

Accountability to Affected Populations for a Hunger-free World



Telling Our Stories

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List of abbreviations

AAP	accountability to affected populations
AP	affected population
CBP	cash-based programming
C/FFA	Cash or Food for Assets
CFA	Cash for Assets
CHD	community help desk
ENSURE	Enhancing Nutrition, Stepping Up Resilience and Enterprise
FFA	Food for Assets
FLA	Field Level Agreement
FPMG	Food Programming and Management Group, World Vision International
IDP	internally displaced person
KRI	Kurdistan Region, Iraq
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MCN	mother and child nutrition
PAC	productive asset creation
PAF	Programme Accountability Framework
RNC	Refugee National Commission
WFP	United Nations World Food Programme

*‘Most important is our accountability to **listen**. This must not become pretence, or a kind of checklist correctness. For a Christian organisation our listening must signify **a genuine willingness to learn**. When we realise this we can place ourselves on the same side of the struggle as those who are outcast by unjust systems.’*

— Bob Mitchell, World Vision¹

¹ From ‘A Brief Theological Reflection on Improved Accountability at World Vision’ (unpublished).

Foreword

As I read through this report, I could not help but recall my first formal encounter with accountability on the ground in Sri Lanka in 2006, following the devastating tsunami of 2004. I was impressed with the way the voices of the affected communities informed World Vision's response strategy and approach, despite the fact that it required more patience and more adjustment to the pace than what would be typical of an emergency of that scale. To this date I applaud my colleagues Perry Mansfield, Andrew Lanyon and Alexandra Levaditis and their teams for creating the space for the voices of the affected populations.

A good thing is worth copying. In 2007, a delegation that included me and the then-executive director of the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership visited World Vision Sri Lanka with an intent to review its work and learn. We confirmed how embedding accountability had greatly increased the quality and ownership of project outcomes. As part of the World Vision global leadership for food assistance, I then championed mainstreaming of accountability in all of World Vision's food assistance programmes. As I visited field offices, I was inspired by how deeply engaged and enthusiastic the affected populations were, especially on the delicate issues of targeting and entitlements. On numerous occasions I also observed how the accountability methods also contributed to resolving broader social issues such as gender-based violence and corruption.

This report captures World Vision's current work on accountability in the last mile of aid delivery. As World Vision takes on the challenge to contribute to **a hunger-free world**, accountability to affected populations is a critical component in our tool box so we can respond in the most appropriate ways.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thabani Maphosa".

Thabani Maphosa,
Partnership Leader,
Food Assistance,
World Vision International

While the world transitions from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals, the most vulnerable children, especially those in fragile contexts, have been rather left behind due to various factors, including the lack of commitment to involve them in various programming approaches and the limited will to listen to their priority needs and tackle these accordingly. As a child-focused and community-based organisation, World Vision adopts a consultative approach that involves children as well as other community members participating in various development and humanitarian operations. Adoption of the Integrated Programme Accountability Framework (PAF) in April 2010 enhanced good accountability practices across all operations within World Vision.

I am elated that this report captures good implementation practices of the PAF in food assistance. It also shows how disaster-affected populations have been actively involved in the different stages of food assistance. This report presents tools for and benefits of involving affected populations, which is fundamental to having the lasting impact on the lives of people that we as an organisation are called upon to serve in development and humanitarian work. This report also follows the release of the first phase of the inter-agency study² on Child-Friendly Feedback and Complaint Mechanisms within the non-governmental organisation (NGO) programmes that highlighted the need for appropriate mechanisms for consultation and participation of vulnerable children in programming.

I salute the Food Programming and Management Group (FPMG) for sharing its experiences through this document and for the valuable tools and recommendations that are intended to improve accountability practices in humanitarian work. Congratulations!



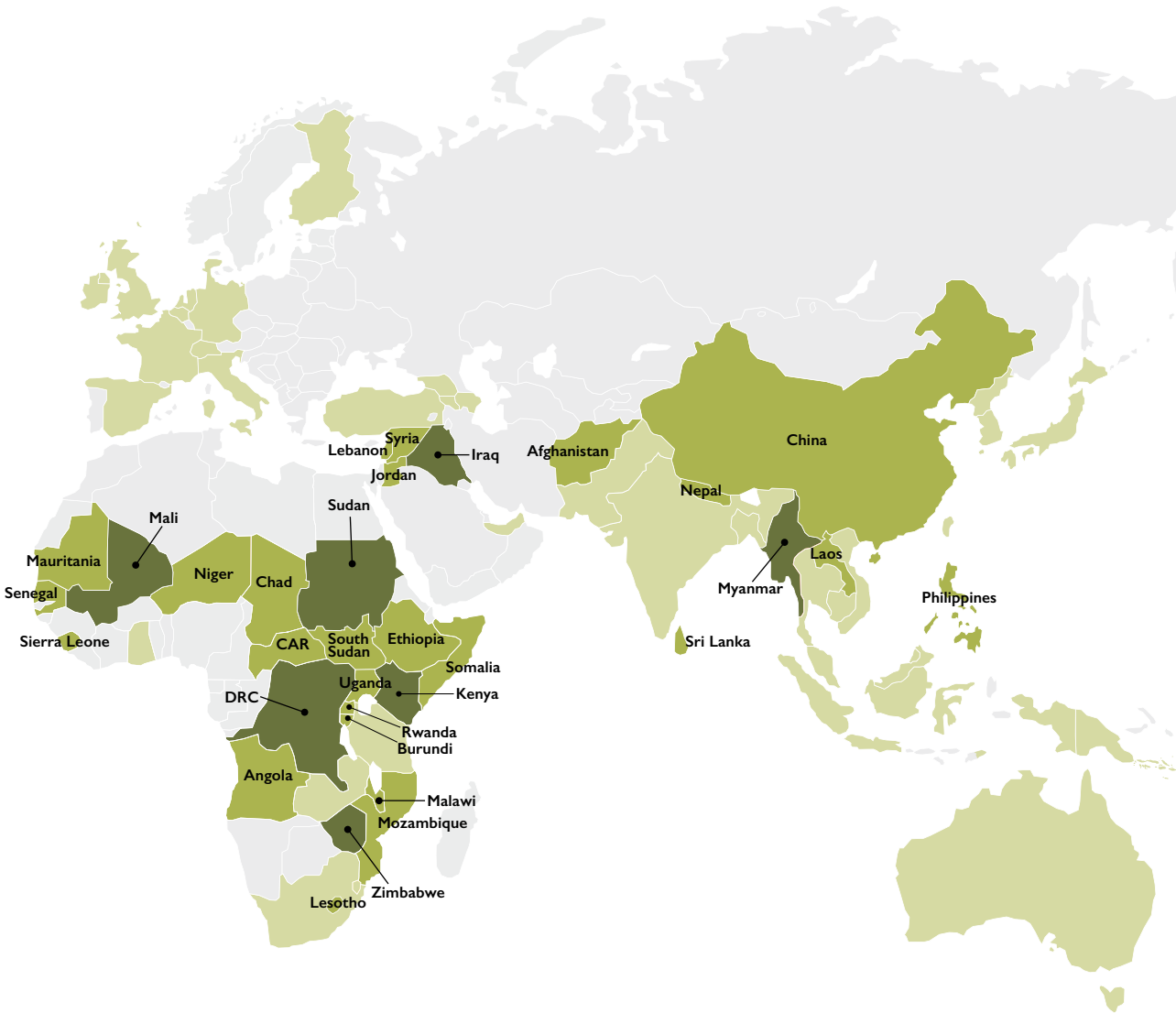
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elie Gasagara".

Elie Gasagara,
Partnership Leader,
Accountability,
World Vision International

²This study is being conducted by the following five agencies: Educo (member of ChildFund Alliance), Plan International, Save the Children UK, War Child UK and World Vision.

