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ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS

A handbook for UNICEF and partners

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Foreword

At UNICEF, we place people – men, women, families, children, adolescents – at the centre of our work. To make sure our work is truly people-centred, we are committed to embedding Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) in everything we do.

AAP means being inclusive, encouraging participation, and empowering people to state their needs, to have their voices heard and to take part in decisions that affect them. We want them to feel able to advocate for children's rights and the rights of their community. These requirements are non-negotiable: our success in achieving them will depend on making sure that UNICEF at every level – locally, nationally and globally – is listening and acting on these voices.

We have increased our efforts on AAP recently, but there is room for improvement. The risks of failing to fully engage communities are many: tension and conflict between aid workers and communities, confusion over multiple activities and participants, inefficient use of resources, and inability to demonstrate efficacy and accountability to our donors and members of the public. Most seriously, lives, health and well-being are threatened if people miss vital information or make decisions based on misleading or incorrect information.

That is why we are reinforcing our commitment to promoting and respecting the rights, dignity and safety of affected populations, ensuring that all our programmes are created in their best interests and meet the highest standards.

AAP demands a proactive, consistent and strategic approach. This means changing our culture and the way we work. We need to place people at the centre of our plans, projects and interventions, and make sure our leadership listens to and acts on the voices of communities. Our staff need to become better at engaging communities actively in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating our aid programmes. Our response needs to be informed by, and to adapt to, the opinions, insights and needs of affected populations. This work will reinforce our advocacy efforts and strengthen our credibility as an organization. This is real-life, practical work, not just a tick box in a policy document.

Being actively accountable to communities is not just the right thing to do. It's critical to ensuring that communities are safe, heard and protected. Meeting our AAP commitments must be a fundamental requirement in all our actions, across all sectors. This Handbook aims to increase understanding of AAP right across our organization, and to support our staff and partners who are applying AAP in practical, everyday situations across the world.



Henrietta H. Fore
UNICEF Executive Director

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We are grateful to colleagues in Country Offices and Regional Offices, and the technical teams in Headquarters, whose expertise and valuable contributions have been central to the development of this Handbook.

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How to use this Handbook

We have prepared this Handbook to help UNICEF staff, partner agencies, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) increase their understanding of Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and to gain practical knowledge and skills in applying AAP principles in their daily work. It is intended as guidance, to be read in full or consulted on specific topics. By addressing this Handbook to a wide audience, we hope to assist UNICEF and partner organizations in embedding the AAP approach at all levels of their work.

The document is in four sections:

SECTION 1 Introduction

introduces the key principles of AAP in the context of the global humanitarian community and presents the frameworks that support the adoption of AAP approaches and influence institutional values and those of the sector as a whole.

SECTION 2 Integrating AAP at country level

presents the specific roles and responsibilities that come into play in the implementation of the AAP agenda and explains how it can be integrated into the programme and humanitarian cycles.

SECTION 3 Implementing AAP in programmes

describes the key elements in establishing a comprehensive AAP approach. It explains the role of the three core pillars of AAP – communication and information provision, participation, and complaints and feedback mechanisms. It also examines how Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) is implemented, and the use of technology.

SECTION 4 Coordination and partnership

shares insights on working with partners, from local actors to UN agencies and cluster systems, to improve the engagement of affected populations and ensure that they are at the centre of our work.

Feedback

This handbook is certainly not the final word on AAP. As our shared experience of this topic grows and we hear about more examples of good practice in the field, we want to refine and adjust the guidance it contains.

For this reason, we'd like you to share your experience and advice, both in terms of using the Handbook and applying AAP approaches in your work. Please share your best practice and the tools you have found useful. Feedback, suggestions and comments are welcome – please send them to the Accountability to Affected Populations Unit, EMOPS Geneva (aap@unicef.org).

Glossary

Accountability to Affected Populations

Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) is about using power and resources ethically and responsibly. It's about putting the needs and interests of the people and communities organizations serve at the centre of decision-making, and ensuring the most appropriate and relevant outcomes for them, while preserving their rights and dignity and increasing their resilience to face situations of vulnerability and crisis. In practice, this means that people – including children and adolescents – have a say in decisions that affect their lives, receive the information they need to make informed decisions, have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to provide feedback or to complain, and have equitable access to assistance in proportion to their needs, priorities and preferences.

Affected populations

Affected populations are the girls, boys, women and men with different needs, vulnerabilities and capacities who are in situations of vulnerability and/or are adversely affected by poverty, conflict, disasters or other crises.

Child safeguarding

Child safeguarding refers to proactive measures taken to limit the direct and indirect collateral risks of harm to children that arise from an organization's work, its personnel and/or associates. These risks include those associated with physical violence (including corporal punishment); sexual violence, exploitation or abuse; emotional and verbal abuse; economic exploitation; failure to assure physical or psychological safety; neglect of physical, emotional or psychological needs; harmful cultural practices; and privacy violations.

Collective Accountability

In Collective Accountability, humanitarian and development agencies are equally committed to accountability, and they coordinate and harmonize their policies, practices and activities across the board. Collective Accountability increases awareness of the work of different agencies among Affected Populations, reduces duplication and mitigates the burden on Affected Populations by coordinating information streams from different agencies. Collective Accountability does not replace agencies' individual accountability – it sits beside it in order to support their work and to ensure a comprehensive, predictable and coherent approach.

Common Service

A Common Service is a support function that is provided on behalf of all organizations working on a humanitarian response. For example, a Common Service on Community Engagement collectively provides information to Affected Populations and collects and analyses their feedback in order to influence strategic and operational decision-making.

Communication for Development

Communication for Development (C4D) is an evidence-based, participatory process that facilitates the engagement of children, families, communities, members of the public and decision-makers for positive social and behavioural change, through a mix of communication platforms and tools.

Community Engagement

Community Engagement (CE) refers to the active participation of people and communities in ways that mean their voices are heard and their active contribution to decision-making is safe, equitable and effective – doing with, not doing to. In order to achieve this, CE includes processes for listening to, and communicating with people in order to better understand their needs, vulnerabilities and capacities, and gathering, responding to and acting on their feedback.

Complaints

A formal complaint is a specific piece of feedback from anyone who has been negatively affected by an organization's action or who believes that an organization has failed to meet a stated commitment. Complaints require a response and are a priority for action.

Complaints and feedback mechanisms

Complaints and feedback mechanisms are systems that allow Affected Populations to express their views of their experiences of the work of a humanitarian agency or the wider humanitarian system. When a mechanism is managed by one organization but used to cover the mandate of many, it is referred to as a 'common' mechanism. If it is jointly established and managed by more than one organization, it is referred to as a 'collective' mechanism.

Consent

Consent is any free, voluntary and informed decision that is given for a specified purpose and that is based on an understanding of the implications and consequences of an action. An example is providing personal information to an organization. Consent must be given for all proposed uses of the information, and for whether the identity of the participant will remain confidential. Even if consent is given, the information collector has an obligation to assess the implications of the use of information for the safety of the person providing it and for others involved.

Data protection

Data protection is the systematic application of a set of institutional, technical and physical measures that preserve the right to privacy with respect to the collection, storage, use and disclosure of personal data. Data protection safeguards the right to privacy by regulating the processing of personal data, providing individuals with rights over their data, and setting up systems of accountability and clear obligations for those who control, analyse or process the data. Strong data protection can empower individuals and deter harmful practices, such as destruction, loss, alteration, exploitation, unauthorized disclosure of, or access to, personal data.

Diversity

Diversity refers to different values, attitudes, cultural perspectives, beliefs, ethnic backgrounds, nationalities, sexual orientations, gender identities, age, abilities, health, social status, skills and other specific personal characteristics. Because they vary from person to person, these differences must be recognized, understood and valued to ensure that all people are considered and accounted for equally, and have equal opportunities to exercise their rights.

Feedback

Feedback is a positive, negative or neutral statement of opinion, shared by a community member with an organization regarding its programmes and/or the behaviour of its staff and representatives. Feedback can be either solicited (collected on pre-determined indicators and via specific channels) or unsolicited (information shared about any issue, at any time).

Inclusion

Inclusion is the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights.

Participation

Participation is people's voluntary involvement in the processes and activities led by humanitarian agencies. Fundamental to participation is that everyone, including the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, has the right to express their views and have them heard, and to be involved in decisions affecting them or their communities.

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) refers to measures taken to prevent, and respond to, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA). These measures aim to ensure safe and accessible reporting, good-quality assistance for survivors of SEA, and enhanced accountability among organizations, including in investigations into allegations of SEA.

Risk communication

Usually related to public health interventions, risk communication is the real-time exchange of information, advice and opinions with people who are at risk, to assist them in contributing to decisions that affect them and to encourage them to adopt protective and safe behaviours.

Rumours

A rumour contains information of uncertain or doubtful truth that spreads quickly among people and needs to be countered by accurate information. A rumour could be about risks or diseases, or about other people or organizations. Rumours have serious negative consequences for programme delivery and people's behaviour.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Sexual Exploitation refers to actual or attempted manipulation, for sexual purposes, of someone who is in a position of vulnerability, including where there are differential power relations. This includes (but is not limited to) profiting financially, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another person. Sexual Abuse refers to the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) by UN personnel, their partners or other aid workers against the people they serve constitute one of the most serious breaches of accountability.

Social accountability

Social accountability is a bottom-up, people-led process through which public institutions (including non-state providers delivering services on behalf of government agencies) are held to account. It includes meaningful participation in decision-making to shape policy, plans and budgets, as well as initiatives that empower communities to hold duty-bearers to account.

Two-way communication

Two-way communication (also Communication with Communities) refers to processes and activities that respond to the information and communication needs of affected populations. It is based on the principle that information and communication are critical forms of aid. Two-way communication strives to ensure dialogue between affected populations and responders through the use of all available and appropriate communication channels.



Abbreviations

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
C4D	Communication for Development
CCCs	Core Commitments for Children
CE	Community Engagement
CEA	Community Engagement and Accountability
CFM	Complaints and Feedback Mechanism
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standard
CMT	Country Management Team
CO	Country Office
CPD	Country Programme Document
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EMT	Emergency Management Team
EPP	Emergency Preparedness Platform
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HACT	Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HPC	Humanitarian Programme Cycle
HR	Human Resources
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDPs	Internally Displaced People
IFC	Information and Feedback Centre
IM	Information Management
IP	Implementing Partner
MSNA	Multi-Sector Needs Assessment
PCA	Programme Cooperation Agreement
PCM	Project Cycle Management
PER	Performance Evaluation Report
PME	Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
RAM	Results Assessment Module
RRM	Rapid Response Mechanism
RO	Regional Office
SADD	Sex and Age Disaggregated Data
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
Sit An	Situation Analysis
Sit Rep	Situation Report
SMQ	Strategic Monitoring Question
SSFA	Small Scale Funding Agreement
ToR	Terms of Reference
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene



Section 1. Introduction

Chapter 1

SOME DEFINITIONS AND BACKGROUND

What is Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)? Where did it come from, and why is it so important now? How does it fit with other global commitments within our sector? This chapter will familiarize you with the key principles of AAP.

A global stance

AAP means what it says: aid and development actors remain accountable to the people they serve, including in times of crisis. In practice, this means that as an organization, and as individuals, we behave ethically towards the communities and people we serve, and we engage fully and holistically with them, to hear their views and feedback, and to respond in ways that make sure the aid we offer is appropriate, useful and timely, and meets their real, expressed needs.

While the importance of listening to people affected by crises may seem obvious, it is in fact one of the weakest areas of progress and performance in humanitarian action, both within UNICEF and across the system as a whole.¹

Despite our best intentions, assessments of compliance show we still have a long way to go when it comes to providing the right information to communities, engaging them in decision-making, and ensuring their safe access to responsive complaint mechanisms. This Handbook is one of the steps we are taking to foster improvement in AAP.

A rights-based approach

One way to approach AAP is to recognize that the people we serve are rights-holders rather than passive 'aid recipients'. That is why we are renewing and reinforcing our commitment to promoting and respecting their rights, dignity and safety, ensuring that all our aid programmes and activities are created in their best interests and meet high standards. The girls, boys, women and men receiving assistance are our primary stakeholders. They have fundamental rights to:

- **participate** in decisions that affect their lives
- **receive** the information they need to make informed decisions
- **be heard** if they feel the help they receive is not adequate or has unwelcomed consequences
- **know** what agencies are doing in their communities and how money is being spent.

¹ ALNAP (2018, 2015)

An active approach

Wording to this effect is often seen in policy documents, but AAP demands real, practical commitment in leadership, organizational transparency and programme management. It demands that we recognize and encourage the input, participation and indeed leadership of communities in all our work.

AAP is not just ‘the right thing to do’: over time, systemic engagement of the people we serve contributes to reducing vulnerability, increasing resilience and strengthening social cohesion. That in turn will improve the quality and effectiveness of our humanitarian and development programmes. It’s a truly virtuous circle.

Global context

The AAP agenda is backed by global commitments and standards that have been developed within the sector. These support agencies in carrying out more effective and accountable programming. Increasingly, donor governments require humanitarian agencies to demonstrate evidence of Community Engagement (CE) and AAP as a condition of funding. The standards are a yardstick against which to measure local and national accountability mechanisms. Below, we describe the most important standards that you need to know about. **These are:**

- IASC Commitments on Accountability to Affected People²
- Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability³

Commitments on Accountability to Affected People

Established in 1992, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is the primary mechanism for coordinating the work of agencies involved in humanitarian assistance. Its Commitments on Accountability to Affected People bind responders to inform, as well as solicit, hear and act on the voices, priorities and feedback of affected people (including in relation to complaints and allegations of SEA), and to ensure that different groups within the affected population can play an active role in decision-making (*see Table 1*). Additionally, the Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action promote the active participation of women, girls and other at-risk groups in decision-making and processes that affect them.⁴

² IASC (2017)

³ CHS Alliance (2019)

⁴ IASC (2015)

Table 1 IASC Commitments on Accountability to Affected People

Leadership	<p>Demonstrate commitment to AAP and PSEA by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ enforcing, institutionalizing and integrating AAP approaches in the humanitarian programme cycle and strategic planning processes at country level ■ establishing appropriate management systems to solicit, hear and act on the voices and priorities of affected people in a coordinated manner, including in relation to complaints and allegations of SEA, before, during and after an emergency.
Participation and partnership	<p>Adopt and sustain mechanisms that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ feed into and support collective, coordinated, people-centred approaches that enable girls, boys, women and men (including the most marginalized and at-risk people among affected communities) to participate and play an active role in decisions that will affect their lives, well-being, dignity and protection ■ support equitable partnerships with local actors to build on their long-term relationships and trust with communities.
Information, feedback and action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Adopt agency mechanisms that feed into and support collective and participatory approaches that inform and listen to communities, address feedback and lead to corrective action. ■ Establish and support the implementation of appropriate mechanisms for reporting and handling complaints and allegations of SEA. ■ Plan, design and manage protection and assistance programmes that are responsive to the diversity and expressed views of affected communities.
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Measure AAP- and PSEA-related results at agency and collective level, including through standards such as the Core Humanitarian Standard,⁵ the Minimum Operating Standards on PSEA⁶ and the IOM's best practice guide.⁷

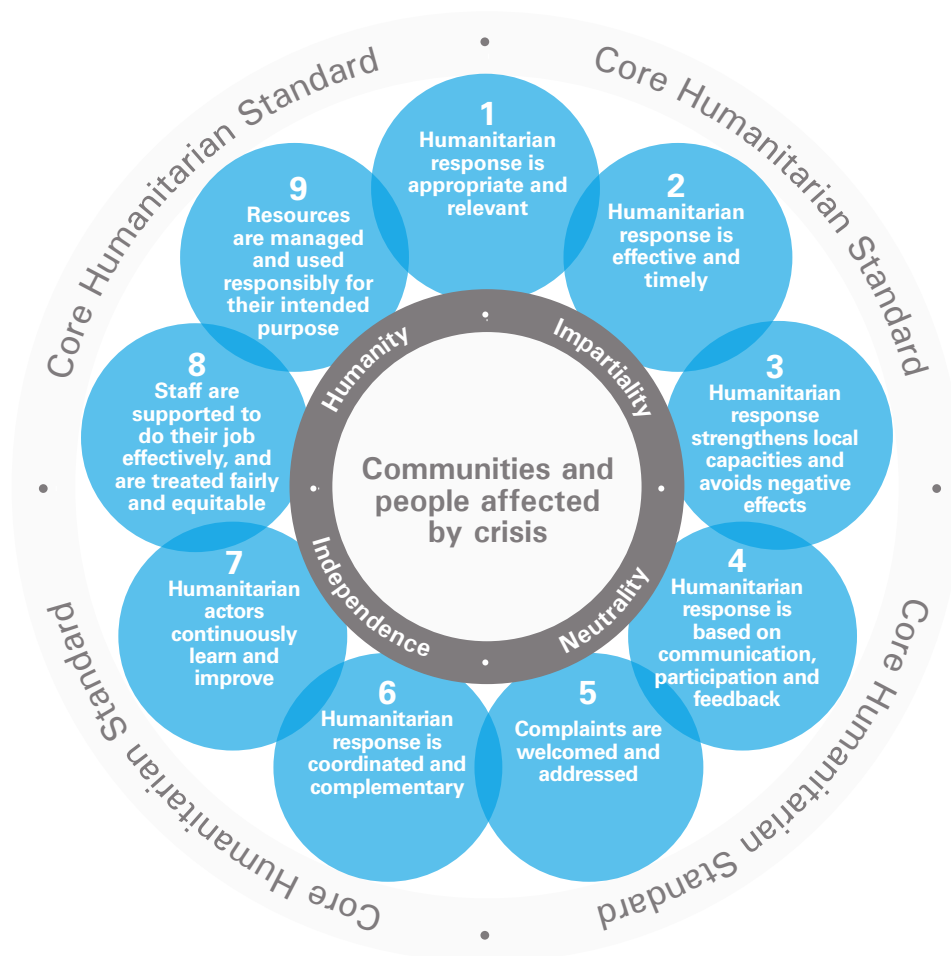
Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability

The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (usually referred to as 'the CHS') was developed by the humanitarian sector through rigorous consultation with a vast range of stakeholders. It puts crisis-affected people and communities at the centre of humanitarian action, through nine commitments that draw together the essential elements of principled, accountable and high-quality humanitarian aid (*see Figure 1*).

⁵ CHS Alliance (2019)

⁶ IASC (2012)

⁷ IOM (2016)

Figure 1 Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability**Box 1** UNICEF's benchmarking against the Core Humanitarian Standard

In 2019, UNICEF commissioned the Humanitarian Quality Assurance Initiative (HQAI) to benchmark the organization against the CHS to generate a better understanding of the quality of its AAP practices.⁸

Benchmarking provided a rigorous and independent analysis of UNICEF's strengths and weaknesses in the application of the CHS across the entire organization, in both humanitarian and development contexts. The results highlighted some good practice and achievements, but also weaknesses that need to be addressed.

Commitment 4 (communication, participation and feedback) and Commitment 5 (complaints) were areas for improvement. Engagement with people is not yet systematic across the organization, and our complaints mechanisms are neither comprehensive nor in place across the whole organization.

A management response plan is being developed to address the weaknesses that were identified in order to strengthen AAP in UNICEF's programmes and responses.

⁸ HQAI (2019)

Beyond the boundaries

Although the concept of AAP emerged in the humanitarian context, opportunities for people to influence their own lives and future, participate in decision-making and voice their concerns go both deeper and wider: they are fundamental to sustainable development and actions on climate change too.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a comprehensive framework for ending poverty, providing humanitarian relief, reducing inequality and fighting climate change.⁹ It's of interest here because of its commitment to ensuring representative decision-making at all levels, including through the active participation of vulnerable groups such as women.¹⁰

The commitment to reaching the most vulnerable people and supporting local ownership of outcomes is also recognized in numerous international agreements, such as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda,¹¹ the Paris Agreement¹² and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.¹³ These are useful resources to consult as you think about placing crisis-affected people at the centre of your work.

Humanitarian–development nexus

The 'humanitarian–development nexus' is a term we are hearing much more about. It arises from the insight that affected populations around the world do not generally distinguish between 'humanitarian' and 'development' work, as we do: they often have a combination of short- and long-term needs, some of which end up falling through the cracks between different agencies, mandates and responses as a result of this somewhat artificial divide.

The humanitarian–development nexus represents an attempt to resolve this difference in perception between aid agencies and the communities they serve. It seeks to break down the institutional, attitudinal and funding boundaries between humanitarian and development work, as part of the 'new way of working' launched at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016.¹⁴ It's worth bearing this in mind as you work through this Handbook. Look for opportunities to integrate humanitarian and development work, and question whether boundaries are genuinely helpful or intuitive among the communities you are working with.

⁹ UN (2015a)

¹⁰ UN (2012)

¹¹ UN (2015b)

¹² UN (2015c)

¹³ UNDRR (2015)

¹⁴ OCHA (2017)

Resources for Chapter 1

(Key resources are highlighted in bold.)

ALNAP (2018, 2015) *The State of the Humanitarian System*. At www.alnap.org/our-topics/the-state-of-the-humanitarian-system

CHS Alliance (2019) *Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability*. At <https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard>

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HQAI (2019) *UNICEF CHS Benchmarking: Summary Report*. At <https://hqai.org/>

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UN (2012) *The Future We Want: Outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 20–22 June 2012*. At <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/733FutureWeWant.pdf>

UN (2015a) *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. At www.unfpa.org/resources/transforming-our-world-2030-agenda-sustainable-development

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UN (2015c) *The Paris Agreement*. At <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

UNDRR (2015) *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030*. At www.undrr.org/implementing-sendai-framework/what-sf

Chapter 2

TRANSLATING COMMITMENTS INTO ACTION

In this chapter, we look in more detail at the AAP agenda. What are the key frameworks that can help us understand the role of AAP? What does AAP mean for UNICEF, and for you? How will the guidance in this Handbook influence our institutional values, and those of the sector as a whole?

What's new for UNICEF?

We've seen in Chapter 1 that participation in decisions and engagement with our programmes are essential parts of embedding AAP within the organization. UNICEF already has a long history of using CE, including with children, adolescents, girls and women particularly, in our development work. So what's new about the AAP commitments? And how will AAP change what we do?

In common with many agencies in the humanitarian sector, we don't currently have a systematic way to ensure that our programmes are informed by the feedback we receive. Our practices tend to be ad hoc and poorly documented. This is an area we need to improve, so that we act on the views and feedback we receive, and are held accountable by affected populations for our decisions.

Our commitments aren't confined to humanitarian responses. Remember the humanitarian–development nexus from Chapter 1? Although the concept of AAP began in humanitarian settings, where the need was apparent, there's no reason why we shouldn't also be held equally accountable in development situations. In these settings, we tend to talk about 'social accountability' rather than 'AAP', but they have a lot in common (*see Table 2*).

 [Tool 2.1 FAQs on AAP](#)
[Tool 2.2 UNICEF video: Accountability to Affected Populations](#)

Table 2 AAP or social accountability?

ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS	SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ rights-based: the right to be heard, the right to expression, the right to association, and the right to participate in decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ rights-based: the right to be heard, the right to expression, the right to association, and the right to participate in decision-making
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ digital or face-to-face interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ digital or face-to-face interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ participatory approaches, information-sharing, complaint mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ participatory approaches, information-sharing, complaint mechanisms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ focuses largely on the relationship between aid providers and the people they seek to support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ focuses largely on facilitating constructive engagement between citizens and governments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ short timeframes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ longer timeframes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ humanitarian crisis, with agencies complementing or temporarily ‘filling in’ for governments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ development projects, with agencies scaffolding support to governments and/or local authorities before ‘stepping back’

Whether the context is humanitarian aid or development work, we must all:

- **act on the views and feedback** we receive
- **be accountable to affected populations for our decisions**, in whatever capacity we make them.

UNICEF's commitments

Putting people at the centre of our work has always been a priority for UNICEF. However, these experiences need to be scaled up and applied more systematically and coherently across all of UNICEF's work. To this end, in 2018, UNICEF's Regional and Headquarters Directors agreed a business case, framework and roadmap for scaling up AAP across the organization.

AAP business case and roadmap

The scope of the AAP business case covers the whole organization, at country, regional and global levels. It is based on two fundamental premises:

First, progress will be achieved only through a systematic and coherent organization-wide approach that is embedded in existing processes and systems; second, AAP must not be a stand-alone concept but rather be an integral part of good-quality programming in development and humanitarian situations alike.¹⁵

The business case states that:

All vulnerable, at-risk and crisis-affected girls, boys, women and men supported through UNICEF's actions can hold UNICEF as an organization to account for promoting and protecting their rights and generating effective results for them, considering their needs, concerns and preferences, and working in ways that enhance their dignity, capacities and resilience.¹⁶

To achieve this, the AAP roadmap aims to achieve four strategic objectives:

1. **UNICEF procedures** and systems support people-centred approaches across all sectors.
2. **All UNICEF programmes** are designed based on feedback from, and participation of affected people, alongside meeting recognized quality, technical and management standards.
3. **UNICEF achieves an organizational culture** whereby a people-centred approach becomes a fundamental part of our actions.
4. **UNICEF AAP commitments** relate to effective collective accountability mechanisms (including PSEA) in countries affected by crises.

