



HAI FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS MECHANISM (FCM)

Definition

Feedback is a personal view on the work of Humanitarian Aid International (HAI) which can be expressed in the form of a suggestion for improvement, as a compliment (if positive) and as a complaint (if negative).

Thus, a **complaint** can be understood as negative feedback. It is an expression of dissatisfaction, pain, or sadness triggered by actions of HAI itself or by actions of third parties within HAI's sphere of influence.

A **Feedback and Complaints Mechanism** is a set of procedures and tools used by HAI to receive, evaluate, and respond to feedback and complaints.

Statements And Target Groups

As an endorser and supporter of the Charter4Change and informed by the commitments of the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) HAI seeks to strengthen accountability and transparency towards its direct beneficiaries, community members, and partners, at all times. Against this backdrop, HAI aims to ensure that all direct or indirect stakeholders have access to a confidential and responsive Feedback and Complaints Mechanism (FCM) which represents an indispensable tool to base our humanitarian programme on participation, dignity, and trust (*see HAI principles below*), ensuring that the beneficiaries are always at the centre. Furthermore, an FCM will support HAI's efforts for continuous improvement both in programme planning and implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation through active listening, addressing, and learning from both positive and negative feedback from all relevant stakeholders.

HAI Principles

Accountability and Transparency

In line with the Charter of Accountability with a FCM HAI aims to strengthen the accountability and transparency in the use of resources and aid towards the direct beneficiaries, i.e., the people affected by crisis or other situations of vulnerability, but also towards external stakeholders such as donors, governments, and, in the broadest sense, the public.

Participation

HAI believes that an FCM will strengthen beneficiaries' participation in programme planning and other decisions that affect them. Through active listening, tacit knowledge will be gained which

represents an invaluable source of information to enhance HAI's project management and to ensure an overall efficient community-based response.

Dignity

An FCM provides an important tool for HAI to ensure the dignity – a fundamental human right in itself – of the affected community as it provides a way to report and address any violation of their rights, misconduct, or abuse of power.

Trust

With a FCM HAI also aims to establish and strengthen trust towards the organisation itself and the humanitarian work in general. To achieve this, HAI commits itself to thoroughly inform beneficiaries about their rights and entitlements, to encourage them to make use of the right to make complaints and to ensure that these will be handled confidentially and professionally (*see Feedback Funnel below*).

For further info please visit www.charter4change.org/coa and corehumanitarianstandard.org.

Scope Of Application

The scope of this policy refers to all forms of feedback and complaints within HAI's sphere of influence. It primarily relates to feedback and complaints on humanitarian programmes and services which makes the direct beneficiaries, who must be always at the centre, the main target group. For this, HAI encourages both formal and informal feedback and emphasizes a mixed-method approach comprising secured feedback boxes, focus group discussions, hotlines, and the Loop platform (*see below*). This mix of methods must be open to expansion and adaptation, as not all methods make sense in every context. The HAI staff must therefore decide which methods are suitable after an assessment of the respective local context. In contexts like refugee camps with a very low literacy rate, for example, a feedback box is unsuitable; instead, the hotline is a good option, as every household has a mobile phone.

Additionally, this policy is also applicable to feedback relating to individual behaviour for whom HAI is responsible, i.e., its staff members. General requests regarding HAI's work, which does not fall under the above-outlined definition of feedback or complaint, however, are not covered by this policy.

Step-By-Step Feedback Funnel

For HAI, the reception and handling of feedback and complaints represents a process based on several steps that build on each other, illustrated in the funnel above (see canva doc) and further explained on the following pages. HAI is committed to following all these steps closely to ensure the most effective and efficient FCM possible.

1. Raising awareness

For a successful and efficient FCM, by adhering to all of the above principles (accountability, transparency, dignity, participation, trust), it is necessary that HAI field staff receive adequate training and thoroughly inform beneficiaries of their rights to report any kind of complaint or feedback. Also, in the development process of the FCM itself, HAI is committed to involving and consulting with the directly affected people, i.e., the respective community. Thus, the FCM

of HAI is always open for changes and adaptations according to the local context as well as the needs and wishes of those affected.

