IASC Inter-Agency
Standing Committee

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE
OPERATIONAL POLICY AND ADVOCACY GROUP MEETING

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT: FEEDBACK MECHANISMS RG2 WORKSTREAM
(AS OF NOVEMBER 2021)
Prepared by: IFRC (on behalf of RG2)

Geneva, 23 November 2021

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1. **Increasing participation in the design of Feedback Mechanisms: Minimum operational requirements for including communities in the design of Community Feedback Mechanisms (CFMs)**

   Leads: *UNHCR and Communicating With Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC)*

This workstream focused on developing tools and guidance that can initiate greater participation by affected populations in the design of Feedback Mechanisms. While there are many very good tools currently available on incorporating participatory design in feedback mechanisms, it is still not widely used.

Multi Sector Needs Assessments (MSNAs) questions and results are widely accessible to partners and they already included a series of AAP questions including some focusing on Feedback Mechanisms. However, those needed to be revised to be more actionable in order to contribute to inform better participatory design of Feedback mechanisms. While the MSNA does not equate more in depth and tailored processes to design participatory Feedback Mechanisms it is possible to use it to gather the most basic preferences people would like in a feedback mechanism. This way the necessary basic information on community preferences could be gathered in a response wide context where the data can be shared across all actors. Providing this initial and basic information provides momentum to partners as every organization then has the necessary information to include an element of participant design preferences in their Feedback Mechanisms and thereby giving a very broad foundation to increase participation as they gain confidence.

This also fits in with the MSNA's primary purpose as a household-level needs assessment, as the ability to provide feedback is an important need, and an intrinsic part of effective AAP.

The revised questions on Feedback Mechanisms can be triangulated with the following data gathered from other parts of the MSNA and that this data will be easily disaggregated:
- Population diversity (age, gender [including LGTBIQ+] and other diverse characteristics, including disability, minority, indigenous etc.) also that whether the respondent is a child or an adult, with both being on the same survey.
- Geographical diversity/location
- Language information, ideally including the main language spoken at home, preferred language to receive written information, preferred language to receive spoken information, and preferred format to receive information.
- CwC and community communication preferences such as the first five questions from the IASC-REACH AAP Menu of AAP Questions. These questions build on question six and seven of the IASC-REACH AAP Menu of AAP Questions and are not intended to replace them, they rather support/expand these existing questions. The questions form Part 1 of this document, with advice on how to approach these CFM questions in Part 2.

This is an absolute minimum for participatory design of Feedback Mechanism. Ideally, the MSNA results on preferences for a feedback mechanism should be followed up by more detailed qualitative work such as focus group discussions (FGD's) and key informant interviews (KII's) with people affected by crisis. The MSNA questions have been revised and written so that they can also be used in those FGD's and KIIs. Therefore, the output of this workstream includes guidance on how to use those questions for those activities as well as a page of resources from partner organizations who have developed participatory design tools which are available for immediate use as well.

2. A simple referral tool for sensitive complaints

Lead: *CHS Alliance*

This tool as originally envisaged requires major changes in the way sensitive complaints are referred at country level, implying a single referral pathway for all complaints, which is far beyond the remit of RG2. One option which will require further consultations with RG2 members is to focus on a simple pocket card for field workers which will contain some tailored information when confronted to sensitive cases, with the referral aspects to be adapted in each context.

3. Data standards and principles: Common standards and principles for collecting, sharing and actioning feedback and complaints data (including for sensitive complaints such as SEA, racism etc.)

Lead: *WFP and IFRC*

The aim of this workstream was to contribute to the improvement of the effective use and response to community feedback, by developing data standards which enable the sharing, safe aggregation and analysis of feedback data from different sources.

As a starting point, it needed to be defined what community feedback data are, and what the different users and usages of community feedback are. The main stages common to any complete feedback cycle were mapped out, and the aspects identified which have a direct impact on the ability to share, analyze and use the feedback for the different purposes in a systematic way.

The intent was to build on commonalities and not to dictate a certain way of engaging with communities and collecting their insights as a lot of work is being done to collect feedback in various different ways. Furthermore, more and more organizations have their own internal guidelines and processes to do so. A main challenge was to find ways to leverage and aggregate the existing data and prepare it in a way it can be used for decision-making at the response-level, while another key challenge was to ensure actors with less capacity and less structured systems in place are included in the process. Standards imposing too high requirements for sharing data would have the consequence of cutting out organizations with less staff and resources.

The approach taken was to identify the existing commonalities across organizations to define the minimum needed to be able to share data or key findings from the data to inform decision-making across feedback mechanisms. They are based on common practice and synthesis of existing documents and guidance in the humanitarian space and consist of key definitions, concrete minimum and recommended advanced actions. Following the minimum actions ensures community feedback data are documented, handled, shared, and prepared according to established principles for community feedback mechanisms. The standards do not intend to replace existing processes and guidance. Still, they serve as a reference point for humanitarian actors to check if they adhere to the minimum. For situations where there is a need to set up or strengthen the data-related aspects of feedback mechanisms, additional recommended actions, essential resources and templates are provided in the supporting documents.

A **data standards package** was developed and organized around 5 main steps of the feedback cycle. It provides the minimum requirements to enable the sharing and aggregation of feedback data, but also provides additional guidance and resources for those who need it. The 5 main steps are:
1. Design of data system
2. Receipt of feedback data
3. Triage and initial response
4. Preparation and sharing of feedback data
5. Using community feedback

The following table describes the current draft structure of those five steps:

MINIMUM STANDARDS	BROADER DATA STANDARD PACKAGE
Minimum requirements & relevant key definitions	Advanced actions & relevant key definitions
	Supporting tools
	Key tips and considerations

One of the challenges that emerged during consultations is the difficulty to draw a clear delineation between the data-related aspects that enable safe and actionable sharing of data for response level collective Feedback Mechanism and the broader processes that are involved in setting up and running such a Mechanism. On the other hand, it is important to note that adhering to the data standards does not guarantee an effective, accessible, transparent, inclusive, and participatory feedback mechanism. The data standards need to be complemented with more general guidance on community Feedback Mechanisms that focuses on aspects including how to engage the different stakeholders, including the community, in a meaningful way.

Another challenge is that solely focusing on inter-agency Feedback Data sharing processes is not sufficient to enable sharing of actionable data. This is because the way a data system is designed, how the data is collected, structured, and sorted are all steps part of internal organization processes, that have a direct impact on the interoperability and ability to use and act on the data once it was shared with other partners. However, this also provides an opportunity to increase broader inclusion and participation of multiple actors in collective Feedback Mechanisms whilst enabling them to increase the quality and actions on their own Feedback Data.

Both those challenges are being addressed while balancing the needs, capacity, and resources of different types of humanitarian organizations who are more or less advanced in their own practice of Feedback Mechanisms. It also takes into consideration complementarity with other key guidance and resources of individual or inter agency organizations to avoid duplications, contradictions and build on commonalities.

For instance, as the Inter-Agency Community Based Complaints Mechanism (CBCM) best practice guide was also under a revision process this year, RG2 leadership ensured that the team working on this revision would be co-coordinating and collaborating closely with this workstream. This helped identify ways to cross fertilize this stream and the update of the CBCM Guide and other related PSEA resources. Across the consultations and development of the resources for this stream the need to ensure that the data standards and principles on Feedback Mechanisms are able to include sensitive complaints were made a key design priority whilst acknowledging that handling and referral pathways for PSEA remain under the scope of the CBCM guide update stream.

The finalization of the Data standard package described above will be completed before the end of the year and will be field tested in 2022 and are planned to be endorsed during that same year.