

TIP SHEET: DATA RESPONSIBILITY AND COLLECTIVE COMMUNITY FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

OCHA CENTRE FOR HUMANITARIAN DATA

INTRODUCTION

A response-wide, collective community feedback mechanism (collective CFM) brings agencies together to capture, analyze, and act on feedback from communities in a coordinated and accountable way. The IASC Standards for Collective Feedback Mechanisms (2024) provide the global benchmark for establishing collective CFMs in humanitarian response. Successful collective CFMs ensure that the priorities and preferences of affected communities are central to humanitarian work. Collective CFMs are part of the Humanitarian Reset Roadmap¹ and the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) process.²

More collective CFMs are being established across humanitarian operations, requiring collaboration between teams working on accountability to affected people (AAP), coordination and information management. It can be challenging to agree on the appropriate tools and infrastructure as well as the level of community feedback required.³ Collective CFMs involve the management of sensitive data, including details in complaints and feedback about sensitive subjects, and in some cases personal data of individuals who have submitted complaints or feedback.

Data responsibility, the safe, ethical and effective management of data, should be prioritized throughout the design and implementation of collective CFMs to mitigate risk to affected people and humanitarian partners. This includes sharing data according to the data and information sensitivity classifications that are set out in a response-level Information Sharing Protocol (ISP) if available. Data sharing agreements should be used whenever personal data is being exchanged.

This tip sheet was developed by the OCHA AAP Advisor and the OCHA Centre for Humanitarian Data, with inputs from inter-agency AAP advisors in country operations, to support teams to responsibly set up and manage collective CFMs. The following tips will help ensure collective CFMs are well-positioned to strengthen AAP, keep communities' data safe, and make the most of resources.

KEY RESOURCES

- [Templates for drafting agreements and developing common SOPs with partners](#)
- [The IASC Operational Guidance on Data Responsibility in Humanitarian Action \(2023\)](#)
- [The IASC Inter-Agency SEA Referral Procedures \(2023\)](#)⁴
- [The IASC Standards for Collective Feedback Mechanisms \(2024\)](#)
- [OCHA Impact Story: From Feedback to Action in the Central African Republic](#)

¹ The [Humanitarian Reset Roadmap, 10 November 2025.pdf](#) notes that HCs/HCTs to be held accountable on delivering against priorities identified by affected people.

² See all relevant HPC guidance, including the HPC Steering Group position paper on the [Facilitation Package - HPC Collective Learning - OCHA Knowledge Base](#).

³ A mapping of digital solutions used in CERF-funded Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) projects found gaps in understanding of both data responsibility and available tools.

⁴ The IASC has established a [comprehensive set of procedures](#) for handling complaints of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) within humanitarian responses.

TIPS FOR SETTING UP A RESPONSIBLE COLLECTIVE COMMUNITY FEEDBACK MECHANISM

The following tips can help ensure a responsible approach to managing community feedback in humanitarian operations, with more detail provided below.

1. Establish data governance early to ensure data is managed responsibly.
2. Develop documentation, aiming to keep it light and easy to update.
3. Build safety into your procedures.
4. Conduct collective analysis to support improved decision-making.
5. Track the key issues, trends and actions, and communicate proactively with affected people.

1. Establish data governance early to ensure data is managed responsibly

Consider data governance from the beginning. Agree early on the top priorities for the collective CFM, such as the safe management of sensitive data and the analysis of community feedback. Take into account that CFM outputs may need to be analyzed jointly with other data such as assessment results and monitoring and reporting data. Surface the processes these priorities will require and design your data governance accordingly. Bear in mind that systems involving a greater number of partners and more sensitive data will require stronger data governance and safeguards.

- Adopt common language around community feedback, based on the glossary in the IASC Standards for Collective Feedback Mechanisms.⁵ For example, agree on what is meant by ‘sensitive feedback’, ‘aggregated data’ or ‘collective analysis’.
- Agree on the priorities for the collective CFM and the consequences for partners. For example, will partners need to share personal data, or is this not a requirement?
- Clarify what each partner can contribute to the collective CFM. What data, analysis and insight can they provide?
- Align on essential roles and responsibilities across agencies, clusters, and response coordination bodies. This should include the responsibility for selecting a collective CFM platform and for hosting the platform and CFM data.
- Determine when feedback should be escalated to the national level, as opposed to being resolved at the local or sub-national level.
- Define exactly who has access to what information, how referrals will be handled, and how data is shared between and by agencies.
- Consider how you will communicate with affected communities. It is important to be transparent about what data is being collected and why.
- Establish clear Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and data sharing agreements, covering the scope of agreed activities, consolidating existing knowledge as much as possible. Where different approaches are being considered, test them on smaller exercises. Start with what you already have in place. From there, expand and reinforce what works.
- Maintain accurate but minimal records and set clear data retention and deletion timelines.

Example: In Bangladesh, the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) sector agreed on shared forms and workflows for the IOM global CCCM unit [ZiteManager platform](#). This early agreement helped partners focus on the same priorities and made data sharing easier, even with limited resources.