AAP Framework

The AAP Framework contains the overarching principles of AAP in our work (see Figure 2). It has seven pillars, each of which is discussed below. Every pillar must be accessible and open to everyone in the community, whatever their status or situation – boys, men, women, girls, the vulnerable, the disabled, the disadvantaged. Equitable access is absolutely fundamental to AAP.

¹⁵ UNICEF (2017) Scaling-up Accountability to Affected Populations at UNICEF 2018-2021, Business Case and Roadmap

¹⁶ UNICEF (2017) Scaling-up Accountability to Affected Populations at UNICEF 2018-2021, Business Case and Roadmap

Figure 2 The seven pillars of UNICEF's AAP Framework

Participation: Access to safe, appropriate and equitable opportunities to take part both in decision-making and in the processes and activities led by organizations right across the programme cycle.

Information and communication: Equal access to safe, appropriate life-saving information, and information on rights and how to exercise them, and appropriate two-way communication channels between aid providers and communities, taking into consideration the specific context and preferences of different groups of people.

Feedback and complaints: Secure and appropriate means for affected populations to provide feedback and to complain about their experiences and perspectives on our programmes and responses, including on sensitive issues. These mechanisms ensure that information is regularly collected, analysed, integrated into decision-making and acted on, and that the results are communicated back to people in a meaningful dialogue.

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: Assess, identify and respond to protection risks and vulnerability of affected children, families and communities by ensuring safe and reliable mechanisms are in place to access assistance and to raise concerns about sexual exploitation and abuse issues, and other protection issues such as gender-based violence and child safeguarding.

Strengthening local capacity: Work with and through local actors, first responders and national coordination mechanisms, and increase support to local actors in order to build their capacity before, during and after an event, crisis or development intervention.

Evidence-based advocacy and decision-making: Make decisions and advocate on behalf of vulnerable children, families and their communities, drawing on their views and feedback, in ways that respect their rights, dignity and autonomy.

Coordination and partnership: Avoid duplication by strengthening existing partnerships, including with other UN agencies, international and national NGOs, and local, national and regional authorities, to maximize the coverage and reach of our work and to coordinate assistance.

Core Commitments to Children

The Core Commitments to Children in Humanitarian Action (usually referred to as ‘the CCCs’) have AAP as a key principle.¹⁷ As well as setting out a firm commitment to AAP, the CCCs specify benchmarks against which practice in AAP can be monitored, evaluated – and improved (see Table 3).

Table 3 2020 Core Commitments to Children in Humanitarian Action: benchmarks

COMMITMENT	BENCHMARK
Ensure that affected children and families participate in the decisions that affect their lives, are properly informed and consulted, and have their views acted upon.	<p>Affected and at-risk people, including children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ are informed about their rights and entitlements, the expected standards of conduct by UNICEF personnel, the services available to them, and how to access these services using their preferred language and methods of communication ■ have their feedback on the quality of UNICEF programmes systematically collected to inform future programme design and course corrections ■ have access to safe and confidential complaints and feedback mechanisms ■ participate in the development of humanitarian response plans and in decisions that affect them

¹⁷ UNICEF (2020)

Resources for Chapter 2

(Key resources are highlighted in bold.)

UNICEF (2018) *UNICEF Engagement in Social Accountability: A stocktake*. At https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/Social_Accountability_stocktake.pdf

UNICEF (2019) *Update on UNICEF humanitarian action with a focus on linking humanitarian and development programming*. At www.unicef.org/spanish/about/execboard/files/2019-EB3-Humanitarian_action-EN-2018.12.21.pdf

UNICEF (2020) *The Core Commitments to Children in Humanitarian Action*. At www.corecommitments.unicef.org



Section 2. Integrating AAP at country level

Chapter 3

FIRST STEPS

In this chapter, we move on to the specific roles and responsibilities that come into play when a Country Office implements the AAP agenda.

Leadership

Leadership in the Country Office is the starting point for embedding AAP principles in all programme and management decisions, so that populations can ultimately hold us to account. Leaders often 'make or break' an accountable response, through four fundamental responsibilities:

- **allocating** sufficient staffing capacity and funding resources to undertake activities that contribute to strengthening AAP
- **committing** to AAP in strategic documents such as Strategy Notes (SNs), Theory of Change (ToC) and workplans
- **assigning** roles and responsibilities for aspects of AAP clearly, and reinforcing these through HR systems of recruitment, job and role descriptions, staff performance appraisals, and professional development and training
- **taking** the views and feedback of affected populations into account when they make decisions.

AAP is everybody's responsibility

Although AAP is everybody's responsibility, there is a risk that it becomes nobody's responsibility if specific roles are not clearly defined and assigned.

Across the Country Office, there needs to be a full understanding of the specific responsibilities that fall to each role. This includes designating an AAP focal point, with clear Terms of Reference (ToR) and reporting lines, and defining clear roles and responsibilities for different functions in the Country Office. When no staff member has the time or capacity to act as an AAP focal point or when the scale of the crisis warrants additional capacity, a dedicated AAP specialist position might need to be established. Key staff roles for AAP at the Country Office will also need to be defined.

 [Tool 3.1 ToRs for AAP Focal Point](#)
[Tool 3.2 Job Description for AAP Specialist](#)

Scaling up AAP

There are eight key steps required to scale up AAP in a Country Office (CO), with contributions from all members of staff (see Table 4).

Table 4 Key steps for scaling up AAP in a Country Office

STEP	HOW TO ACHIEVE THIS
AAP BECOMES PART OF THE CO'S CULTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Country Representatives and Deputy Representatives take ultimate responsibility for ensuring that country programmes have a robust AAP approach, including ensuring that the feedback and views of affected populations inform decision-making. ■ Leaders communicate AAP commitments and lines of responsibility clearly, and ensure that all staff understand them. ■ Leaders allocate specific resources for the implementation of AAP approaches. ■ Management ensures that AAP is a standing agenda item for monthly meetings, including those for Country Management Teams (CMTs), Project Cycle Management (PCM) and Emergency Management Teams (EMTs).
EVERYONE UNDERSTANDS WHAT AAP IS AND WHAT IT REQUIRES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All staff complete UNICEF online Agora training. ■ Staff members involved in the implementation of AAP attend training to strengthen specific knowledge and skills.
THERE ARE CLEAR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES TO SCALE UP AAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ An AAP focal point is designated, with a clear reporting line to the Country Representative. ■ Programmes and operations, specifically of the planning, monitoring and evaluation, emergency and C4D teams, have clearly articulated roles to support AAP efforts. ■ All staff, including Country Representatives and Deputy Representatives, have AAP responsibilities in their Performance Evaluation Report (PER).
AAP IS INTEGRATED IN PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING PROCESSES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Leaders ensure that strategic documents such as SNs and the Results Framework commit explicitly to AAP. ■ The Annual Workplan includes activities linked to AAP. ■ Programme Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) detail AAP mechanisms and monitoring arrangements. ■ Monitoring tools (such as third-party monitoring checklists and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guides) include AAP. ■ Progress is monitored and reported through a list of AAP indicators, Results Assessment Modules (RAMs) and Strategic Monitoring Questions (SMOs). ■ Mid-year and mid-term reviews allow for programme course correction according to AAP feedback. ■ The Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) includes AAP.

 *Tool 3.3 Overview of AAP responsibilities in a CO*

(see Chapter 5)

Table 4 Key steps for scaling up AAP in a Country Office *(continued)*

STEP	HOW TO ACHIEVE THIS
AAP IS REFLECTED IN EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (DRR) PLATFORMS <i>(see Chapter 4)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ AAP is included in the emergency preparedness platform. ■ Preparedness action plans include AAP approaches. ■ Local DRR platforms enhance participation from affected populations.
ALL PROGRAMMES INCLUDE AAP APPROACHES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Programmes and operations staff ensure systematic inclusion of information provision, participation, and complaints and feedback mechanisms across multiple sectors. ■ Where a C4D section is well established, it provides technical support on information-sharing, participation, complaints and feedback mechanisms. ■ Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME), Information Management (IM) and programme staff ensure that systems are in place to collect, analyse, disaggregate, share and report on complaints and feedback across all programmes. ■ Inter-sectoral complaints and feedback mechanisms, CEA and information-sharing approaches are encouraged.
FEEDBACK INFORMS DECISION-MAKING AND COURSE CORRECTION <i>(see Chapter 9)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Programme Managers and PME staff ensure that feedback from different groups is analysed to inform planning and course correction. ■ Programme documents outline how they have been informed by the views and feedback of affected populations.
PRIORITIZE SYSTEM-WIDE, COLLECTIVE AAP APPROACHES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Relevant staff members coordinate AAP activities at inter-agency level and support the work of technical working groups on AAP and CE. ■ Agencies adopt and implement common approaches, strengthening collaboration and avoiding duplication. ■ Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) and Country Teams adopt a common approach to AAP.

Respect and integrity

So far, we have looked at the capacity of organizational structures to embed and uphold the principles of AAP within a Country Office, by combining specific roles with specific responsibilities. But we each have personal responsibilities to the people we serve too. An organization's capacity to ensure affected populations are assisted in the most effective and accountable way depends on the ability of all its members to uphold and promote the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct.

As recent events demonstrate, aid workers are often placed in a position of power and influence in relation to the people they are intending to serve. There have been some who have taken advantage of this power imbalance, with very serious consequences. Staff have an ethical obligation never to abuse this power and always to avoid all acts of misconduct or wrongdoing.

In particular, sexual exploitation and abuse of affected populations by aid workers constitutes an act of gross misconduct. Preventing any form of sexual exploitation and abuse is one of the key elements of AAP.

Code of Conduct

While it is the personal responsibility of each member of staff to uphold the standards and behaviour to which the organization adheres, organizations themselves are responsible for ensuring that staff have the right knowledge and awareness of the behaviour expected of them.

A Code of Conduct, which all staff agree to read, understand and adhere to, is a good way of ensuring awareness and compliance. It also serves as a clear declaration to communities, donors and the public that the organization will uphold its ethical values through the behaviour of its staff and the way that they work. There are no excuses for not knowing the ethical values and proper conduct required when working for UNICEF.

A Code of Conduct contributes to a culture of accountability, but alone it is not enough. It must be supported by systems and measures that ensure it is upheld by everyone, all the time:

- **All organizations and partners** working with affected populations must have a Code of Conduct.
- **The Code of Conduct** must be read, understood and signed by all staff, partners and stakeholders.
- **Training, workshops and guidance** must be easily available to staff, partners and stakeholders so that everyone understands the Code of Conduct and facilitates its compliance.
- **Systems** must be in place for reporting misconduct or wrongdoing and acting promptly on it.
- **Information** must be available on how to report misconduct safely and what support services are available to victims, including access to interpretation services in an array of languages.
- **Solid measures** that people trust must be in place to ensure the safety of anyone reporting misconduct.

Safeguarding communities

Communities must also know how humanitarian and development staff are expected to behave. They should know how to recognize and report misconduct and have safe access to channels for doing so confidentially (see Chapter 7; Chapter 9).

UNICEF staff operate under UN Staff Regulations and Rules,¹⁸ Standards of Conduct for International Civil Servants¹⁹ and a Code of Ethics.²⁰ In 2019, UNICEF introduced Child Safeguarding Personnel Standards under the 2016 Child Safeguarding Policy (see Chapter 8).²¹ This is what some organizations call the 'core standards', to which all of us are subject in both our professional and private lives – at work and at home.

UNICEF's implementing partners (IPs) and their employees are bound to conform to these standards under Programme Cooperation Agreement (PCA) Article V (Responsibilities of the IP) and Article 2.0 of the General Terms and Conditions for Programme Cooperation Agreements. Companies doing business with the United Nations are required to accept and comply with the UN Supplier Code of Conduct.²²

Box 2 Respectful engagement with communities

To reinforce Accountability to Affected Populations during the Ebola response in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 2019, humanitarian actors agreed to adopt key principles that must be respected by all. Through a signed form, they promised to:

- **ensure** their responses are informed by the needs, priorities, values and local languages of communities
- **communicate** with respect, transparency and openness
- **promote** active participation of community members in the humanitarian response
- **ensure** that technical interventions do not contribute to reinforcing inequalities
- **treat** everyone equally and with respect
- **consider** concerns and questions from community members in order to continuously revise their work and improve the quality of the response.

¹⁸ UN (2018)

¹⁹ International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) (2013)

²⁰ UNICEF (2020)

²¹ UNICEF (2016)

²² UN (2017)

Resources for Chapter 3

(Key resources are highlighted in bold.)

Groupe URD (2018) *Quality and Accountability Compass*. At <https://www.urd.org/en/project/the-quality-and-accountability-compass-method/>

IASC (2013) *Accountability to Affected Populations: Operational Framework*. At https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/legacy_files/AAP%20Operational%20Framework%20Final%20Revision.pdf

ICSC (2013) *Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service*. At <https://icsc.un.org/Resources/General/Publications/standardsE.pdf>

IFRC & ICRC (1994) *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief*. At <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/publications/icrc-002-1067.pdf>

UN (2017) *UN Supplier Code of Conduct*. At www.un.org/Depts/ptd/sites/www.un.org.Depts.ptd/files/files/attachment/page/pdf/unscoc/conduct_english.pdf

UN (2018) *Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations*. At <https://undocs.org/ST/SGB/2018/1>

UNICEF (2016) *Policy on Conduct Promoting the Protection and Safeguarding of Children*. At <https://www.unicef.org/supply/documents/policy-conduct-promoting-protection-and-safeguarding-children>

UNICEF (2020) *Guidance for Civil Society Organizations on Partnership with UNICEF*. At www.unicef.org/about/partnerships/files/Guidance-for-CSOs-on-Partnership-with-UNICEF.pdf

Chapter 4

PREPAREDNESS AND RISK REDUCTION

Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Risk Reduction are no exceptions to AAP integration. How can we strengthen AAP in these situations? This chapter explains what you can do to embed AAP in challenging circumstances.

Be prepared

Providing timely, effective assistance to people in disasters is a major challenge for governments and humanitarian organizations alike. We know that we can provide life-saving assistance more quickly and cost-effectively if we prepare in advance. Consequently, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Emergency Preparedness Platforms (EPPs) play a vital role in responding to crisis. Mainstreaming preparedness in UNICEF programmes puts the focus on the resilience of populations and links humanitarian and development programming.

Disaster Risk Reduction approaches

DRR approaches are an opportunity to involve communities and ensure they are front and centre in preparedness planning. UNICEF embeds DRR approaches in its programmes to advance awareness, knowledge and practical capacities at the local level to protect communities. This contributes to a shift from a reactive to a proactive approach, with disaster risks identified, assessed and addressed as part of long-term development.

National and local platforms for DRR aim to enhance collaboration among communities, organizations and institutions locally and mutually strengthen knowledge and capacities to plan and implement preparedness activities. These platforms can boost the engagement of community members, as well as the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, ensuring that local, traditional and indigenous knowledge and practices complement scientific knowledge in disaster risk assessment and the development and implementation of policies, strategies, plans and programmes of specific sectors.

Risk-informed programming

Preparedness actions and disaster risk reduction must be based on an understanding of disaster risk in all its dimensions of vulnerability, capacity, exposure of persons and assets, hazard characteristics and the environment.²³

Affected populations have an in-depth knowledge of the local context, and their capacities and vulnerabilities. Engaging them allows for a better understanding of the risks they face and the nature and extent of their areas of strength and weakness, in terms of their abilities to cope with adversity. Such knowledge can be used by organizations for risk assessment, prevention, mitigation, preparedness and response. We call this 'risk-informed programming' and it is important in bolstering the resilience of communities to the shocks and stresses of a crisis.

In line with the principles of AAP, this process is a two-way dialogue, from which both parties learn and benefit. A solid approach to risk-informed programming means that communities themselves contribute to the prioritization of risk mitigation actions and identify preventive activities. This is wholly in line with the AAP approach.

Emergency Preparedness Planning

UNICEF offices follow a four-step annual EPP process to prepare to respond to the priority risks in their context. The timing of the process is aligned with the development and subsequent scheduled reviews of the Country Office's workplan. This alignment ensures that workplans and annual management plans include preparedness activities and resources. Each programme and operational section includes preparedness in its plans.²⁴

CO staff follow four steps for preparedness planning:

1. **Identify**, analyse and monitor risks.
2. **Define** the scenario.
3. **Identify** UNICEF's expected response.
4. **Implement** preparedness actions.

You will need to embed AAP approaches at each step (*see Table 5*).

 *Tool 5.5 Tip sheet for integration of AAP in Humanitarian Response Plans and Emergency Preparedness*

²³ UNDRR (2015)

²⁴ UNICEF (2016a)

Table 5 Guiding questions for embedding AAP in EPP

PREPAREDNESS STEP	GUIDING QUESTIONS TO EMBED AAP
1. IDENTIFY, ANALYSE AND MONITOR RISKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Have you consulted different groups of the at-risk population on what they consider to be the risks, their vulnerabilities and their capacity to cope? ■ Have you drawn up a profile of at-risk populations and subgroups, arranging them by gender, age, disability, social status and economic situation? ■ What secondary data will you use for your analysis? Perception surveys, anthropological studies, situation analysis (SitAn),²⁵ cluster surveys and inter-agency reports are all potential sources of information.
2. DEFINE THE SCENARIO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How many people are likely to be affected? What are their characteristics? ■ What are their preferred communication channels? Will they be able to access them? What additional resources will you need to ensure the population is informed (e.g. translation, interpretation services, access to social media)? ■ Can you guarantee access to services for people who are disabled, in remote locations or who are particularly vulnerable? ■ What local partnerships do you need to establish to ensure access to support services, including information? How will you maintain this access?
3. IDENTIFY UNICEF'S EXPECTED RESPONSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Are AAP approaches embedded in preparedness plans, and in information-sharing and communication, participation, and complaint and feedback mechanisms? ■ Is the plan coherently reflected in sectoral programmes? ■ Does the budget include funding for AAP actions, including for measures to equip communities with the knowledge and technical skills they need to protect themselves? ■ Are the planned AAP actions aligned with government and humanitarian agency coordination structures such as cluster and inter-cluster groups, HCTs and working groups?
4. TAKE PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Have the preparedness actions been implemented? ■ Is there adequate capacity to coordinate and implement AAP? ■ What are the gaps in your implementation of AAP approaches?

Specific preparedness actions for AAP

There are some important AAP actions that must be taken as part of step 4 (preparedness):

- **Identify** the preferred and most appropriate information and communication channels for the affected populations (*see Chapter 7*).
- **Prepare** staff by developing their understanding of the context (pre- and in-crisis), culture and customs to facilitate meaningful and respectful engagement with affected populations.

²⁵ UNICEF (2013)

- **Establish** protocols with partners and government for developing common messages, as part of a collective communication strategy for information-sharing.
- **Map the successful**, accessible mechanisms that are in place for feedback, complaints and information-sharing so they can be replicated and scaled up.
- **Establish clear** commitments and agreement on roles and responsibilities internally and at inter-agency level on how AAP approaches will be coordinated and who will take the lead.
- **Agree how** AAP mechanisms will relate to the existing coordination architecture and influence decision-making.
- **Establish an inter-agency** AAP/communication and community engagement platform, drawing on in-country specialists, to work with clusters and sectors in coordinating information-sharing and feedback.
- **Conduct** basic training in AAP to increase understanding among national and international staff.

Reviewing the plans

As part of your integration of AAP within emergency preparedness, always review the existing CO and IASC EPP action plans. These will provide you with a handle on the existing risks, vulnerabilities and coordination, and you will gain valuable insights into:

- **risk profiles and risk mapping** (step 1)
- **crisis scenarios** and contingency plans (step 2)
- **potential partners** within government, civil society and clusters (step 2)
- **humanitarian response** modalities (for example, the feasibility of cash distribution) (step 3)
- **existing coordination** and information-sharing mechanisms (step 3)
- **HR, surge capacity, supplies and logistics** arrangements (step 4).

Box 3 Youth-led digital mapping of environmental risks and vulnerabilities in Brazil²⁶

Aiming to empower vulnerable young people and to engage them in DRR programming, in 2012 UNICEF Brazil implemented a pioneering initiative using digital mapping technology to identify environmental, mobility, housing and structural problems in Rio de Janeiro Favelas communities.

Young people, community leaders, healthcare workers and government representatives were involved. Young people themselves drew up the list of identified risks in their communities and mapped their neighbourhood using GPS on their mobile phones, tagging high-risk areas and taking aerial pictures using kites or balloons.

Youth-led digital mapping proved to be a compelling tool that enabled young people to contribute to prevention planning and raise awareness of the risks they face. They were actively involved in identifying and communicating risks to local duty-bearers, thereby taking ownership of the process.

²⁶ UNICEF (2012)

Resources for Chapter 4

(Key resources are highlighted in bold.)

Climate and Disaster Governance (CDG) (2010) *Accountability for Disaster Risk Reduction: Lessons from the Philippines*. At www.preventionweb.net/publications/view/18206

IFRC (2016) *Road Map to Community Resilience*. At <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/document/road-map-community-resilience/>

Plan International (2010) *Child-Centred DRR Toolkit*. At www.childreninachangingclimate.org/uploads/6/3/1/1/63116409/child-centred_drr_toolkit.pdf

UNDRR (2015) *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030*. At www.undrr.org/implementing-sendai-framework/what-sf

UNICEF (2012) 'In Brazil, adolescents use UNICEF's new digital mapping technology to reduce disaster risks in the favelas'. Press release, March 2012. At www.unicef.org/statistics/brazil_62043.html

UNICEF (2013) *Disaster Risk Reduction in Education: Good Practices and New Approaches*. At www.preventionweb.net/files/37137_drrgoodpracticesandnewapproaches.pdf

UNICEF (2016a) *Guidance Note: Preparedness for Emergency Response in UNICEF*. At www.unicef.org/emergencies/files/UNICEF_Preparedness_Guidance_Note_29_Dec__2016_.pdf

UNICEF (2016b) *Child-centred Disaster Risk Reduction*. At www.unicef-emergencies.com/downloads/eresource/docs/DRR/Child-centred%20DRR.pdf

UNICEF (2018) *Guidance on Risk-Informed Programming*. At <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/unicef-guidance-risk-informed-programming-how-integrate-analysis-risk-child-rights>

WHO, UNICEF & IFRC (2018) *Risk Communication and Community Engagement Preparedness and Readiness Framework: Ebola Response in the Democratic Republic of Congo in North Kivu*. At <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/275389/9789241514828-eng.pdf?ua=1>

Chapter 5

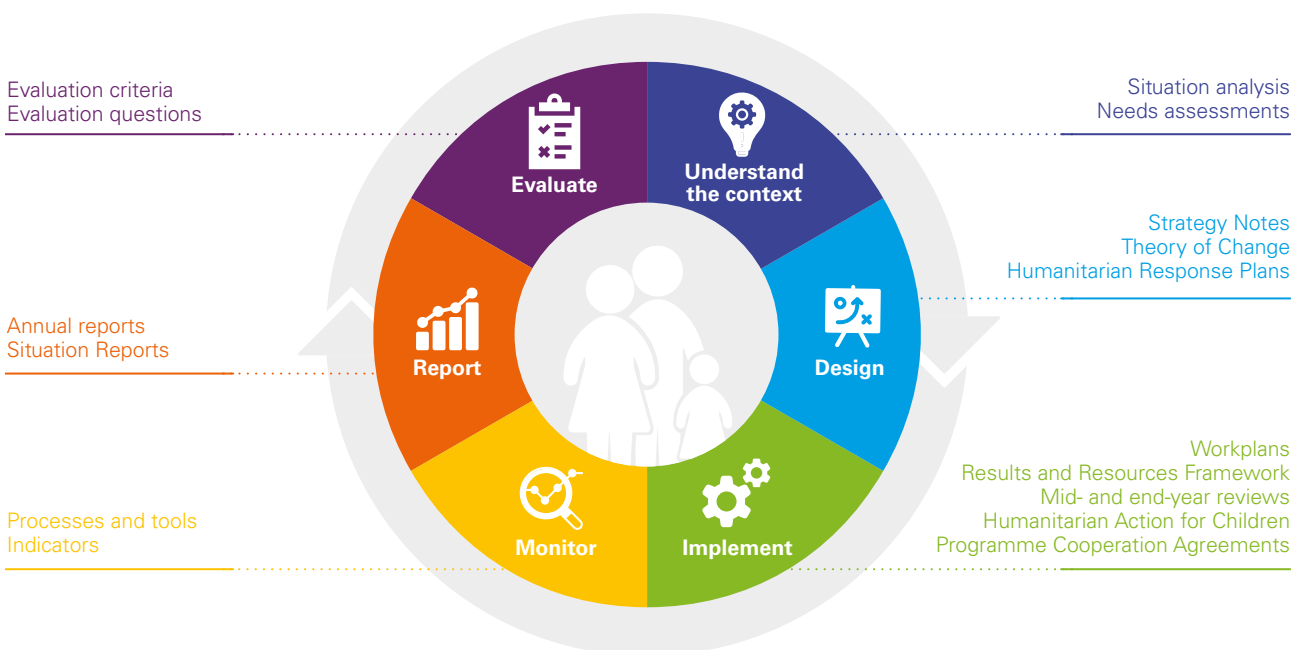
THE PROGRAMME CYCLE

In this chapter, we look how you can strengthen AAP in the programme cycle, by identifying opportunities for change and embedding AAP principles into all your organization’s regular procedures and policies.