World Vision's Food Assistance programmes

- Countries where World Vision works
 - Countries with World Vision Food Assistance programmes
 - Countries studied in this report
- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Afghanistan ● Angola ● Burundi ● Central African Republic ● Chad ● China | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Democratic Republic of the Congo ● Ethiopia ● Haiti ● Iraq ● Jordan ● Kenya | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Laos ● Lebanon ● Lesotho ● Malawi ● Mauritania ● Mali ● Mozambique ● Myanmar ● Nepal ● Nicaragua ● Niger ● Philippines ● Rwanda ● Senegal ● Sierra Leone ● Somalia ● South Sudan ● Sri Lanka ● Sudan ● Syria ● Uganda ● Vanuatu ● Zimbabwe |
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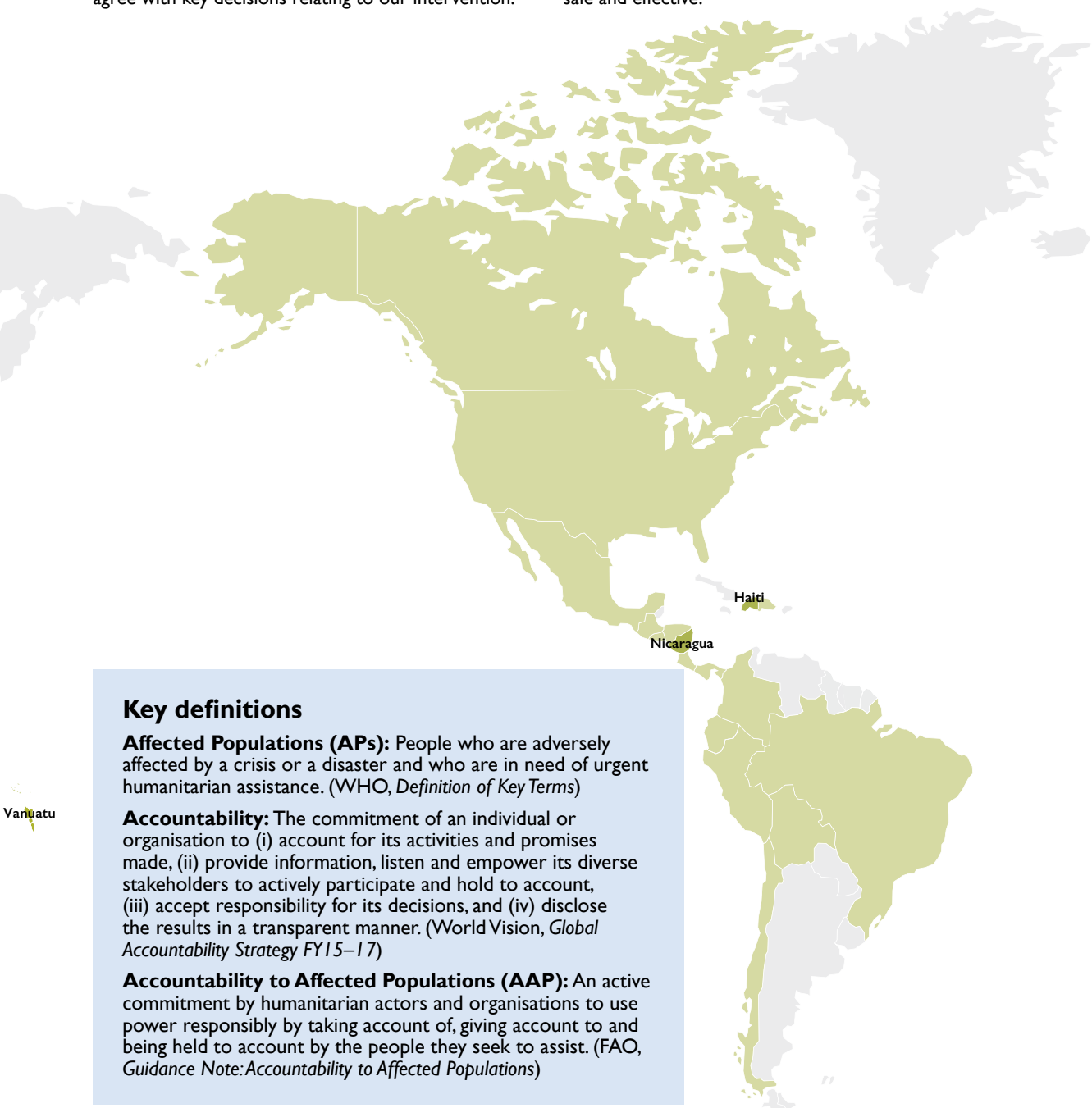
Four Pillars of Programme Accountability Framework

1) Providing information: World Vision commits to ensuring that relevant programme information is made available and intentionally provided to communities in a timely, accessible and accurate manner.

2) Consulting with communities: World Vision is committed to the principle of informed consent and ensuring that communities are aware of, understand and agree with key decisions relating to our intervention.

3) Promoting participation: World Vision is devoted to purposely empowering communities and building their capacity to participate in all components of the programme cycle.

4) Collecting and acting on feedback and complaints: World Vision undertakes to implement community feedback and complaints procedures that are accessible, safe and effective.



Key definitions

Affected Populations (APs): People who are adversely affected by a crisis or a disaster and who are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. (WHO, *Definition of Key Terms*)

Accountability: The commitment of an individual or organisation to (i) account for its activities and promises made, (ii) provide information, listen and empower its diverse stakeholders to actively participate and hold to account, (iii) accept responsibility for its decisions, and (iv) disclose the results in a transparent manner. (World Vision, *Global Accountability Strategy FY15–17*)

Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP): An active commitment by humanitarian actors and organisations to use power responsibly by taking account of, giving account to and being held to account by the people they seek to assist. (FAO, *Guidance Note: Accountability to Affected Populations*)



Alain, a communicator with WV DRC, listens to Lopi Lundengu (boy, age 6) expressing his wishes.

Key trends

In collecting and presenting better practices on AAP based on World Vision's PAF document, this report intentionally wove in the following programming elements, trends and considerations to provide the most relevant and timely examples that can help improve accountability practices in a wide range of programmes.

Cash-based programming vs. food-in-kind

- ▶ See examples of accountability during the switch of modality from food to cash in Kenya and Myanmar (pp. 11–12), a response with vouchers in Iraq (pp. 6–7) and in cash for assets projects in Kenya (p. 11).

Fragile context

- ▶ See examples of accountability methods adopted in IDP camps in DRC (pp. 5, 10, 24), Sudan (p. 16), Iraq (pp. 6–7) and Myanmar (p. 10).

Mainstreaming gender and protection

- ▶ See examples of gender-balanced community help desk and its impacts in Kenya (p. 15), Zimbabwe (pp. 15, 19–21) and Mali (p. 15).

Use of mobile technology

- ▶ See examples such as Iraq's and Myanmar's use of hotlines (p. 18) as well as Kenya's and Mali's use of mobile surveys (p. 12).

Integration of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and accountability

- ▶ In all case studies presented, elements of M&E are embedded. M&E systems and processes ensure that the feedback is processed and reflected back in the programme, closing the loop.

Executive summary

Accountability to Affected Populations for a Hunger-free World is the second report in World Vision's Telling Our Stories series, which documents and shares better practices in its food assistance programmes with practical examples from the field. This report demonstrates various ways to operationalise accountability to affected populations (AAP) and the resulting outcomes, with examples from seven countries (eastern Democratic Republic of Congo [EDRC], Iraq, Kenya, Mali, Myanmar, Sudan and Zimbabwe). The content is collected through qualitative methods such as document reviews, field visits, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and storytelling, then covers the four pillars of World Vision's Programme Accountability Framework (PAF): information sharing, consultation, participation and feedback mechanisms.

The first chapter focuses on **information sharing** as the cornerstone of AAP. Information materials such as ration boards, banners and brochures provide information to the affected populations (APs) through printed or publicly displayed materials in an accurate, accessible and user-friendly manner. Pre-distribution addresses and meetings are ways to share information in person more interactively, timely and comprehensively, with the APs as valued partners. A country case study from the Iraq response for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Kurdistan Region follows, showing innovative and multi-layered ways to share information and how doing so contributes not only to more efficient distributions but also to broader messaging on transparency and protection in the fragile context.

The second chapter addresses **consultation** and **participation**, which empower APs to engage actively in, lead and own the programmes that affect their lives and to make decisions with dignity and a sense of agency. It also improves operational effectiveness and programme quality. Consultation and participation starts at the planning and design stages (beneficiary targeting, choice of asset, distribution date and time or design/modification of intervention) and continues throughout implementation and evaluation stages, with methods such as learning events and community-led committees. A more in-depth case study on Kenya is presented, looking at the country's use of mobile technology for accountability and at accountability in cash-based programming.

The third chapter describes **feedback mechanisms** as channels of continuous mutual communication, using three of the most widely used methods: community help desks (CHDs), suggestion boxes and hotlines. Then, a country case study of Zimbabwe is presented with lessons on the complementarity of the different methods, gender and protection considerations, and the importance of capacity building.

