



**Save the Children**

## Guide for setting-up Child Friendly Complaints and Response Mechanisms (CRMs)



### Lessons Learnt from Save the Children's CRM in Dadaab Refugee Camp

[JULY 2011]

Based on the Proceedings of a Lessons Learnt Workshop Held on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2011 with Save the Children staff who are directly implementing CRMs in Dadaab Refugee Camps; Kenya.



## What is a Complaints and Response Mechanism (CRM)?

CRM is clear and transparent procedures that provide beneficiaries, staff and other stakeholders with access to a safe, confidential means of voicing complaints on issues within the control of the agency (Ref, HAP).

### 1.0 What makes a CRM child-friendly?

1. Design and nature of the CRM: The mechanism is informed by children's ideas and needs about what is preferable to them.
2. Nature of the environment and location of the CRM: this needs to be a place known to children, easily accessible, safe for them and where confidentiality is guaranteed. A place where they are treated with respect, understanding and calmness; allowing children to freely share their concerns.
3. Approach to the Complainant – child friendly language and approach need to be used -basically: simple, clear and understandable
4. Staff and skills: the CRM needs to be led by people with skills to work with children. This includes: child friendly 'interviewing' skills, active listening, tolerance and patience. Staff needs to give time to children to communicate or make a point; to be happy and positive and show kindness to the child and a willingness to help; using visual materials or images on the desks so that younger children understand.

### 2.0 Why have it?

1. Children can be vulnerable and face many barriers to complaining and require a unique approach to handling their concerns
2. Children communicate in and need to be communicated with in different ways to adults
3. It provides an opportunity for children's participation-helping children to freely engage with the organization to discuss their problems and to scrutinize the organization's activities from their point of view
4. Is an avenue for demonstrating accountability to the donors, partners and stakeholders
5. It is a means of making contact, building relationships, providing feedback and sharing information with children
6. A system of understanding and addressing children issues
7. It is a system of understanding and addressing children's issues
8. It is an avenue for the organization to improve on its programming and performance
9. It is a way of finding out about violations of children's rights



## 3.0 Pilot Case Study - Ifo Camp, Dadaab, North Eastern Kenya

### 3.1 Background

Dadaab Refugee camps in Kenya, is one of the oldest and largest refugee *camps* in the world. They were originally established in 1991, designed to house 90,000 refugees for an intermittent amount of time. As of July 4<sup>th</sup> 2011, the Dadaab camps (Dagahaley, Hagadera and Ifo) host 372,551 refugees from Somalia (97%), Ethiopia, Sudan and small populations from Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, Eritrea, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe. The majority of refugees reside in Ifo.

Ifo Camp has a population of 130,004 (UNHCR, 2011)<sup>1</sup> where 92.3% are Somali and 7.7% are non Somali. Males account to 50.3% while Females are 49.7%. Approximately 55% of the camp population is children; a total of 71,657 people (34,254 girls and 37,403 boys). Save the Children is the only child-centered organization in Dadaab. Like in all other camps, SC implements child protection & food security & Livelihood programs in Ifo.

In July 2010, the HAP team led by Maria Kiani was deployed in Dadaab for a three months support mission. During this period, the HAP mission challenged organizations working in Dadaab, especially HAP members, about their commitments on accountability to communities. They conducted briefings with head of agencies as well as trainings to selected senior staffs from each agency. Save the children seconded three of its staffs: Benson Maina, M&E coordinator, Martin Odhiambo, M&E officer and Kames Kebasso, Training officer. The training covered: introduction to accountability, HAP benchmarks and how to set up CRMs.

After the HAP Mission, Save the Children embarked on the process of strengthening accountability in its programs in Dadaab, particularly child protection. The Area Manager mandated the M&E Unit to take lead. Key at the time was how to translate the lessons learned from the HAP Mission, mainly from the trainings and the inter-agency stakeholder mapping/ consultation exercise, into effective CRMs.