Opportunities for change

Humanitarian agencies such as UNICEF and its partners are accountable to affected populations from the outset of a crisis through to the implementation of durable solutions. During this period of mitigation and adjustment, the programme cycle provides a step-by-step protocol that will help to ensure the humanitarian response remains effective, coherent and accountable to the people it serves. Accountability needs to be an integral part of each stage of the programme cycle, rather than a parallel stream of work (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 The programme cycle



You will need to look for opportunities to bring AAP principles into each of the six stages of the programme cycle:

- Understand the context
 - Design the programme
 - Implement the programme
- Monitor the programme
 - Report on the programme
 - Evaluate the programme.

Each of these stages is discussed below.

Understand the context

Understanding the context people live in is the foundation for effective programming, and leads us to an understanding of people's needs in a crisis.

Country Offices use two main tools for establishing the socio-economic and health status of communities: situation analysis (SitAn) and needs assessment. This is where the inclusive AAP approach is so valuable: by including the views, priorities and preferences of affected populations in understanding the context, we build strong foundations of trust.

Situation analysis

In your SitAn, have you:

- **engaged** different groups of the affected population when gathering information, including their views on their immediate and long-term needs?
- **collected** fine-grained information on the specific vulnerabilities, needs and views of different groups (e.g. children, women, people with disabilities, displaced and stateless people, refugees)?
- **listed and analysed** the systems and channels of communication you used, and identified any gaps in communication (e.g. different languages and culturally appropriate forms of communication)?

 *Tool 5.1 Tip sheet for integration of AAP in Situation Analysis*

Table 6 lists elements to include in your SitAn.

Table 6 AAP considerations for SitAn

Communication and information-sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Look at existing assessments of people's preferred communication channels and analyse the strength and weaknesses, and any gaps. (If this data does not exist, gather it.)
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Report on effective participation strategies that are working. Were these planned or ad hoc? ■ Propose ways of reaching people who are remote, marginalized, displaced or vulnerable for other reasons, e.g. because of cultural norms.
Feedback and complaints mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Map existing complaints and feedback mechanisms, including for PSEA, and report on how they are used (user-friendliness, accessibility, safety, barriers to their use). ■ Report on the main issues raised and how the organization has responded. ■ List the gaps. What is needed to close them?

Needs assessments

Various methodologies and tools are used to assess people's needs, but from the AAP perspective, what matters most is that you change your focus from relying on secondary data to actively engaging with different groups of the affected and at-risk population to hear directly from them about their needs.

- Study the existing needs assessments. Where are the gaps?
- Add questions that will help you fill these gaps.
- If no assessments are being conducted, engage with different groups to understand their needs and preferences. Use focus group discussions, helplines, SMS (text) messaging and social media, being aware of their advantages and drawbacks (*see Table 12, Chapter 7*).
- Disaggregate the data by sex, age and disability to get an in-depth understanding of the situation.
- Collaborate! When working with partners, share your findings, and suggest they include your gap-filling questions in their assessments.

Box 4 Community perceptions of humanitarian assistance in South Sudan²⁷

Despite the fact that humanitarian agencies have been operating in the region for over 30 years, there has been limited understanding of the attitudes, experiences, perceptions and opinions of the South Sudanese population in relation to aid. In 2019, REACH began work with several partners in South Sudan to address this information gap.

REACH and its partners carried out a study that integrated quantitative and qualitative data to gain a more comprehensive picture of the community's views. Quantitative data was collected through REACH's multi-sectoral remote-monitoring survey tool. Qualitative data was collected through FGDs, semi-structured in-depth individual interviews with members of the community, key informants in local authorities and humanitarian workers.

Survey and interview questions included:

- Do people in your area usually feel they are receiving enough information about the assistance that is available to them?
- Do most people in your area feel that the type of assistance they receive is the type they need most?
- How would most people prefer to share feedback or make complaints about assistance if they are unsatisfied?
- Based on your knowledge of this community, what would be the most effective way for people to provide feedback to humanitarian service providers about the assistance they are receiving?

Results of the assessments highlighted widespread dissatisfaction with humanitarian assistance, and misunderstanding of targeting procedures and criteria for aid recipients. Implementers of humanitarian assistance can draw from these and other findings to inform and strengthen programming, based on a wide range of direct community perspectives.

²⁷ REACH (2020)

Needs assessments tend to focus on sectors (e.g. health, nutrition or WASH) but don't always assess information needs and communication preferences. These are the key questions to add to needs assessments to gain an understanding of people's views and perceptions, inform the development of AAP strategies and feedback mechanisms, and help identify barriers to accessing information or feedback mechanisms:

- Are people satisfied with the timeliness, relevance, appropriateness and quality of the programme or humanitarian response, as well as their level of engagement in decision-making?
- Are people, including the most vulnerable and marginalized, receiving all the information they need?
- Do people know how to provide feedback or lodge a complaint about programmes or the humanitarian response?
- What are people's preferred communication channels?
- Have people participated in the design, monitoring and evaluation of programmes or the response?
- Are the people most in need receiving services and assistance?
- Are humanitarian actors treating and engaging with affected and at-risk populations with respect and dignity?

The Menu of Accountability to Affected Populations Related Questions for Multi-Sector Needs Assessments, developed by IASC and REACH, provides an extensive list of AAP questions to add to assessments.²⁸

 *Tool 5.2 Menu of AAP Related Questions for Multi-Sector Needs Assessments*

Design the programme

In designing programmes, you will need to feed in the results of your SitAn and needs assessments. Be open to the views of affected communities influencing the design and development of your programme: be prepared to change things if the feedback suggests a better or different way of doing things that is more in tune with the local context. It isn't sufficient to collect the information – it must translate into concrete action.

The next step is to integrate your locally informed knowledge of the context, needs and preferences into three key documents: the Strategy Notes, Theory of Change and Humanitarian Response Plans.

Strategy Notes

Strategy Notes are used to fulfil the ambitions described in the Country Programme Document (CPD) and its Results Framework. It's crucial that you integrate AAP principles into the Strategy Notes.

- **Describe** how meaningful consultations with affected populations have informed the development of the Strategy Notes.
- **Map** the communication channels as a basis for your AAP strategy.
- **Define** a communication strategy that targets different groups of the affected population.
- **Include** AAP approaches in programme design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation, and say how these lead to the Theory of Change (ToC).
- **Describe** how the Country Office will develop an inclusive complaints and feedback mechanism, based on the preferred communication channels you identified in the needs assessment.

 *Tool 5.3 Tip sheet for integration of AAP in Programme Strategy Note*

²⁸ IASC & REACH (2018)

Theory of Change

The Theory of Change (ToC) underpins the integration of AAP in your work. It is built on the following logic:

- If vulnerable and affected people can:
 - exercise their right to participate in the decisions that affect their lives
 - receive the information they need to make informed decisions
 - access safe, appropriate means to provide feedback or complaints about the quality and effectiveness of responses; and
- UNICEF and its partners systematically collect, understand, analyse and integrate the different needs, priorities and views of all vulnerable and affected groups into management processes;
- Then: humanitarian and development actions are more likely to successfully address people's immediate needs, reduce their vulnerability and strengthen their resilience.

 *Tool 5.4 Example of AAP Theory of Change*

Humanitarian Response Plans

A strategy specifying how UNICEF will be accountable to affected populations is a defining feature of a robust Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). You need to include AAP in your HRP at an early stage. You could place it within an existing section – for example, AAP would fit under interventions, the humanitarian–development nexus, cross-sectoral integration, or coverage, quality and equity. Alternatively, you could write a separate section for AAP. Whichever you do, you will need to:

- **describe** how you will respond to the needs and priorities of different groups
- **explain** your reasons for targeting specific groups
- **set out** your AAP strategy, saying how you will share information, engage with affected people and establish feedback mechanisms
- **include** at least two indicators for AAP.

 *Tool 5.5 Tip sheet for integration of AAP in Humanitarian Response Plans and Emergency Preparedness*

Box 5 Integrating AAP in Haiti's Country Programme Document

In 2017, UNICEF Haiti integrated the 'accountability' component in its CPD. Since then, PCAs signed between the Country Office and civil society organizations have systematically included a description of the complaints and feedback mechanisms needed. The monitoring and evaluation team is responsible for ensuring that feedback mechanisms are included in programme design and that the results are included in quarterly progress reports, with a dedicated section for AAP.

A partner, Action Contre la Faim, established Pale Ak Nou ('talk to us'), a 24/7 hotline. Between May 2018 and October 2019, the hotline received over 800 calls: 40% were requests for help, 29% were requests for information and 1% were major complaints.

The hotline is complemented by surveys and face-to-face sessions, to ensure comprehensive coverage.

With UNICEF's support, Action Contre la Faim has trained its staff on PSEA to ensure that standards of behaviour are upheld and that employees know how to handle, respond to and report complaints about SEA.

Implement the programme

During implementation, there are several ways to reinforce the AAP message. Workplans, indicators, mid- and end-year reviews, appeals and PCAs can all strengthen the application of AAP principles (see Table 7).

 *Tool 5.6 Budget overview for AAP*
Tool 5.7 Example of integration of AAP in PCAs

Table 7 Implementing AAP in standard documentation

IN YOUR...	INCLUDE DETAILS OF...
Workplans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> activities that involve communities in programme design how AAP fits into Strategy Notes and ToC financial and human resources needed to establish and run AAP mechanisms AAP indicators.
Results and Resources Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sectoral indicators for AAP outputs (in the Results and Resources matrix of Strategy Notes) at least one key AAP indicator for each output.
Mid- and end-year reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gaps and bottlenecks analysis of feedback planned and completed corrections to programmes and budgets alignment of these with HRPs and Humanitarian Action for Children appeals in respect of AAP.
Humanitarian Action for Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AAP targets AAP budget.
Programme Cooperation Agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> formal agreement of partners to AAP principles and practices contribution of partners to AAP implementation.

Box 6 Integrating AAP in Cameroon

UNICEF Cameroon successfully integrated AAP in two of its PCAs and a third-party monitoring checklist.

One PCA aimed to strengthen mechanisms to combat social and gender-based violence. This incorporated major activity on collecting feedback. Another aimed to establish a rapid response mechanism for displaced people in hard-to-reach areas, and did this through indicators for AAP.

Some indicators in the PCAs focused on specific AAP-related concerns. For example, there were indicators for awareness of services, trust in SEA reporting mechanisms, and satisfaction with the response to feedback. In all cases, the agreement of specific indicators for AAP made monitoring more effective and reliable.

Monitor the programme

Mainstreaming AAP into monitoring processes and tools is essential for tracking the quality and accountability of programmes and of the humanitarian response over time. By now, you'll know that holding humanitarian agencies to account means that the communities being assisted should be closely involved in the monitoring of programmes. To strengthen the focus on AAP:

- **establish and communicate** data collection processes and indicators that track implementation of AAP within programmes
- **use** complaints and feedback systems, such as field monitoring system, U-Report and SMS, to regularly ask affected populations about their experiences of the programme (e.g. 'How do you assess the quality and effectiveness of the response?')
- **share** your findings with cross-sector teams and the Country Management Team (CMT)
- **have** feedback as a standing agenda item at CMT meetings
- **take** collective decisions to respond to feedback and adjust intervention strategies
- periodically, **assess** how complaints and feedback mechanisms are being accessed and used.

Indicators

You can use agreed indicators to monitor performance on AAP at various points of the programme. **Suggested indicators are:**

- Country Office performance management (end-of-year report)
- partner reporting
- household and other surveys
- field monitoring, as part of HACT assurance activities such as programmatic visits and spot-checks

 *Tool 5.8 List of suggested AAP Indicators*

Report on the programme

As we gain experience in applying AAP, it's important that we capture and spread good practice in applying a robust AAP approach. Reports of different types can foreground the views of affected people and show how their needs, feedback and concerns have been heard and addressed:

- Country Offices report annually on their AAP progress in programmes and humanitarian responses.
- Situation Reports (Sit Reps) provide an opportunity to regularly inform on the evolution of AAP in the humanitarian response. In the 'Summary analysis section', report the trends, gaps and challenges in the implementation of AAP, and include an analysis of feedback and your organization's response. Under 'Humanitarian strategy', explain how the response has been adapted in response to feedback from affected communities.

Evaluate the programme

Evaluation goes hand in hand with monitoring and reporting. Once we have established through monitoring what needs to improve, and made adjustments, the next step is to evaluate our actions, learning and adapting and improving our performance as we go. The outcomes of actions will be particularly significant for different groups of the affected population – what difference has your work made to them? This is an opportunity to establish which AAP approaches are most likely to succeed, and why, thus feeding into a virtuous circle of improvement.

The perceptions and opinions of affected populations on the success and impact of humanitarian interventions and programmes are central to evaluation. They should be involved throughout the evaluation process, from beginning to end. It is only by engaging with people that we can know whether our programmes are effective and relevant for everyone.

Box 7 Community representatives guiding project evaluations in Cambodia²⁹

UNICEF Cambodia supports and implements projects aimed at improving educational outcomes for children from Indigenous communities. In 2018, it commissioned an independent evaluation of the Government's Multilingual Education National Action Plan (MENAP) to inform the creation of a second MENAP.

The evaluation sought feedback from Indigenous communities through discussions and consultations. To ensure stronger inputs from communities, two members of Indigenous groups joined the evaluation reference group. Thanks to their insights, the group was able to provide culturally appropriate guidance during the evaluation. Their participation also gave UNICEF Cambodia a chance to engage in a constructive dialogue about the impact of education policies and community perceptions of its work.

The community representatives also advised the evaluation team on how best to report the findings to the numerous Indigenous community networks.

Ethical considerations

You want your evaluations to be as inclusive as possible, so reaching out to marginalized groups is important. At the same time, consider how to protect people who reveal sensitive information or information that could cause them harm. You must have referral systems in place and remedial services available if trauma is revealed or menaces to well-being are identified. If you have local people working with you to gather data, always consider whether this could put them in danger too.

²⁹ UNICEF (2018)

Evaluation questions

Table 8 presents some examples of evaluation questions – use these to decide which are relevant for your context and communities.

Table 8 Evaluation criteria and sample questions³⁰

CRITERIA	SAMPLE QUESTIONS
RELEVANCE How well suited is the activity to the priorities and policies of the target group(s), recipients and donors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Were affected communities consulted on needs assessments and the selection of a target population? ■ Was humanitarian assistance adapted to changing contexts in order to meet the needs expressed by affected populations? ■ How accountable were UNICEF and its partners to affected populations? ■ What has been the extent and quality of CE?
EFFECTIVENESS Were the planned activities, outputs and outcomes achieved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Did crisis-affected communities have sufficient access to information? ■ Did they take part in the decisions that affect them? ■ How do we know this?
EFFICIENCY How efficient were you in allocating and managing resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To what extent did community feedback influence the efficiency of humanitarian operations? ■ What were the outcomes of your allocation and use of resources?
COVERAGE Which population groups facing life-threatening suffering were reached by humanitarian action?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To what extent did UNICEF and its partners identify, target and reach a large, representative section of the affected population? ■ Did we achieve adequate coverage of marginalized groups – women, children, displaced and stateless people, refugees, people with disabilities, people of all genders and sexualities?
IMPACT What positive and negative changes were achieved by the intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Did the humanitarian response take advantage of opportunities to empower communities and individuals? ■ Did it address gender inequality in the target areas?
SUSTAINABILITY Are the benefits of the intervention likely to continue?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Do affected groups feel better prepared and less at risk because of humanitarian actions? ■ How effectively did we support our partners to implement AAP? ■ How is the learning captured and used to improve and sustain the implementation of our AAP strategy?

³⁰ OECD & DAC (2019)

Resources for Chapter 5

(Key resources are highlighted in bold.)

ACAPS & CDAC Network (2014) *Pocket Guide: Information & Communication Questions in Rapid Needs Assessments*. At www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-and-resources/i/20140721173332-ihw5g

ALNAP (2016) *Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide*. At www.alnap.org/help-library/evaluation-of-humanitarian-action-guide

CHS Alliance, Sphere Project & Groupe URD (2015) *Core Humanitarian Standards Guidance Note and Indicators*.

At <https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/files/files/CHS-Guidance-Notes-and-Indicators.pdf>

DFID (2015) Beneficiary feedback in evaluation. At https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/428382/Beneficiary-Feedback-Feb15a.pdf

Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB) (2007) *The Good Enough Guide: Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergency*. At www.globalprotectioncluster.org/wp-content/uploads/ECB-Good-Enough-Guide_0.pdf

Groupe URD (2018) *Quality and Accountability Compass*. At www.urd.org/en/project/the-quality-and-accountability-compass-method/

IASC (2015a) *Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle*. At

https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/edg_aap_protection_guidance_note_2016.pdf

IASC (2015b) *Reference Module for the Implementation of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle*. At https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/hpc_reference_module_2015_final_.pdf

IASC and REACH (2018) *Menu of Accountability to Affected Populations: Related Questions for Multi-Sector Needs Assessments*. At

https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/reach_iasc_aap_psea_task_team_menu_of_aap_questions_for_needs_assessments_june_2018.pdf

IRC (2019) *Client Responsiveness Measurement Framework*. At www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/3605/irc-clientresponsivenessmeasurementframework-digital.pdf

OECD & DAC (2019) *Better Criteria for Better Evaluation: Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use*. At <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/revised-evaluation-criteria-dec-2019.pdf>

REACH (2020) *Accountability to Affected Populations: Community Perceptions of Humanitarian Assistance in South Sudan*. At https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/SSD_REACH_Report_AAP_Final.pdf

UNICEF (2013) *UNICEF Guidelines for Disability Situation Analyses*. At www.unicef.org/disabilities/files/General_Suggestions_for_Disability_SITANS.pdf

UNICEF (2018) *Ensuring Equitable Evaluations through Indigenous Representation*. At www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/VFF-2018-10-04-Ensuring-Equitable-Evaluations-through-Indigenous-Representation.pdf

United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) (2008) *Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation*. At www.uneval.org/document/download/548

Washington Group (2004) *Short Set of Questions on Disability*. At www.washingtongroup-disability.com/washington-group-question-sets/short-set-of-disability-questions/



Section 3. Implementing AAP in programmes

Chapter 6

GETTING STARTED

What are the key elements in setting up a comprehensive AAP approach? How can you tailor your AAP approach to your context? This chapter is all about the practical implementation of the AAP approach.

Community Engagement

In both development and humanitarian contexts, UNICEF promotes a people-centred approach that has Community Engagement (CE) at its core. The process of engaging and working with local groups and stakeholders and supporting people's roles in addressing issues that affect their lives is central to achieving multiple development and humanitarian outcomes (see Figure 4). CE is key to becoming more accountable to the people we serve, but is also a means, for example, to enhance civic participation and improve governance, or to strengthen community systems.

Given that engaging with communities represents a common foundation for achieving different outcomes, an integrated and coordinated CE approach within UNICEF and other aid organizations needs to be established, to enhance efficiency, avoid duplication, and, above all, avoid burdening communities. **The purpose: effective and coherent programming driven by people's views and the realities of their lives.**

Figure 4 Outcomes of Community Engagement



An inclusive approach

Communities are not homogeneous units: your AAP approach needs to be tailored to specific groups that you have identified within the affected population. **An inclusive approach can improve the participation and engagement of the most disadvantaged groups, ensuring their voices are heard, and their rights met.** Everyone's views are legitimate, and everyone's views matter. The steps to follow are to:

- **conduct** extensive mapping of the affected population to identify vulnerable and at-risk groups, social and power dynamics, local capacities and opportunities, and constraints on engagement
- **disaggregate** the data by age, gender, disability and other diversity factors, such as language
- **find out** what barriers to engagement minorities and vulnerable groups face
- **adopt and adapt** diverse engagement strategies and communications channels to ensure each group is represented in activities
- **identify and assess risks**, and take protective measures to ensure vulnerable groups have safe, inclusive and equitable opportunities to engage
- **make sure** that teams implementing AAP and CE activities are diverse and representative of the population and groups they are serving.

 *Tool 6.1 Accountability and Inclusion tip sheet*

Box 8 Engaging communities in the Volcano of Fire response in Guatemala³¹

In 2018, the Volcano of Fire in Guatemala erupted, killing over 100 people, and leaving many more injured or homeless. UNICEF and its partners conducted a needs assessment. Priorities emerged for emotional support for children, schooling, use of time while in temporary shelters, child protection and waste management.

A communication strategy was established with community leaders, using local radio stations to develop radio spots with key messages, and organizing workshops for affected people. Communications were broadcast in both Spanish and indigenous Mayan languages to ensure a wide reach. They included messages about AAP principles to empower people so they knew their rights and could expect compliance from organizations involved in the response.

³¹ UNICEF (2019)

A comprehensive approach

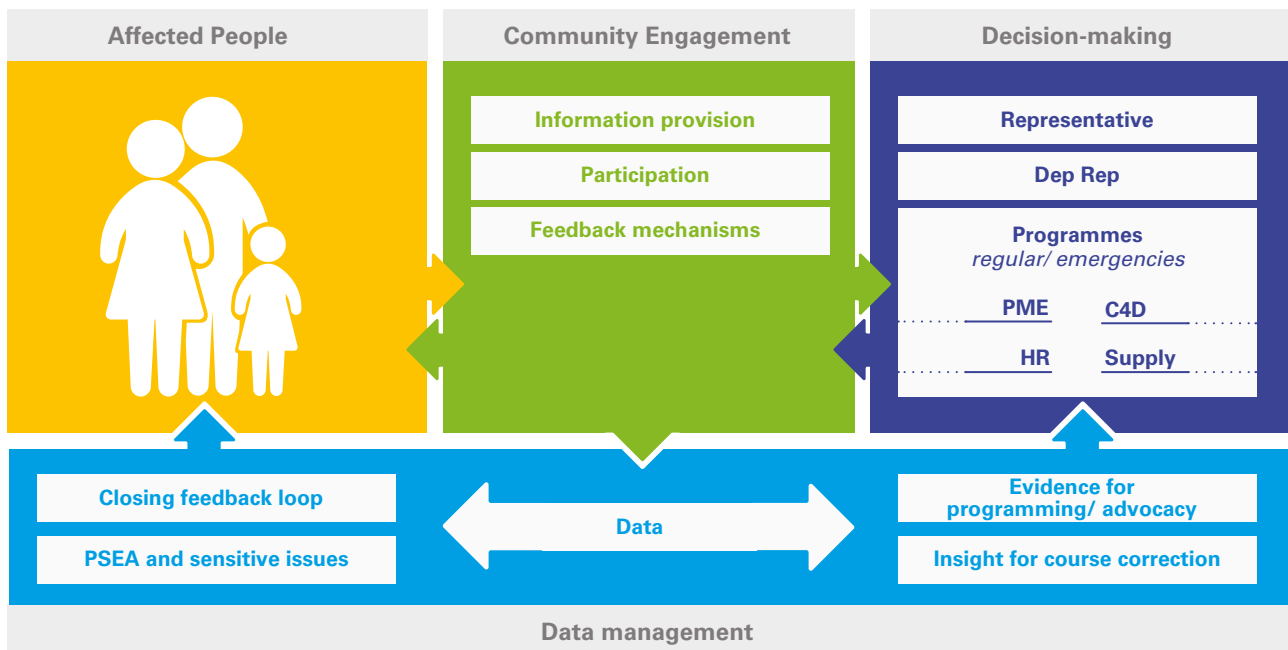
Being accountable to affected populations relies on effective CE practices in our programmes, particularly in terms of communication and information provision, participation, and complaints and feedback mechanisms. These are the key pillars of the AAP framework (see Chapter 1; the other four pillars are covered in other chapters of the Handbook). However, it does not stop there: a solid approach to AAP includes two critical components: data management and decision-making.