Last, the fourth chapter is dedicated to promising practices of **involving children in accountability mechanisms**, mostly through suggestion boxes, promoting children's participation and involvement in projects to better advance their well-being. These practices intentionally put children at the centre of World Vision's work, so decisions are made in consideration of their views and suggestions. While these practices are still at piloting stages, the examples from Sudan, EDRC and Kenya show how small voices can have powerful messages in different contexts.

Recommendations

The following recommendations reflect the better practices and lessons learnt from the seven countries featured in this report.

Information provision

- Establish multi-layered methods of information sharing. This is especially critical in contexts where the distribution time is dispersed (e.g. IDP/refugee camps) or the composition of the group is diverse.
- Use the local language of the APs with simple, clear messages that build trust and promote participation.
- Consider contextual issues such as literacy rate, cultural norms, political context and fragility/volatility of the location when developing information provision materials.

Participation and consultation

- Provide channels for the APs to participate throughout the project cycle with clear roles and responsibilities, so they are empowered to play an integral part of the project in all stages (from design and assessment to implementation, evaluation and exit).
- In setting up committees, seek to include various groups and both genders within the community so the views and needs of each group can be properly represented.
- When considering a change of modality or of other significant aspects of the project, consult the APs with full disclosure of the pros and cons for informed consent.
- Involve AP representatives to participate in the learning and reflection sessions so that their views are reflected in decisions and action plans regarding the programme.

Feedback mechanisms

- Conduct inclusive accountability assessments to identify the preferred feedback mechanism (how the community would like to provide feedback and receive information).

- Track the turnaround time from receiving feedback to full resolution and response with an aim to close the loop in a timely and comprehensive manner.
- Establish secure and prompt escalation processes for urgent and significant feedback that may compromise the project objectives or protection considerations (e.g. sexual harassment, theft, or staff misbehaviour).

Children and accountability

- When children are direct beneficiaries of a project (e.g. school feeding), include them in the accountability mechanisms in an encouraging and child-friendly manner.
- Invest in building trust and understanding through sharing information and receiving feedback with the caregivers of affected children (parents, school teachers and other appropriate caregivers) so they share and appreciate the purpose and value of children's participation.
- Consider engaging and consulting the children of projects that target their parents in order to learn about the project's indirect consequences or impacts on children.

Cross-cutting

- Establish monitoring and reflecting processes on the performance of accountability mechanisms to ensure continuous modifications and improvement.
- Involve stakeholders from inception of accountability mechanisms through to building support and buy-in for mainstreaming accountability.
- Where feasible and appropriate, adopt mobile technology to speed up collation, analysis and reporting.
- Allocate adequate resources for the effective roll-out of a comprehensive accountability system.

I. Informing: Information sharing

World Vision commits to ensuring that relevant programme information is made available and intentionally provided to communities in a timely, accessible and accurate manner.

What it is

To inform is the cornerstone of accountability to affected populations (AAP). Without knowing what is happening, what their rights are and how the programme should work, the affected populations (APs) cannot hold World Vision or its staff accountable. Sharing information empowers the APs to understand the programme as well as their relevant rights and entitlements, enhances transparency in all aspects of the programme, reduces the potential for abuse or manipulation, builds trust between World Vision and the communities and invites APs to be more involved in the programme.

This chapter uses examples from Sudan (Darfur Region), Zimbabwe (Mutare), Myanmar (Kokang and Yenanchaung) and EDRC (Bukavu and Goma) to highlight how World Vision implements various information-sharing methods in different contexts. For instance, methods such as ration boards, banners and brochures provide information about food distributions and other aspects of programmes through printed materials in an accurate, accessible and user-friendly manner. In addition, pre-distribution addresses and meetings are ways to share information in a more interactive manner with the APs. These face-to-face methods help World Vision and the APs share information in a more timely, comprehensive and adequate way. The chapter then concludes with a country case study focusing on WV Iraq (Kurdistan Region). In Iraq, adequate information provision helped promote more efficient and orderly distribution processes. In addition, the mixed methods of information sharing provided a platform for learning on various aspects of the project, on nutrition and on the importance of child well-being.

When information sharing is done well, we can expect:

- the APs to be satisfied with the amount, frequency and quality of information as well as ease of access
- the APs to understand what they are entitled to, who is entitled and what their rights are within the programme and beyond
- the APs to be ready and willing to engage in other pillars of accountability: consultation, participation and feedback mechanisms
- the stakeholders and those with decision-making power to maintain a high level of transparency, reducing potential abuse, misrepresentation, manipulation or corruption
- the stakeholders, including the APs and the implementing agency to demonstrate a high level of mutual trust and acceptance.

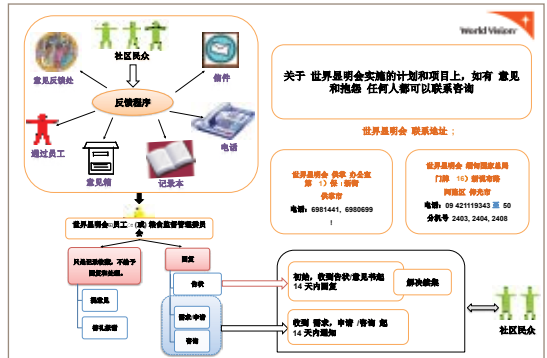
Method I: Information materials

Information-sharing methods such as ration boards, banners and brochures provide information on various aspects of the programmes with printed, publicly displayed or publicly available materials. These methods are the most basic and most commonly found forms of information sharing at distribution points, as food assistance programmes often involve physical distribution of food-in-kind, vouchers or cash. With these methods APs can easily access information in an accurate and user-friendly manner in order to understand exactly what they are entitled to receive and how. By sharing the information publicly, these methods improve transparency and mutual trust.



Ration Board in Darfur, Sudan.

One of the low-cost, standard methods is the use of ration boards. A good example is found in Sudan (Darfur); it shows the type of food, ration sizes, number of targeted APs by gender and names of the donor/implementing agencies. The beneficiaries are encouraged to compare their received rations to the boards. If there is any difference or concern, they can approach the community help desk to raise their issue. To ensure that the information is accessible and user friendly, it is critical to consider the context – such as the local language, literacy rate and group dynamics – when producing the



Banner in Chinese for the beneficiaries in Kokang, Myanmar.

materials. In Darfur, for instance, the information is provided in both English and Arabic and updated monthly to reflect changes. In addition, as the area has high levels of illiteracy, staff verbally present the information to the APs before each distribution. The banner in the Kokang Region, Myanmar, is written in Chinese because the majority of APs speak Chinese.

In Iraq, a brochure showing the types of food items to be purchased using vouchers is a useful source of information and clarification, especially for women. It is designed to discourage the wrongful use of vouchers for buying items like alcohol, cigarettes and electronic gadgets. Women reported that this clear information helps reduce quarrels in the household about how to use the cash assistance.



Brochure in Arabic, from Iraq.

Method 2: Pre-distribution addresses and meetings

Pre-distribution addresses and meetings are held to share information face to face with the APs. These methods help World Vision and the APs dialogue as partners and share information in more timely, comprehensive and interactive ways.

A good example of using pre-distribution meetings for information sharing is found in a food distribution project for the IDP camps in Goma, EDRC. World Vision and the Refugee National Commission (RNC) of the government agreed to hold pre-distribution meetings a day before the actual distribution. World Vision, the RNC, the IDP Management Committee (an inter-agency committee composed of IDP members), community help desk members and other NGOs in the camp attended the meetings to set and agree on the distribution details and to respond to complaints and feedback received.

In these meetings information on the food basket for the month and any changes in the ration size or the type of food is shared in advance. That information is then shared with the rest of the AP by the IDP Management Committee members. Convening these pre-distribution meetings where planning and communication with beneficiaries occurs resulted, to the satisfaction of the beneficiaries, in a reduction in crowding during the actual distributions. The discussion of the complaints and feedback during the meetings led to the creation of income-generating activities for the IDPs not directly benefitting from the programme.

The president of Balungu IDP Camp, Hatanga Emmanuel, explains how this process works: 'Before World Vision conducts activities at our camp, they work closely with committees, beneficiaries and partners to plan and agree on the distribution modality for the month. Furthermore, World Vision sensitises us through field visits for better planning of activities.' It shows how timely and well-planned information sharing can help improve the programme and organically generate other complementary activities.

For shorter-term, emergency response programmes where time for direct consultation and engagement may be limited and the size of the AP is large, information sharing becomes even more challenging yet critical. In such cases it is helpful to utilise multiple layers of information sharing. For instance, a USAID-funded Emergency Food Security Programme (EFSP) in EDRC uses a combination of infographics, posters and pre-distribution message sharing. The posters inform the APs of their entitlements along with nutrition messages for the pregnant and lactating mothers. The messages in the infographics and posters are also explained verbally during pre-distribution addresses. The result is increasing transparency, trust and empowerment of the APs to be active actors in the programme.