In 2011, Save the Children launched Accountability to Children Breakthrough that provides challenge funds to 15 countries to work on improving accountability of programmes to communities. Dadaab office used the HAP standards and recent evaluations (KAP survey and Stakeholder review) for Child protection program in Dadaab as the reference documents for application to be part of the Breakthrough. Camilla Jones (Child Protection technical advisor) and Benson Maina (accountability focal person) spearheaded the proposal with valuable input from Maria Kiani, HAP roving representative. Based on this, SC Kenya programme was identified as one of the pilot countries under the Accountability to Children Challenge Fund from SC Headquarter to implement a one year accountability project in Dadaab starting from January 2011.

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR Dadaab, Camp Population Statistics by Country of Origin, Sex and Age Group as at 4<sup>th</sup> July 2011



### 3.2 Lessons from Consultations with Children

The interagency stakeholder consultations led by Maria Kiani, HAP roving representative, in August 2010 provided very important lessons about a variety of accountability issues in Dadaab; and particularly what children want in terms of a CRM.

Save the Children took lead in children consultations. This involved Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with children (14 boys and 10 girls) purposefully selected from various sections of Ifo camp to ensure adequate representation across the camp. Two FGDs were conducted for boys and girls separately.

From these discussions, we gained an understanding of what children consider to be the most appropriate mechanisms for them to most easily provide feedback and/or complain. Children described their preferred CRM as one that:

- Provides face-to-face reporting
- Is situated in child-friendly locations
- Is child targeted in terms of set up, information / messaging
- Promotes participation and inclusivity– is flexible and includes younger and non-school going children

### 3.3 Setting up Child friendly CRMs

Based on the lessons from consultations with children, we agreed to setup feedback and complaints desks. However, the community in Dadaab has a negative attitude about children complaining to organizations. If a caregiver hears his/her child complained they assume something bad happened to them. Hence to make them more approachable to children and acceptable to community, we commonly refer to them as “**Information** or “**Feedback desk**” (used interchangeably in this guide).

These were to be set up in all Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) in the camp and host community; at the new arrival registration point and the SC camp offices. The process of setting the CRM up began in Ifo as the model or ‘pilot’ camp. This approach enabled us to generate lessons about what works and what doesn’t. The lessons learned from here after two months of implementation were used to rollout child friendly CRM in other areas (Hagadera camp, Dagahaley camp and Host community).

The information desks at the CFSs and new arrival registration point(s) were earmarked to deal with general complaints mainly project related complains and/ or information e.g. operations, beneficiary targeting etc. The SC office deals with sensitive complaints, mainly: PSEA/GBV and staff misconduct. Complainants who are not satisfied with how their project related complaints are addressed or responded to at the CFSs and new arrival registration desks are referred to SC office.

Moreover, the Food Security and Livelihood program in Dadaab provides fresh food vouchers to caregivers with children aged 6-12 months. A complaints desk is set up at the voucher distribution point during the period of voucher distribution.



In addition to the information desks, measures to proactively solicit and give feedback to beneficiaries were introduced. Among adults, we established **Beneficiary Reference Groups (BRG)** attached to each information desk, particularly the CFS. The group consists of 9 members: 4 camp leaders (2 male and 2 Female), 3 religious leaders and 2 teachers. A leaders meeting is organized bringing together religious and camp leaders to select the representatives. After explaining the purpose of the BRG, the leaders are requested to elect their representatives to the group. For teachers, there is one school in Ifo camp. SC consulted the Head teacher to recommend 2 teachers (1 male and 1 female) to be part of the BRG. Monthly feedback sessions/meetings are organized. For children, different measures for proactively soliciting feedback are employed. They include: group discussions during boys and girls days, children clubs meetings, feedback boards and drawing competitions.

### **The physical Set-up**

Setting up information or feedback desks requires furniture (lockable desk and chairs), enough space to locate them, conducive environment that guarantees confidentiality of complainant and skilled staff with knowledge of CRM processes and procedures as well as how to handle children.



Tukul at CFS in Ifo Section N where SC Complaints Desk is Located.



