Accountability to Affected Populations

Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms.

Background

Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) practices in humanitarian and development contexts, ensure that interventions are effective, responsive, and equitable. This approach prioritizes accountability, participation, and transparency, contributing to sustainable outcomes for children and communities. CBCC Africa through UNICEF support, has been implementing integration of AAP practices and standards since July 2022 through the DigiRedio Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) Platform.

DigiRedio is a Social and Behaviour Change platform that facilitates dialogue between multi-sectoral players and the public to educate, amplify community voices, catalyse action, create social accountability, and enhance participation at all levels for sustainable development primarily through a network of radios, social groups and online.

Between August 2023 and August 2024, the platform further established a feedback mechanism, enabling beneficiaries—children, women, men, and marginalized groups—to express concerns without fear of retribution. The complaints and feedback mechanism (CFM) pilot was implemented in the Garissa and Lodwar Zonal office regions aimed at providing communities in the zonal regions with accessible, culturally relevant channels to voice their concerns, complaints, and feedback.

Implementation Approach

Five Public Service Announcements (PSAs) were developed and broadcasted through DigiRedio to create community awareness on access to information and communication, participation, sexual exploitation and abuse and importance of feedback.

Six radio drama series were produced and aired on the radio platform depicting real-life scenarios that communities face regarding AAP. Each episode covered different pillars of Accountability to Affected Populations making the concepts more and understandable.

The platform ran the Tuwajibike Tunawiri AAP campaign, focusing on rights of affected people, eliciting feedback from community members regarding any aid or services they are receiving or need. A critical aspect of the DigiRedio platform is its capacity for two-way communication allowing communities to share their concerns or feedback through call ins, SMS, or social media.

CBCC Africa conducted community consultation sessions in Garissa and Turkana counties to gather critical insights from community members regarding their experiences with humanitarian aid and development services. These sessions aimed to understand community needs, preferences, and overall experiences to enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of the aid and development programs.

Additionally, DigiRedio partners utilised various social groups and platforms to conduct community engagement activities on access to information and communication, participation, sexual exploitation and abuse, complaints and feedback mechanisms (CFM) in 10 counties reaching 4663 community members.

CBCC Africa supported by UNICEF rolled out AAP stakeholder capacity strengthening and engagement forums in Turkana and Garissa counties. The workshops brought together county teams, civil society organizations, and national government agencies aiming to strengthen their understanding of AAP principles; focusing on ethical and operational frameworks for both development and emergency contexts. Participants shared knowledge, challenges, and best practices, fostering collaboration and innovation.

CFM Performance Insights

DigiRedio through its Angaza Social Listening Platform monitors, collects, analyses community conversations and perceptions on various topics discussed on the weekly show. The platform gathers community-level feedback through the weekly, on-air two-way engagement and individualized feedback via short code 23080. The platform analyses and thematises this data to gain insights community sentiments and emerging trends, which informs programming. The feedback was also routinely shared with UNICEF for closure of feedback loops.

The data from the two-way communication revealed that a total of 2,070 community level feedback items were collected. This includes 1,068 complaints (51.6%), 133 compliments/appreciations (6.4%), 508 suggestions (24.5%), 118 queries/requests (5.7%), and 243 other issues (11.7%).

Below is representation of the feedback gathered through the DigiRedio two-way engagement.

Feedback Type
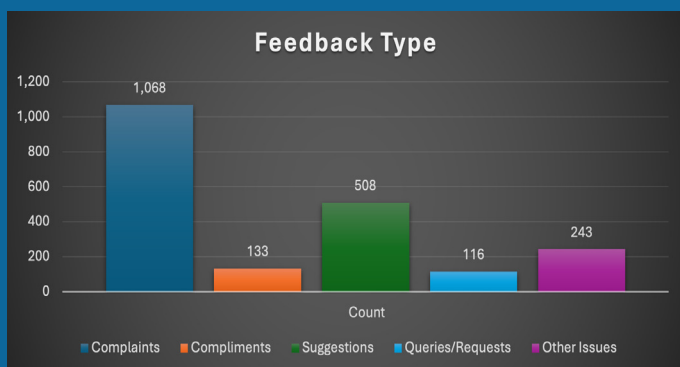
Further analysis reveals that Health and Disease Issues were the most significant concern, with 61.0% of responses focusing on disease outbreaks and vaccinations, followed by 9.5% addressing access to health care services. Education and Child Welfare issues were also notable, comprising 13.3% of feedback, particularly around educational access and resource affordability.