While distributions or responses are important parts of food assistance programmes, they are not the whole picture. The importance of timely, adequate and sufficient information sharing for better programme design and implementation is essential for more integrated, longer-term food programmes with activities linked to agriculture, nutrition, resilience building or education. Going beyond providing basic information about the logistical aspects of the distributions or activities to provide comprehensive information on World Vision and its mission, values, strategic goals and the objectives of the programmes with the APs is a sign that they are treated as valued partners and not just as passive objects of assistance. This is a clear prerequisite to the other aspects of accountability such as participation, consultation and feedback.



Pre-distribution address at Nyaung Zauk Chaung village, Yenanchaung Township, Myanmar.

Country case study: Iraq

World Vision started food voucher transfers in the Kurdistan Region, Iraq (KRI), in November 2014, responding to the needs of the IDPs fleeing from conflicts. The KRI is in northern Iraq, bordering the Kurdish regions of Iran to the east, Turkey to the north, Syria to the west and the rest of Iraq to the south. The semi-autonomous KRI now hosts more than 850,000 IDPs, representing 42.5 per cent of IDPs globally. They have sought refuge in unfinished buildings, NGO and government camps, greenhouses, makeshift tents, schools and rented hotels. World Vision is working in partnership with World Food Programme (WFP) to respond to the IDP crisis in the three districts of Erbil City, Shaqlawa and Soran, all in Erbil governorate. Through this partnership the IDPs are given vouchers worth 30,000 Iraq Dinar (approximately US\$25) each month. The location of the IDPs and the type of modality required establishment of a robust information-provision system about distribution dates, times, venues and the documents to bring to the distribution points.

In Iraq, information to APs is provided using a mixture of methods at the same time: recorded messages broadcast over loudspeakers during distributions, brochures, 'gallery walks' of posters with key messages, an information desk at the distribution site and text messages through mobile phones. 'We adopted principles of adult learning. Information provided is based on the problems identified, as adults start with a problem and then work to find a solution. We endeavour to make the environment as relaxed and informal as possible and provide a cocktail of options,' explains Joseph Fredrick, DME (design, monitoring and evaluation) coordinator for the response. The APs affirm that this has resulted in an orderly distribution and mutual trust between World Vision and them. 'I am very interested in the gallery walk and these posters because it's a simple drawing with a deep meaning; even the kids can understand the idea,' says Raid Kamit (male, age 48) at the Erbil Distribution Centre, KRI.



AP members reading posters.

These methods consider the cultural diversity of the IDPs, socioeconomic status, literacy levels and general location of the APs within KRI. In this fragile context, where voucher transfer could be a target for bribery, World Vision strengthened its AAP to make clear that bribery would not be tolerated. This was also meant to ensure that women and girls are protected from any forms of abuse in exchange for assistance from World Vision. An array of pictures depicting various forms of abuse that are unacceptable is displayed at the distribution points to inform the APs on their rights to free assistance.

In fragile contexts where there is potential for external interventions to cause unintended suspicions and conflict, and with vouchers and cash programmes likely to be prone to abuse, transparency is especially critical. In the photo above, the members of the APs are informed that they do not need to give money, livestock, sexual favours or any other forms of favours to be registered to receive World Vision assistance. The provision of this information is meant to protect the APs, especially women and girls, from sexual exploitation and other forms of abuse in exchange for assistance. In addition, the responses to the top 10 feedback and complaints received during the previous month are broadcast during the distributions to address them promptly and openly.

For World Vision, a child-focused organisation, protection of children in all operations is imperative. For this reason WV Iraq discourages children from attending distribution points to collect vouchers on behalf of their parents or guardians. Since vouchers have cash value, they can expose children to risks associated with mugging and stealing. This information was disseminated using a poster with an explanation. The poster points out that children are not permitted to come to the voucher distribution point; only those above 18 years of age with full identification documents of the registered member can do so. In addition, the disabled, pregnant, elderly and women with young children are given priority in the distribution sequence to reduce the time they have to spend at the distribution points. There is also a poster showing the priority given in distribution for the vulnerable. Lilyan Hatm Ezzat (female, age 29) at the Erbil Distribution Centre explains: 'This poster is telling us that of course the elderly, pregnant and disabled have first priority to receive their vouchers. I like this poster so much because we, the young ones, can wait in the waiting area, but those have special needs and they cannot wait.'

These posters are great examples of using information-sharing materials at the distribution point to share more than only the logistical aspects of the distribution and prompt dialogue about the standard on transparency and protection of the children and the vulnerable.



Zero tolerance to any form of favour.



Do not pay money to jump the queue.



Distribution priority.



No children at distribution points.

2. Working together: Consultation and participation

World Vision is committed to the principle of informed consent and ensuring that communities are aware of, understand and agree with key decisions relating to our intervention.

World Vision is devoted to purposely empowering communities and building their capacity to participate in all components of the programme cycle.

What it is

Consultation and participation are ends in themselves, respecting the dignity of the people to make decisions and choices that affect their lives directly. This sense of agency is especially important to members of the APs, who often lack control over many aspects of their lives due to factors beyond their control. The essence of AAP is to respect the needs, concerns, capacities and disposition of the APs, and the methods for participation and consultation are designed to empower them with tangible ways to engage actively in and lead programmes to improve their lives.

When facilitated well, working together with the APs improves programme quality at all stages. The APs know best what they need, what works in their contexts, what the potential challenges are and how to mitigate them. In addition, as an active part of a response or a programme, the APs are empowered to sustain the impacts even after the programme ends.

This chapter describes how World Vision implements these principles in different phases of programmes through meetings, visits, surveys and focus group discussions. First, consultation and participation start at the planning stage, such as setting a distribution date or beneficiary targeting in the Mali (Mopti Region) example, designing a complementary intervention in the Sudan (Darfur) example or selecting community assets for a food for assets (FFA) project in the Myanmar (Chauk) example. During the implementation and evaluation stages, learning events as well as community-led project management committees and help desk committees are adopted. A more in-depth case study on various aspects of participation and consultation in Kenya is presented with a focus on the country's pioneering work with cash-based programming, the use of mobile technology for accountability, and strong understanding and implementation of gender balance.

When consultation and participation are done well, we can expect:

- the APs to experience a sense of agency, dignity and respect to make decisions that affect their lives throughout the programme and beyond
- the APs to be well represented in the platforms for consultation and participation in consideration of factors such as gender, disability, vulnerability, age and cultural diversity as appropriate
- the programme and its activities to fit the context and the needs well, avoiding unintended harm and mitigating contextual challenges
- the APs to have strong ownership of the programme and the results created, which leads to sustainability and replication.

Method 1: Planning with the affected populations

Planning and designing the programme with the APs are necessary to avoid any unintended harm and to achieve the intended results. An illustrative example is World Vision's experience in Mali in 2013. At first, World Vision set the food distribution dates on Fridays. This was done without sufficient consultation with the communities. Once the distribution started, complaints flooded in through the suggestion box about this schedule conflicting with the religious duty of Friday worship for the Muslim majority population in the community. Upon receiving this feedback, the distribution schedule was changed immediately to avoid Fridays.

Recalling this experience, WV staff recognise that consultation would have prevented this. Because World Vision comes from a different religious background, it did not realise the schedule would be an issue. It acknowledges it should have asked first! Since then, accountability methods have been strengthened. For instance, in 2014, WV Mali worked with the community on beneficiary targeting for a nutrition programme in Bandiagara District, Mopti Region, to verify general information and data used in the proposal. It was a blanket supplementary food assistance programme for all lactating mothers and children between 6 months and 23 months in the area, originally estimated at 99,654 people, based on the national statistics available to international agencies. However, due to significant feedback from the community about insufficient coverage and exclusion of deserving beneficiaries, World Vision and WFP made door-to-door visits to consult the community and confirmed that the initial target number was greatly underestimated. The programme was subsequently amended to reflect the correct number of the population, almost double the initial target.

Similarly, consulting the APs in the Darfur response in Sudan led the way to the introduction of milling vouchers into the General Food Distribution

programme as a complementary intervention. The community raised the concern that most of them had to sell a substantial portion of the received food for milling services, reducing the amount for household consumption. The milling vouchers also helped protect the people, especially women, who used to go out of the camp to look for casual labour on the nearby farms or to collect firewood to raise additional money for milling services, which exposed them to the risk of physical harm by rebel groups operating in the area.



