feedback_referral) **feedback to those in a position to responsibly handle,** [**escalate**](#Escalation) **and address them in an appropriate and timely manner to support action and individual** [**loop closure**](#Closing_fb_loop)**.** *Terms defined in the glossary are underlined and linked below.* | |
| **We prioritize the safety and protection of feedback providers.** | **Notes** |
| * 1. Ensure that all [feedback channels](#Feedback_channel) are equipped to flag feedback as sensitive, urgent, or requiring immediate action and trigger the appropriate action by the correct authority in line with established protocols for [feedback management](#Feedback_management). | *Apply* [*privacy-by-design*](#Privacy_by_design) *approaches that support* [*data minimization*](#Minimisation) *throughout the data management cycle, and ensure sensitive data will be stored, transferred, or exchanged in a manner that minimizes risk of exposure.* |
| * 1. Ensure that only people with the required access authorization can view [recorded data](#Feedback_record) and information that is flagged as sensitive or potentially harmful, in line with the [IASC Operational Guidance on Data Responsibility in Humanitarian Action](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/operational-response/iasc-operational-guidance-data-responsibility-humanitarian-action), as well as the standards contained in the relevant information sharing instruments and established SOPs. |
| **We ensure timely action and individual loop closure.** | |
| * 1. Ensure feedback is responded to as quickly as possible and in line with the timelines we share with communities and individual feedback providers. This includes for [feedback tickets](#Feedback_ticket) that have been referred through the established [referral system](#Referral_system). If feedback is received that has no pre-defined process, define and update the standard protocol documents, established SOPs, and ensure these changes are communicated with community-facing staff, field teams and other personnel supporting the [community feedback mechanism](#CFM). | *Appropriate and timely response to feedback may not always require feedback to be recorded. The requirements for recording should become clear by thinking about the conditions for actioning different types of feedback and what this means for different kinds of feedback channels.*  *For example, community-facing staff and teams may be able to answer questions about humanitarian activities on-the-spot. It may be impractical to record feedback unless it requires a specific action; it may be more appropriate to share a daily summary for this type of feedback. Also, if a critical piece of feedback is encountered in the field, recording may be skipped altogether in favor of acting immediately. This may mean more effort might be needed to ensure feedbackis not forgotten or overlooked.*  *Conversely, hotlines receiving any kind of feedback will likely record all feedback and assign tickets that are either closed immediately or left open for referral or other action, and as a result be easier to monitor and control.* |
| * 1. Ensure a unique ID is systematically assigned for the tracking of recorded feedback tickets. Record the details of the feedback to support [referral](#Feedback_referral) and loop closure in accordance with: * The pre-defined protocols for feedback management. * The principles of [information security](#Information_security) and [personal data protection](#Personal_data_protection), honoring the approach to minimize [identifiable information](#Personal_data) and respect the privacy of feedback providers. * The preferences of the feedback provider where this information is provided. |
| * 1. Ensure feedback and the tools used to manage it are managed centrally so that: * [Service mapping](#Service_mapping) and [referral pathways](#Referral_pathway) are easily maintained and can be disseminated through the different systems for feedback when updated. * Feedback data can be tracked, meaning the different places it may be [stored](#Data_storage) or be [transferred](#Data_transfer) are known.   Where centralized management is not possible, regularly collate feedback, complete with individual status at a specific date, to meet needs for follow-up on open feedback tickets in addition to regular reporting and performance oversight. Similarly, feedback management tools should be systematically updated and shared as needed to ensure consistency across channels and systems. |
| * 1. Ensure [quality control](#QA_QC) activities are implemented to monitor how procedures have been followed for the documentation, [categorization](#Categorisation), prioritization, and [follow-up/closure of feedback](#Feedback_ticket_closure). This supports the identification of sensitization and training needs for different stakeholders involved in feedback management. |