2. Reception of Feedback and Complaints:

Formal Feedback & Complaints

Anyone who wishes to provide formal feedback or lodge a complaint towards HAI can do this through the following channels:

E-mail: complaints@hai-india.org

Post: Malkoti Apartments, A12 MBR Enclave, Sector 23 Dwarka, New Delhi 110077

Contact Us form: www.hai-india.org

Informal Feedback & Complaints

Informal feedback can be provided through meetings, discussions, or any other interactions with HAI staff. HAI promotes Secured Feedback Boxes, Focus Groups and Hotlines (see below) which are to be understood as complementary since all methods have their shortcomings. While boxes, for instance, are an easy and anonymous way to provide feedback, unlike focus groups, HAI is aware that they depend on users' writing and reading skills. In addition, HAI relies on the Loop Platform as an independent third party, which can be understood as an intermediary between HAI and the people giving feedback.

3. Storage and categorization of received complaints and feedback

No matter through which channel HAI receives feedback, it must always be categorized and stored in a database. This not only facilitates its processing and analysis but is crucial to HAI's MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning) commitments. The storage and categorization of received feedback will be carried out by the management staff which produces a brief monthly summary report. Possible categories:

- Positive feedback/compliments
- Suggestions for improvement
- Opinion
- Requests
- Minor complaints: e.g., missing item
- Severe complaints: e.g., bad quality of items distributed
- Sensitive complaints: e.g., abuse of power including sexual abuse

4. Investigation of complaints

In the case of minor complaints, the field staff who receive the feedback should be able to respond immediately. In the case of severe or sensitive complaints, follow-up and further investigation might be required - a task that is due to an external complaint handling committee (see 5.0 below) which is encouraged to share such complaints and consult with HAI.

5. Response

Appropriate measures must be developed and applied, depending on the context, to address specific complaints and prevent them in the future.

Feedback Channels – Guidelines

1. Focus group discussions

1.1 Why and what

Focus group discussions are group interactions amidst a relatively informal atmosphere. Participants are encouraged to discuss specific topics to uncover underlying complaints shared by most of them. Provide insights into the communities' perceptions and common complaints --> tacit knowledge that is not yet accessible to HAI.

1.2 Who and how

The trained field staff of HAI needs to ensure that all beneficiaries understand the meaning and purpose of a complaint. Furthermore, HAI needs to raise awareness of their rights to report any form of complaint, perceived misconduct, or abuse. Trained field staff of HAI have the role of a moderator. He/she asks open questions to get the group discussion going. Example: Are there any problems/issues you have faced/observed that you think need to be reported? The moderator (HAI staff member) must encourage all participants to share their views and complaints. The moderator must therefore avoid allowing stronger people to take the lead in the discussions.

1.3 Where and how

Group discussions should be held on a regular and ideally consistent basis. Suggestion: once per month. When forming groups, age and gender should be taken into account. Ideally, there are separate groups for women, men, and youth, with a respective male and female moderator (HAI staff) not exceeding a maximum number of 10-15 participants to guarantee a fruitful discussion. Ideally, the group composition is not changed, so that trust can develop and be strengthened within the group, allowing open discussions. For more sensitive topics, all participants should be shown the possibility of an individual discussion with a HAI member of their choice, as well as the feedback box.

2. Secured Feedback Box

2.1 Why and What

A secured feedback box offers a few perks over other engagement methods. For example, suggestion boxes are generally easier to access than surveys or focus groups. Additionally, since the entire process is anonymous, feedback boxes give people the freedom to provide honest and genuine input and might be used for sensitive issues. Hence, it offers beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries a safe space to share their thoughts and ideas helping HAI to identify its strengths and weaknesses. One shortcoming of this method is that it requires literacy skills, as complaints and/or suggestions must be placed in the box in the form of a written note or letter.