Community and World Vision meeting for a FFA project in Kaing Htauk Kan, Chauk Township, Myanmar.

When implementing resilience or asset-building programmes, community ownership and participation are critical for sustainability of the asset after the project. For this reason World Vision empowers the communities to take leadership in the planning of the activities that speak to their needs and aspirations. For example, in Kaing Htauk Kan village in Myanmar, where most of its 100 or so households live off smallholder farming and casual labour, the community engaged actively in the planning. 'We prioritised assets that will support us for a long time, to help us produce more food. We also categorised our villagers into the poorest/landless, average and the well off, so the poorest receive benefits from the projects while we all participate,' explained the chairperson of the village. 'For resilience programming, project activities are proposed, appraised and approved by the communities,' explains Stephen Ongom, food assistance manager for WV Mali.

Method 2: Implementing and reflecting with the affected populations

Many World Vision food assistance programmes include learning events as an integral part of their quality assurance framework.³ Learning events are a method by which staff, government representatives, donor agencies, other implementing partners and community representatives come together to learn and reflect on the various aspects of the project during and/or after implementation.

Collectively, the participants reflect on what went well, what did not go well and what could have been done differently. The lessons, better practices and action plans are documented and shared, sparking tangible changes and improvements. The learning events held in EDRC and Sudan are good examples from fragile contexts. In EDRC, the APs shared that the white maize provided was not the preferred staple food for

the Bukavu area, prompting the office to consider cultural appropriateness and preferences in designing the next cycle. In Sudan, the short-term (six-month) recurring nature of the Field Level Agreements (FLA)⁴ caused significant delay, compromising programme goals and impact. The community raised this during the learning event, with WFP represented. It led to WFP and World Vision agreeing to extend the FLA to cover a one-year period, greatly reducing the delay.

In addition, especially for resilience or asset-building projects, the members of the APs are involved in the

daily operations not just as participants but also as leaders and facilitators through various committees composed of community members themselves (e.g. Project Management Committee, Food Management Committee, Help Desk Committee). These committees, if equipped and trained well at the initial phase, can lead the implementation of the projects with minimal external interventions: 'The [World Vision] focal staff provided us with complete information related to the CFA [Cash for Assets] project before we started the implementation, and

we could finish the project well without any problem with the supervision of focal staff and Food Management Committee members,' said a CFA participant for a soil-conservation project in Lai Kyin Yoe village, Yenanchaung Township, Myanmar, in a focus group discussion.

Even in selecting and implementing accountability methods, it is the APs who determine how they wish to be listened to. For instance, WV Myanmar discussed with the IDPs in Khat

Cho Camp in Kachin their preferred methods to provide feedback to World Vision. The IDPs then voted on their preference in a community meeting and implemented the top choices. In all countries studied, when the APs chose CHDs, they discussed and agreed on how the committee would be organised: 'The helpdesk committee members were chosen by the community. We chose people that uphold confidentiality. We chose five people – two men and three women,' explained a participant for the Magoli Dam Productive Asset Creation project in Zimbabwe in a focus group discussion.



Votes by the APs for preferred accountability methods in Myanmar.

³The quality assurance framework refers to monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning aspects of a programme.

⁴The Field Level Agreement (FLA) is a standard contractual document by WFP to be used in all operations where non-profit, non-governmental organisations handle WFP resources or implement activities on WFP's behalf.

Country case study: Kenya

World Vision, in partnership with WFP, the Government of Kenya and the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) of the government, introduced a cash or food for assets (C/FFA) approach in Kenya in 2009. The goal is to restore livelihoods and build resilience as a long-term measure through the creation of innovative, long-lasting and sustainable community and household assets to improve food security.⁵ With projects that involve community assets such as irrigation schemes, tree planting and rainwater harvesting structures that are there to stay long after the end of the programme, consultation and participation throughout the project cycle are critical. The APs are involved in the entire process, not as passive recipients but as active leaders and facilitators, from selecting the assets for the project to beneficiary selection and formation of different committees. They also lead in the beneficiary targeting and serving on the CHDs, sharing lessons learned and evaluating impact. Equal representation from both genders in consultation and participation is strongly encouraged and observed.

A particularly noteworthy aspect for consultation and participation with the APs in Kenya regards the switch of modality from food-in-kind to cash and vouchers (e.g. cash-based programming [CBP]).



Focus group discussion with the community committees, government representatives and World Vision in Taita Taveta.



Project Management Committee for CFA in Kilifi.

CBP is rapidly becoming the preferred modality for food assistance by international agencies.⁶ This magnitude of global-level trend change increases the risk of these critical decisions and shifts being made without due consultation and informed consent of the APs. However, the commitment to accountability demands that APs be duly consulted and involved in this critical decision. The dialogue with the community about the switch to CBP in Makueni, Kenya, presents a good example of community consultation. In Makueni, where World Vision has been implementing FFA projects for years with food-in-kind, a potential change to cash or vouchers distribution was discussed before the change was made. In a focus group discussion World Vision staff explained what this change means and asked for the thoughts and preferences of the community. Most observed they would welcome the change to cash.



⁵ For a demonstration of a C/FFA programme, see WV Kenya, Zinduka International documentary (May 1, 2014), at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93BR2zigNrA>; see also pages 11–12, which explain Kenya's C/FFA in detail.

⁶ World Vision is the leading agency in CBP, with the largest programme value. For more details on the global trend towards CBP, visit the Cash Learning Project (CaLP) site at <http://www.cashlearning.org/information-sharing/cash-mapping-tool>.



Regina Matia, mother, Kilifi.

'I would go for cash. It will help me buy food and even pay fees for my children. I will make a budget of how much to pay for fees, food and clothes,' explained Regina Matia (mother of eight children, age 45, Kilifi, Kenya).⁷

Accountability methods can also work to safeguard programme quality during implementation by creating a feedback loop to continuously improve programmes and catch shortfalls. For example, Mrs Nzisa is one of 174 beneficiaries targeted under the CFA intervention in Chumvini village in Taita Taveta, Kenya. In November 2013, having completed all her assigned work hours, she visited a local ATM to withdraw her cash entitlement from the project only to find the account with no balance.



CHD members wearing slogan T-shirts. One reads: 'Complain and give feedback; it's your right!'

Frustrated, Mrs Nzisa reached out to the help desk, and a community meeting was soon convened with the Help Desk Committee, the Project Management Committee and Mrs Nzisa herself. After sifting through the worksheets and payment schedules together, they discovered an error in documentation; the money had been deposited to another participant's account by mistake. The community

raised the issue to the appropriate World Vision staff, and the issue was soon resolved to Mrs Nzisa's satisfaction.⁸ The resolution of this critical mistake would have been much slower and more costly without the well-functioning CHD, as it would have required World Vision staff to discover this mistake within the relevant documentation of the 7,500 registered beneficiaries.



Mobile-based accountability survey in Kenya.



Mobile-based accountability survey in Mali (in French).

Another noteworthy innovation in implementing accountability methods is the use of mobile technology. WV Kenya utilises an existing, free mobile survey application (DroidSurvey) to conduct regular accountability surveys to collect feedback efficiently during and after programme implementation. After collecting feedback in each field location, the data are consolidated at the national office and analysed for follow-up actions and responses. 'The move from paper to mobile technology for raw data collection has revolutionised our accountability practices, not just the cost-efficiency aspects but also for having real-time data during project implementation,' explains Victor Mwanyalo, accountability officer, WV Kenya.

⁷This is not to say feedback on the switch to CBP is always positive. At times, the APs share their preference for food in kind and their reasons, as in this note from Ah Nyo in Myanmar through a suggestion box: 'Rice price will increase if you provided cash. We would like request continue providing us ration food, not cash.'

⁸This internally circulated story was featured in WV East Africa Region's accountability newsletter, written by Victor Mwanyalo, accountability officer, WV Kenya.

3. Listening and responding: Feedback mechanisms

World Vision undertakes to implement community feedback and complaints procedures that are accessible, safe and effective.

What it is

World Vision recognises feedback mechanisms as critical components of accountability. When the APs are well informed, consulted and participating actively, it is natural for them to provide feedback to improve the programme and raise any concerns and issues. For World Vision, the intent is to establish ways and make efforts to listen to the feedback continuously and intentionally and to respond in a timely and adequate manner. In doing so, the APs' preferences among various methods are reflected in selection, design and rollout.