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| **Operational Guiding Principle # 4**  **We collate, thematically explore, and draw findings from feedback data in a way that responsibly and effectively meets the information needs of different stakeholders to feed into the formulation of recommendations and actions for decision-makers at various organizational levels.** *Terms defined in the glossary are underlined and linked below.* | |
| **We collate and prepare feedback data responsibly.** | **Notes** |
| * 1. Ensure individual datasets are [coded](#Coding) before [aggregating](#Data_aggregation) and sharing with identified stakeholders for further analysis. Do this according to the parameters determined in the protocols and SOPs for reporting, which cover the requirements, process, and regularity of sharing this data. | *A* [*coding frame*](#Coding_frame) *for community feedback is provided with the standard* [*template logbook*](#Template_logbook) *to guide this work for all kinds of documented feedback.* |
| * 1. Ensure feedback data is [anonymized](#Anonymisation) before sharing aggregated feedback datasets, and exclude identifying or redundant information (for example, by using [statistical disclosure control](#SDC) where identifying variables are removed or modified). |  |
| * 1. Ensure [disaggregated data](#Disaggregation) is explained to ensure data on gender, age, disability, and other diversity information is contextualized within the data available to the feedback mechanism rather than generalized to groups in the population. |  |
| **We explore and draw findings from** [**community feedback**](#Community_feedback) **together.** | |
| * 1. Ensuring feedback trends and findings are [triangulated](#Triangulation) and [interpreted](#feedback_interpretation) using other information available on the response (such as needs assessment/monitoring data, security incidents, survey findings, etc.) and make them available for use in broader analysis processes that feed into decision-making at programmatic and strategic levels. | *An example* [*analytical framework*](#Analytical_framework) *for understanding community feedback in your context can provide a holistic framing that brings together different kinds of information to support this triangulation and analysis.* |
| * 1. Ensure feedback trends and findings are shared and discussed at sector and inter-agency levels. This includes any analysis, actions taken in response, strategies for community engagement and/or any of the processes that support collective action and coordinated decision-making. | *Any data relating to a potential allegations of SEA can only be analyzed by PSEA specialists, following data protection and confidentiality principles.* |

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| **Operational Guiding Principle # 5**  **We discuss and track the recommendations and actions taken in response to findings from** [**community feedback**](#Community_feedback)**, and we ensure our programs and strategies for meeting the needs of communities are reviewed and adapted accordingly.**  *Terms defined in the glossary are underlined and linked below.* | |
| **We maintain and review the** [**protocols**](#Protocol) **established to support decision-making and adaptation.** | **Notes** |
| * 1. Ensure continuous integration by inter-agency coordination leadership and structures (including sectoral and inter-sectoral) within regular programming discussions and processes, including for: * Defining what information is needed, and when, to systematically include feedback from communities into their regular planning processes, and adapt their programs. * [Triangulating](#Triangulation) and [interpreting](#feedback_interpretation) community feedback findings together with other programmatic data. * Formulating and documenting recommended actions and adaptations systematically over time. * Disseminating information with other relevant stakeholders to strengthen sensitization at the collective level. * Actively contributing to, and regularly reviewing, the processes and common feedback management tools used to support the objectives and functions of the [feedback mechanism](#CFM) overall. | *This will need to be checked with OCHA and be aligned with key messages for leadership, which will include explaining and linking to the template action tracker.* |
| * 1. Ensure regular monitoring and periodic review of the different information sources used to measure performance for the mechanism at the collective level by identifying: * How the [feedback channels](#Feedback_channel) for two-way communication are meeting or missing the needs of different groups in the community. * Weaknesses in coordination of [feedback management](#Feedback_management) and how the conditions and protocols can be reinforced further (for example, through advocacy, additional resource allocation, or training). * Information gaps and how these can be filled by additional data collection or research exercises planned or being undertaken for other complementary purposes. | *Supplementing measurement of the common indicators with direct feedback and suggestions for improvement from the different stakeholder groups interacting with the feedback mechanism can strengthen this process.* |
| **We adapt and learn as a response community, together with the communities we serve.** | |
| * 1. Report back to the community on findings, decisions, and the rationale for actions, seek [validation](#Validation), and reinforce these with community-facing staff. To achieve this: * Discuss key trends in community feedback and how and why they have been addressed. * Communicate information updates regarding programs or the feedback process and reflect these changes in established SOPs and supporting tools. * Ensure these are understood, and that any remaining questions and concerns are addressed or can be in the future through the established channels for feedback. |  |
| * 1. Publish reports on collective findings, recommendations and actions taken in response to community feedback on public platforms that are commonly used for sharing humanitarian information and resources to support transparency, facilitate inter-agency coordination, and strengthen accountability in the response community. |  |