Public Services and Welfare account for 12.2% of the feedback, emphasizing public service delivery and social welfare. Smaller concerns included Community and Cultural Issues, Rights and Freedoms, and Violence and Exploitation, with each area representing a minor portion of the feedback. The data from the individualised complaints and feedback mechanism (23080 short code) reveals that 342 (37.4%) were queries or requests, 296 (32.4%) were complaints, 140 (15.3%) were other issues, 91 (10.0%) were compliments, and 45 (4.9%) were suggestions.

Feedback type
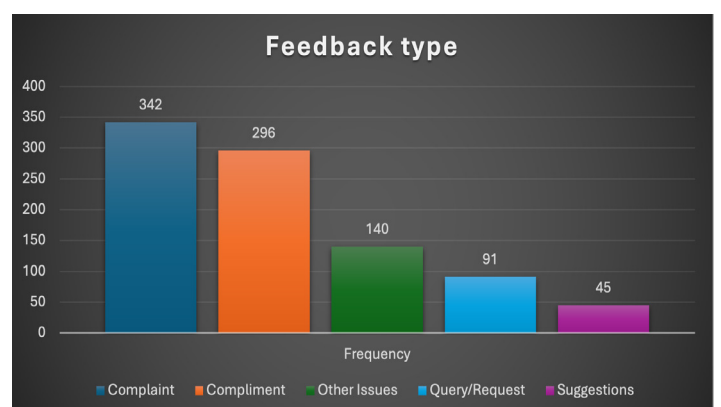
Additionally, the feedback provided by community members through the short code highlighted several areas of concern. Health and disease-related challenges were particularly prominent, with issues such as disease outbreaks and vaccinations (12.91%), access to healthcare services (1.97%), and the effects of drug and substance abuse (1.31%) being frequently mentioned. Education and child welfare were also significant topics, with concerns about the affordability of educational resources (4.92%) and access to education (3.39%). Additionally, community members expressed concerns about violence and exploitation, particularly sexual exploitation and abuse (7%).

Recommended Initiatives

Continuous government and stakeholder engagement:

The engagement forums with government and civil society organizations were beneficial, but it is critical to maintain momentum by establishing regular forums and follow-up actions. Additionally, integrating AAP into national policies will enhance sustainability.

Institutionalization of AAP capacity strengthening initiatives:

Continued investment in capacity-building for local actors is essential for long-term sustainability. Training programs for local government officials and community organizations to ensure ongoing knowledge transfer on accountability principles, PSEA, and complaints mechanisms would be beneficial. Training should include technical aspects of running feedback systems, as well as sensitivity training for handling complaints related to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA).

Conclusion

UNICEF's efforts to integrate Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) have demonstrated success, especially through the DigiRedio platform and its community feedback systems. The initiatives in Garissa and Turkana zonal regions show promising results in creating accessible and culturally relevant channels for complaints and feedback, empowering communities to voice concerns and influence the services they receive.

However, to build on these achievements, a more comprehensive approach is needed. Strengthening capacity-building for local stakeholders, expanding the scope of the feedback mechanisms, and using the gathered data to continuously inform programming and interventions are essential steps toward ensuring that AAP is deeply embedded in development and humanitarian interventions. Moreover, addressing the specific issues raised by community members—especially around health, education, and sexual exploitation—will be crucial to improving overall outcomes.

By continuing to adapt and refine these mechanisms, humanitarian and local actors can further enhance their accountability, ensure better interventions for vulnerable populations, and contribute to more sustainable and equitable development outcomes.