In food assistance programmes these mechanisms are widely used across various contexts, providing channels for the APs to voice their complaints, give compliments or share suggestions related to the programme in all aspects from design to operations to staff conduct. When implemented well, these methods are simple, easily accessible to the APs and contextualised to the operational environment.⁹ They also provide a sense of security so the members of the APs feel comfortable sharing issues or suggestions. Feedback is collected, analysed and reported back to the APs as well as the programming staff to influence decision making for project modifications and improvements, thus 'closing the loop'. This helps World Vision design projects at the core of the APs' needs and shows that World Vision values the feedback and intentionally uses it, building mutual trust.

This chapter describes the three most widely used feedback methods (community help desks, suggestion boxes, and hotlines) with examples from Kenya (Kilifi), Zimbabwe (Matebeleland), Mali (Mopti), Myanmar (Chauk), Iraq (KRI) and Sudan (Darfur). Then a country case study of Zimbabwe is presented, with particular focus on the complementarity of different methods, gender and protection considerations, and the importance of capacity building.¹⁰ For these methods to work smoothly, adequate training of staff, sensitisation, appropriate tools and timely response to the APs are critical.

‘Being accountable to beneficiaries requires that humanitarian agencies take account of beneficiaries’ opinions, concerns, suggestions and complaints and to provide feedback to beneficiaries on these.’

**—Dr. Marumbo Ngwira, Director –Food Assistance Programme Development,
World Vision International**

⁹ In some contexts words like *complaint* and *feedback* were not acceptable to the government or the local authorities. In these cases World Vision used *issues*, *comments* and *suggestions* instead to gain acceptance.

¹⁰ For the list of different feedback mechanisms with their respective advantages and disadvantages, see World Vision's *Complaint and Response Mechanism Guide*. <http://www.alnap.org/resource/8770>.

When feedback mechanisms work well, we can expect:

- the APs to feel safe and encouraged to provide feedback or raise any concerns and issues without fear of repercussions or exposure
- the APs to understand various options to provide feedback and select their preferred methods with a clear understanding of their respective pros and cons
- the APs to understand the scope of feedback they can provide and their right to receive responses in a set period of time
- the APs to be well equipped to participate actively with a high level of professionalism and integrity, not only as end users but as owners and operators of the methods
- feedback mechanisms to be adapted in a culturally sensitive manner and contextualised to minimise any potential for conflict and confrontation, especially in fragile contexts
- the implementing agency to collect, analyse and report regularly on the received feedback to influence decision making for project modifications and improvements, that is, 'closing the loop'.

Excerpt from a focus group discussion



Q: *'What would you do if the project manager visited and behaved rudely to this lady [a project beneficiary] here?'*

A: *'I will write it down and put it in the suggestion box. It will go to this person's manager up there. He will be in trouble!'*

Method I: Community help desks

A CHD is a committee of responsible community members selected by other community members. CHD members serve to receive and respond to community issues, suggestions and feedback. When asked about the criteria in selecting the CHD in the focus group discussions in Kenya, Zimbabwe, Mali and EDRC, the APs unequivocally named qualities such as integrity, willingness to listen, good temperament, trustworthiness, honesty, patience and training. They apply the same principles and expectations to World Vision in addressing the received feedback: 'The way World Vision moves forward in dealing with the complaints dignifies the complainant. The complaints are solved diplomatically,' says the focus group CHD in Magoli Dam Project, Zimbabwe.



CHD in Kilifi, Kenya.

Another important consideration is gender balance, especially for programmes where the majority of the participants are women. This consideration is well understood and supported, even by the traditional male leadership. 'We first recommend that women are given priority, because they have good hearts to listen to complaints,' says a village elder and a traditional leader in Kilifi, Kenya, when asked about what he would recommend for other communities when composing CHDs. 'Women prefer to speak to fellow women when raising issues,' points out Themba Sibanda (male, age 47), a local leader for



Focus group discussion with CHD Committee in Bandiagara, Mali.

the Nyagara Dam Project in Zimbabwe. As serving on the CHD is often viewed in the community as a leadership position, the CHD at Guwe clinic in Nkayi District, Zimbabwe, explains, women's contribution and participation in CHDs empower them in the community. Even in a context where male dominance and female silence is the prevailing traditional norm, serving on CHDs composed of men and women can contribute to altering the gender dynamics in the community, as observed in Bandiagara District, Mopti, Mali. When asked about how men and women participate differently in the project or the committee, the help desk president (Madany Tall, age 48) responded with a smile: 'Well, just look at us. You can see even now we sit together and discuss; we hear the voices from both genders equally.'

'Having a Feedback Mechanism system in IDPs camps ensured knowing beneficiaries' feelings, opinions, thoughts, difficulties, satisfaction and appreciation to donors and organisation.'

—Nan Aung Dee, AM&EF Food Assistance Programme for Kachin, WV Myanmar

Ideally, the CHD members are seated at a clearly signed table (hence the term help desk), but sometimes the committee moves around the distribution site or among community members to facilitate collection of feedback. This method, called mobile help desks, can be observed in the IDP camps in Darfur, Sudan. It was selected because the number of beneficiaries per the distribution point (caseload) was large, so the distribution layout made it difficult for the APs to move freely within the distribution site to reach the help desk. Therefore, to facilitate access to the CHD, two help desk focal persons selected by the community moved

around the distribution site, wearing clearly marked community help desk jackets. Since it is critical that these representatives share the same understanding of the help desks and that female representatives are included and equally respected despite prevailing cultural barriers, World Vision provided multiple rounds of training and sensitisation for them in a group setting about observing privacy, confidentiality, code of conduct and the importance of documentation using the standard log books. With this training the help desk members could facilitate and collect feedback, document it and submit the log books to responsible World Vision staff.

‘The community help desk has helped me to channel my complaints appropriately and at the right time without fear of being intimidated by anybody. They are addressed to my satisfaction and the other community members have this privilege too.’

—Kahindi Charo, Kilifi, Kenya



Mobile CHD focal person documenting feedback, Derege IDP Camp, Darfur, Sudan.

Method 2: Suggestion boxes

While CHDs provide a direct, personal and prompt way to provide feedback and receive responses, they have the risk of exposing the person's concerns and issues to the broader community. For more significant incidents, abuses or concerns regarding health and nutritional status, respecting privacy and anonymity becomes especially critical.

Suggestion boxes, often used in conjunction with CHDs, address this concern and offer a safer and more private way to share issues or provide feedback without fear of repercussions or exposure. Suggestion boxes are clearly marked, locked and located in secluded places away from the distribution lines or the CHD locations. Accountability personnel regularly take the box to the office or a safe location, open the box and record the details of the suggestions or complaints.

If needed, further investigation or fact checking is done. When there are issues requiring management decisions or interventions, they are escalated promptly. This thorough documentation and evidence of feedback and response build trust in the system and between the APs and World Vision. In all focus group discussions conducted with communities using suggestion boxes, there is a clear understanding that this box is opened only by designated World Vision accountability personnel¹¹ and that the issues are tracked, taken seriously and addressed confidentially. The APs consider suggestion boxes a safe way to hold the CHD Committee, the Project Management Committee and World Vision staff accountable: '[The] suggestion box allows the community [members] to complain directly about their feelings, inconvenience and [in what ways they are] not satisfied with the programme, and [the community] also can complain if there are inabilities of management by Food Management Committee (FMC) members and programme staff,' explains San Nu from Tae Pin SaKhan village, Yenanchaung Township, Myanmar.



Suggestion box in Mali.



Suggestion box in Zimbabwe.



Suggestion box in Myanmar.



Suggestion box in Darfur, Sudan.



San Nu with the suggestion box in her village.

¹¹ In some contexts, opening the suggestion box in the presence of a third party may be recommended for additional transparency, provided that it does not compromise APs' privacy and confidentiality.

Method 3: Hotlines

Hotlines are designated phone numbers (often toll free) by which those in the APs can call to speak to a World Vision representative or record a message to submit feedback. In areas where the majority of the APs have access to mobile phones, this can be an efficient way to provide feedback and receive responses.

In Iraq, for instance, most of the members of the APs have access to mobile phones, making a hotline an effective method in the context. The number for the hotline is always displayed at the distribution points, and accountability personnel log the feedback into a database to track the status of the response. The APs can check the status of their feedback on this database at distribution points. The feedback and the status of their resolution are consolidated for further analysis. When asked about the hotlines, Lilyan Hatm Ezzat (female, age 29), a beneficiary at the Erbil Distribution Centre, affirms: 'Yes, the hotline is very useful for us; we are referring our messages to World Vision. They are hearing us and we are hearing from them.'



Catherine Mwadime, CFA participant, Kilifi.