## Annex: GLOSSARY

**Analytical framework** Analytical frameworks are models that aim to guide and facilitate sense making and understanding.[[2]](#footnote-3) Communities and their diverse feedback are complex, multi-faceted, and multi-dimensional, and understanding them requires a structured and consistent approach. The analytical framework offered in this package can be adapted to any context, offering a logical way to analyze, triangulate, and discuss feedback data with the relevant stakeholders.

**Closing the feedback loop** The process of communicating to feedback providers and communities what has been done in response to their feedback. It is essential to explain and discuss how the feedback was taken into account, what was feasible to do (or not), and the rationale behind these decisions.

**Coding feedback data** Coding is a technique used to attach qualitative data to subjects or classes to reduce data to a form in which they can be tracked and analyzed more easily. Coding helps capture key points that can be used as the basis for further analysis and to identify themes in community feedback data without losing meaning. Codes can be analyzed quantitatively or qualitatively, and/or help to identify relationships and patterns in the data.[[3]](#footnote-4)

**Coding frame and codebook** A coding frame is a guiding scheme for organizing open feedback comments. It provides an overview of the categories, codes, and criteria used to classify community feedback. It is supported by a codebook, which describes the categories and codes, and gives example feedback comments. The coding frame and codebook ensure that everyone involved in the coding and analysis process has the same understanding of the coding process. The feedback taxonomy in the *Template Logbook* can be used as a coding frame.

**Community feedback** Community feedback is information generated by community members – adults and children – and can include any type of information, such as questions, suggestions, observations, beliefs, concerns, complaints[[4]](#footnote-5) and statements of thanks. Community feedback can therefore be positive, neutral, or negative information. It can be received through any kind of feedback channel, both formal or informal ones, be structured or unstructured, received directly by the stakeholder who will use and act on the information, or indirectly via intermediary stakeholders. Community feedback provides response actors with insights about the needs, perceptions and experiences of different individuals and groups, including in relation to response activities and services, and the behavior or organizations’ staff members.

**Community feedback mechanism (CFM)** Systems to manage feedback shared by communities, such as questions, suggestions, observations, beliefs, concerns, complaints, and statements of appreciation – including feedback that is sensitive and/or critical and requires specialized or urgent response[[5]](#footnote-6). In addition to supporting the timely and appropriate resolution of individual feedback, a CFM facilitates the use of insights and findings from community feedback to inform the strategic and operational decisions that underpin accountability to affected people (AAP) in an operation. This includes avoiding and mitigating risks to different groups in the community and ensuring programming safely and effectively meets their needs.  
*(CFM definition continued)*   
All CFMs are comprised of:   
- Appropriate, safe, and accessible channels for feedback communication that have been tailored to the context, respecting the different needs and preferences of various groups in the community,   
- Processes and tools, whether analogue or digital, for securely and effectively gathering, referring, and responding to community feedback,  
- Processes and tools for analyzing and using findings and insights from community feedback to inform adjustments and make improvements,  
- The coordination structures and resources required to maintain CFM functions, oversee performance, and ensure the necessary targeted or collective actions are taken to meet the objectives of the CFM

**Data anonymization** Process by which personal data is irreversibly altered, either by removing or modifying the identifying variables, in such a way that the person that provided the data can no longer be identified directly or indirectly.[[6]](#footnote-7)

**Data aggregation** The compiling of information from different sources or databases with intent to prepare these combined datasets for data processing.

**Data categorization** The process of grouping data into categories according to specific criteria, which usually means that these data have something in common, such as a similar value (in the case of quantitative data) or a similar feature (in the case of qualitative data). Categories can be overlapping or non-overlapping, and a piece of data may be categorized in several different ways, depending on the analyst’s perspective.[[7]](#footnote-8)

**Data collection** Data collection is the process of documenting community feedback in a systematic way. Solutions for data collection can be low-tech (that is, paper documentation and no internet) or high-tech (that is, involving software and devices that require wireless internet- or cloud-based storage).