Ensuring that the views and feedback from affected populations inform our decisions, and that our actions are fed back to communities, is a central tenet of an accountable approach (see Figure 5; also see Chapter 9).

The information generated through engagement with communities, where affected people share their views, opinions and feedback, and are heard and acknowledged, must be used to inform decisions. Data generated through such processes must be used by leaders and decision-makers to guide course correction in programmes and advocate for changes, ensuring that people are at the centre of the decisions we make.

For all the feedback provided by affected populations, we must 'close the loop' by telling people about the action we have taken to respond to their views and concerns. When sensitive issues arise, we must deal with these individually, ensuring confidentiality and safety.

Figure 5 Comprehensive approach to AAP



A contextual approach

Different contexts call for us to tailor the AAP approach to the context (*see Table 9*).

Table 9 Tips for tailoring AAP to different contexts

CONTEXT	KEY CONSIDERATIONS	TIPS
Armed conflict	<p>In highly politicized environments, 'accountability' is a sensitive topic, and difficult to address with different factions in a conflict.</p> <p>Security restrictions, lack of access and instability make it difficult to establish relationships with affected communities.</p> <p>Power imbalances between different groups erode trust and trigger rumours and misinformation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish trust, using proximity, engagement and good communication strategies. Reach out to the most vulnerable groups and identify specific protection risks. Use ICT to reach people who are physically inaccessible.
Natural disaster	<p>In disaster-prone regions, community members are often the first responders when a disaster strikes.</p> <p>In the aftermath, physical access to populations or infrastructures might be difficult or impossible.</p> <p>Information on a dynamic situation is needed more than ever.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed AAP approaches in preparedness and DRR (<i>see Chapter 4</i>). Conduct pre-crisis mapping of preferred communication channels and ICT infrastructure (<i>see Box 3, 'Youth-led digital mapping of environmental risks and vulnerabilities in Brazil', Chapter 4</i>). Have common messages ready, that are based on consultation, testing and validation with communities, in order to facilitate timely, accurate and coherent dissemination of information. Use ICT to reach people who are physically inaccessible.
Disease epidemic	<p>Communities play a critical role in spreading information (or misinformation), which can respectively save or threaten lives.</p> <p>As the number of cases increases, fear rises and rumours are spread.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish solid feedback mechanisms to engage affected populations and encourage them to ask questions, clarify doubts and question rumours. Promote the engagement of trusted members of the community to help dispel rumours (<i>see Box 9, 'Hotspot Busters in the fight against Ebola in Sierra Leone', this Chapter</i>). Coordinate the approach to Risk Communication and CE across UNICEF and its partners to make the intervention coherent and consistent. Develop shared messages with government and other organizations so that information provided is coherent.

Table 9 Tips for tailoring AAP to different contexts (*continued*)

CONTEXT	KEY CONSIDERATIONS	TIPS
Population movement	<p>Interventions in contexts of displacement and population movement can often exacerbate tensions between displaced people and host communities.</p> <p>In some contexts, people might be on the move frequently, and so have limited opportunities to engage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conduct contextual analyses to understand the priorities, needs and vulnerabilities of both displaced people and host communities. ■ Translate messages into all the languages in use, and use a variety of formats and communication channels to ensure widespread dissemination of information. ■ Foster mutual spaces for citizens and non-citizens to promote inclusion and discourage xenophobia. ■ Use digital communication channels to increase reach and encourage engagement by people facing physical or cultural obstacles to engagement. ■ Coordinate with partners, using solid referral mechanisms to address gaps.
Long-term development	<p>Participation and community engagement are deeply rooted in development programming.</p> <p>Social accountability offers solid foundations for establishing an AAP approach that breaks the humanitarian–development divide.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Involve the government and local leaders from the beginning of the adoption of social accountability approaches to help ensure sustainability (<i>see Chapter 12</i>). ■ Establish robust participation structures, communication systems and feedback mechanisms. ■ Move beyond ad-hoc participation to community empowerment, so that positive change is owned, led and sustained by the community.

Box 9 Hotspot Busters in the fight against Ebola in Sierra Leone³²

The Hotspot Busters initiative was a key element of UNICEF's immediate response to the 2015 Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone, when over 800 members of the community were deployed to more than 344 communities considered to be Ebola hotspots.

They had been trained to increase engagement in helping to prevent the spread of Ebola. They linked up with and activated young people, women and volunteer networks, reaching approximately 9,000 households a week.

The advantage of using community members to mobilize was clear: as trusted figures in their communities, they were able to conduct house-to-house visits, awareness-raising and signposting to the Ebola hotline in suspected Ebola cases, thus reducing the spread of the disease.

³² UNICEF (2015b)

Box 10 Engaging young refugees and migrants in Italy

To help unaccompanied child migrants and refugees arriving in Italy without much knowledge of their rights, UNICEF set up the U-Report on the Move project (U-Report OTM). This allows young people to raise their concerns with UNICEF through the Facebook Messenger app. Through this digital, two-way channel, young refugees and migrants get critical information about their rights and the complex bureaucratic system they find themselves in.

A U-Report poll asked adolescents about their work in Italy. Results highlighted that adolescent migrants are at risk of being hired on irregular contracts, being underpaid and being exploited. To address this, UNICEF and Intersos shared a user-friendly handbook with U-Reporters that included tips on finding work, workers' rights and how to apply for jobs.

Supporting U-Report OTM are U-Ambassadors, a volunteer initiative that encourages young people to be active in their community, not just digitally but also in person. In Italy, U-Ambassadors organize gatherings and take actions to support other migrants and refugees.

Resources for Chapter 6

(Key resources are highlighted in bold.)

ALNAP (2014) *Rhetoric or Reality? Putting Affected People at the Centre of Humanitarian Action*. At www.alnap.org/help-library/rhetoric-or-reality-putting-affected-people-at-the-centre-of-humanitarian-action-0

CDAC Network (2019) *Collective Communication and Community Engagement in Humanitarian Action*. At www.cdacnetwork.org/i/20190205111959-9qxls

DRC (2018) *Listen to our Voices: What does it take to improve refugee participation in durable solutions processes?* At https://drc.ngo/media/4736779/participation-and-durable-solutions-guidance-for-crrf_drc-here_july-2018.pdf

ICRC (2018) *Engaging with people affected by armed conflicts and other situations of violence*. At www.icrc.org/fr/publication/engaging-people-affected-armed-conflicts-and-other-situations-violence

ICRC & IFRC (2016) *A Red Cross Red Crescent Guide to Community Engagement and Accountability*. At <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/01/CEA-GUIDE-2401-High-Resolution-1.pdf>

UNICEF (2015a) *Communication for Humanitarian Action Toolkit (CHAT)*. At www.unicef-emergencies.com/downloads/eresource/docs/Communication%20for%20Development/6-C4D-CHAT_Proof-2.pdf

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UNICEF (2019) *C4D in Humanitarian Action: Guatemala Fuego volcano: Participatory production and the strengthening of local capacity for accountability to affected populations*. At www.unicef.org/cbsc/files/C4D_in_Humanitarian_Action_Case_Study_Guatemala_Fuego_volcano_2018.pdf

WHO (2017) *Community engagement framework for quality, people-centred and resilient health services*. At <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/259280/WHO-HIS-SDS-2017.15-eng.pdf>

Chapter 7

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

Thinking about different audiences, messages and channels of communication can make all the difference to the effectiveness of information-sharing and communication. In the AAP approach, this all relates to a two-way dialogue. This chapter explains how.

Information provision – or dialogue?

People need accurate, timely information to be able to take decisions about their lives. This much is obvious – but what is sometimes overlooked is that they also have the right to engage in dialogue and express their views about what they are being told.

Information-sharing is a constant, dynamic process that should take place at every stage of a programme or response until its completion. The exchange of accurate, useful and timely information from trusted sources, in an appropriate language and accessible format, is critical to helping people to make informed decisions. This applies particularly in emergencies, when communication networks are likely to be disrupted, and information on services, safety and family links is needed more than ever.

Programmes and interventions are more effective when guided and informed by continuous dialogue with the people for whom they are designed. For this reason, it is important to create as many opportunities as possible for two-way communication so that each exchange becomes a forum for sharing, listening and acting.

Addressing diverse audiences

Affected groups and communities are never homogeneous units. They speak diverse languages, follow different norms of social and cultural interaction, use and trust different channels, and have distinct levels of knowledge and access to information. **To ensure information reaches and is understood by as many people as possible, consider the following:**

- **Context is everything.** Communication dynamics change according to context, so an in-depth understanding of the local context is required. A previously successful approach can inform your choices, but should not be duplicated as a matter of course – it must be tailored to each context (*see Table 9, Chapter 6*).
- **Listening** to what already works for different groups and building on that is a great starting point. Where do people usually access information? Which languages are used? Which sources do people trust? What formats are they able to access?

- **Communicating** with diverse and complex audiences calls for a diversified approach. You will need imaginative strategies to reach marginalized groups, such as those with low literacy or who speak a minority language, or those with disabilities or who are geographically or socially remote.
- **Consider** how to address children and adolescents. Use tailored tools and methodologies that are age-appropriate, culturally sensitive and inclusive. They must generate interest and engagement (*see Chapter 8, 'Participation of children and adolescents'*).
- During and after implementation, **discuss** with the diverse groups whether they feel that information and communications are accessible and achieving the intended goal. Use the feedback to adapt communications as needed.

Effective messaging

A good message has the qualities of being:

- goal-oriented (aims to achieve something specific, such as answering a question, promoting engagement, prompting action, resolving a concern, etc.)
- short, simple and clear
- in appropriate languages and formats, adapted to different groups
- pre-tested with various groups before being shared more broadly
- shared coherently and consistently across all channels.

Remember the 'KISS' principle – Keep It Simple and Short! Short messages can easily be owned, translated, adapted or replicated. They can be based on a careful consideration of the specific context, sensitivities or concerns of particular groups.

In a crisis, people seek context-specific, timely, actionable and life-saving information to make informed decisions (*see Table 10*).

A single organization is usually unable to provide all the information that affected communities require, so you need to be equipped to refer people to a reliable partner organization or agency. Remember that partners must be working to the same high standards of behaviour (*see Chapter 3, 'Code of Conduct'*). Ideally, communication activities will be coordinated across all the organizations working in the same area in order to avoid duplication, incoherent messaging and information overload.

Remember to continue assessing information needs so that messages remain relevant and useful.

Table 10 Information-sharing at the onset of an emergency

INFORMATION ON...	FOCUS OF MESSAGES	
AID ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What is happening? ■ When is it happening? ■ Where is it happening? ■ How is it happening? ■ Who is providing the assistance? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Who will receive assistance? ■ What are the criteria for entitlement to assistance? ■ How should I use the assistance? ■ How can I find out more?
THE ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What is the organization? ■ How is it identified? ■ How can it be contacted? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What can I expect from the organization?
AID AND HUMAN RIGHTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Right to assistance (free and needs-based) ■ Right to give feedback ■ Right to be informed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Right to participate in decisions ■ Right to be treated with respect ■ PSEA and child safeguarding
SERVICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What services are available to me? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What are my legal rights?

Rumours and false information

In times of uncertainty, false information and rumours spread easily as people try to make sense of a situation or react to a perceived threat.

False information and rumours have negative effects, both for communities and for organizations working with them. Nevertheless, they are also a source of feedback on programmes and humanitarian intervention, and therefore should not be ignored.

As with any other communication from affected populations, rumours should be heard and responded to, using appropriate channels. Prepare and disseminate messages and other communication materials to address directly the issues that arise from your analysis of rumours. This will rectify misunderstandings, clarify doubts and dispel the uncertainty that breeds rumours.

Understanding the communication landscape

Knowing which communication channels affected populations use will determine how your programme or intervention is designed and implemented, and the choice of information-sharing and complaints and feedback mechanisms.

Begin by taking stock of the telecommunications environment and the communication channels normally used in the area in which you are working. Secondary sources of information on this are network operators, the media, ICT companies, civil society organizations, and national and regional players. In a crisis, you will need to establish whether these communication channels remain available.

Once you have established an overall view of the communication landscape, you need to implement AAP principles by consulting affected groups on matters such as the level of access to, and trust in, each communication channel. For example, what prevents people from using particular channels of communication, such as public gatherings, social media or radio broadcasts? If it hasn't already emerged from your needs assessment (*see Chapter 5 'Understand the context'*), find out what type of information they feel is most pressing and relevant (*see Table 11*).³³

In general, it is good practice to share results and analysis of assessments or other studies with affected populations. AAP principles indicate that communities deserve access to the knowledge they have made possible through their engagement – and they will also provide useful feedback on the interpretation and analysis of results.

Box 11 Needs assessment in Venezuela³⁴

In 2019, IFRC, UNHCR and their partners conducted an information and communication needs assessment among different population groups affected by the Venezuelan crisis. They collected data in 15 countries, using face-to-face and online surveys, FGDs and observations.

Analysis revealed that most people used their mobile phones to access information and to communicate, often using apps such as Facebook and WhatsApp. However, a significant number did not have access to a mobile phone, and some raised concerns about the reliability of information on social media.

The major information needs were for access to rights and legal procedures, where to find assistance, and access to employment. Although most respondents had contact with humanitarian actors, not everybody knew whom to contact and where. Only 51% felt informed about their rights and the assistance available to them.

The needs assessment allowed identification of the most appropriate and important information, as defined by members of the affected populations themselves. This approach is entirely in line with a people-centred, AAP approach.

³³ CDAC Network & ACAPS (2014)

³⁴ R4V (2019)

Table 11 Rapid assessment questions on information and communication channels

TOPIC	ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS
ACCESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the main channels of communication available to your community right now? What channels did you use before?
BARRIERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is preventing you from getting the information you need now? Are there groups that have more difficulty accessing information, and why?
TRUST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which sources of information do the people in your community trust the most? And the least? Are there any other trusted sources? Who uses these?
NEEDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What would the community like more information on at the moment? What do you need to know more about?
PREFERENCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How would you most like to communicate with aid agencies?

Picking the right channel

When deciding which communication channels to adopt, as guided by affected populations, it's also important to consider the advantages and drawbacks of each. One size does not fit all: it's always necessary to use a combination of channels, and often a mix of face-to-face and digital interactions. While some communication channels focus on the provision of information, thus limiting the exchange of views, others support extensive and meaningful dialogue (see Table 12).

Box 12 Strengthening accountability of cash programming in Lebanon³⁵

In 2018, WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF and their partners implemented mechanisms to strengthen accountability in a multi-purpose cash programme for refugees in Lebanon.

Based on the expressed preferences of affected populations, communication by SMS (text messaging) was selected as the primary channel for sharing information. Both recipients and non-recipients of cash can contact a call centre for information. Traditional communication channels, such as in-person visits to reception centres or distribution sites and leafletting, complement the phone communication channels.

Feedback is recorded and responded to, and monitored and analysed to inform and adjust the programme itself, as well as the information shared. For example, after people had reported overcrowding at ATMs on the days when cash was distributed, adjustments were made so that payments were distributed over several days and people were notified by SMS about the dates.

³⁵ CALP & CAMEALEON (2019)

Table 12 Strengths and weaknesses of channels for communication and engagement

COMMUNICATION CHANNEL	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	STRENGTHENING AAP
 <p>Community meetings with different stakeholders including community members, local partners and government representatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can serve large groups. Good for collecting feedback and views and concerns of community members. Provide ownership and oversight of the programme by communities. Can target specific groups, such as children or women. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not everyone feels comfortable to speak out (for example women and children), so active participation can be limited. Can reinforce existing power structures and exclude certain groups (such as women, children, or people with disabilities). Not suitable for confidential or delicate issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look at meetings as an opportunity for two-way communication and not only to provide information to affected populations. Organize meetings for different groups, for example with only women participants, or only for adolescents or children, and adapt the format to participants to ensure views of different groups are heard. Having the right profile of trained facilitators among staff will enhance engagement. For all-women groups use female staff, for example.
 <p>Household visits by staff formal and informal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide direct access to people, including those who might not be able to participate in meetings or activities. Provide an opportunity to discuss in detail and in confidence, and to clarify issues on the spot and receive feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The staff visiting may not be the right person for affected people to talk to (for example, they may not want to talk to a technician, or women may not feel comfortable talking to a man). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Household visits are particularly effective in reaching women and populations with reduced mobility. Ensure visits are carried out by vetted and trained personnel with the right profile.
 <p>Key community members and groups leaders, influencers, friends, neighbours, family members, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Represent an important source for information-sharing among community members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaders might not be trusted by their communities nor represent them. Challenges in passing on accurate information and avoiding spreading of rumours. Not a suitable channel for confidential or delicate issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key community members will probably be well informed and their knowledge on a specific issue strengthened. Engaging leaders and influencers facilitates access to, and engagement with, their wider communities.

Table 12 Strengths and weaknesses of channels for communication and engagement (*continued*)

COMMUNICATION CHANNEL	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	STRENGTHENING AAP
 <p>Help desks managed by staff at a specific site</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share targeted information with a large group of people. Refer people to other services. Collect targeted feedback. Provide a face-to-face channel, which is the preferred option of many. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linked to a specific intervention and therefore not permanently accessible. Staff need to be able to speak local/multiple languages. Not confidential, and not everyone will feel comfortable to approach the desk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diverse helpdesk teams composed of men and women, fluent in different languages and well trained encourage stronger engagement with affected populations.
 <p>Radio programmes managed by community members or journalists, and including community input and participation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide broad and quick coverage. Engage listeners and strengthen trust by using local voices. Reach people who are not literate, using their local language, as well as visually impaired people. Reach people in hard-to-reach locations. Can be specifically tailored to children. Call-in or SMS (text) message options encourage active participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information needs to be current and regular. Participation from community members requires dedicated follow-up. Information not accessible to people with hearing impairments or who use minority languages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Radio programmes need to be in the language of affected populations. Multiple languages spoken among groups need to be used to ensure a broad reach. A call-in or SMS (text) system linked to the programme will make radio programmes engaging and allow for two-way communication and feedback. Trained staff should be managing the engagement. Participation of communities in the programme could put them at risk. Before setting up programme, consider whether it is appropriate to air in the context.

Table 12 Strengths and weaknesses of channels for communication and engagement (*continued*)

COMMUNICATION CHANNEL	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	STRENGTHENING AAP
 <p>Radio information broadcast as news or jingles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provides broad coverage and reach. ■ Reach people who are not literate, using their local language, as well as visually impaired people. ■ Reach people in hard-to-reach locations. ■ Share targeted information or a call for action, or raise awareness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ One-way communication approach. ■ Radio information is not always absorbed if it is not presented well. ■ Difficult to determine whether messages are received well or understood. ■ Information needs to be broadcast in different languages, on different radio channels. ■ Information is not accessible to people with hearing impairments or who use minority languages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consider which radio channels are the most trusted and popular among different groups, bearing in mind language and cultural preferences.
 <p>Local broadcasting system e.g. loudspeakers and audio-visuals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reach people who do not have access to radio, TV or a phone. ■ Target specific groups in a location (when static) or in different locations (when mobile). ■ Share messages in multiple languages. ■ Loudspeakers and audio-visuals can ensure information provision to visually and hearing-impaired people respectively. ■ Reinforce messages communicated through other channels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cannot be used for complex messages. ■ Coverage depends on physical access, so may not reach all groups. ■ One-way communication. ■ Information not accessible to people with hearing impairments or who use minority languages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ When using loudspeakers ensure people recognize who is sharing the message. ■ Combine this channel with opportunities to communicate face to face to ensure two-way communication.

Table 12 Strengths and weaknesses of channels for communication and engagement *(continued)*


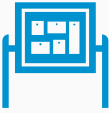
COMMUNICATION CHANNEL	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	STRENGTHENING AAP
 <p>TV programmes and announcements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a broad reach, especially in urban areas. Television has a high impact on the audience. Simple messages can be summarized in announcements, while complex messages can be shared in programmes. Reach illiterate and hearing-impaired people. Can be specifically tailored to children and adolescents. Call-in or SMS (text) message options create engagement opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costly and complex to set up. Limited geographic coverage (mostly urban). Excludes populations in low-income and rural areas. Depends on infrastructure, which might be damaged. Can expose participants to risk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in TV programmes requires a lot of resources. Risks to affected populations participating in a programme should be carefully considered.
 <p>Notice boards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low cost and simple to set up. Good to introduce a topic or disseminate information with local relevance. Accessible to a broad audience (literate), as well as to hearing-impaired people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-way communication. Limited geographic coverage. Not accessible to people with visual impairments or reduced mobility. Best suited for communities where a large proportion are literate. Not suitable for complex information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notice boards work better in strategic places, where people congregate or transit. Depending on the type of information displayed, it might need constant updating. Combine this channel with opportunities to communicate face to face to ensure two-way communication.

Table 12 Strengths and weaknesses of channels for communication and engagement (*continued*)

COMMUNICATION CHANNEL	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	STRENGTHENING AAP
 <p>Printed materials posters, flyers, cards, calendars, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials with a lot of pictures are accessible to people who are not literate. Can be specifically tailored to children and adolescents. Easily distributed and shared. Reinforce messages communicated through other channels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-way communication. Might not be consulted by people who are not used to printed materials. If text-heavy, only accessible to literate people. Difficult to determine how messages are received or understood. Needs updating. Generates waste once discarded. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Printed materials generate limited engagement and are not accessible to everyone. It is therefore important to consider their limitations and complement them with other information channels. Printed materials should be made accessible to visually impaired people.
 <p>Suggestion boxes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple and low cost. Enables anonymous feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If feedback is anonymous, it cannot be used as a two-way communication channel. Only available to people who can write. Often not trusted because of uncertainty about how the information is managed. Can cause security and/or confidentiality issues for people that use it if not well monitored. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boxes must be physically accessible to everyone. Staff must monitor the box regularly and information must be kept secure. It is important to assess understanding of, and trust in, this channel among community members. Risks for affected populations related to using the box should be carefully considered.

Table 12 Strengths and weaknesses of channels for communication and engagement *(continued)*

COMMUNICATION CHANNEL	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	STRENGTHENING AAP
 <p>SMS (text) messages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Flexible channel that can be used to provide information and seek feedback. ■ Broad reach. ■ Can be shared in many languages and reach different groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Require considerable budget and resources. ■ May exclude people who are not literate, that have visual impairments, those without phones and not familiar with technology and those in areas with poor mobile network coverage. ■ Information must be very concise. ■ Cannot determine how messages are received or understood. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bulk SMS (text) messaging requires an agreement with local telecommunication companies. ■ Ensure messages are in the different languages spoken by groups. ■ This channel works well for very specific information. ■ Use other channels to ensure people understand who is communicating with them.
 <p>Messaging and chat apps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Share information in different formats (such as text, pictures, audio and video). ■ Facilitate discussions and rapid exchange of information. ■ Work across countries and reach displaced people and persons on the move. ■ Very popular with young people. ■ Can be combined with an automatic answering method (chatbot). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Rumours and misinformation can spread quickly. ■ Exclude people without smartphones and access to IT networks. ■ Can be difficult to moderate when there is a large number of active users. ■ Automatic answering limits interaction and can be a source of frustration for users. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dedicated staff with different language skills need to monitor conversations and be responsive at all times. ■ Privacy and data security issues need careful consideration. ■ Consider the perception of messaging apps among the affected population. ■ Can work particularly well to talk about issues people are embarrassed to ask about in person, for example sexual health.

Table 12 Strengths and weaknesses of channels for communication and engagement (*continued*)

COMMUNICATION CHANNEL	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	STRENGTHENING AAP
 <p>Social media</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides options for bulk information, one- or two-way communication in private, semi-public and public settings. Share information in different formats (text, pictures, audio and video). Facilitate discussion and exchange. Work across countries and displaced people and persons on the move. Very popular with young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rumours and misinformation can spread quickly. Exclude people without smartphones and access to IT network. Risk of messages being hijacked by vested interests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated staff with different language skills need to monitor conversations and be responsive at all times. Privacy and data protection issues need to be carefully considered. Can work well to talk about issues people are embarrassed to ask about in person, for example sexual health.
 <p>Helplines including direct access to operator or interactive voice response</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a rapid response across large geographical and hard-to-reach areas. Open to many and particularly suited for illiterate people. When managed by an operator, it is a solid two-way communication channel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require considerable budget and resources. May exclude people without phones or those in areas with poor network coverage. Requires significant outreach efforts to ensure trust and understanding of how it works. An interactive voice response system may generate frustration among users. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated staff and continued efforts are needed to coordinate information exchange and ensure follow-up and response. Staff managing the helpline must be able to cover all languages spoken in the area. A hotline needs to comply with legal requirements. Privacy and data protection issues need to be carefully considered. A toll-free number is often more difficult to set up than a regular number but ensures that everyone can access it.