Complaints desk: Seated is a CFS staff ready with record book and feedback board; Martin (Left), Benson (Right) and Abdi-the CFS Supervisor (standing)

In most of the CFSs in Ifo camp, there are Tukuls with sufficient space where these feedback desks are located. Lockable desks were procured and distributed to all CRM sites. At the camp office and new arrival section, setting up a separate feedback desk have not been possible due to lack of space. As a result, the camp team leader in the SC office and new arrival registration clerk currently act as the feedback focal point.



### **Preparing Staff**

Before CRM roll-out, series of trainings were held with Save the Children staff and partners to introduce them to accountability and CRM. Detailed training was also carried out to the staff directly responsible for implementing the CRM in different locations. Their trainings covered: proposed child friendly CRM processes and procedures, interviewing children, facilitating feedback sessions with children and adults and recording of complains. Regular refresher trainings/ meetings are also held with them from time to time to equip them with new skills and share experiences.

### **Awareness-Raising with Children and the Community**

Awareness creation has been a key component for the success of this child friendly CRM. Every child visiting our CFS for playing and psychosocial support is first registered at the entrance. During registration, the children are introduced, shown and encouraged to visit the feedback desk. Moreover, at the end of morning and afternoon sessions, children available at the CFS are often brought together for a feedback session. During this time, children are given time to give feedback about the services received and encouraged to share information about SC services with their peers and caregivers. The use of child-to-child approaches proved to be effective in awareness creation on the CRM; making the number of children and adults visiting the feedback desks for information / complains increase.

#### **3.4 Complaints Handling**

Complaints are received either: face-to-face from the complainant, anonymously when complainant sends it through a friend or the beneficiary reference group as well as when our staff proactively solicit feedback/complain from children or adults.

#### **Keeping a record of complaints**

We have two complains record book at each desk and a central complains database as well. The central database is kept at the M&E office in Dadaab Main Office. Record books are collected on weekly basis (every Friday evening). The following week, feedback is sought, logged in the book and data is entered to the central database. The books are then returned back to the desk the week after (often on Monday). It therefore takes 1-2 weeks **ideally** to get feedback depending on when complaints were raised.

In Dadaab office, two data entry clerks, one for child protection and one for the FSL programme are tasked with doing the complaints data entry. According to our records, below is show the number of complaints received from both children and adults at the various feedback desks located at the CFSs in Ifo since April 2011.



Table 1: number of complaints received from both children and adults in Ifo

|              | 0-5 years | 6-11 years | 12-17 Years | 18 Years and above | Totals    |
|--------------|-----------|------------|-------------|--------------------|-----------|
| Male         | 0         | 4          | 22          | 3                  | 29        |
| Female       | 0         | 2          | 34          | 19                 | 55        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>0</b>  | <b>6</b>   | <b>56</b>   | <b>22</b>          | <b>84</b> |