**Data disaggregation** Statistical reports that are separated according to criteria. For the humanitarian sector this is most commonly sex and age.[[8]](#footnote-9)

## Data minimization The objective of ensuring that only the minimum amount of data is processed to achieve the objective and purposes for which the data were collected.[[9]](#footnote-10)

**Data responsibility** The safe, ethical, and effective management of personal and non-personal data for operational response.

**Data sharing agreement (DSA)** Agreement that establishes the terms and conditions that govern the sharing of personal data or sensitive non-personal data. It is primarily used for data sharing between two parties and typically established at the country level. In accordance with data protection frameworks, signing a DSA is required for the sharing of personal data.[[10]](#footnote-11)

**Data storage** The process of retaining data (in most cases, digital data). For feedback data, this means the locations where feedback is safely kept at each stage of its life cycle, including where it goes just after it is collected, where it exists during and after processing, as well as – to a certain degree – where it is distributed to.

**Data transfer** Sharing data privately with partners or making it available publicly for open access.[[11]](#footnote-12)

**Escalation** The process of bringing feedback to the attention of stakeholder(s) with more authority or decision-making power, for the purposes of appropriately addressing information that is critical and/or sensitive.

**Feedback referral** The transfer of information connected to a feedback ticket to a focal point with the necessary resources and expertise to resolve it. A referral could include information about the feedback provider, interaction(s), feedback content, and response actions. It is important to note that the term “referral” has different meaning depending on how it is used. See: Referral system and referral pathway definitions below.

**Feedback channel** A modality through which community insights can be shared, captured, and received. Every channel will have its own set of characteristics that determine how accessible it is to specific individuals and groups in a community; a combination of channels will enhance accessibility of the feedback mechanism.

**Feedback management** Refers to how we collect, store, process, address, analyze and use feedback in a secure, efficient, and effective way. It includes defining the purposes, processes, and solutions for the intended uses of community feedback, which inform the targeted of collective actions for:  
1. The resolution of individual feedback and improvement of the feedback process for communities. Processes for developing and adjusting channels for communication, tools[[12]](#footnote-13) for feedback management, and any technologies associated with these are included here.  
2. The improvement of the quality and effectiveness of operations and the management of potential risks to different groups in the community. Processes for deriving insights and findings from aggregating, analyzing and triangulating community feedback to inform decision making for preparing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating activities and programs are a part of this.

**Feedback sensitivity and criticality** Feedback sensitivity concerns information that should be protected from access or disclosure due to it being information that can put the person sharing it, or other people liked to it, at risk. Feedback criticality relates to the importance of feedback information that may require a time-sensitive or escalated response process.Both sensitivity and criticality require care[[13]](#footnote-14) when handling. They also require classification parameters that determine the standard course of action or response (see feedback escalation above). Although sensitive feedback items are often also critical ones, it is possible that feedback may be non-sensitive but still require urgent action.

**Feedback record** The entire portfolio for that feedback, including the interaction(s), feedback details, and response actions connected to a specific instance of feedback.

**Feedback ticket** A record of feedback that requires further action (such as referral) to be resolved. Note that not all feedback will need to be recorded, and not all feedback records will lead to the creation of a ticket, but some forms of feedback may create multiple tickets depending on the range of issues it contains. Additionally, a ticket may require multiple interactions between feedback data collectors and the individual providing feedback before it can be closed (and reported as such).

**Feedback (ticket) closure or resolution** The action that takes place when no further intervention is required to resolve an individual piece of feedback. A ticket may be closed due to a) it being outside of the scope of a CFM, b) it being resolved using feedback management tools (repository of key messaging/talking points, redirection to partner services in the standard directory, or through application of the referral system) or c) the individual withdrawing or no longer wishing to proceed.

**Feedback interpretation** The process of looking across themes and narratives in the feedback data and working out what it all means. It is sometimes referred to as a second level analysis.[[14]](#footnote-15) The process of interpreting community feedback data necessitates the involvement of diverse stakeholders with knowledge of the context and operational realities, including diverse representatives of the community, and must not be conducted by the feedback team alone.

