

Complaints and response mechanisms

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Complaints and response mechanisms (CRM) constitute all the procedures an agency adopts to enable beneficiaries, staff, partner agencies and other specified stakeholders to raise concerns about the agency's work, actions and commitments. An effective CRM is safe, confidential, transparent and accessible.



A right to a say and a duty to respond

Recognition – Humanitarian accountability is the responsible use of power. It is about providing those affected by disaster with an opportunity to influence the decisions that impact upon them and to recognise that they have a **right** to a say and the agency a **duty** to respond.

Invention and development – HAP member agencies share an obligation to comply with the HAP Principles of Accountability. By applying these Principles, a basic requirement of HAP membership, an agency commits to enabling beneficiaries and staff to report complaints and seek redress. Involving all stakeholders in the design process is what makes the HAP CRM approach innovative. As a result of this approach, entry points to complain are context specific and thus vary depending on how people want to complain.

Implementation – Since 2003 HAP member agencies, with the support of the Secretariat, have been developing and implementing CRM for all stakeholders. Case studies, guidelines and tools are available on the HAP website.



Lessons learned:

HAP's report *To Complain or not Complain*, reveals chronic under reporting of all complaints by beneficiaries, not only allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, but of the most basic concerns, like accessibility to clean water. Many of the refugees also stated that it was hard to complain, because the "Big People" – aid workers - were difficult to reach.

To mitigate the many barriers that stop people from complaining, HAP members agencies with HAP's support, consult with communities in the design and implementation of the mechanism. **Asking communities how they would like to complain** increases trust in the process and accessibility as people feel safer coming forward to lodge complaints.

Together with our members, we are committed to improving the effectiveness of community based CRM and to develop formal structures where none exist.



Further information - on CRM, HAP, its members and the HAP Standard in Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management, visit www.hapinternational.org. The study *Impact of complaints and response mechanisms* will be released later in 2009.