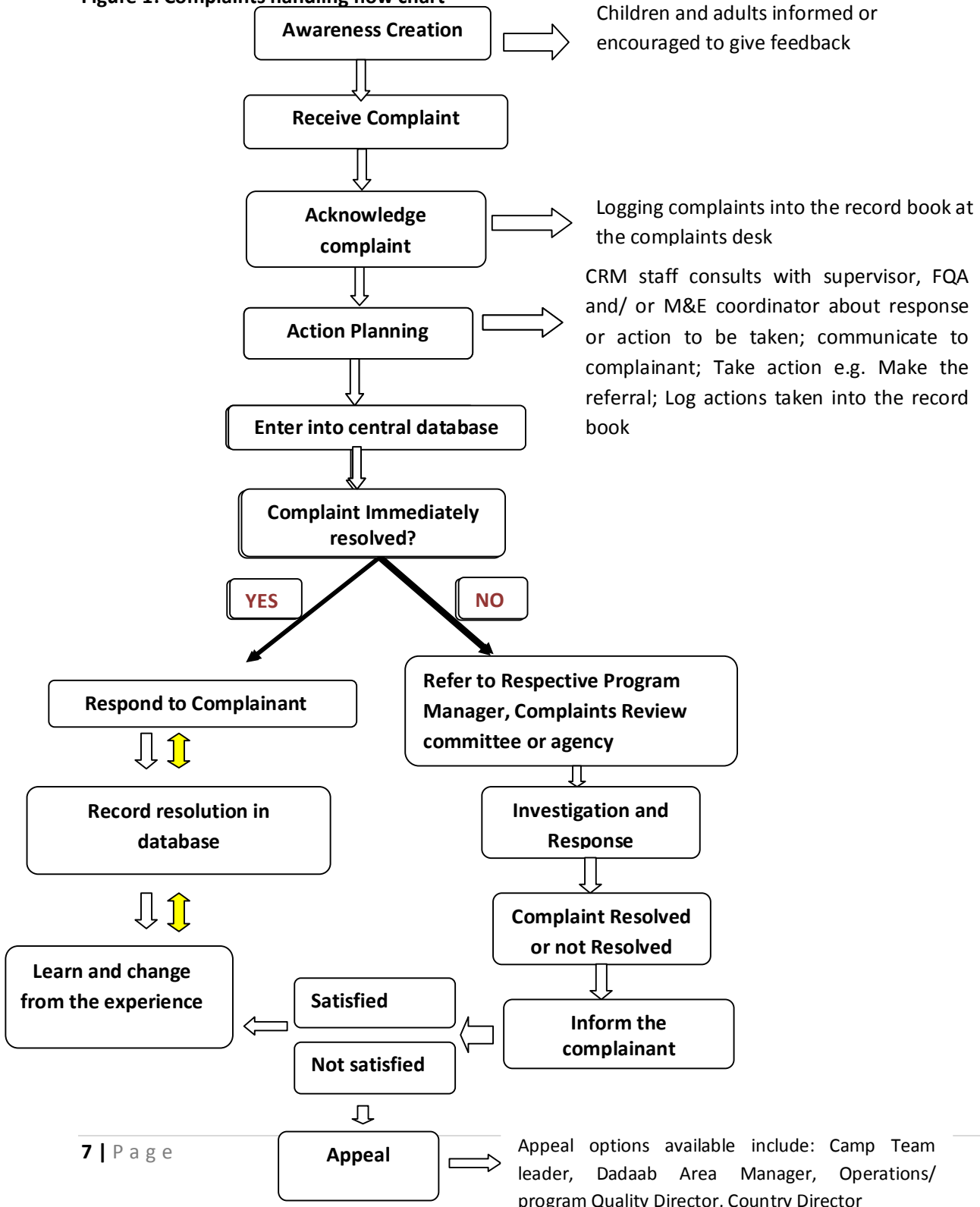
Source: Feedback desks, April to June 2011

However, handling complains at the information desks is sometime challenging particularly in ensuring there is a staff on duty at all times particularly when there are other competing activities at the CFS. This is because, there is usually no staff employed to deal with CRM on full time basis. At the CFS information desks, the CFS staffs work on rotational basis. Every week, there are different staffs on duty to receive and solicit feedback from children.

Figure 1 below is a flow diagram of how formal and informal complaints from children and adults in Dadaab are received and addressed.



Figure 1: Complaints handling flow chart







### **3.5 Challenges**

1. Information desks require much space. Lack of enough space in camp offices and new arrival section compromise on confidentiality and hence made it hard to set them up in these places
2. Cultural factors- culture affects whether and/or how children complain; for example, in the Somali culture, girls don't complain to males.
3. Language barriers- in areas where there is a heterogeneous community with mixture of various ethnic identities, minority groups don't usually complain due to lack of staff from their ethnic background.
4. Where large number of complaints are received may cause delay in delivering feedback
5. Lack of staff employed to work on CRM on full time basis.
6. There are very few female staff and hence girls don't complain when the female staff are away
7. Projects designed to predominantly target adults or very young children often fail to guarantee child participation. For instance, food distributions target adults. The environment where it happens are often not conducive for children hence don't attract children
8. Verbal versus written complains handling; large number of complaints received at the feedback desks are not recorded. This mainly happen where the culture of writing is not developed and also when the staff receiving complaints has ready feedback often they give it verbally.
9. Giving children choice of how they wish to receive feedback makes it difficult to meet their demands especially where staffing is a problem
10. Misconception of the community. Many parents believe if they their child complains they assume something bad have happened to their child. Hence many children fear that their parent will find out that they complained.