2.2 Who and How

The box will be opened and emptied only by one specific person from HAI who holds the key and opens the box once a month. For Delhi, this will be programme manager Tarini Ross. In other operational areas, HAI will appoint a member of the respective member organization. HAI will be placing one locked wooden or metal box in each community where the organization itself and/or its member organizations are operating. They will be placed in an area where those who wish to access it can do so as confidentially or privately as possible – they should be placed away from the centre of attention (e.g. away from children’s reach). The box must also be visible and accessible. An information campaign will be implemented before the box is put in place to explain the purpose of the box and the process for making a complaint.

2.3 Where and How

Feedback boxes should be set up everywhere, where at least 50 per cent of the community can read and write, to ensure high engagement. In no case, however, is the box to be understood as the sole method of obtaining feedback, but always as a complementary one.

3. Hotline

3.1 Why and What

A hotline is a phone number free of charge, allowing both anonymous and non-anonymous feedback and complaints every day. There should be at least two hotlines, managed by a man and a woman, to meet gender-specific needs.

3.2 Who and How

Call-takers must be well-trained personnel appointed by a third party – eventually through votes from the communities themselves. All calls are recorded by the call-takers, who promptly submit them to a designated agency employee for review and subsequent action, as necessary.

3.3 Where and How

The phone numbers (hotlines) should be communicated to all communities with access to mobile phones. Moreover, they must be visible at all times – possibly on a poster.

4. Loop Platform

4.1 Why and What

Loop is a free “independent platform which enables anyone, anywhere to give feedback on their experience of humanitarian and development aid – safely, freely, in their language, and using the simplest and most accessible technology”. Due to the anonymity, it allows beneficiaries and stakeholders to safely submit feedback and complaints on sensitive issues such as sexual exploitation or harassment. Thus, it constitutes an independent way for HAI to gather feedback, especially on delicate issues which may be difficult to obtain bilaterally. Additionally, HAI receives feedback notifications in real time, allowing a direct and immediate response to the communities.

4.2 Who and How

Loop users can submit their feedback through a variety of online channels, including SMS, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger or even by speaking in their language. This allows us to bridge both language and literacy divides. Each piece of feedback is then reviewed by a Loop moderator and a Loop case manager, who is a trained specialist in managing sensitive stories. Loop moderators are local people who eventually translate the feedback and then post it to the stories page on the Loop platform. Sensitive issues, however, will never be published and always be treated confidentially. Once posted, both the author and the organization will get a notification that allows the latter to directly respond.

4.3 Where and How

Since Loop can be used by everyone irrespective of literacy or language skills, it should be promoted wherever people have access to a mobile phone with an internet connection. Since this requirement is met in most HAI-operated areas, it should be promoted in all of them. Selected staff members – from both HAI and its member organizations – will first receive training on the Loop platform and then pass this knowledge on to communities in the form of information sessions.

5. Complaint Committees

5.1 Why and What

In each area of operation, HAI establishes different complaint committees composed of village leaders, beneficiary household members, and other stakeholders. Similar to the Loop platform (see above) they are conceived as intermediaries between HAI and the community. The main duties of such committees include both receiving and responding to complaints, as well as ensuring that their community is aware of the right to complain.

5.2 Who and How

Ideally, to bridge age and gender gaps not just one but several complementary committees should be formed based on community elections. To meet HAI's MEAL commitments and successfully improve its programs on an ongoing basis, it is essential to incorporate children's perspectives. Thus, a committee of community children should be formed composed of elected and trained child representatives who will collect feedback and concerns and forward them directly to HAI. Other committees, following the same structure, can be:

- Youth Feedback Committee
- Adult Feedback Committee
- Joint Feedback Committee
- Direct Beneficiary User Committees

5.3 Where and How

Complaint committees should be formed in all HAI-operated areas. After selected staff members have held information sessions on the purpose of these committees, they should be formed directly through elections.