**Information security** The protection of information and information systems from unauthorized access, use, disclosure, disruption, modification, or destruction in order to provide confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information.[[15]](#footnote-16)

**Information sharing protocol (ISP)** The foundation for a collective approach to responsible information and data exchange. While typically established at the system-wide level, ISPs may also be established at the cluster/sector and organization level as needed.[[16]](#footnote-17)

**Memorandum of understanding (MoU)** A legal document which sets the agreed terms, conditions, and operational rules for a non-final agreement between agencies. This can sometimes be a donor requirement where an application for funds includes an explicit non-financial collaboration with partnering organizations. The MoU demonstrates the organizations have consulted and coordinated the responsibilities of their grant activities.

**Personal data** (Also referred to as personal information, personal identifiable information). Any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (“data subject”). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier, or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural, or social identity of that natural person.[[17]](#footnote-18)

**Privacy by design** Equivalent to the practice of data protection through (technology) design. This means that privacy is considered at the initial design stages and throughout the complete development process for any system intended to process personal data. Behind this is the thought that data protection in data processing procedures is best adhered to when it is already integrated in the technology when created.[[18]](#footnote-19)

**Protocol** A system of rules that explain the correct conduct and procedures to be followed in formally defined situations. In general, a protocol dictates what needs to be done, and standard operating procedures (SOPs) outline and document how this is carried out through responsibilities linked to functional roles. For a CFM implemented at any level (individual, joint/inter-agency, or collective), protocols and their corresponding SOPs must exist for feedback management, reporting, decision-making, and adaptation.

**Quality control** A process with the objective of preventing and identifying errors, both human and technological, from impeding the effectiveness of the CFM. In addition, the process maintains the relevant feedback tools and processes, and preserves the trust of CFM stakeholders through the activities.

**Referral pathways** Flexible mechanisms that safely link feedback providers requiring specialized services (e.g., health, psychosocial support, case management, safety/security) to the appropriate service provider. Referral pathways are specific to the kind of feedback and can involve responsible parties at multiple levels (such as project/activity, sub-national, and national).

**Referral system/mechanism** Enables the needs or gaps identified through community feedback to be comprehensively managed using resources beyond those offered by a single feedback channel or mechanism. It ensures different professional sectors communicate and work together, in a safe and efficient manner, to provide the communities and individuals sharing feedback with an appropriate (and sometimes multisectoral) response and/or services. A mechanism for referral comprises the protocols for feedback management and the channels/focal persons at various levels of representation across the professional sectors (project, organizational, national, and sub-national) responsible for their execution.

**Service mapping** A process where information about services and the actors that provide them are mapped for purposes of ensuring this information is consistently communicated to communities. A service map or repository should be centrally managed as it requires frequent updating and dissemination through the different pathways and channels used to communicate with communities, including community-facing staff and CFM teams. As an essential tool for feedback management, it should be fully aligned with the coverage of operational activities and the categories used to classify feedback in the *Template Logbook*.

**Standard messaging** Agreed information and responses that promote consistent messaging about issues that don't require contextual responses. Any resource or repository for standard messaging should be centrally managed as it requires frequent updating and dissemination through the different pathways and channels used to communicate with communities, including community-facing staff and CFM teams. As an essential tool for feedback management, it should be fully aligned with the categories used to classify feedback in the *Template Logbook*. For each of the specific feedback categories used in feedback documentation, a standard message should exist; if there is none, then there is an information gap, and a ticket should be created to address this. A standard message may be accompanied by instructions on how the individual processing the feedback should flag the case for escalation or referral depending on **sensitivity or criticality.**

**Standard operating procedures (SOPs)** A set of detailed instructions that help the different roles supporting the functioning of the feedback mechanism carry out established protocols and therefore their functional responsibilities. The objective of establishing SOPs is to achieve efficiency, quality outputs, and uniformity of performance, while reducing miscommunication and failure to document compliance with the minimum requirements.