### **3.6 Lessons Learnt**

1. Complaints handling should be backed up with strong referral system. More often, complainants especially children do not differentiate organizational scope or mandate. It's difficult to restrict children what they should complain about. Some complainants also tend to appeal about services offered by other agencies to your agency if dissatisfied. You therefore receive complaints that are beyond the scope/ mandate of your organization or feedback desk. Strong referral mechanisms internally and externally are therefore crucial for effective CRM.
2. Have more than one complaints record book at the information desk especially when receiving large numbers of complains. This allows continuity in recording of complaints when one book has been collected for data entry, complaints assessment and feedback logging.
3. For effective management of CRM, it is important to have accountability staffs fully responsible for: collecting and soliciting complaints; entering and maintaining complaints database; overall co-ordination and follow up on complaints.



4. Organize regular trainings and meetings with the CRM staff /focal person to share experiences/ equip them with new skills. This is good where staff turnover is high
5. Eye catching or strategically located Information desks make children curious and encourages them to ask questions or provide feedback.
6. Awareness creation has been a key component for the success of this child friendly CRM. Use of child – to- child approaches proved to be effective way of creating awareness to children. Children feel free to talk with children of their age groups and gender. Information about importance of information desk can be passed through other children.
7. Children shouldn't be guided how to complain. When children feel restricted, they don't usually feel free to raise their concerns.
8. Children require immediate response for their concerns. This doesn't mean solutions but responses may be in the form of assurances, acknowledgement of complaints or where possible solutions. Having ready answers in the form of FAQs at every information desks is essential.
9. Combine passive with proactive approaches of soliciting feedback. Examples of some effective proactive approaches for soliciting feedback includes: focus group discussions, feedback boards/sessions, Beneficiary Reference Group and drawings.
10. Allow for anonymous complaints. Children sometime complain on behalf of their friend, children of same age bracket or gender. This should be encouraged.

## 4.0 Main Stages of Setting up a Child Friendly CRM

The main steps of setting up Child friendly CRMs adapted from *10 steps to a Complaints and Feedback Mechanism* by Save the Children UK and *Proceeding of HAP training on CRM held in Nairobi Kenya*

1. Establishment of a child friendly CRM is supported by senior management, and appropriate resources, including human, are devoted to this purpose
2. Consult children and their carers and partners to ascertain which method is most appropriate for them.
3. Adapt/design guidelines and processes based on children's and partner input and program resources, and agree on roles.
4. Staffs are trained in the processes and procedures as well as communicating effectively with children.
5. Set up the complaints handling infrastructure. Make access to the complaints processes as easy and safe as possible for children.
6. Raise awareness among children (including via other children) and their carers and partner organizations on what they can complain about and how to make a complaint.
7. A complaint is made or a concern is raised.



8. Complainants are acknowledged- for adults acknowledge complain by delivering a paper receipt to complainant. For children it's difficult. Acknowledgement of complainants from children it's done by recording the complaint in a book
9. Enter the complaint into a database.
10. Complaints are resolved; informally or formally
11. Response is given. If unsatisfied, the complainant may appeal the decision
12. Information from complaints is continuously fed into project improvement and the CRM is adjusted according to lessons learnt