⁵ Refer to the comprehensive glossary of terms available in annex on page 26 of the [IASC Standards for Collective Feedback Mechanisms](#).

2. Develop documentation, aiming to keep it light and easy to update

Collective CFMs are complex as they bring together multiple systems, stakeholders and needs. As a result, they often comprise multiple communication channels (e.g., in-person feedback, hotlines and surveys). To be effective, collective CFMs require agreed protocols for feedback management, clear roles and responsibilities, and robust structures and processes for collective decision-making. Documentation can quickly become unwieldy, difficult to manage and therefore redundant over time.

- Keep documentation concise.
- Ensure documentation explicitly mentions data protection measures, access controls, and retention rules.
- Consider developing supplementary guidance for specific roles (for example, CFM managers, front-line workers, reporting officers and data managers) involved in the collective CFM process.
- Determine which instruments are critical to achieve your collective priorities. For example, a Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) may not be required to support the collective CFM if no personal data will be exchanged between agencies.
- Keep in mind that if a DSA is required, HQ review and sign-off between agencies can be time-consuming.

Example: In Bangladesh, the CFM Task Force under CCCM agreed on common forms, referral steps, and an Information Sharing Protocol. This created a shared approach across agencies and made documentation clear and practical.

3. Build safety into your procedures

Systems must enable CFM managers and staff to distinguish between programmatic issues handled through regular monitoring, reporting and response adaptation, and immediate risks that require escalation, such as sensitive safeguarding or Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) allegations and sensitive protection concerns.

- Ensure that front-line staff know how to differentiate between different categories of complaints and feedback, and are able to apply the correct procedures. This will enable the appropriate application of the key principles of consent, confidentiality and data minimisation. Sensitive feedback should always be stored in restricted systems and handled by trained focal points.
- Map your feedback management tools. Standard responses, escalation procedures, and referral information should be mapped down to specific sub-categories, regularly updated, and made accessible to those who need to use it.

Example: In Syria, the Safe Line system was set up with an inter-agency SOP endorsed in 2024. The system offers mobile phone, WhatsApp, Telegram and email channels, and includes separate referral pathways for SEA allegations and other sensitive complaints. This helps ensure sensitive safeguarding cases are prioritized and handled with stricter confidentiality.

4. Conduct collective analysis to support improved decision-making

Feedback is most impactful when it is aggregated and collectively analyzed. When partners agree to use a common approach, such as shared categories for classifying feedback, it becomes easier to report against response-level indicators. This increases the likelihood that feedback data will influence operational and strategic decisions within the response.

- Specify in the collective analysis framework how data and analysis will be shared between the collective CFM and a community voices platform used to visualize feedback trends, if applicable.
- Where a community voices platform is used to visualize feedback trends, the framework should specify how data and analysis will be shared between the collective CFM and the community voices platform.

- Always anonymize or aggregate feedback before analysis. Shared analysis should never expose personal data or other sensitive information. Only aggregated trends and figures should be published.
- Agree how data will be collated and triangulated and who will conduct its analysis.
- Avoid adding unnecessary and complicated processes for data cleaning, preparation or transformation where possible.
- Agree on how to ensure that the outputs of analysis will feed into relevant coordination fora, discussions, decision-making processes and reports.
- Enable partners during coordination meetings to share feedback from field and frontline teams, highlight observed trends in the feedback, and discuss updates and common procedures. Sharing regular newsletters and hosting targeted workshops are other ways to ensure community insights are shared consistently.

Example: In Afghanistan, the AWAAZ helpline produces regular analysis from thousands of calls each month and contributes the analysis into the Afghanistan Community Voices and Accountability Platform. By using a common form and referral process, partners can spot trends across sectors and provinces and feed findings into national coordination.

5. Track the key issues and actions, and communicate proactively with affected people

Collective CFMs should strengthen and improve the response. Partners should observe changes in the response, from the feedback and complaints received to the action taken in response. They should be able to document their experiences, record their knowledge and communicate regularly with affected people to relay how their feedback or complaints have been addressed or not.

- Track agreed actions, assign and take responsibility for these actions, and update communities on how their feedback has or has not shaped decisions. Transparency builds trust and reinforces the value of giving feedback.
- Perform regular monitoring and quality assurance for all collective feedback management processes and tools. This includes assessing the effectiveness of coordination structures, the adherence to feedback management protocols, and the follow through to operational and strategic decision making. Agree on a set of common indicators to measure effectiveness, while keeping it as light as possible.
- Ensure that any assistance, action or advocacy that results from feedback is communicated to the individuals who submitted the feedback. Communicate the aggregated results and analysis generated to communities through their preferred communication channels.

Example: In Afghanistan, Venezuela and Honduras, collective CFMs are linked to a ticketing system that tracks complaints and feedback until they are resolved and communicated back to the individuals who submitted the feedback. This structured follow-up helps demonstrate that issues are being addressed, thus building community trust and supporting accountability to affected people.

For more on data responsibility and collective CFMs, visit the [Data Responsibility](#) page on the Centre's website or contact our team at centrehumdata@un.org.