Table 12 Strengths and weaknesses of channels for communication and engagement (*continued*)

COMMUNICATION CHANNEL	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	STRENGTHENING AAP
 <p>Outreach activities e.g. theatre, story-telling, education sessions, activities organized by clubs, associations or groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Face-to-face is the strongest form of communication. ■ Ensure engagement from the community and message-sharing between key groups. ■ Deliver key messages in different formats. ■ Provide a forum for in-depth interaction and feedback with specific groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Require considerable resources and expertise. ■ Have limited geographic coverage. ■ Exclude groups with limited mobility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consider each activity that engages affected populations as an opportunity to communicate with them by providing information and listening to feedback.

Resources for Chapter 7

(Key resources are highlighted in bold.)

BBC Media Action: <http://commisaid.bbcmmediaaction.org/>

CALP & CAMEALEON (2019) *Research Report on AAP in the World Food Programme's Multi-purpose Cash Programme*. At <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/cash-assistance-lebanon-accountability-affected-populations-aap-research-report-aap>

CDAC Network (2014) *Communicating with communities during the first six weeks of an emergency response*. At www.cdacnetwork.org/contentAsset/raw-data/3b8afbbf-d9de-4a0e-be3f-71bd36ef030f/attachedFile

CDAC Network (2017) *Rumour has it: A practice guide to working with rumours*. At www.alnap.org/help-library/rumour-has-it-a-practice-guide-to-working-with-rumours

CDAC Network (2018) *Toolkit: Mainstreaming communication with communities in emergency response*. At www.cdacnetwork.org/contentAsset/raw-data/c007fe6c-f11b-45bb-a662-f72b72c0a25c/attachedFile

CDAC Network & ACAPS (2014) *Assessing information and communication needs*. At <http://www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-and-resources/i/20140721173332-ihw5g>

Overseas Development Institute (ODI) (2013) *Improving communication between humanitarian aid agencies and crisis-affected people: lessons from the Infoasaid project*. At www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/np74-infoasaid-paper.pdf

UNICEF (2011) *Communicating with Children: Principles and practices to nurture, inspire, educate and heal*. At www.unicef.org/cwc/

Response for Venezuelans (R4V) (2019) *Regional Information and Communication Needs Assessment: Understanding the information and communication needs of refugees and migrants in the Venezuela Situation*. At <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/73683.pdf>

Chapter 8

PARTICIPATION

Meaningful participation in decision-making is the foundation of effective AAP. This chapter looks at how you can build participation among affected populations. We look at the factors that constrain, support and shape participation, and explain how you can apply participatory approaches at every stage of the programme cycle.

Ownership

Everyone – regardless of their gender, age, disability or other differences – must be empowered to express their views and make their own choices, supported by reliable and accessible information, and have a genuine say in decisions.

Participation takes many forms, depending on the context, but will always lead to establishing ownership among the affected population that will help to improve programmes and contribute to their sustainability.

Overcoming barriers

Defining a strategy for participation requires you to understand the factors that influence it. Identifying the barriers to participation, and implementing solutions to overcome them, are the first steps in gaining equitable and widespread participation among communities (*see Table 13, Table 14 and Table 15*).

Box 13 From problem identification to project design in Kosovo³⁶

In 2019, UNICEF's Innovations Lab Kosovo and UN Women engaged young Kosovan adults on the issue of gender-based violence (GBV) through an UPSHIFT workshop, an initiative that supports young people to become social innovators in their communities.

Having identified conservative attitudes towards sex education in Kosovo as a potential barrier, the young people worked with a mentor to design a phone app called SHNET, which focuses on sex education. A mobile app was considered to be an excellent means of reaching young people.

SHNET is now helping young women not only to talk about the problems they face in relation to GBV, but also about empowerment.

³⁶ UNICEF (2019d)

Table 13 Barriers to participation and solutions

BARRIERS	SOLUTIONS
Limited time to participate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establish the most convenient times for different groups as part of your needs assessment (<i>see Chapter 5 'Understand the context'</i>). ■ Be flexible: contact people outside working and school hours if necessary. ■ Strike a balance between an ideal amount of time for participation and what is feasible without compromising on the minimal amount of time needed for participation to be meaningful (<i>see 'From consultation to participation' below</i>). ■ Endeavour to alter perceptions about what is important: raise the profile of active participation and engagement.
Hesitancy and fear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Discuss the importance of participation with local authorities and representatives of vulnerable groups, to get them on board first. Ask for their help to reach out to others. ■ Engage in conversations about the value of participation to people's lives and life chances. ■ Be transparent. Tell people about UNICEF's mandate and our AAP principles, stressing our neutrality and impartiality. ■ Create trust to help people feel safe. ■ Promote peace and reconciliation activities. ■ Create safe spaces for participation – ask people what they need to help them feel safe.
Low literacy levels, minority languages and hearing, speech and sight impairments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Literacy is not just the ability to read. Be aware of different areas of 'literacy' (e.g., digital literacy, writing, reading, speaking, numeracy). ■ Identify the most appropriate means of communication with different groups from your needs assessment (<i>see Chapter 5</i>). ■ Create participatory mechanisms for vulnerable categories to feed back on the most appropriate way to communicate with them. ■ Use the most strategic mixture of communication channels to reach the people who need to be reached (<i>see Table 12, Chapter 7</i>). ■ Promote approaches and activities that facilitate the engagement of people with low literacy levels and with impairments (e.g. discussion groups, storytelling and role plays, drawings, mapping, video making).
Participation fatigue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Work with partners to integrate your approach across different programmes to avoid duplicating your work. ■ Be aware of the risks of over-burdening people with assessments, surveys, etc. ■ Be practical and don't aim uniquely at thorough levels of participation: in some instances (depending on the context), a quick consultation may suffice.

Table 14 Organizational barriers to participation and solutions

BARRIERS FOR ORGANIZATIONS	SOLUTIONS
Participation not prioritized by the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advocate within your organization to raise the profile of participation and AAP more generally. ■ Promote participatory planning and ensure that financial and staff resources are allocated for its implementation. ■ Monitor and evaluate to what extent participation is included in processes and systems, including in processes implemented by partners.
Lack of funds and flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Plan resources for participation in advance and allocate a ring-fenced budget. ■ Include a contingency budget line to allow flexibility to adapt the project, including participatory activities. ■ Advocate with donors for more flexibility to adjust funding for programmes.
Capacity of staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Add participatory programming to staff competency frameworks and job descriptions. ■ Dedicate resources to strengthen the capacity of staff in participatory programming.
Lack of access to affected people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tap into digital communication channels. ■ Work with local partners and organizations that can negotiate access and build trust.
Environment hindering participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Work collaboratively with local staff who have good awareness of the local and national socio-cultural, religious and political context. ■ Train staff on how to conduct participatory approaches in sensitive settings (including how to behave, how to speak, how to interact with people, etc.). ■ Ensure that governments and all other parties involved understand the purpose and benefits of genuine and meaningful participation, as well as UNICEF's commitment to it. ■ Assess the implications of participation for the safety of people who are actively participating, and do risk assessments of their involvement. ■ Retain confidentiality to protect participants' identify where necessary, especially when collecting and analysing data.

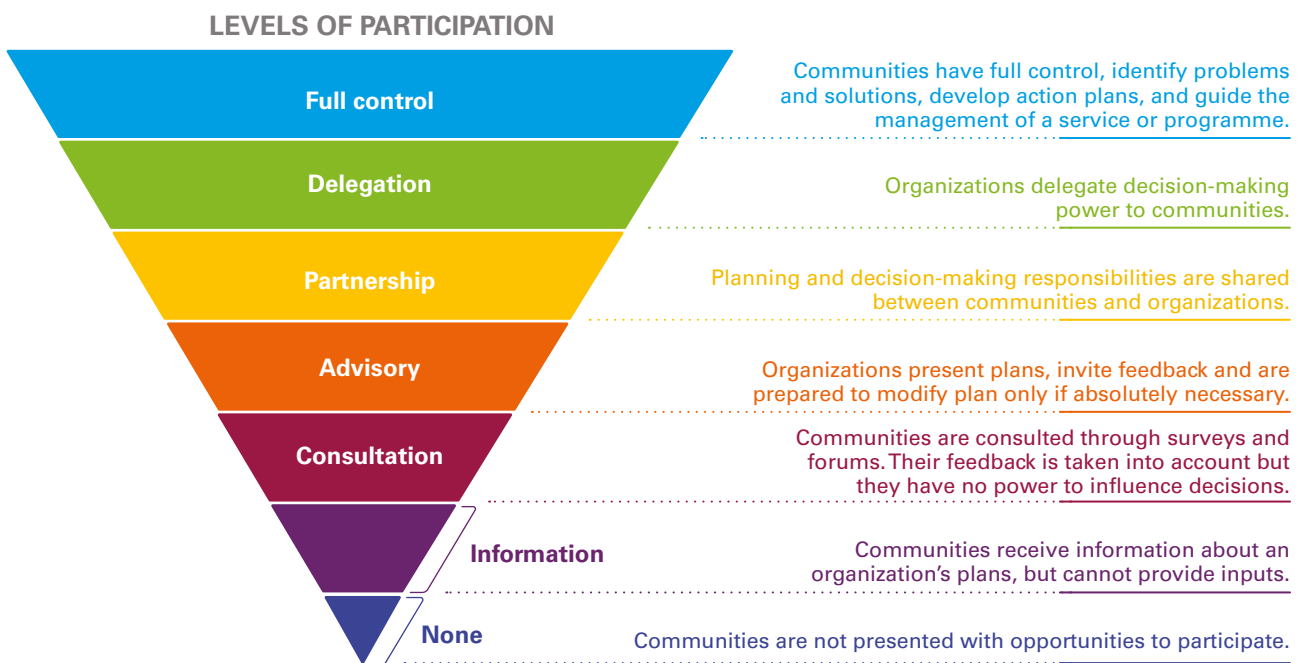
Table 15 Participation of specific groups

SPECIFIC GROUPS	SOLUTIONS
Women and girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advocate and engage with men and religious leaders on women’s participation, while remaining aware of and respecting cultural norms, attitudes and behaviours. ■ Advocate and engage with parents and caregivers on girls’ participation. ■ Consult with communities (both men and women) on the most culturally appropriate ways for women and girls to participate. ■ Support women’s groups and associations. ■ Create safe spaces and choose the most suitable time for activities. ■ Use informal channels and spaces to help women and girls express themselves.
Older people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Create dedicated spaces that are accessible and appropriate for older people. ■ Foster connections between older people and younger generations by organizing appropriate shared activities.
Children and adolescents <i>(see ‘Participation of children and adolescents’ below)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Collaborate with organizations that specialize in working with children. ■ In your planning, consider the different capacities across ages and stages of development – children aged 6–9 will have very different interests and needs from those aged 15 and over, for example. ■ Consult parents, teachers and community leaders on the most culturally appropriate ways for children and adolescents to take part. ■ Identify and respond to the needs of the most vulnerable groups of children and adolescents. ■ Create safe spaces for children and adolescents to express themselves. ■ Use child-friendly, entertaining and fun approaches. ■ Mix methods for partnering with a limited number of children and adolescents (in personal consultations) and with large groups (such as U-Report). ■ Create mechanisms for children and adolescents to feed back periodically on UNICEF’s responses.
People with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use appropriate communication channels and formats that are adapted to specific impairments. ■ Ensure people with disabilities are aware of their right to participate. ■ Promote approaches and activities that facilitate the engagement of people with impairments. ■ Collaborate with organizations that specialize in working with people with disabilities, such as NGOs, women’s organizations, youth networks, etc.

From consultation to participation: getting the balance right

There are different levels of participation (see Figure 6). At one end, participation is limited to consultation of affected populations, or sometimes no participation at all, while at the higher end, people take full control of programmes. Try to achieve the highest level of participation that is appropriate and feasible for the context, but always ensure the approach is inclusive and safe for affected populations and staff.

Figure 6 Levels of participation³⁷



While it may seem difficult to implement participation in a crisis, the opposite is sometimes the case. During a crisis, there is a stronger interest among populations to participate than in stable situations. This is complemented by a greater need among responders to gain rapid access to information in a disrupted context where regular information systems are often impaired.

 *Tool 8.1 Tips on running focus group discussions*
 *Tool 8.2 Tips on holding community meetings*

³⁷ Adaptation of Hart's Ladder of Participation (1992)

Participation across the programme cycle

Participation is a key element across the whole programme cycle. As we saw in Chapter 5, integrating AAP in the programme cycle requires the use of various organizational structures and tools. Here, we look in closer detail at the way in which participation cuts across all six stages of the programme cycle (see Figure 7).

Figure 7 Participatory programming



BUILD YOUR PROGRAMME WITH PEOPLE BY...

IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAMME

- **establishing community** committees and teams for the implementation of specific parts of the programme (e.g. information and communication committee, monitoring committee).
- **establishing partnerships** with local groups so that they can take over certain duties and responsibilities.
- **identifying meaningful** roles that young people can play in the provision of services, such as outreach, awareness-raising and maintenance.
- **reducing barriers** to participation which could restrict engagement in consultations or other activities (*see Tables 13, 14 and 15 above*).
- **building the capacities** and skills of community members, especially adolescents, women and people with disabilities, so they can own and implement specific parts of the programme.
- **working alongside community influencers**, such as religious and group leaders, volunteers, representatives of clubs and associations, youth networks and women's organizations, to build engagement.
- **establishing lines of communications** and channels so that everyone knows how to make their voice heard.
- **conducting** regular meetings for different groups of the affected population, to share information on the programme and listen to their feedback.
- **creating spaces** for informal discussions and training staff accordingly – sometimes relevant information will only surface during informal chats.

MONITORING THE PROGRAMME

- **establishing with communities** how to measure progress and success and adapting standard indicators accordingly.
- **sharing monitoring responsibilities** with affected populations by establishing a monitoring committee. Agree on which monitoring activities will be carried out by community members and which by your organization.
- **facilitating** the participation of young people in reviews.
- **creating easy-to-use tools** for affected populations to monitor programmes and projects and providing training in their use.
- **conducting regular meetings** where community committees brief the organization on progress, bottlenecks, gaps and other issues they are concerned about.
- **sharing updates** on the programme, including budget overview and resource allocation.

REPORTING ON THE PROGRAMME

- **reporting** on quantitative but also on qualitative data by talking to people and reporting their views.
- **advocating** for and facilitating the participation of community members in decision-making spaces, meetings, etc. where they can report on the programme.

EVALUATING THE PROGRAMME

- **ensuring** that representatives from different groups of the affected population are involved in evaluation, and that everyone understands its purpose.
- **allocating enough time and resources** to have meaningful and in-depth discussions with people.
- **promoting** the use of participatory evaluation tools that can be used by communities, such as participatory video evaluations, photo stories, etc.
- **validating the results** of your evaluation with the affected population.

Box 14 Participation of children and adolescents with disabilities in Nicaragua's municipal councils³⁸

In Nicaragua, Save the Children partnered with the Network of Child-Friendly Municipal Governments and the Municipal Commissions on Child and Adolescent Affairs to establish children's participation councils. These enable children and adolescents to organize around their interests, advocate for their rights and present their demands to local authorities. Some municipal commissions explicitly promoted the inclusion of adolescents with disabilities; to strengthen disability-inclusive municipal capacity, with one municipality establishing a quota of 25% for children with disabilities.

The participation of children and adolescents with disabilities in the councils led to positive changes for participants and the wider community. Children with disabilities who became members of the councils have learned about their rights and how to claim them, and have also raised their self-esteem. As rights-holders, they asked local and central government bodies to implement awareness-raising campaigns to challenge discriminatory attitudes, create more spaces for children with disabilities to express their views, and tackle barriers to their participation. Their families have also become more confident in the children's abilities, by seeing how much they can achieve.

At community level, there has been greater recognition of children and adolescents with disabilities as rights-holders instead of passive recipients of support. Stronger links have been formed between children with disabilities and children without disabilities. The participation of children with disabilities in local councils has been sustained and even increased, while municipal authorities have become more sensitized to the needs of children with disabilities and more responsive to their requests for support.

³⁸ ODI (2018)

Participation of children and adolescents

In line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF believes that children and adolescents of all ages and abilities, including the most marginalized, should have a say in matters concerning them, and must be given the opportunity to express their views, influence decision-making and bring about change.³⁹

The participation of children and adolescents not only improves the quality and relevance of our work: it also contributes to their personal and social development, helping them to develop independence and contributing to their resilience.

 *Tool 8.3 Basic requirements for quality child and adolescent participation*

Participation by age

Children's competencies and capacities evolve through direct experience and meaningful participation, which in turn encourage their development. This mutually reinforcing loop is an essential part of why the participation of children and adolescents is so important.

Children's cognitive, emotional, physical and social skills develop as they go through life, in parallel with their needs, abilities and interests. They develop not only as they grow but also in relation to the tools and spaces they are given to participate and interact. In programmes, this translates into adopting tailored strategies to engage and consult with different age groups.⁴⁰

Figure 8 shows the stages of development a child goes through from birth until adulthood. Corresponding age groups are not rigid as the translation from one stage to another is individual.

Figure 8 Childhood and adolescence stages of development

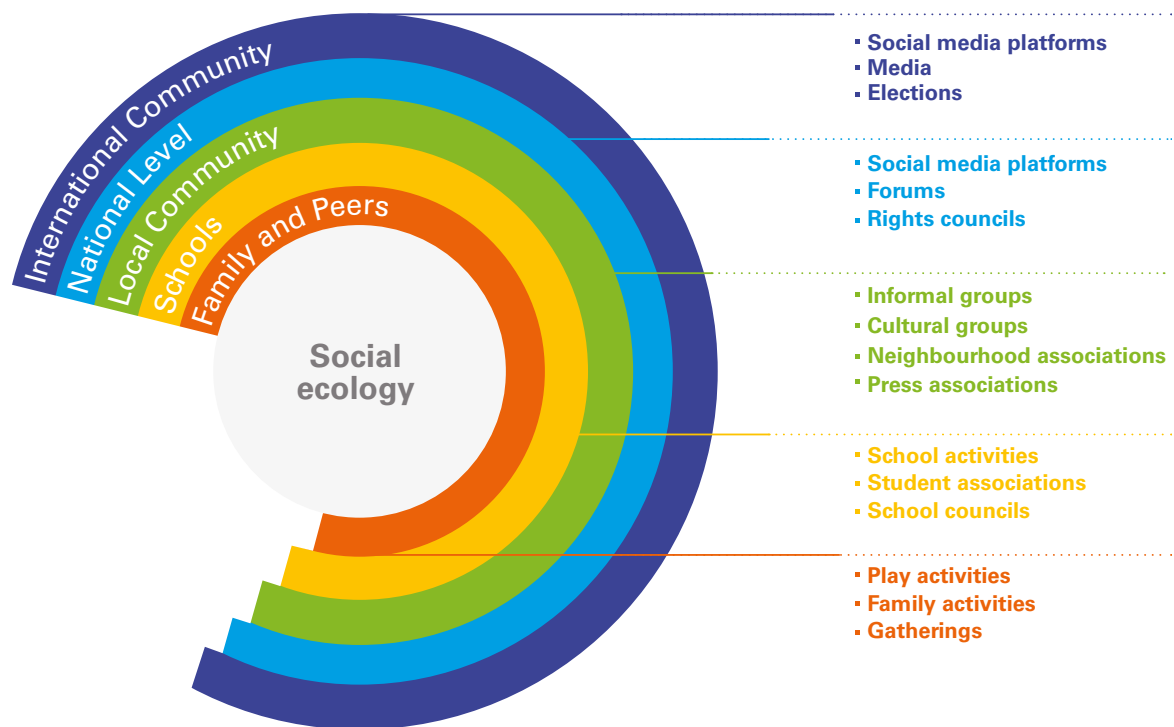


Different stages of development and different abilities imply different spaces where the child or adolescent is able to participate and voice their views and opinions. These spaces should be taken into account in the development of programmes and tools to encourage children's participation and support the development of skills related to compromise, leadership and independence in decision-making processes.

Through participation in appropriate spaces, and being heard by a relevant audience, children and adolescents can influence the social ecology of their communities (see Figure 9). As their abilities increase and they grow older, their opportunities for participation will expand from private to public spaces, and from local to global influence.

³⁹ Article 12, UN (1990)

⁴⁰ UNICEF (2011)

Figure 9 Opportunities for child and adolescent participation across the social ecology⁴¹

Strategies for involvement⁴²

Adults play a key role in helping children grow and develop. Our role is ultimately to empower children and adolescents to initiate their own solutions and reach their own decisions, wherever possible.

Today, opportunities for participation are enhanced by the use of technology and the digital environment. Many young people engage with digital spaces and on social media, expressing themselves and participating in creative ways, including through blogs, vlogs (video blogs), photography and artwork.

Some strategies and platforms to enhance the participation of adolescents and children in different spheres, from programmes to local projects, include the following:

- **Support** high-level consultations through the equitable, representative and appropriate participation of young people and children in councils, peace processes, and development and humanitarian plans.
- **Institutionalize** platforms for adolescent participation in governance.
- **Support** the establishment of self-run networks.
- **Support** child and adolescent parliaments, councils and local forums.
- **Support** community projects run by young people and children.
- **Engage** peers to deliver life-skills training and education on the issues that are important to them.
- **Establish** and promote the use of digital platforms (e.g. U-Report) to influence decision-making processes.
- **Introduce** complaints and feedback mechanisms that are age appropriate.

⁴¹ UNICEF (2013a) (adapted); UNICEF (2018a) (adapted)

⁴² UNICEF (2020)

- **Encourage** and support children and adolescents to speak out in the media, in conferences, and at meetings.
- **Support** children and adolescents to produce their own independent monitoring and evaluation reports.
- **Support** children and adolescents to conduct and lead research and mapping projects.
- **Review** and trial materials with children and adolescents.
- **Use** edutainment to help the youngest to express their views and preferences.

The enabling environment

For children and adolescents to participate meaningfully, we need to establish environments in which their contribution and empowerment are encouraged.

The key enabling elements for participation and aspects to consider are as follows:⁴³

- **Opportunities:** What opportunities have we created for participation? Have we facilitated the creation of opportunities by children and adolescents themselves?
- **Social norms:** Which factors constrain or enable their participation? What are the social barriers and how can we remove them?
- **Awareness of rights:** How can we promote awareness on the right to participate among children and adolescents, especially those who are already marginalized through gender, disability or social and cultural norms?
- **Skill and capacities:** How are we supporting children and young people in building their skills and knowledge, so that they can question, speak out, express their views and make decisions?
- **Laws, policies and mechanisms:** How can we ensure that children's and adolescents' rights are supported? Who can we work with to ensure that these rights are supported by laws, policies and mechanisms, at the national and local level?

Box 15 Cambodian adolescents evaluate UNICEF-sponsored activities⁴⁴

In 2018, UNICEF Cambodia conducted its first review using the adolescent-led evaluation approach to look at the Magic Classroom, which screens educational videos, and community preschool playgrounds, which give children a safe place to play.

Three gender- and ethnically balanced groups of adolescents aged 15–19 received training in conducting evaluations through interviews and FGDs. The young people collected data, analysed the results and provided recommendations. An enabling adult team synthesized their evaluations into a comprehensive assessment report.

The engagement and inputs of these young people have improved the programmes by making them more inclusive. Additionally, the adolescents gained new skills, including gains in confidence and self-esteem.

⁴³ UNICEF (2018c)

⁴⁴ UNICEF (2018b)

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a fundamental part of being accountable, and no more so than with children and adolescents. The risks to children and adolescents include:

- physical and/or sexual violence
 - exploitation and/or abuse
 - emotional and/or verbal abuse
 - economic exploitation
 - failure to provide for physical or psychological safety
- neglect of physical, emotional and/or psychological needs
 - harmful cultural practices
 - privacy violations.

Everyone involved in activities with children and adolescents, in whatever capacity, must comply with safeguarding standards and regulations, and it is everyone's personal responsibility to make sure that this happens. You must seek consent from children and their parents and carers or guardians before engaging in activities. Staff must be trained to deal professionally, effectively and fairly with complaints, reports and disclosures from children and adolescents, including how to ensure safe referral of the information to third parties (*see Chapter 3, 'Code of Conduct'*).