## 5.0 Top Tips

### Enablers

1. Have a separate room, place or desk strategically located for receiving complaints/ feedback
2. Set up the CRM in an accessible, conducive and hospitable environment. Children feel more comfortable to speak with someone they know or are kind to them.
3. Ensure confidentiality as much as is practical. When a child is complaining others shouldn't listen
4. Sensitize the children and their caregivers about the existence and importance of complaints desk
5. Use child friendly approaches when handling children's complaints: treat children with respect, use Child friendly language, listen patiently as they express themselves.
6. Record complaints using standardized criteria in the different complaints handling mechanism. Recording the complaints provide assurance to complainants' that action will be taken. It also makes follow up and response easier
7. Be truthful to the children (Transparency), explain clearly and honestly what can be done or and what cannot be done.
8. Keeping the promise (and only promising what you know you can deliver)
9. Have CRM staff with skills to communicate effectively with children
10. Have both male and female staff in the information desk

### Disablers

1. Non conducive environment for children e.g. locations that are unfriendly, insecure, lack space for playing etc
2. lack of confidentiality
3. Fear of being punished by their caregivers.
4. Lack or delayed feedback
5. Not knowing about the existence and importance of the complaints desk
6. Unfriendly staff and/or lack of staff who understand the children's mother tongue
7. Lack of female staff at the information desk- In Somali culture girls don't complain to male staff



## 6.0 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)<sup>2</sup>

### General

- Q. What does Save the Children (SC) do in Dadaab?
- Q. Does SC convert children to Christianity?
- Q. Does SC teach children to be undisciplined or not to respect their parents?
- Q. Does SC prohibit parents from disciplining their children?
- Q. Does SC work at the transit center or have any of its staffs there?
- Q. Does SC provide shoes and clothing to needy children?
- Q. When a staff of SC is seen misbehaving or engaging in fraud, what should I do?

### Questions about Child Friendly Spaces (CFS)

- Q. What goes on at the CFS?
- Q. Which days and time is the CFS open?
- Q. Does SC provide Food to children who come to the CFS?
- Q. Does SC add playing materials in the CFS if they are few?
- Q. Does SC repair or replace playing materials that have broken down?
- Q. Can SC add more games in the CFS?
- Q. Can SC expand the size of the CFS field?
- Q. Can SC put-up storage water tanks at the CFS to ensure constant supply of water?
- Q. When a child is injured or hurt while playing at the CFS, what should I do?

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<sup>2</sup> Preparation of FAQ from complains received in progress! Updated as more feedbacks/ complains are received. This FAQ is based on the complaints received at the various information desks from April to June 2011 in Dadaab refugee camps. There is also another FAQ prepared based on child protection experience at the new arrival section (annexed)



### **Questions about Child Protection**

Q. Who is a Child?

Q. What is Child Protection?

Q. What is the difference between: Unaccompanied Minors (UAM), Separated Child (SC) and Orphan?

Q. When a case of Unaccompanied Minors (UAM) and/or Separated Children is reported to me, how should I deal with it?

Q. When a case of child abuse and neglect is reported to me, how should I deal with it?

Q. When a case of custody dispute is reported to me, how should I deal with it?

Q. When a case of Gender Based Violence or Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) is reported to me, how should I deal with it?