**Statistical disclosure control (SDC)** Technique used in statistics to assess and lower the risk of a person or organization being re-identified from the results of an analysis of survey or administrative data, or in the release of microdata.[[19]](#footnote-20)

**Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA)** Particular forms of gender-based violence[[20]](#footnote-21) committed by aid workers.

* Sexual exploitation: Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.
* Sexual abuse: The actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. All sexual activity with a child is considered sexual abuse.[[21]](#footnote-22)

***Template Logbook* (with taxonomy)** A tool to ensure that minimum data points exist for any feedback that is documented across various channels, systems, and mechanisms for feedback, and supports a standardized approach to categorizing this feedback, to serve the following purposes:

* To understand the full nature of feedback information, including where feedback is coming from, what it is about, and how it is actioned.
* To lay the foundations for a common analysis of shared minimum data points.
* To prepare different feedback systems and mechanisms supported with different technological and digital solutions for conversations around inter-operability.

Together with the service mapping and standard messaging tools, the *Template Logbook* is an essential tool for feedback management and should evolve and be adapted according to the needs of the response context.

**Triangulation** The process of combining or comparing several sources and/or observations on a given topic, with the aim of increasing confidence in the result by decreasing the bias associated with “one side of the story”. The end goal of triangulation is to reveal converging results, complementary results, and contradictions.[[22]](#footnote-23)

**Validation** The process of discussing the interpretations, conclusions, and recommendations arising out of the data analysis with those who shared their feedback. Feedback providers are asked if they agree with the findings, and to correct things that might not have been interpreted correctly. Validation is especially relevant if the feedback providers were not involved in the interpretation and development of conclusions, which is the ideal scenario.

1. This includes but is not limited to: the IASC Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action, the [IASC Guidelines for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2021-01/iasc_guidelines_on_the_inclusion_of_persons_with_disabilities_in_humanitarian_action_2019.pdf). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. See: Chataigner, Patrice (2017): *Analytical Framework Review Report*. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. ICRC (2017): *Acquiring and analyzing data in support of evidence-based decisions*, p.201. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. In practice, using the word complaint in the context of a feedback mechanism can sometimes discourage children and/or adults from reporting their feedback, as it implies the need for evidence or a level of certainty. We recommend consulting different groups in the community to determine the appropriate terminology to ensure any safeguarding concerns are addressed. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Please see the definition for *Community Feedback* just above for more information. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. The Centre for Humanitarian Data: *Glossary*. <https://centre.humdata.org/glossary/> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. ICRC (2017): *Acquiring and analyzing data in support of evidence-based decisions*, p.208. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Sphere (2018): *Sphere Glossary* [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. 31 ICRC, Handbook on Data Protection in Humanitarian Action (2020), https://www.icrc.org/en/data-protection-humanitarian-actionhandbook.) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. IASC (2021): *Guidance on Data Responsibility in Humanitarian Action,* p. 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. The Centre for Humanitarian Data (2019): *Data responsibility guidelines*, p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Tools for feedback management include standardized forms and software for feedback documentation, repositories for standard messaging, activity/service directories, referral pathways and reporting platforms, and the standard operating procedures (SOPs) that support their maintenance and use. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2021). *Data Responsibility in Humanitarian Contexts. Operational Guidance, p.30.* [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. See: UNICEF Social Science Analysis Cell (2020): *CASS Methodology Guide* andINTRAC (2017): *Qualitative analysis*. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. ISO/IEC Information Technology Task Force (ITTF) ISO/IEC 27000:2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. IASC (2021): *Information Sharing Protocol.* [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. OCHA (2019): *Data Responsibility Guidelines, p.49.* [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. The Centre for Humanitarian Data (2019) *Guidance Note on Statistical Disclosure Control*. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. For the full list and definitions of SEA and related terms, refer to page 14 of the [*IASC (2023): Inter-Agency SEA Referral Procedures.*](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/IASC%20Guidance%20Note%20on%20Inter-Agency%20Sexual%20Exploitation%20and%20Abuse%20Referal%20Procedures.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. *Secretary-General’s Bulletin: Special Measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse* (ST/SGB/2003/13), Section 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. Flick, Uwe (2009): *An introduction to Qualitative Research*. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)