UNICEF's Child Safeguarding Personnel Standards apply to all individuals engaged by UNICEF, regardless of whether the person works directly with children, and including at times when they are involved with children and adolescents outside the workplace.⁴⁵ Any programme or activity that involves the participation of children should be supervised by a child safeguarding coordinator and team who are familiar with UNICEF's Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures,⁴⁶ the UNICEF Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment,⁴⁷ and other relevant local procedures. The safeguarding coordinator and team have overall responsibility for ensuring the safety and well-being of children and adolescents at all times.

Informed consent

As with adults, participation can expose children and adolescents to risk. It is imperative that you seek informed consent before engaging with them.

Parents, carers and/or guardians must receive a written or verbal briefing about the planned activity, so they can make an informed decision about whether or not they wish their child to take part. They must know that they are allowed to refuse permission. Children and adolescents themselves must also be given the opportunity to consent to taking part in the activity or programme and must be well informed about what it entails. Always record the consent, in written or digital form or as a recording.



Tool 8.4 Informed consent form

Tool 8.5 Consent form for processing of personal data

⁴⁵ UNICEF (2016)

⁴⁶ UNICEF (2016)

⁴⁷ UNICEF (2019b)

Responding to concerns

'Concerns of abuse', under UNICEF regulations, are reasonable suspicions that a member of UNICEF has engaged in sexual exploitation or abuse of a child, or other conducts that caused a child to suffer or are likely to cause a child to suffer harm.

If a child wishes to disclose any concern of abuse or harm, a written record should be taken and transmitted using prescribed procedures. All staff and partners that engage with children must know how to record and refer cases safely. Clear guidance must be established on safe referrals to third parties.

Trauma and adversity awareness

When working with children and adolescents in humanitarian and development contexts, it is vital to be aware of the trauma and adversity they have endured. Individual responses to trauma or adversity vary, and present in a wide variety of developmental, physical and psychological ways, some of which may be unexpected. No judgement should be made: children who have suffered distress and trauma need specialized support. Any programmes or activities in which they participate should be adapted to accommodate this.

Resources for Chapter 8

(Key resources are highlighted in bold.)

- ADACAP (2015) *Minimum Standards for Age and Disability Inclusion in Humanitarian Action*.** At <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/minimum-standards-age-and-disability-inclusion-humanitarian-action>
- ALNAP & URD Group (2009) *Participation Handbook for Humanitarian Field Workers*.** At www.urd.org/en/publication/participation-handbook-for-humanitarian-field-workers/
- Danish Institute for Human Rights (2012) *AAAQ toolbox*. At www.humanrights.dk/projects/aaaq-toolbox
- IASC (2017) *Recommendations that promote effective participation of people affected by crisis in humanitarian decisions and incentivize participation as a way of working for GB signatories*. At https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/final_participation_revolution_workstream_reccomendations.pdf
- ODI (2018) *Adolescents with disabilities: Enhancing resilience and delivering inclusive development*. At www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12323.pdf
- Plan International (2019) *Guidelines for Consulting with Children & Young People with Disabilities*.** At <https://plan-international.org/publications/guidelines-consulting-children-and-young-people-disabilities>
- Save the Children (2010) *Putting children at the centre: A practical guide to children's participation*. At <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/3583/pdf/3583.pdf>
- Save the Children (2013) *Children's participation in the analysis, planning and design of programmes*.** At <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/childrens-participation-analysis-planning-and-design-programmes-guide-save-children-staff>
- Save the Children (2016) *A youth participation best practice toolkit*. At https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/12409/pdf/2016_rb_toolkit_part_01_w205xh297_s1-14og73-74_web.pdf
- UN (1990) *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. At <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>
- UN (2006) *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. At www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRPD/Pages/ConventionRightsPersonsWithDisabilities.aspx
- UNHCR (2012) *Listen and Learn: Participatory Assessment with Children and Adolescents*. At www.unhcr.org/protection/children/50f6d1259/listen-learn-participatory-assessment-children-adolescents.html
- UNICEF (2003) *The State Of The World's Children*. At https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/pub_sowc03_en.pdf
- UNICEF (2011) *Communicating with Children: Principles and practices to nurture, inspire, educate and heal*. At www.unicef.org/cwv/
- UNICEF (2013a) *Ethical Research Involving Children*. At www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/eric-compendium-approved-digital-web.pdf
- UNICEF (2013b) *Take Us Seriously! Engaging Children with Disabilities in Decisions Affecting their Lives*.** At www.unicef.org/disabilities/files/Take_Us_Seriously.pdf
- UNICEF (2014) *Participatory approaches*. At www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/brief_5_participatoryapproaches_eng.pdf
- UNICEF (2016) *Policy on Conduct Promoting the Protection and Safeguarding of Children*. At <https://www.unicef.org/supply/documents/policy-conduct-promoting-protection-and-safeguarding-children>
- UNICEF (2018a) *UNICEF Programme Guidance for the Second Decade: Programming with and for adolescents*.** At www.unicef.org/media/57336/file
- UNICEF (2018b) *Voices from the Field: Engaging adolescent evaluators to review UNICEF Cambodia activities*. At www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/VFF-ALE_Cambodia2019.pdf

UNICEF (2018c) *Conceptual Framework for Measuring Outcomes of Adolescent Participation*. At www.unicef.org/media/59006/file

UNICEF (2018d) *Children's Participation in the Work of NHRIs*. At www.unicef.org/eca/sites/unicef.org/eca/files/2019-02/NHRI_Participation.pdf

UNICEF (2019a) *Procedure for a Child Safeguarding Framework DFAM/PROCEDURE/2019/009*. At www.unicef.org/media/65336/file/GP-2020-Phase-II-Programme-Document.pdf

UNICEF (2019b) *Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment*. At www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/UNICEF-Strategy-Prevent-Respond-Sexual-Exploitation-Abuse-Sexual-Harassment-January-2019.pdf

UNICEF (2019c) *Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability and Quality Framework: A tool to identify potential barriers to accessing service in humanitarian settings*. At <https://gbvguidelines.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/AAQ-framework-Nov-2019-WEB.pdf>

UNICEF (2019d) *Innovation's Blog 'The Birds, the Bees, and now SHNET!'*. At <https://blogs.unicef.org/blog/birds-bees-now-shnet/>

UNICEF (2020) *Engaged and Heard! Guidelines on Adolescent Participation and Civic Engagement*. At <https://www.unicef.org/media/73296/file/ADAP-Guidelines-for-Participation.pdf>

UNICEF & NRC (2020) *IASC Guidelines on Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises (forthcoming)*. At www.youthcompact.org

Chapter 9

COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

Without effective complaints and feedback mechanisms, we cannot be fully accountable in our response to the people and communities we serve. This chapter explains how to set up and run an inclusive and accessible mechanism.

Prepare to listen

A cornerstone of being accountable to affected populations is ensuring that their feedback and complaints are heard and acted on so that programmes and responses are effective, relevant and do no harm. For this to happen, we need dedicated systems that allow communities to share their views and feedback safely, and we need to collect, analyse and use the information we receive correctly.

Ensuring that such mechanisms are systematically implemented by everyone involved in programmes is critical. UNICEF and its partners should be open to receive as much feedback as affected populations need to provide, both through dedicated mechanisms and in more informal circumstances. Staff must be trained in welcoming and being responsive to the views expressed: feedback is an opportunity for advocacy, transparency and improvement.

One thing to keep in mind is that giving and receiving feedback, and expressing complaints especially, are not always common in many cultures – thus, using a mechanism can be seen as artificial, imposed and not organic. **Establishing mechanisms requires an understanding of what works best for communities, building trust and familiarity around the mechanisms, and building the skills to use them.** A well-functioning complaints and feedback mechanism can provide relevant information on:

- the quality and relevance of services, projects or supplies
- access to services by affected populations
- satisfaction levels
- organizational performance, including through the behaviour of staff and partners
- our responsiveness
- rumours and misinformation.

It is by using the information the mechanism provides that we can become more accountable to affected populations. The stages in implementing an effective mechanism are:

- **agree** the key features of the mechanism, including channels to be used and protocols
- **establish** the process to manage feedback
- **integrate** complaints and feedback with regular monitoring and evaluation activities, so that they inform programme design and implementation.

Agree the key features

Complaints and feedback mechanisms take time to establish. The key steps are to:

- **secure the support of leaders** to ensure the mechanism is adequately resourced and promoted
- **sensitize staff**, so that everyone has ownership of the mechanism and understands their part in it
- **collaborate across sectors**, to reduce duplication and confusion across different services (*see Chapter 13*)
- **consult with affected populations** about different features of the mechanism to make sure it is understood, accepted and trusted
- **choose communication channels** that match the local population's preferences and socio-cultural contexts, including language(s) spoken, and that are accessible to different groups, including children
- **consider barriers to access**, and how to overcome them
- **identify suitable tools** for each stage of the feedback management cycle: capturing and managing data, analysis, visualization and reporting (*see Chapter 11*)
- **develop operating guidelines** and procedures on ethics, confidentiality and data handling
- **establish a robust, secure referral system** for complaints related to SEA, GBV and fraud, including by maintaining an up-to-date list of local service providers, including services for both child and adult survivors of SEA
- **train staff** in the required standard of behaviour when engaging with people
- **publicize the mechanism**, making sure people understand its purpose, can access it and know what to expect when they use it.

Box 16 Information and feedback centres in Bangladesh⁴⁸

A multi-sectoral rapid assessment had highlighted an urgent need for mechanisms to refer Cox's Bazar's communities – particularly Rohingya women – to relevant services. In response, UNICEF established 12 information and feedback centres (IFCs).

The IFCs are located strategically in the Rohingya settlements to meet the gap in information provision and engagement with affected and host communities. They are supported by community volunteers who engage in face-to-face interviews and conversations as well as facilitating radio broadcasts and community discussions.

The IFCs record all feedback using UNICEF Bangladesh's Open Data Kit application to digitize the data. This has made real-time data-sharing possible.

Almost 80,000 people visited the IFCs in 2018 to obtain information or give feedback. This resulted in improved relationships with affected populations, and raised UNICEF's credibility and standing in the local community.

⁴⁸ UNICEF (2017)

Decide on the communication channels

One type of channel will never fit all the groups within the affected population. It's therefore preferable to use multiple communication channels, based on population preferences and the context. When deciding, consider the availability, acceptability, trust and user-friendliness of different channels. A mixture of analogue and digital channels is often best as it increases the chance of reaching most groups.

Take into consideration the resource implications of the channels you use: for example, hotlines require trained staff to take calls, and data collection on paper by volunteers requires time to enter the information on a spreadsheet (*see Table 12, Chapter 7*).

Manage feedback and complaints

Once the mechanism is up and running, feedback is handled according to pre-established procedures, and data is collected, analysed and shared. Corrective actions are taken where feedback indicates that something is not working well. Some types of feedback (rumours, perceptions) are also important to inform our analysis, but do not require individual case management. The final action is to 'close the feedback loop' by informing people who have provided feedback about the actions that have been taken to improve things (*see Figure 10*).



Tool 9.1 Feedback flow diagram

Tool 9.2 Feedback collection form template

Box 17 Complaints and feedback mechanism in Lebanon

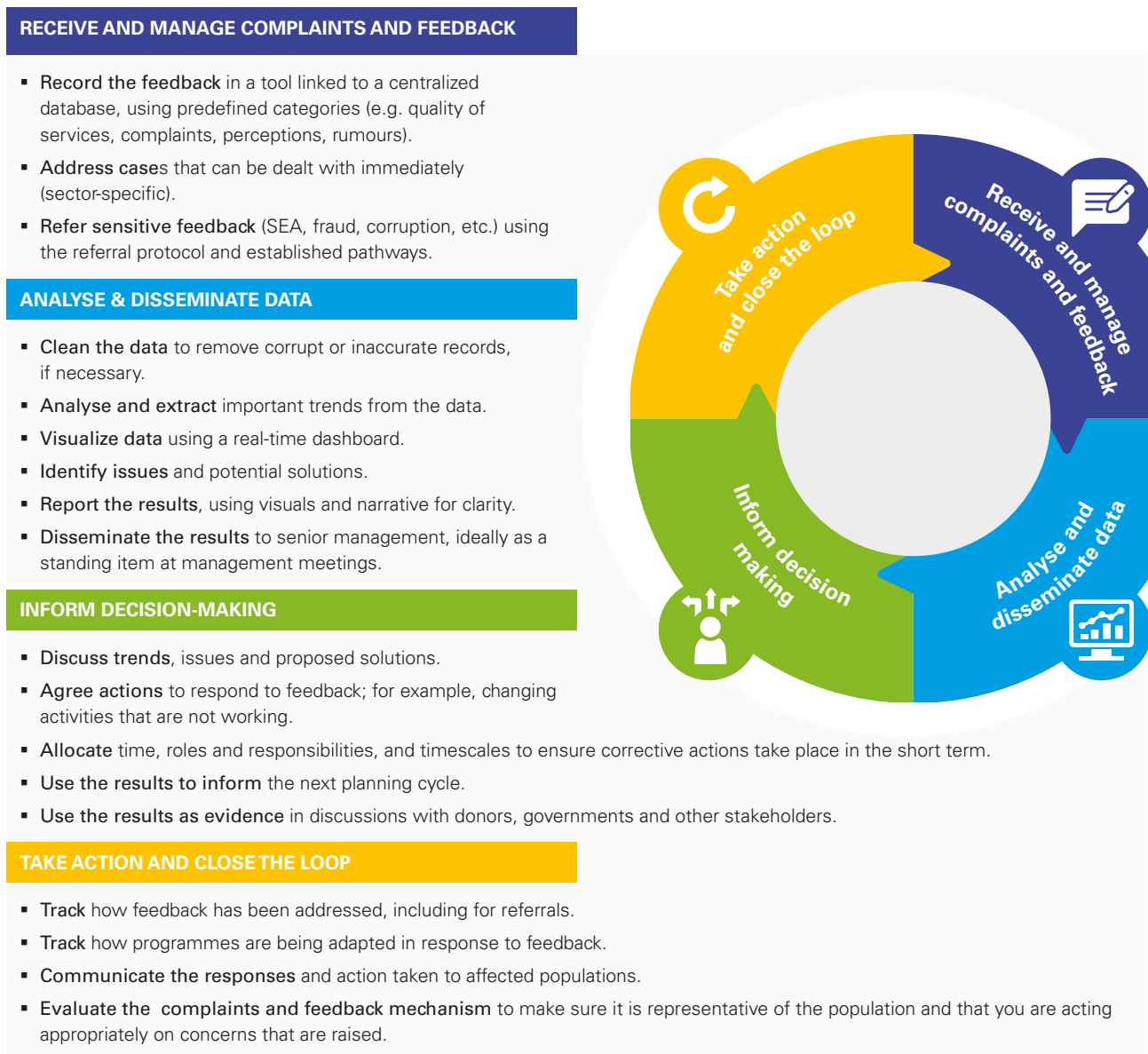
UNICEF Lebanon developed a complaints and feedback mechanism for education in emergencies. A call centre, staffed by UNICEF, was supported by a hotline team of trained education partners, who were able to respond to complicated cases promptly.

An online portal and dashboard were established for real-time monitoring of different indicators. Categories included those for girls and women, which helped to establish the reasons for the low enrolment of girls and parental attitudes towards education.

After an intervention to improve enrolment rates was put in place, monitoring indicated a 40% increase in demand for education among the targeted communities.

Analysis of the feedback also became a key resource for advocating with senior managers for resources to support the education programmes. Budget was also allocated to the call centre for the following year's workplan. During the second phase, ownership of the complaints and feedback mechanism was transferred to the Ministry of Education.

Figure 10 Steps of the feedback management loop



Establish protocols

Affected populations are likely to use the same channel for feedback and complaints. It is therefore important to ensure that the mechanism is sufficiently confidential, reliable and trusted so that it can handle complaints as quickly as possible, including sensitive complaints, such as those related to SEA. If such conditions are not in place, they need to be introduced.

While feedback is positive, negative or neutral information shared by an affected person and listened to and acted upon, complaints express unhappiness, dissatisfaction and concern about something or someone and should be given particular attention.

Referral pathways

Feedback that concerns UNICEF can be handled directly and will generally relate to a specific sector. Where feedback relates to the work of other agencies, robust referral systems between different sectors, organizations and governments exist to make sure nothing gets overlooked or slips between the cracks. Importantly, if you receive feedback that does not relate to programmes that UNICEF runs directly, you must still listen to the person providing the feedback and close the feedback loop (see *Figure 10*).

If for any reason referral is not possible, be transparent and honest about this. Acknowledge the information you have been given and explain why it cannot be resolved at this time. While we may not be in a position to address the feedback directly, we can use our influence to press for a solution from other partners or from governments.

Data protection⁴⁹

Organizations with responsibility for handling personal data must ensure the safety and privacy of each and every person that provides feedback. The steps to take are as follows:

- **Assign** a trained and qualified data protection focal point who will be responsible for implementing, monitoring and evaluating data protection measures.
- **Conduct** a privacy impact assessment to identify and minimize data protection risks.
- **Develop** risk mitigation strategies.
- **Establish** formal agreements with partners and third parties on how data will be protected.
- **Train** staff and partners on data protection.
- **Raise** awareness among affected populations on their rights in relation to personal data and informed consent.
- **Assign** categories of consent for the different types of data collected and data being referred on, so that the most sensitive data is protected.

Tips on feedback

- **Don't collect** more information than you can handle.
- **Don't duplicate** complaints and feedback mechanisms – this can cause frustration and feedback fatigue.
- **Do use** different channels of communication to reach a wide a range of people and communities.
- **Do include** mechanisms that are accessible to under-represented and vulnerable groups: children, women and girls, people with disabilities, and people who are socially or geographically remote.
- **Do take** action, and if this isn't possible, explain why openly and honestly.

⁴⁹ For more information on data protection, see Chapter 11.

Ensuring feedback is acted on

To be effective, complaints and feedback mechanisms must be strongly linked with decision-making processes and receive full support from leaders. **This requires instituting an organizational culture where feedback and complaints are not perceived as criticism, but rather as a way to improve and strengthen our programmes.** This also means that data generated through complaints and feedback mechanisms must be regularly analysed and disseminated. Furthermore, staff must be encouraged to undertake innovative and flexible approaches based on the feedback received. Creating such an environment can increase the frequency with which staff collect, use and respond to feedback, and ultimately contribute to improving the quality and effectiveness of our programmes.⁵⁰

For this to happen, you will need to:

- **promote** an adaptive management approach, ensuring that the design of programmes and plans factors in flexibility to adjust the activities in response to feedback. Having milestones for feedback analysis and course correction will ensure this is integrated in our work
- **establish** procedures for taking immediate action when feedback indicates urgent issues
- **make sure** course correction is transparent: everyone, including affected populations, must understand that it is prompted by evidence and aimed at improving the situation
- **advocate** flexible donor funding, to allow for continuous course correction, and ensuring that interventions remain relevant and appropriate
- **use** feedback as a powerful tool to support your case with donors, governments and other stakeholders when advocating for funding and programme implementation.

⁵⁰ IRC & CDA (2018)

Resources for Chapter 9

(Key resources are highlighted in bold.)

CDA Collaborative Learning Projects (2012) *Time to Listen: Hearing people on the receiving end of international aid*. At www.alnap.org/help-library/time-to-listen-hearing-people-on-the-receiving-end-of-international-aid

IASC (2016) *Best practice guide to inter-agency community-based complaints mechanisms*. At <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/accountability-affected-populations-including-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/documents-50>

IFRC & Ground Truth Solutions (2018) *How to establish and manage a systematic community feedback mechanism*. At https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/06/IFRC_feedback-mechanism-with-communities_ok_web.pdf

IFRC (2019) *Feedback Starter Kit*. At <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/document/tool-15-feedback-starter-kit/>

IFRC (2020) *Hotline in a Box*. At www.communityengagementhub.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/03/200325_Full-toolkit.pdf

IRC & CDA (2018) *Feedback to Action: Strategies to improve the use of feedback in programmatic decision-making*. At <https://cdacollaborative.org/publication/strategies-improve-use-feedback-programmatic-decision-making/>

Plan International (2019) *Child Friendly Feedback Mechanisms: Guide and Toolkit*. At <https://plan-international.org/publications/child-friendly-feedback-mechanisms-guide-and-toolkit>

UNICEF (2017) *C4D in Humanitarian Action: Rohingya Emergency Response: Information feedback centres strengthen community feedback mechanisms*. At www.unicef.org/cbsc/files/C4D_in_Humanitarian_Action_Case_Study_Bangladesh_Rohingya_IFCs_2017.pdf

UNICEF (2018) *Discussion Paper: Operational-level grievance mechanisms fit for children*. At www.unicef.org/csr/css/DISCUSSION_PAPER_GRIEVANCES_final.pdf

UNICEF & GOVLAB (2019) *Responsible Data for Children: Synthesis report*. At www.thegovlab.org/static/files/publications/rd4c-report.pdf

WFP (2016) *Guide to Personal Data Protection and Privacy*. At <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/e8d24e70cc11448383495caca154cb97/download/>

Chapter 10

PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE AND AAP

UNICEF is accountable for the conduct of all its staff, and this is brought into sharp relief in protecting people from sexual exploitation and abuse. In this chapter, we look at how we can strengthen our work in this vital area.

Our commitment to PSEA

UNICEF is committed to creating environments where populations are safe and respected by humanitarian and development staff and can access the protection and assistance they need without fear of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). This commitment is grounded in the UN Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse⁵¹ and related IASC Commitments,⁵² including the IASC Six Principles on PSEA.⁵³

UNICEF has developed a series of documents that demonstrate our commitment and leadership in this area, including the UNICEF Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment⁵⁴ and the UNICEF Policy on Conduct Promoting the Protection and Safeguarding of Children.⁵⁵

Many organizations, UNICEF included, have established PSEA focal points and technical experts to ensure implementation of PSEA measures in country programmes. Focal point(s) assume key responsibilities, such as the development of internal systems, training and awareness-raising of staff, and coordination with other relevant actors. If a focal point is not designated, its roles and responsibilities must be allocated across the organization in a robust and systematic way, for example to managers, HR departments and individual members of staff.



Tool 10.1 PSEA Practical Guide and Toolkit

Standards of conduct

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment of affected populations are an unacceptable breach of fundamental human rights and a deep betrayal of UNICEF's core values. Equally unacceptable is the sexual harassment of our fellow aid workers. Both constitute grounds for termination of employment.

UNICEF staff are accountable for regulating their conduct and are expected to support an organizational culture of care, respect, integrity, trust and accountability that deters violations. For this reason, all personnel must abide by the UN standards of conduct, including the prohibition of sexual exploitation and abuse, and be trained in PSEA.

⁵¹ UN (2003)

⁵² IASC (2017)

⁵³ IASC (2019)

⁵⁴ UNICEF (2019)

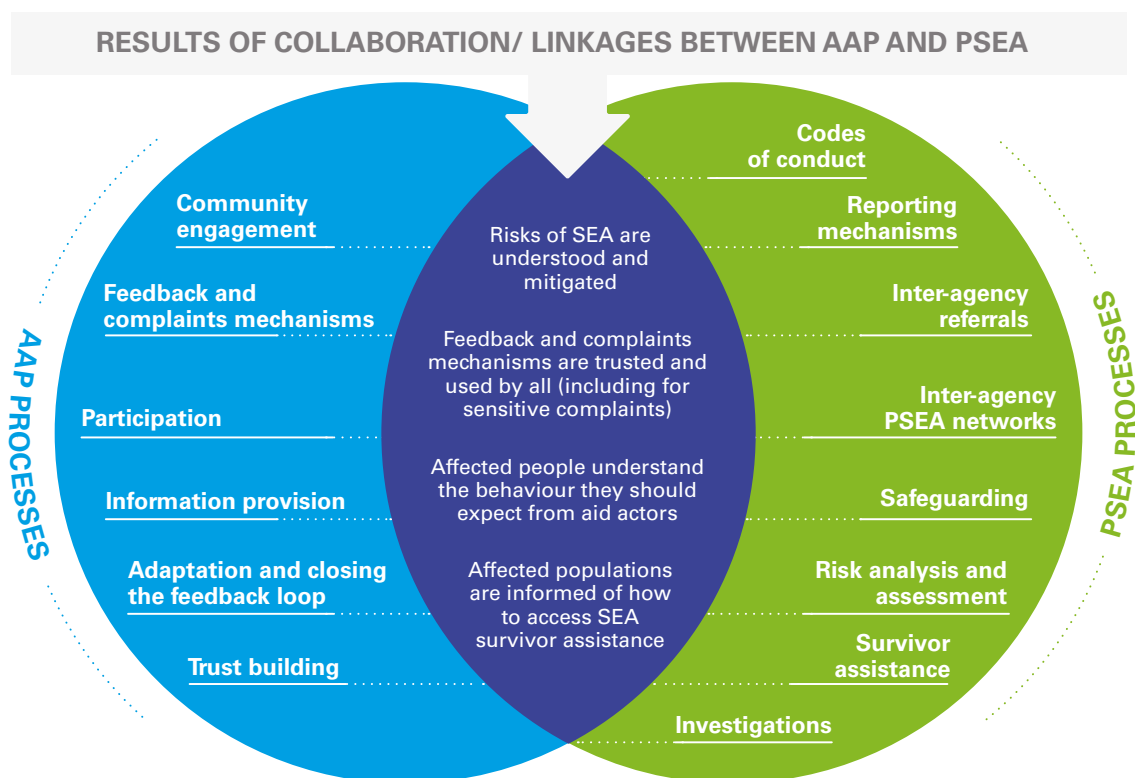
⁵⁵ UNICEF (2016)

The goal of PSEA is to create an environment where affected populations are safe and respected and can access the protection and assistance they need without fear of any form of exploitation or abuse. By creating organizational systems and raising awareness among staff and affected populations regarding PSEA, organizations can lay the groundwork for more effective reporting of, and response to, violations. Likewise, effective reporting and response structures can also serve as a preventive measure, for example by encouraging survivors and witnesses to report violations or helping deter potential perpetrators.