### **Questions about Fresh Food Voucher Project**

Q. Who is eligible or qualify to receive Fresh Food Voucher?

Q. Does SC give voucher to children not registered with UNHCR e.g. new arrivals?

Q. If my child is eligible and not included in UNHCR manifest, what should I do?

Q. When should I come to collect my voucher?

Q. What should I carry when coming to collect my voucher?

Q. Can I send my child, friend, relative or neighbor to collect for me my voucher?

### **Questions about Education**

Q. Can SC start Early Childhood Development Centers at the CFSs?

Q. Does SC provide school uniforms and learning materials?

Q. Does SC tell children not to go to school and instead go to the CFS?



### **Questions about Shelter and Food**

Q. Does SC provide children and their families Shelter?

Q. Does SC provide children and their families food ration?

Q. Does SC assist Children and their families to get shelter and food ration from other agencies?

### **Questions about Refugee Registration**

Q. Does SC assist Children and their families get registered by UNHCR?



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## **Annex 1**

### **Child Protection FAQ Used at the New arrival Reception Section during vulnerability screening**



FAQ\_ New Arrival  
Reception Centres.doc





## Annex 2

### HAP Inter-agency Stakeholder Mapping Tool used during Children Consultations in Dadaab



Refugee Group: Children-Elderly-PLWD

|  |   |                             |                               |
|--|---|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>INTERVIEWERS</b>                              |   |                             |                               |
| Name and Agency:                                 |   |                             |                               |
| Name and Agency:                                 |   |                             |                               |
| Name and Agency:                                 |   |                             |                               |
| Name and Agency:                                 |   |                             |                               |
| Date:  |   |                             |                               |
| Location:  |   |                             |                               |
| Translator used: Yes <input type="checkbox"/>    |   | No <input type="checkbox"/> |                               |
| <hr/>  |   |                             |                               |
| <b>PARTICIPANTS</b>                              |   |                             |                               |
| No. of participants <input type="text"/>         | female <input type="text"/>                   | male <input type="text"/>   | children <input type="text"/> |
| Comments:  |   |                             |                               |
| <hr/>  |   |                             |                               |
| <b>Methodology Used:</b>                         |   |                             |                               |
| Focus group discussion: <input type="checkbox"/> | Translator used: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> |                             | No <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Direct Interviews: <input type="checkbox"/>      |   |                             |                               |
| Other: <input type="checkbox"/>                  |   |                             |                               |

#### Introduction for Refugees Group

1. Good Morning/afternoon. My name is ..... I work with .....which is an organization that works in IFO camp. These are my colleagues..... name and agency.
2. We are here to better understand how to improve our work in Dadaab and so we are carrying out discussions with various members of the community.
3. To participate in the discussion we will ask you some questions. Your participation will not cause any bad thing/disadvantage to you, or the community/school etc.
4. We are asking you to answer the questions simply to help our understanding and on a voluntary basis ( there is no gain or reward etc).
5. We will take notes but we will not record or share your personal information with anyone. We will put the feedback we receive from you and other community members together to see what are the important issues on information, participation and complaints and how all the agencies can address them.
6. This information will be used to help us plan for some improvement in the way we work and will also be put into a report about our work-but the report will never mention names or who said what.
7. You are free to ask questions as we do the discussion and you are also free to not respond to questions you do not feel comfortable responding to. This interview will take **about 40 minutes**
8. We will not be able to give you feedback personally but will try to let you know what happens next as soon as we can through (leaders/ representatives/ etc).
9. Would you be willing to support us in this activity by answering a few questions?  
*Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.*

**(CHILDREN GROUP:- ADAPT AND FOCUS QUESTIONS ACCORDING TO YOUR GROUP)**

Refugee Group: Children-elderly-PLWD

10th August HAP Inter-agency Mapping & Action Planning Exercise

1



**SECTION 3: COMPLAINS HANDLING**

14. Have you heard of people in your community who have raised complaints with the agencies

a. answer:

b. what was it about? ( examples)

c. How did they raise it?



d. do they get a response?

15. If you had a concern/complaint about the work/project how would do you raise it at the moment?

a. how?

b. with whom( where/who would you go to etc)

c. when

d. what happens next?



16. Do you feel free to raise any concerns/complaints?

Answer:

If not why not:

17. What would you do if you had a concern/ complaint about a camp committee or a community leader?

a. Answer: ( How, where, etc)



b. Fears/challenges

18. Have you been told/informed how to register your complaints?

a. Answer:

b. By who? ( what do they tell you?)



19. How would you like to raise a concern/complaint? Tell us so we can improve- make clear suggestions:  
(If they make the any suggestions ask them for more details: Eg: tell someone directly (ask who should it be? When, where, how often) complaint box ( where it should be placed, how often etc), leaders, committees etc- try to get as many details as possible.



**Observations:**

**Recommendations**

**Actions points**