Kenya is another country where mobile phones are easily accessible and widely used. Catherine Mwadime (female, age 38) in Kilifi, Kenya, says she likes the ease of using the hotline: 'I simply make a call to the hotline number if I have an issue. World Vision staff receives the

calls and talks to me in a loving way that encourages me to say all that I have without reservation. I have memorised the hotline number and I use it whenever I want.'

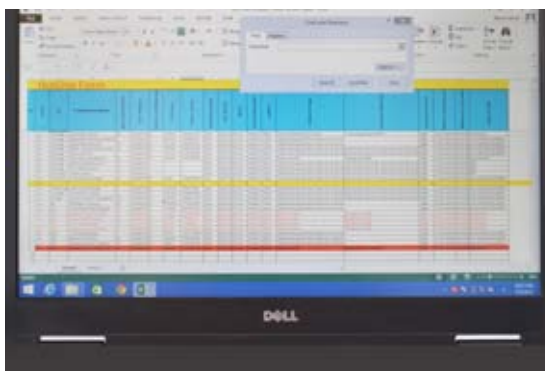


Win Bo CFA Participant, Myanmar.

Hotlines are also used in Myanmar, not only to provide feedback, but also to seek advice as necessary. 'We made a call to focal staff when we did not know how to continue on the catch drain through the CFA programme. The World Vision

engineer and focal staff came to the project sites immediately and guided us,' shares Win Bo, a CFA participant in Sue Yit Kan village, Chauk Township, Myanmar.

As an ever-increasing portion of the global population obtains access to mobile phones, especially in the urban context but also in remote areas, mobile technologies such as hotlines and text messaging are increasingly becoming preferred methods because of their efficiency and ease.



Hotline database at the Erbil Distribution Centre, KRI.

Country case study: Zimbabwe

WV Zimbabwe started its journey for better AAP with a comprehensive accountability assessment in 2008 along with World Vision's adoption of the PAF, followed by a review in 2010, then a country-wide strategy to roll out accountability methods. In 2015, WV Zimbabwe has been implementing these methods across a variety of programmes: a WFP-funded conditional seasonal targeted assistance in Bulilima; a resilience-building productive asset creation (PAC) programme in partnership with WFP, USAID and the government since 2012; mother and child nutrition (MCN) and rural safety-net programmes in Nkayi health clinics; a USAID-funded, integrated Enhancing Nutrition, Stepping Up Resilience and Enterprise (ENSURE) programme through a consortium in Mutare. This variety makes WV Zimbabwe a good case study to demonstrate the nuances and common lessons of accountability methods across different contexts.

Across all programmes CHD and suggestion boxes are implemented in parallel, with a strong recognition and appreciation by the APs for their respective pros and cons as well as their complementarity. In general, CHDs are considered personal, prompt and fully community owned: 'CHD is composed of local community members who understand the community dynamics well; it's easy for them to handle and respond to community



CHD members for Magoli Dam PAC, Zimbabwe. Left to right: Rebecca Tshuma, Molly Chuma (with a child), Thomas Tshuma, Estel Nkhoma and Anacleta Ndlovu.

complaints from their fellow villagers,' explains a CHD member in Mbimba, Bulilima District. On the other hand, suggestion boxes are viewed as more private and direct connections to World Vision. Tambudzai Nyoni, mother of four children and a participant to the Nyangara Dam project explains why she likes the suggestion boxes: 'When I am shy to come to the help desk, I can use the suggestion box to say what I want to say, because I know how to write.' Another member from the project echoes: 'I personally like *leli Boxi* [suggestion box]. If you are not comfortable with going to the help desk, you have a choice of using the suggestion box.'

Another lesson is how gender considerations can be strengthened through feedback mechanisms where both men and women participate equally. Initially, WFP's guidelines required strong involvement and representation of traditional leadership in CHD committees. However, in dialogue with the APs, WV Zimbabwe saw the value in having women and people with disabilities represented on the CHD so those often-softened voices could be heard. With these lessons WV Zimbabwe negotiated with WFP to lead a change in CHD standards to be both more gender sensitive and disability inclusive. The impact of this changed standard is well observed in the



All-women help desk for an MCN project in Guwe Clinic, Nkayi, Zimbabwe. From left to right: Rosemary Sibanda, Mavis Ndlovu and Silindile Ndlovu.



World Vision staff providing training on how to document feedback in the log book to CHD members, Mutare, Zimbabwe (ENSURE).

programmes. When asked about the advantages of CHDs, the focus group (eight men, six women) for Kasibo dip tank construction stressed that women are empowered to handle community issues. Other women in the community affirmed this statement: 'To have women in leadership positions gave us power and made us appreciate that we can also be in the leadership roles and lead men.'

In addition, suggestions received through the feedback mechanisms help World Vision continue to incorporate gender and protection considerations that may not have been obvious in the project start phase. For instance, for the ENSURE programme, which targets pregnant and lactating mothers, a food distribution point was moved based on feedback from members of the APs. They pointed out that the original location had 'no shelter, toilet or water,' making the location difficult for pregnant or lactating mothers to stay for long. In another example from the MCN projects that deal with privacy information (e.g. HIV and AIDS status, pregnancy status), those in the APs emphasised how confidentiality of the collected feedback has protection implications and requested that the suggestion box become 'mobile' – moving with World Vision staff – rather than remaining within the community centres in order to avoid any potential risk of exposure. Based on this request, the box is now kept at the World Vision office and brought to the community during meetings or distributions. Furthermore, World Vision

and CHD provide the responses to the feedback and complaints individually and privately, not in a group setting, to respect further the privacy aspect.

Finally, the importance of training and capacity building cannot be overemphasised. Only when the APs fully understand and appreciate how these methods work can they utilise them to their benefit. The first step is training and sensitisation on accountability for the entire community. If the community lacks shared understanding, it may result in misrepresentation or abuse and damage the APs' trust in the accountability methods or even in the programme. 'Some people blame CHD if they do not qualify for the project, yet the beneficiary selection is based on BMI [body mass index] measurements,' shares a CHD member in an MCN project at Guwe Clinic, Nkayi District, when asked about a challenge in serving on the CHD. Since the members on the CHD serve as two-way communication channels between the APs and World Vision, they need to be well equipped and empowered with sufficient training and tools. CHD staff should have a clear understanding of the programme, its goals and objectives, the criteria for beneficiary targeting, and how to handle certain issues.

An excellent example of an empowered CHD is found in a Hwange District PAC project to build a community dip tank.¹² In August 2014, Aloise Tshuma approached the CHD and submitted a



Log book with carbon-copy paper and a receipt number that allows the complainant to follow up on his or her comment.

suggestion: he and other village members, even though they were not direct beneficiaries of the project, wished to come and work on the dip tank. They were concerned that nonparticipants would be excluded from using this community asset for their livestock once it was completed. The CHD accepted his suggestion and responded that every community member is free to participate in building the community asset, which will be shared, while clearly stating that they cannot expect food rations that the food insecure households in the project receive. The suggestion was resolved on the same day and documented first in the log book by the CHD,¹³ then in WV Zimbabwe's accountability database. With experiences of prompt and respectful resolutions, 'the help desks build trust between World Vision and community,' a focus group participant in Ndolwane in Bulilima District affirms.



The newly constructed Kasibo cattle dip tank.



A tour of the Nyagara Community Dam Nutrition Garden.

¹²To learn more about dip tanks in Zimbabwe, see <http://www.wvi.org/food-assistance/article/zimbabwes-productive-asset-creation-cattle-bath>.

¹³'They [World Vision] gave us a log book and taught us how to use it with carbon papers, and how we have to ensure that the issues are responded to,' explains the CHD in the Magoli Dam project.

4. Small voices, powerful messages: Children and accountability

World Vision's mission is to see every child have the opportunity to live a full life. Working to improve the lives of children for more than 60 years, World Vision clarified its definition of child well-being in 2010, including a framework of broad child well-being aspirations, each with a set of outcomes and four targets.¹⁴ While the commitment to AAP is ultimately to realise these aspirations, outcomes and targets by facilitating the attainment of programming goals and objectives, it is not enough: World Vision is committed to improve continuously the accountability methods to consider, engage and reach children directly, so they participate in the decisions that affect their lives and their communities.

This chapter identifies three promising practices by which accountability methods intentionally include children, inviting them to voice their opinions and recount their experiences about World Vision programmes, both as direct beneficiaries (e.g. EDRC and Sudan school feeding programmes) and as indirect beneficiaries (e.g. Kenya's Food/Cash for Assets programmes). These practices have the potential to promote inclusion of children at the centre of the programmes and to enhance child well-being.