PSEA and AAP

PSEA contributes to the broader agenda on AAP by ensuring that organizations and their staff use their power ethically and responsibly. Likewise, AAP approaches contribute to enhancing PSEA by ensuring that affected populations know what to expect from aid actors and can access trusted, reliable channels to express their grievances. PSEA and AAP are interconnected, and they complement and strengthen each other (see Figure 11).

Figure 11 Links between PSEA and AAP⁵⁶



⁵⁶ IASC (2018b) (adapted)

Strengthen PSEA through people-centred approaches

The links between AAP and PSEA are particularly relevant when looking at information-sharing and reporting through complaints and feedback mechanisms.

Information-sharing

Affected populations must be aware of the standards of behaviour they should expect from staff, and their right to hold organizations accountable for their actions. It is the responsibility of organizations to inform affected populations so that they:

- **understand** what SEA is, why it is dangerous, what their rights are and how organizations handle it
- **are fully aware** of the behaviour they should expect from the organization's staff
- **know how** to report incidents and how organizations handle reports (e.g. safety, confidentiality, assistance)
- **can influence** the establishment of PSEA policies and reporting mechanisms, such as preferred channels of communication, access, etc.

Ensure you reach out to women, children, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. Informing people fully about reporting SEA builds trust in the system.

SEA reporting mechanisms

Effective reporting of SEA is essential for guaranteeing that all SEA and GBV survivors receive appropriate assistance and for ending impunity. Survivors and witnesses rarely speak out about SEA due to the fear of repercussions (e.g. losing assistance, retaliation), and a lack of adequate reporting channels. In many contexts, survivors face barriers to reporting, such as physical, cultural, security or linguistic barriers. Heightened social tensions, breakdown of societal norms, lack of privacy (e.g. cramped situations in displacement or refugee settings), and/or other factors often exacerbate physical or psychological barriers to reporting in emergency settings.

Designing and implementing effective reporting structures that can minimize or eliminate some of these barriers is an essential priority. For this, it is important to understand the different types of complaints and feedback mechanisms that exist and how these can be used so that every child and adult can access a reporting mechanism that is safe, gender- and child sensitive and appropriate to the context.

SEA reporting mechanisms must be grounded in the preferences and views of affected populations themselves, including marginalized groups. They must use different channels of communication in order to capture as wide an audience as possible (*see Table 12, Chapter 7 and Chapter 9*).

Core principles of effective reporting

There are four core principles that underpin effective reporting mechanisms that can be trusted. SEA reporting mechanisms need to be:

- **safe:** ensure that referral procedures and protection measures restrict access to incident reports by keeping all documentation safely stored, for example using robust passwords and encryption for computers, and by storing paper records under lock and key
- **confidential:** give informants the option to report anonymously, and enforce strict information-sharing practices, for example by limiting the number of people with access to reports and making sure that information submitted is coded and redacted in a way that means individuals cannot be identified, and by keeping any personal information separate from incident reports
- **transparent:** obtain prior informed consent from the complainant to record the grievance, and explain how information will be shared, with whom and for what purpose, including for investigations and assistance to survivors
- **accessible:** make sure reporting mechanisms are easy to use and remove any barriers to usage, such as language, and any costs or time needed to use them, keeping in mind the target audiences, including people of different ages, genders, educational backgrounds, abilities, etc.

Box 18 A PSEA network in Mozambique⁵⁷

Tropical Cyclone Idai made landfall in Mozambique in March 2019. Within a month, the HCT had established a PSEA network nationally and in Beira, the most affected area. The Humanitarian Coordinator circulated the Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures for inter-agency complaint handling to all members of the HCT, sending a clear message that PSEA is a priority.

The PSEA network quickly rolled out an action plan, endorsed by the HCT, which contained clear indicators for tracking progress. Its co-chairs sent regular updates to the Humanitarian Coordinator on progress and areas where support was needed. Communication materials with information on how to report SEA were posted at accommodation centres and resettlement sites, and 2 million people received an SMS (text) message on the prohibition of SEA and the right to receive humanitarian aid for free.

The PSEA network worked with the GBV and child protection sub-clusters to integrate referral pathways to assistance for any victims that came forward to report abuse. A direct link with the Prosecutor's Office was set up to discuss alleged cases related to the Government.

⁵⁷ IASC & UNICEF (2019)

Support interconnected approaches

Strengthening the links between AAP and PSEA will produce more robust systems, but even more can be achieved by working in partnership:

- **Task** PSEA focal points and networks to provide technical support to embed PSEA in all programmes and interventions. They can advise on suitable reporting mechanisms, including those shared by different organizations, and on how to receive and refer sensitive information safely and confidentially.
 - **Make sure** all partners are part of the effort to address and prevent violations: the aim is a joined-up accountability culture that abhors, sanctions and prevents SEA and protects victims. Training, materials and resources on PSEA should be made available not just to all UNICEF staff, but also partner organizations.
 - **Make PSEA and AAP** a standing agenda item in HCT and inter-agency coordination meetings.
- **Make it possible** for PSEA and AAP focal points to work closely together and to be present at all relevant meetings.
 - **Build** SEA reporting mechanisms with affected populations to increase trust.
 - **Train** staff who are handling feedback and complaints in PSEA, including procedures for disclosures, referrals and sensitive complaints.
 - **Share** PSEA information at every opportunity, focusing on the right to receive aid free of condition, the expectations of behaviour, how to report SEA, and reassurance on the confidentiality and safety of complainants.

Resources for Chapter 10

(Key resources are highlighted in bold.)

CHS Alliance (2017) *PSEA Implementation Quick Reference Handbook*. At https://d1h79zlgfht2zs.cloudfront.net/uploads/2019/07/PSEA_Handbook.pdf

IASC (2017) *Commitments on Accountability to Affected People and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*. At <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/accountability-affected-populations-including-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/documents-56>

IASC (2018a) *Plan for Accelerating Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Response at Country Level*. At <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-champion-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-and-sexual-harassment/iasc-plan-accelerating>

IASC (2018b) *Visual: AAP and PSEA linkages/collaboration*. At <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/accountability-affected-populations-including-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/news-97>

IASC (2019) *Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*. At <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/principals/documents-public/iasc-six-core-principles-relating-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-2019>

IASC & UNICEF (2019) *Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: UNICEF IASC Championship 2018-2019*. At <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2019-12/IASC%20Championship%202018-2019%20v11%20WEB.pdf>

IFRC & ICRC (1994) *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief*. At www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/publications/icrc-002-1067.pdf

UN (2003) *Secretary-General's Bulletin: Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse*. At www.unhcr.org/uk/protection/operations/405ac6614/secretary-generals-bulletin-special-measures-protection-sexual-exploitation.html

UNHCR (2004) *Code of Conduct & Explanatory Notes*. At <https://cms.emergency.unhcr.org/documents/11982/32382/UNHCR+Code+of+Conduct/72ff3fdf-4e7c-4928-8cc2-723655b421c7>

UNICEF (2016) *Policy on Conduct Promoting the Protection and Safeguarding of Children CF/EXD/2016-006*. At www.unicef.org/supply/media/886/file/Policy%20on%20Conduct%20Promoting%20the%20Protection%20and%20Safeguarding%20of%20Children.pdf

UNICEF (2018) *AGORA online training: Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*. At <https://agora.unicef.org/course/info.php?id=7380>

UNICEF (2019) *Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment*. At www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/UNICEF-Strategy-Prevent-Respond-Sexual-Exploitation-Abuse-Sexual-Harassment-January-2019.pdf

UNICEF (2020) *The Core Commitments to Children in Humanitarian Action*. At www.corecommitments.unicef.org

UNICEF (2020) *Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA): A Practical Guide and Toolkit for UNICEF and Partners*. At https://www.unicef.org/about/partnerships/index_81428.html

Chapter 11

HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY FOR AAP

Technology has a valuable contribution to make in our engagement with communities and individuals. How can it support our accountability, and how can we be sure that new technologies are secure and used ethically? This chapter looks at these pressing questions.

A new way of working

Rapid changes in technology in recent decades have transformed the way we work. Tools such as mobile phones and web platforms have been embraced as a way to provide aid, collect remote data and communicate with affected populations in new ways, especially when physical access and face-to-face communications are not an option.

Despite this, surveys repeatedly show that, while many humanitarian agents successfully invest in technology to improve their outreach and engagement with affected populations, people often prefer face-to-face contact. Consequently, technology should never be the single channel for engaging with communities. Understanding the habits and preferences of different groups before introducing new technologies is crucial.

Ethical questions

Technological innovation, solutions and tools can introduce new and better ways to respond to emerging challenges, by increasing efficiency and cost-effectiveness, and maximizing the impact of our work. **However, there are also serious considerations for the ethical use of technology:**

- **What steps** are you taking to reduce the 'digital divide'; that is, where the barriers of gender, income, literacy and disability result in unequal access and the exclusion of vulnerable groups?
- **What risks** have you identified from new technologies, for example in relation to privacy, data protection, interception and surveillance?
- **Is technology** imposed on populations, or is there co-production and collaboration between developers and intended users?

Time spent analysing the context and the characteristics of users will help to make tools relevant and sustainable and will not duplicate existing efforts.

Set up secure systems

There are some key guidelines to consult when setting up data collection systems and protocols. These are:

- UN Principles on Personal Data Protection and Privacy – a basic framework for processing personal data⁵⁸
- Principles for Digital Development – designed to help you integrate best practice in the use of technology in programmes.⁵⁹

The UN's nine Principles on Personal Data Protection and Privacy are a valuable guide when developing policies and guidelines on the processing of personal data, in ways that also reflect your organization's mandate:⁶⁰

- **purpose specification:** personal data should be processed for specified purposes, consistent with the mandate of the organization
- **proportionality and necessity:** the processing of personal data should be relevant, limited and adequate to what is necessary
- **retention:** personal data should only be retained for the time necessary for the specified purposes
- **accuracy:** personal data should be accurate and up to date to fulfil the specified purposes
- **confidentiality:** personal data should be processed with due regard to confidentiality
- **security:** organizational, administrative, physical and technical safeguards and procedures should be implemented to protect the security of personal data
- **transparency:** processing of personal data should be carried out with transparency to the data subjects
- **transfers:** personal data may be transferred to a third party, provided that it affords appropriate protection for the personal data
- **accountability:** the organization should have adequate policies and mechanisms in place to adhere to these principles.

Box 19 Shaping the response in Sierra Leone⁶¹

UNICEF Sierra Leone's response to the mudslide of August 2017 used the social messaging platform U-Report to keep the voice of community members at the heart of the design, implementation and course correction of the humanitarian response.

Within 24 hours of the mudslide, the Country Office was in direct communication with affected populations about their water supply and general conditions, sending messages and gathering reports on their situation by polling their responses through U-Report. There was no other way to collect this data at the time.

UNICEF WASH's planned response had been to truck in water supplies; however, a U-Report poll showed that only a minority could receive trucked water due to access problems. This led to informed and timely course correction: the WASH team, for the first time in an emergency, distributed water-harvesting kits and worked with local young people to assemble the kits.

⁵⁸ UN (2016)

⁵⁹ Digital Impact Alliance (2016)

⁶⁰ UN (2016)

⁶¹ UNICEF (2017)

Data security

Organizations and their staff must be aware of the risk that the data collected or generated by their programmes could be accessed by other parties and used for harmful purposes such as surveillance, repression or targeting. **Any disclosure of data, whether intentional or not, can have dire consequences.**

Personal data has a very wide sphere: examples include an individual's name, user ID, email address (even those not including a name), account number, forum and online handles and posts, any identifier that can be looked up in a database to identify an individual, biometric data and location data.⁶²

A breach in privacy and confidentiality cannot be undone and could adversely affect people for the rest of their lives, or put their lives in danger. The following questions are starting points for you to think deeply about the risks and benefits of collecting data:

- What data is collected?
- What is the purpose of your data collection, and will it benefit the participants?
- Are the collection methods transparent and open to question by participants?
- Do you seek informed consent before collecting data, and does everyone – including vulnerable groups and children – understand what information will be collected, how it will be used and what their privacy rights are?
- How will the data be acquired, used, analysed, stored and shared?
- Are people's privacy and dignity upheld during data collection, analysis, storage and sharing?
- What are the risks of individuals being identified?
- What are the risks of data being accessed and/or manipulated by third parties?
- What is being done to reduce these risks?
- Are there trained staff available to set up and operate information management systems so that data is handled, stored and shared securely?
- What physical, organizational and technological security measures are in place to protect personal data against accidental loss and/or damage, unauthorized access, disclosure, modification and destruction?
- How often are your processes and protocols assessed?
- Do you have robust data protection requirements in your PCAs with partners?
- Does your approach consider the needs and vulnerabilities of children?

Box 20 Overcoming physical barriers during an outbreak

During the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, UNICEF used the Internet of Good Things to reach populations in low-income, hard-to-reach areas with trusted and reliable life-saving information. The app allowed UNICEF to maximize information access in times when physical proximity and direct contact were not possible. UNICEF developed and adapted the content in 13 languages and made it available in 63 countries through partnerships with mobile network operators and Facebook.

Parents and young people were able to browse, read and watch user-friendly content for free through the app and access easy-to-understand information and tips on how to protect themselves and their families, how to manage stress, and what to do in case of sickness, etc. Users could also test their knowledge and report rumours.

⁶² UN (2016)

Digital solutions

Technology can improve outreach and engagement of affected communities; however, we cannot assume that one technological solution will solve everything. Digital solutions need to be embedded in a solid and comprehensive AAP strategy.

In some instances, you might need to combine digital tools to support your activity. Complaints and feedback mechanisms, for example, can build on digital platforms, but also use data collection tools and, at the feedback analysis stage, be supported by data analysis and visualization tools.

A growing number of solutions are available to strengthen engagement of communities and information-sharing, including tools that UNICEF has recently developed in order to bridge the digital divide for children, families and vulnerable groups who still lack access to good-quality, credible information, in both development and humanitarian contexts (see [Table 16](#) and [Table 17](#)).

Table 16 Digital platforms to support AAP approaches

NAME AND WEBLINK	DESCRIPTION	USE TO...
U-Report https://ureport.in/	UNICEF's U-Report is a platform for community participation. Subscribers are engaged through social messaging using different channels. Real-time responses are collected and visualized on a website.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Connect with people through social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok), social messaging (WhatsApp, Viber) and SMS on issues that they care and want to talk about. ■ Encourage free expression and exchange of views among participants, particularly young people. ■ Analyse opinions in real time to inform development work and, increasingly, humanitarian response (see Box 10, 'Engaging young refugees and migrants in Italy', Chapter 6). ■ Share results and information with the community.
Rapid Pro https://app.rapidpro.io/	Rapid Pro was originally developed by UNICEF to allow interactive messaging systems that can be adapted to different communication channels. Rapid Pro is an easy-to-use, open-source interface, and is free to use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide information in real time through a flowchart of questions and automated responses, using different channels (e.g. SMS, Facebook). ■ Manage large groups of contacts through multiple communication channels and languages.
Ushahidi www.ushahidi.com/	Ushahidi is a platform that collects data from multiple channels, and manages, analyses and visualizes it. Pricing is based on the functions needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Engage communities and gather opinions and views on a specific topic, through different technologies. ■ Reach people with limited access in hard-to-reach places.

Table 16 Digital platforms to support AAP approaches *(continued)*

NAME AND WEBLINK	DESCRIPTION	USE TO...
<p>Development Check https://integrityaction.org/devcheck/</p>	<p>Development Check is a simple mobile app that allows people to monitor different elements of projects and services, report problems and share perceptions. Data is displayed on a website.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Engage individuals or communities in monitoring specific initiatives or projects.
<p>Community Response Map https://communityresponsemap.org/</p>	<p>IOM's Community Response Map is an app that facilitates online tracking, compilation and visualizing of communications received by target communities. It works both offline and online.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Engage people and gather opinions and views on a specific topic, through different technologies. ■ Monitor projects, evaluate their progress and share their outcomes.
<p>Internet of Good Things (IoGT) www.unicef.org/innovation/IoGT</p>	<p>IoGT is a phone app developed by UNICEF to make ready-to-use life-saving and life-improving information available free of charge, and even on low-end devices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Give children, adolescents and their family members, health trainers, caregivers, and communities access to localized, up-to-date, good-quality content, e.g. on maternal health, hygiene, emergency information on diseases, and advice on sexual health. ■ Provide easy access to information for the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.
<p>Magic Box www.unicef.org/innovation/Magicbox</p>	<p>Magic Box is a web platform developed by UNICEF and private-sector partners that analyses data to gain insights into the needs of affected populations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Harness real-time data generated by the private sector to make informed decisions. ■ Share data with and combine datasets from trusted humanitarian and development partners, and the private sector and academia.

Table 17 Digital tools for data collection, analysis and visualization

NAME AND WEBLINK	DESCRIPTION	USE TO...
Open Data Kit (ODK) https://opendatakit.org/	ODK is free, open-source software that can be used to design survey questionnaires. It works both online and offline.	
Kobo Toolbox www.kobotoolbox.org/	Kobo Toolbox was developed by UN OCHA. It is also open source and free, and available for designing survey questionnaires, on- or offline.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Design survey questionnaires.
SurveyGizmo www.surveygizmo.com/	SurveyGizmo is a feedback platform for collecting people's views and for grouping, managing and analysing data. Pricing is based on the functionalities needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Collect data online or offline, on a variety of devices. ■ Store data in a database and manage it.
Magpi https://home.magpi.com/	Magpi gathers responses to questionnaires using any device, including data collected through SMS and interactive voice response, and to build visualizations of the data. Pricing is based on the functionalities needed.	
Microsoft Excel	MS Excel is a spreadsheet tool that is very widely used to compile, organize and visualize data into tables, charts and graphs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Compile and organize data.
JASP https://jasp-stats.org	JASP is free, open-source software supported by the University of Amsterdam. It can be used for advanced interactive statistical analysis, in ways similar to STATA and SPSS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Analyse data. ■ Visualize data in tables, charts and graphs.
Tableau	Tableau software can be used to explore data, and create dashboards and visualizations. Pricing can be adjusted to fit organizations with different needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Compile and organize data.
Microsoft Power BI	MS Power BI is primarily a business analytics software that can be used to explore data, and create dashboards and visualizations. Moderate pricing and options fit organizations with different needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Analyse data. ■ Visualize data in tables, charts and graphs. ■ Create dashboards.

Resources for Chapter 11

(Key resources are highlighted in bold.)

Digital Impact Alliance (2016) *Principles for Digital Development*. At <https://digitalprinciples.org>

GSMA (2019a) *Landscaping the Digital Humanitarian Ecosystem*. At www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Landscaping-the-digital-humanitarian-ecosystem.pdf

GSMA (2019b) *The Digital Lives of Refugees: How displaced populations use mobile phones and what gets in the way*. At www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-Digital-Lives-of-Refugees.pdf

ITU (2018) *Fast-forward progress leveraging tech to achieve the global goals*. At www.itu.int/en/sustainable-world/Documents/Fast-forward_progress_report_414709%20FINAL.pdf

UN (2016) *Principles on Personal Data Protection and Privacy*. At <https://www.unsystem.org/principles-personal-data-protection-and-privacy>

UN Foundation (2009) *New technologies in emergencies and conflicts: the role of information and social networks*. At <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/new-technologies-emergencies-and-conflicts-role-information-and-social-networks>

UNICEF (2017) *C4D in Humanitarian Action: Sierra Leone Mudslide Response – Using digital platforms to place affected populations at the heart of the response*. At <https://reliefweb.int/report/sierra-leone/c4d-humanitarian-action-sierra-leone-mudslide-response-2017-using-digital>



Section 4. Coordination and partnership

Chapter 12

LOCAL AND NATIONAL COLLABORATION

We aim to make humanitarian action as local as possible, and as international as necessary. This chapter demonstrates that respecting, supporting and strengthening local leadership and capacity rather than replacing them is consistent with our aims for AAP.

Think globally, act locally

Localizing the humanitarian response is a process of recognizing, respecting and strengthening the leadership and capacity of local communities, authorities, governments and civil society in order to better address the needs of those affected by humanitarian crisis. As well as being congruent with our core beliefs on accountability, this approach prepares local and national actors for their role in future humanitarian action.

There is a strong connection between our commitment to partnering with local and national actors, as part of the Grand Bargain,⁶³ and our efforts to strengthen AAP. Indeed, CE, which is the foundation of a robust, people-centred approach, does not only include affected populations, but also local NGOs, women's or youth groups, social networks, faith groups and religious leaders, and other networks that are rooted in the community. **There are clear benefits to be gained by including local actors; they:**

- **have a strong understanding** of the local political, social and cultural context and dynamics
- **are usually trusted** by the local population
- **are often the first to respond** in a crisis
- **have access to the affected population**, which international actors cannot always achieve.



Tool 12.1 Tip sheet for local actors' participation in the programme cycle

Steps in ensuring that local actors are fully involved in AAP are to:

- **share** UNICEF manuals, policies and training materials with local partners and invite them to training and workshops
- **ensure** that Programme Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) and Small Scale Funding Agreements (SSFAs) include clear mutual obligations on both CE and AAP, with responsibilities for partners and for UNICEF
- **support** partners to be a part of inter-agency coordination structures for AAP, particularly by freeing up resources to make participation feasible (*see Chapter 8*)
- **advocate** for local agency participation in coordination mechanisms in which UNICEF is a key party, such as cluster and inter-cluster coordination groups and HCTs (*see Chapter 13*).

⁶³ Agenda for Humanity (2016)

Work with national and local governments

As States have primary responsibility in emergencies as well as for development, the establishment of AAP must be done, as much as possible, with the cooperation and support of governments.

However, there are situations where a government is wary of aid organizations establishing accountability mechanisms. Situations in which the State is party to a conflict can be particularly sensitive, and coordination with government can be risky or inappropriate. Where possible, co-design the AAP process with government actors to gain buy-in, and tailor the message to the situation.

Box 21 Collaborating with governments and affected populations in India

The Janakiya Pankalithavum Punarnirmanavum Initiative (JPP-I) of the Kerala Government is an AAP programme that aims to facilitate the participation of affected populations, especially marginalized groups, through the provision of various complaints and feedback mechanisms.

JPP-I involved partnerships with multiple government agencies, UN agencies, academic institutions and Indian civil society organizations through Sphere India, a network of international and national NGOs.

In 2018, 19,765 people in Kerala from the seven worst-affected districts provided real-time feedback on disaster relief and EPP to inform ongoing recovery and development plans.

Strengthen partnerships

The benefits of strong partnerships are closely aligned with our AAP aims. **Where partnerships are strong, the quality of our work improves, and trust grows.** Some of the steps you can take to embed the principles of AAP in partnership work are to:

- **familiarize** yourself with State-led communication protocols, channels and processes
- **link** AAP activities throughout relief, rehabilitation, recovery and development, ensuring that AAP is a key feature of preparedness and can be scaled up
- **work** with governments on an AAP strategy that strengthens engagement with government, media and local telecommunications actors
- **identify** the entry points for engagement with government
- **remain aware** of mistrust around 'accountability scrutiny' being applied to government performance: explain that AAP has as much to do with making organizations (including UNICEF and its partners) accountable
- **discuss** how emergency processes with national government can be supported and strengthened, rather than replaced
- in situations in which the government is party to a conflict, **seek** permission from national heads of office, using the messaging on accountable foreign intervention
- **involve** government partners in AAP from the outset and allow government actors to contribute, collaborate and lead

- **advocate** with government partners for the involvement of departments, especially those dealing with telecommunications and the media
 - **have a strategy** for supporting any State-led AAP approach
 - **mainstream AAP** into ongoing partnerships with government actors, for example through incorporating AAP indicators and standards in partnership documents
- **make informed decisions** about what data can be shared: for example, sensitive complaints should be referred to qualified protection agencies (*see Chapter 9; Chapter 11*)
 - **depoliticize feedback data**, for example by redacting statements that blame particular actors
 - **remove** names and other information that might identify an individual (*see Chapter 11*).

Box 22 Communications preparedness in Vanuatu⁶⁴

Vanuatu is regularly hit by cyclones, tsunamis, earthquakes and volcanic activity. The government, NGOs and community representatives had voiced the need for more robust AAP mechanisms to respond to crisis.

A sub-cluster was formed in 2019 comprising Vanuatu people and organizations, members of governments, NGOs and INGOs, and media and telecommunications entities. This opened up new opportunities for collaboration and sharing expertise and ideas.

The group trialled the data collection tool RapidPro to mobilize local networks. RapidPro used the telecom network to collect real-time data via SMS, voice messaging and social media, even from remote places. The data collected will help inform EPP and help to direct any response coordinated by the group.

⁶⁴ CDAC (2018)

Resources for Chapter 12

Agenda for Humanity (2016) *The Grand Bargain: A shared commitment to better serve people in need.*

At www.agendaforhumanity.org/initiatives/3861

CDAC (2018) *Communications Preparedness and Accountability for Disaster Response – Vanuatu Scoping Report.* At www.communityengagementhub.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/11/JointCDACGTSScopingMissionReportVanuatuJuly2018-1.pdf

Global Humanitarian Platform (2007) *Principles of Partnership.* At www.icvanetwork.org/system/files/versions/Principles%20of%20Partnership%20English.pdf

Humanitarian Leadership Academy (2019) *Unpacking Localization.* At www.humanitarianleadershipacademy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Whitepaper-Localisation-Online.pdf

Chapter 13

INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION

The number of examples of good practice in collaboration on AAP is growing. In this chapter, we share the insights this has brought, looking at the potential for collaboration at inter-agency and cluster level to increase AAP.

Benefits of coordination and collaboration

Humanitarian reform calls for coordinated, response-wide community engagement. In emergency contexts, the HCT has mandatory responsibilities, including a collective approach to AAP that informs decision-making and course correction.⁶⁵

The benefits of a collective approach to AAP have been well documented: clearly, people's needs and concerns are not necessarily linked to one organization, and broader issues may be overlooked if they are not addressed collectively. There are also efficiency gains from collaboration and coordination: by pooling their resources, agencies and partners avoid overburdening communities with questions and conflicting or duplicated messages, and achieve a better understanding of trends. Communities themselves appear to prefer collective approaches.⁶⁶

There are different degrees of collaboration, from very limited to full integration (*see Table 18*).

Box 23 Setting up a common service in Nepal⁶⁷

The Inter-Agency Common Feedback Project was established after the 2015 Nepal earthquake. The project was conceived to consolidate feedback from earthquake-affected populations and to share their inputs with the HCT, ICCG and clusters, with a view to making sure that their voices influenced decision-making and response and recovery efforts.

The platform integrated several components:

- **feedback collection**, targeting not just communities that were receiving aid but all affected people
- **analysis and reporting**, ensuring that feedback reached all humanitarian actors in real time, and was acted on and influenced decisions
- **advocacy** based on the outcomes of feedback from affected populations and informing the overall response
- **closing the feedback loop**, using three complementary mechanisms: community meetings, community radio programmes, and an interactive voice response system.

These components guided collective engagement and ensured better coordination, as well as improvement in the quality of the response.


⁶⁵ IASC (2018)

⁶⁶ GPPI (2016)

⁶⁷ Humanitarian Country Team (2015)

Table 18 Degrees of collaboration

LIMITED COLLABORATION	PARTIAL COLLABORATION	FULL COLLABORATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no coordination of AAP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An AAP working group exists. Feedback mechanisms are coordinated with referral pathways in place but there is no formal link to collective decision-making. HNO/HRP process includes AAP but is not strongly prioritized by the HCT. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A dedicated AAP Coordinator coordinates the AAP Working Group (also called Communication with Communities or Community Engagement Working Group). A common complaints and feedback mechanisms is in place, with a central dataset to inform decision-making processes at HCT level. The HCT has an AAP strategy reflected in the HRP and AAP is regularly on its agenda.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each organization sets up its own complaints and feedback mechanisms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints and feedback mechanisms are coordinated with referral pathways in place, but there is no formal link to collective decision-making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Common complaints and feedback mechanisms are in place, with a central dataset to inform decision-making processes at HCT level.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no coordination of AAP around the HNO and HRP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HNO and HRP processes include AAP but this is not a priority for the HCT. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The AAP strategy is reflected in the HNO and HRP and is a standing agenda item for HCT meetings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The HCT does not have an AAP strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An HCT strategy is mentioned in the HRP but is not fully implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An HCT strategy exists and is well resourced and implemented.

 *Tool 13.1 ToRs for interagency AAP Coordinator/ Senior Adviser/Technical Adviser*
Tool 13.2 Example of ToR for AAP/CE Working Group
Tool 13.3 Framework for collective AAP in the HPC

The Humanitarian Programme Cycle

The purpose of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) is to make sure that all the needs of affected people are fully considered and integrated into the response plans of clusters and at the inter-cluster and HPC level. Getting the views of affected people is essential to making the HPC work as intended.

The HPC should not be a static process – the outputs from each phase of the HPC need to be reviewed and adjusted to reflect changes in the situation and operational context, and adapted to affected people’s changing needs and priorities. This means clusters need to harmonize their approach to engaging with communities, to maximize the quality, coverage and results for affected people.

Learning how to integrate key aspects of AAP into each phase will help ensure the HPC generates the right kind of analysis and evidence of affected people’s needs and priorities, which in turn helps improve the design, implementation and monitoring of the overall response. The following sections provide recommended AAP actions for cluster coordinators in each phase of the HPC, along with other tools, suggestions and recommendations.

Table 19 Integrating AAP in the HPC

HPC	MINIMUM RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify the available AAP resources, learning and capacities among all partners, ideally before cluster activation. ■ Review and integrate UNICEF Country Office and IASC Emergency Preparedness Action plans into the cluster’s situational analysis. ■ Identify training, tools and resources that will strengthen your own and cluster partners’ knowledge and capacities for AAP.
Needs assessment and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Define and agree a common approach and methodology for community engagement. ■ Ensure sex and age disaggregated data (SADD) is systematically collected and included. ■ Include an analysis of gender and protection risks. ■ Highlight the views, priorities and preferences of affected people.
Strategic planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Include at least one AAP-related strategic objective in the Project, Cluster Strategy or Response Plan. ■ Define common technical and quality standards and benchmarks for all partners. ■ Define cluster performance indicators for quality of response, consistency and accountability. ■ Include at least one indicator for affected people’s satisfaction with responses. ■ Use AAP criteria to assess and review partner project proposals.
Implementation and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Define and agree a common approach for CE. ■ Define how the relevant technical, quality and accountability indicators will be monitored. ■ Choose the most appropriate approaches to complaints and feedback mechanisms and ensure all cluster partners have a functional system in place. ■ Regularly monitor affected people’s satisfaction with the quality and effectiveness of responses. ■ Regularly review cluster performance to identify and resolve issues affecting coordination.

Clusters

Considerable progress has been made over the years in embedding AAP approaches within clusters: most notably, AAP has become one of the clusters' core functions and UNICEF's global clusters have adopted and integrated the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) into their work.

In its capacity as cluster lead agency, UNICEF has responsibility for ensuring that AAP is a core function of clusters. This means applying agreed mechanisms within clusters to consult and involve affected populations in decision-making, and receiving, investigating and acting on complaints and feedback.

Cluster coordinators are responsible for ensuring the cluster fulfils its role of coordinating the work of partners in maximizing quality and coverage, closing gaps and minimizing duplication, and generating results for affected people. Consider the following elements in order to strengthen AAP in the work of clusters:

- **Spend time** thinking about possible incentives and barriers to AAP, to help you plan how to overcome barriers and find the most appropriate approach for the cluster.
 - **Communicate** with partners and other stakeholders to make sure your planned approach feeds into and doesn't duplicate common systems.
 - **Make** AAP a standing agenda item at cluster meetings and share outcomes of meetings at higher level meetings such as with ICCGs.
 - **Include** AAP to the ToR of strategic advisory groups.
- **Delegate** a person as focal point for AAP for the cluster.
 - **Organize** training and knowledge-sharing workshops for partners and others, to disseminate good practice.
 - **Consult** communities and groups, for example by inviting community representatives to share their views on the quality and accountability of responses.
 - **Conduct** joint field visits to communities to monitor the situation, share good practice and lessons learned, and to find solutions to operational and AAP issues.

Box 24 Global WASH Cluster Quality Assurance and Accountability Project

In 2019, the Global WASH Cluster, in collaboration with Oxfam, Solidarité International, Tufts University and UNICEF, initiated the Quality Assurance and Accountability Project (QAAP). The project focuses on implementing people-centred WASH responses that achieve quality standards reliably and consistently. The framework for the project was informed by field visits in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Colombia and South Sudan.

QAAP's aim is for clusters to manage quality by:


- **enabling** strong participation and ownership from all WASH partners
- **providing** engagement of, and accountability between, partners, wider stakeholders and affected populations
- **supporting** effective quality management through operationally relevant information to decision-makers, so that corrective actions are agreed and implemented in a timely manner.

Cluster leads

If every cluster systematically engaged communities to what they considered an ‘optimum’ level, those communities would be completely overwhelmed. For this reason, we recommend working at inter-cluster level, rather than as individual clusters. This will mean that cluster leads can push for and contribute to a coordinated AAP response that is conducted responsibly without duplication.

The most responsible thing you can do as a cluster lead is advocate for and help to facilitate collective action (see Table 20). It is imperative that clusters:

- encourage cluster members to work collaboratively on AAP, making plans together and sharing work accordingly
- work at ICCG level to ensure collective work occurs in support of HCT commitments on response-wide accountability
- take responsibility for certain areas of collective efforts as part of a whole, as long as this is planned collectively and everyone understands it.

 *Tool 13.4 Tip sheet to monitor AAP performance in Cluster Coordination*

Tips for cluster coordinators

- **Familiarize yourself with the CHS⁶⁸** and the updated Sphere standards.⁶⁹
- **Familiarize yourself with the AAP** tools and training resources to strengthen your own and cluster partners’ knowledge.
- **Review** reports and evaluations from previous crises for insights on good practice in AAP and CE, and the most effective and appropriate intervention strategies for your context.
- **Consult** with UNICEF Country and Regional Offices, cluster partners and the agencies UN OCHA, IOM, UNHCR, ICRC and the IFRC for overviews of previous or existing country-level AAP interventions.
- **Consult** with local stakeholders familiar with the context for their views on how to integrate AAP with the response.

⁶⁸ CHS Alliance (2019)

⁶⁹ CHS Alliance, Sphere Project & Groupe URD (2015)

Box 25 Strengthening AAP in Myanmar

In Myanmar, the WASH Cluster has included AAP indicators in its HRP and has revised its monitoring framework to include indicators such as ‘% of affected people surveyed who feel informed about the WASH services available to them’ and ‘% of people surveyed who know how to, and feel comfortable to make suggestions or complaints’.

Partners regularly involve affected populations in the development of strategies and design of services in the camps. For example, the design of child latrines was informed by consultations with children, using child-friendly activities (*see Chapter 8*). The household-shared sanitation approach (instead of communal sex-segregated) was adopted based on feedback. This is currently being independently evaluated.

Complaints and feedback mechanisms have been established by different partners to cover most of Rakhine State. Oxfam-SI set up and advanced digitized mechanisms that are being considered for use by smaller NGOs.

Some feedback reported that hygiene kits were incomplete – for example, sanitary pads and soap were lacking. This information was used to make adjustments.

Collective accountability

A collective approach to AAP can provide a range of services to the humanitarian community, support the coordination of partners engaged in community engagement and AAP activities, and ensure that decision-making is informed by the views and feedback from affected populations (*see Figure 12*).

The collective approach you adopt will depend on the context and the technical expertise and resources available in your situation. Leadership support will be needed to gain wider adoption of the AAP approach. It will help to build collective approaches on existing platforms and networks for CE.

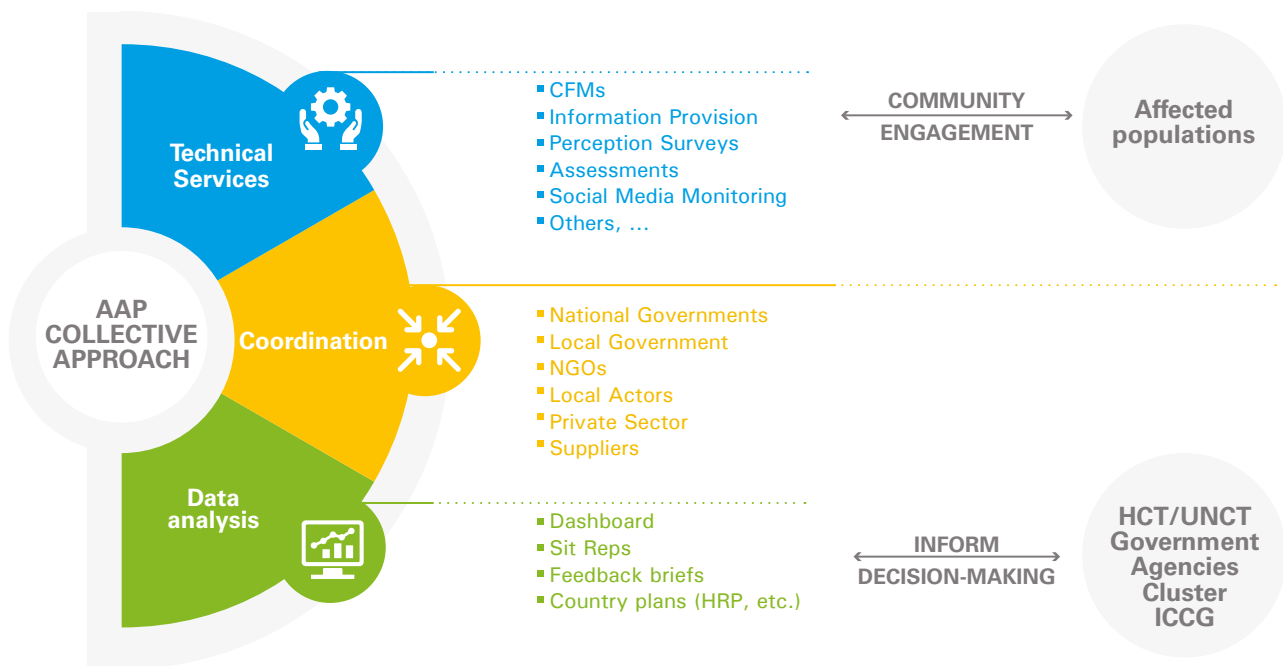
Make sure your collective approach to AAP:

- **identifies communication** needs and appropriate communication channels
- **coordinates the provision** of appropriate and relevant information to affected communities
- **regularly monitors** rumours and perceptions from affected people about the quality of the aid response
- **supports the establishment** of collective complaints and feedback mechanisms
- **compiles and analyses data** to inform collective decision-making and course correction (through the ICCG and/or HCT)
- **ensures AAP approaches** are included in country-level preparedness activities.

UNICEF actively supports collective approaches to AAP in many countries. It can:

- provide dedicated inter-agency coordinators for the AAP working group
- chair or co-chair the AAP working group
- advocate for HCT support to collective approaches
- ensure that UNICEF-led clusters adopt the collective approach
- lead on key functions in the collective approach
- support inter-agency capacity-building initiatives.

Figure 12 AAP Collective Approach



The benefits of collective feedback mechanisms

There is evidence to show that shared complaints and feedback mechanisms are more user-friendly and more responsive than individual ones. When many aid agencies are present, communities are often confused about which agency they should address their complaints to. For example, a study of affected populations in Afghanistan, South Central Somalia and Syria found that, except for certain well-informed community representatives, many people did not know which agency was responsible for the aid they were receiving.⁷⁰

Despite affected people often expressing the need to talk about general concerns that are unrelated to specific organizations, individual mechanisms continue to be established. This fragmentation makes it difficult to aggregate and jointly analyse data. As a result, organizations miss opportunities to identify broader trends that could inform and improve programme design. **To be effective, collective mechanisms must:**

- **reflect** operational realities
- **be co-designed** by those they serve
- **articulate** how we engage communities at the inter-agency level
- **value and recognize** the importance of existing practices, rather than replacing them
- **identify ways** to share lessons for continuous improvement
- **map** out practical steps to improve how we collectively share information, and collect, listen and respond to feedback
- **ensure** that communities can participate in decisions that affect them.

⁷⁰ GPPI (2016)

Box 26 Establishing a collective approach to AAP in the Central African Republic⁷¹

In 2019, UN OCHA and its partners established a collective approach to AAP in the Central African Republic, with dedicated funding, working group and coordinator.

The AAP Working Group is co-led by UN OCHA and UNICEF and positioned at the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group level. Membership of the group includes AAP officers, M&E officers from INGOs and NGOs, such as the Danish Refugee Council, Finn Church Aid, Ground Truth Solutions, REACH, and Reseau des Journalistes des droits de l'Homme, as well as those with similar roles in local, government and media associations, youth groups, civil society organizations and the private sector.

The AAP WG implements shared activities and services to support the adaptation of programmes and responses based on feedback from affected people. Activities include:

- ensuring implementation and monitoring of collective activities for CE and AAP (e.g. managing a hotline and information & feedback centres, organizing radio programmes and discussion groups, tracking and analysing feedback, complaints and perceptions)
- through a shared secure database, producing regular analysis of feedback in order to identify trends in satisfaction, priority needs and rumours so that the response can be adapted.
- advising partners, the ICCG and HCT on actions to be taken in response to feedback, complaints and rumours, using trends analysis and advocacy
- ensuring that AAP is included in the HPC and humanitarian action, including in needs assessments, communication products and monitoring (e.g. including AAP questions in multi-sectoral needs assessments, and tracking perceptions against indicators).

Organizational vs collective accountability

UNICEF has taken a lead role in promoting collective approaches to AAP in cooperation with the IFRC and UN OCHA and as part of IASC, but this does not remove internal responsibilities within UNICEF to ensure AAP is integrated in all aspects of humanitarian and development work (see [Table 20](#)).

Collective accountability approaches build on what individual organizations do, and tend to have a broader focus on the participation, feedback and perceptions of people across the totality of the response, including those who may not be receiving assistance or protection. For humanitarian coordinators and HCTs, as well as clusters, collective approaches are critical for understanding the overall needs and preferences of affected people across the response, identifying where gaps exist, and guiding the prioritization of the response.

⁷¹ ODI (2020)

Table 20 UNICEF responsibilities

	UNICEF PROGRAMMES	UNICEF AS CLUSTER LEAD	UNICEF AS MEMBER OF HCT IN ICCG
Information provision	<p>Assess preferred communication channels and ensure they are inclusive.</p> <p>Ensure all UNICEF programmes provide essential and life-saving information to affected people.</p>	<p>Review development of key messages related to specific sectors of intervention.</p> <p>Coordinate information provision through AAP working group.</p>	<p>Ensure a mechanism is in place for testing key messages, and that preferred communication channels are used.</p> <p>Ensure information provision is coordinated through an AAP working group.</p> <p>Assess preferred and inclusive communication channels for all clusters.</p>
Participation	<p>Ensure that all segments of the affected populations are able to engage in effective participatory processes.</p>	<p>Ensure that all sectoral assessments use participatory methodologies.</p> <p>Ensure inclusive participation strategies are reflected in cluster plans.</p> <p>Ensure that cluster activities are monitored through participatory approaches.</p>	<p>Ensure community priorities are included in HNO and HRP processes.</p> <p>Ensure that multi-sector needs assessments include questions to ascertain how communities wish to provide feedback and hear back from agencies.</p>
Feedback	<p>All UNICEF programmes give people access to safe and reliable feedback mechanism, taking into consideration their preferred communication channel(s).</p> <p>Complaints and feedback mechanisms are harmonized and linked with collective mechanisms, to the extent that this improves efficiency and makes it easier for affected people to have their voices heard.</p> <p>Data management and utilization platform exists to ensure that views and feedback are channelled back to UNICEF decision-making processes, as well as closing the feedback loop.</p>	<p>Ensure CFM is in place and connect to the Inter-Agency CFM (share feedback received by your own cluster with wider Inter-Agency mechanism when available).</p> <p>Ensure referral pathways are in place for referring cases to other sectors if needed.</p>	<p>Establish collective feedback mechanisms with clear division of labour between each agency for data collection, analysis and closing the feedback loop.</p> <p>Ensure that real-time evaluations and inter-agency humanitarian evaluations include analysis of how the response has been adapted to reflect views and feedback from affected people.</p> <p>Connect with clusters to ensure all feedback and complaints are aggregated in one system for common analysis.</p>

Resources for Chapter 13

(Key resources are highlighted in bold.)

CDAC Network (2017) *Policy Paper: The role of collective platforms, services and tools to support communication and community engagement in humanitarian action*. At www.cdacnetwork.org/contentAsset/raw-data/ca0a2c16-a6f6-4e53-86e2-9ea75fbbcb31/attachedFile

CDAC Network (2019) *Collective communication and community engagement in humanitarian action: A how-to guide for leaders and responders*. At www.cdacnetwork.org/contentAsset/raw-data/cca52f57-4f06-4237-9c18-37b9e8e21a18/attachedFile2

CHS Alliance (2019) *Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability*. At <https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard>

Global Protection Cluster (2016a) *Checklist on Incorporating Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle*. At www.globalprotectioncluster.org/_assets/files/tools_and_guidance/protection-cluster-coordination-toolbox/gpc-edg-note-checklist-on-incorporating-protection-and-accountability-in-the-hpc.en.pdf

Global Protection Cluster (2016b) *Suggested actions for inter-cluster coordination groups to strengthen accountability to affected populations and protection in the humanitarian programme cycle*. At https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/suggested_actions_to_strengthen_aap_and_protection_for_clusters_final_02092016.pdf

GPPI (2016) *Listening to Communities in Insecure Environments*. At www.gppi.net/media/SAVE__2016__Listening_to_communities_in_insecure_environments.pdf

Inter Agency Common Feedback Project (2015) *Community Perception Report - Nepal Earthquake*. At <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Community%20Perception%20Report%20May%202018.pdf>

IASC (2017) *Standard Terms of Reference for Humanitarian Country Teams*. At https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/hct_tors.pdf

ODI (2020) *Collective approaches to communication and community engagement in the Central African Republic*. At www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/cce_in_car_web_0.pdf

Toolkit

The AAP Handbook toolkit is available online at: corecommitments.unicef.org/aap

List of tools

Tool 2.1 FAQs on AAP

Tool 2.2 UNICEF video: Accountability to Affected Populations

Tool 3.1 ToRs for AAP Focal Point

Tool 3.2 Job Description for AAP Specialist

Tool 3.3 Overview of AAP responsibilities in a CO

Tool 5.1 Tip sheet for integration of AAP in Situation Analysis

Tool 5.2 Menu of AAP Related Questions for Multi-Sector Needs Assessments (IASC)

Tool 5.3 Tip sheet for integration of AAP in Programme Strategy Note

Tool 5.4 Example of AAP Theory of Change

Tool 5.5 Tip sheet for integration of AAP in Humanitarian Response Plans and Emergency Preparedness

Tool 5.6 Budget overview for AAP

Tool 5.7 Example of integration of AAP in PCAs

Tool 5.8 List of suggested AAP Indicators

Tool 6.1 Accountability and Inclusion tip sheet

Tool 8.1 Tips on running focus group discussions

Tool 8.2 Tips on holding community meetings

Tool 8.3 Basic requirements for quality child and adolescent participation

Tool 8.4 Informed consent form

Tool 8.5 Consent form for processing of personal data

Tool 9.1 Feedback flow diagram

Tool 9.2 Feedback collection form template

Tool 10.1 PSEA Practical Guide and Toolkit

Tool 12.1 Tip sheet for local actors' participation in the programme cycle

Tool 13.1 ToRs for interagency AAP Coordinator/ Senior Adviser/ Technical Adviser

Tool 13.2 Example of ToR for AAP/CE Working Group

Tool 13.3 Framework for collective AAP in the HPC

Tool 13.4 Tip sheet to monitor AAP performance in Cluster Coordination

This list is not exhaustive. The toolkit will be piloted and tested, and as our shared experience of this topic grows, it will be revisited and adapted. New tools may be made available online.