World Vision International President Kevin Jenkins visits a Syrian refugee camp and listens to Hoda, 11, as she tells her story.

¹⁴To learn more about World Vision's child well-being aspirations, outcomes and targets, see <http://www.wvi.org/evidence-and-learning>.

Listening to children in Darfur, Sudan, regarding their school meals

WV Sudan has been implementing Food for Education and other complementary interventions in IDP camps in Darfur since 2009, supporting over 70,000 school children in seven camps. Sudan is a fragile-context country with deep-rooted structural disparities and localised conflict, which have resulted in decades of war and an ongoing large-scale humanitarian emergency since 2003. In Darfur, violence is prevalent, with tribal rivalries and the proliferation of small arms. The children of Darfur receive their education in temporary schools constructed using bamboo and plastic sheets, and they eat school meals of cooked sorghum and beans during school days. It is an integrated school feeding programme with health and hygiene components to help protect the children from infectious diseases. The programme also involves capacity building for the Parents-Teachers Association to train members on school management, record keeping and other related aspects with the aim of improving the learning environment for the most

vulnerable children residing the IDP camps. In an effort to ensure that these most vulnerable children receive assistance with respect and dignity, the Food Assistance Team introduced a full range of accountability methods.

The feedback from the school children is received in two ways: through physical collection of feedback during meal times and through suggestion boxes collected every other week. Implementing accountability for this young group of APs led to several improvements in the quality of the programme. For instance, the children were able to share that there were not enough plates and dishes for the school meals, which led to World Vision purchasing additional ones. The children also recommended retraining of the cooks, which resulted in improved quality of the food served. When the children complained about inadequate handwashing facilities at the schools and their concerns that this may increase the potential to spread diseases, World Vision shared this feedback with WFP. The agencies then followed the children's recommendation and installed additional washstands.

Listening to school children in EDRC

EDRC has experienced armed conflicts since 1996, accompanied by widespread poverty and deterioration of the living conditions of the most vulnerable, especially children. This fragility is particularly acute in EDRC due to the region's long history of conflict, displacement and marginalisation. Access to primary education is costly and difficult for many children and their families. Children often lack the necessary nutrition to learn and grow. In the EDRC, more than one third of the under-5 children suffer from chronic malnutrition (stunting), and global acute malnutrition (GAM) rates are 14 per cent, which is just below the threshold for an emergency (15 per cent). World Vision is implementing a food-for-education programme in EDRC to address this issue.

School children benefitting from the programme preferred suggestion boxes to share their feedback. They regard suggestion boxes as a means to share

their voices with World Vision and to influence decision making. 'If there is no suggestion box at my school, there will be no means for us to express our concerns on the food to World Vision', says Zawadi Barigwa (female, age 15) at Nyamashege Primary School. When asked about the suggestion boxes at their school, Civunwa Primary School located in South Kivu, EDRC, a member of the children's focus group summed up: 'How can we guard our food without the suggestion boxes? If we notice something wrong or someone stealing our food, we will write down and deposit it into the box and we know World Vision will listen to us and take action!'

In addition to the suggestion boxes, World Vision also engages the children with post-distribution monitoring in which children give feedback on various aspects of the programme and its impact on them: the quality and quantity of food, whether all children indeed ate the school meals, whether feeding happened on school days, whether children still bring food from home, and so on.



Children enjoying a school meal at Civunwa Primary School, South Kivu, EDRC.

Listening to children of C/FFA participants in Makueni, Kenya

While the examples from Sudan and EDRC engage children who are directly benefitting from World Vision school feeding programmes, the child help desk and suggestion box introduced in Makueni, Kenya, present an interesting new angle: listening to the children of participants in an asset-creation project in the community.

WV Kenya is piloting this approach in Kavingoni village in Makueni with a goal to roll it out across the country in a few years. As these methods are based in schools, the first step was to have sufficient dialogue with the school authorities: 'We had to clarify that we are not encouraging children to complain against schools' educational authorities but trying to listen to children on their experiences of their parents' participation in World Vision projects,' explains Sarah Mbai, the accountability, monitoring and evaluation officer in Mankeni. 'Now, the teachers are supportive; they said they never thought of asking what children think of these things!'

The child help-desk members are selected by their peer students to represent different grades. They collect feedback from suggestion boxes to record it in the log book and share it with World Vision staff. In a focus group discussion they also shared openly about their concerns and observations. For instance, a child shared how his parents' participation in the FFA project helped the family have more food to eat, but the project also makes the parents quite tired from the work and they play with him less. 'That is a very interesting point, something we did not realise. Surely it is important to you that they can spend time with you. We will think about how to make it better', responded World Vision staff. Another child raised his hand with a question: 'My grandmother suddenly stopped working on the project recently; can you explain why?' Being unsure of the details, World Vision staff promised to look into it and respond to him. In the following weeks World Vision discovered that he is an orphan living with a grandmother, and his grandmother was discharged from the FFA because of her old age and physical inability to work. She was, however, included as a non-working participant in the project to receive food to support the child and herself.



Children's help-desk members in Kwa Kavishi Primary School in discussion with World Vision staff.

This approach acknowledges that the ultimate goal in every World Vision programme is to affect the lives of these children and enable their voices to help improve the programmes so they work better for their benefit. As Jacinta Oichoe, programme officer for design, accountability, monitoring and evaluation for WV Kenya, points out: 'Children do not lie; they will tell you honestly how they feel about the impact of the programme without being so concerned about what the donor or World Vision wants to hear.' Involving children directly through accountability methods, therefore, is a promising practice to gain valuable insights for programmes and to empower children to participate in them.

World Vision's Child Well-being Aspiration #4 describes a world where children are 'cared for, protected and participating' so they can grow in self-esteem and have a better chance to succeed in life,



A girl child in charge of safekeeping and recording the suggestions opening the Suggestion Box.

where children are able to say what they think about decisions that affect their lives. These promising practices of involving children in accountability mechanisms is a very tangible way to move one step closer to this aspiration.

Closing words

Accountability to affected populations (AAPs) may be one of the few concepts in humanitarian work that is hardly ever contested; most would readily agree it is the right thing to do, a given. The real challenge is in the how.

This report is an attempt to capture and share World Vision's practical experience in implementing accountability mechanisms for food assistance programmes. It considers a wide range of examples so that the practitioners at the forefront may be inspired to apply the lessons and make their own practice better. In addition, while this report does not intend to put forward comprehensive and general conclusions on AAP, it may serve as a meaningful step towards further scientific research and evaluations. In particular, we hope these examples inspire programme designers and donors to look deeper into the operational and programmatic applications, such as the response turn-around time, the balance between transparency and confidentiality, the cost effectiveness of the various methods, budgetary and staffing considerations, capacity-building and training approaches or ways to share complaints across agencies. Researchers, evaluators and strategists may take interest in further establishing evidence on the outcomes and impact, evaluate effectiveness of various measures or explore the possibilities to bring AAP into other realms of humanitarian work beyond the scope of this report.

Special thanks go to the colleagues who work with the APs daily to cultivate the trust and relationship essential in any accountability efforts. They are the courageous leaders who are willing actually to do the right thing: to be transparent and listen to those they serve, working with them towards a hunger-free world.

Yejin Oh,
Food Community of Practice & Evidence
Coordinator, World Vision International

The cases collected in this report demonstrate World Vision's commitment to put the APs at the centre in all areas of its work in all contexts. The methods and practices promoted across different countries speak volumes about World Vision's commitments to international standards, its partnership standards, and respecting and valuing cultural diversity obtainable in the areas of operation. The various groups of the affected populations spoken to during the documentation of these stories appreciated the contribution of the accountability methods in ensuring that their feedback reaches World Vision and that action is taken to embrace their views in decision making. Importantly, the issues of respecting cultural norms and values in designing feedback mechanisms were identified as of paramount importance. Furthermore, protection and gender mainstreaming were visible as the designed methods considered different needs of the different groups within the APs. The participation of women, men, boys and girls ensured that feedback came from all groups in the community. In addition, the integration of accountability and M&E provided an excellent platform for closing the accountability loop.

The efforts put forth by World Vision colleagues in delivering quality service to the APs demonstrated their desire to promote inclusiveness in programme design and implementation. The robust systems established also showed that World Vision prioritised opening up its programmes for public scrutiny by the APs, including vulnerable children – doing it with them, not doing it for them.

Luphathe Nyathi,
Programme Quality Advisor,
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World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. Inspired by our Christian values, we are dedicated to working with the world's most vulnerable people. We serve all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender.

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