



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
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Inclusive Accountability to Affected Populations:

Lessons from CFM hotlines in Syria and Moldova

Purpose

This learning paper is part of a series documenting good practice examples of disability inclusion mainstreaming. This paper focuses on evidence generated by community feedback mechanisms (CFM) in Syria and Moldova. We analysed the intake forms and quantitative and qualitative data of the Syria and Moldova CFM hotlines,¹ and identified four key opportunities for strengthening inclusion. This paper is structured around these four elements, which mirror the AAP cycle:

1. Keep inclusion inclusive – This section describes how a broad inclusion lens drives the collection and analysis of intake data to support inclusive programming.

2. Illuminate unknown unknowns – Qualitative data remains underused within CFM hotlines. We present opportunities and experiences related to qualitative data.

3. Cul-de-sac to closing the loop – The majority of CFM hotline cases are requests for information. This section presents learning on how CFM can inform an evidence-based approach to community engagement.

4. Resolution to Evolution – Crises and response environments change over time, we share examples of adaptations to enable an inclusion approach to AAP remains sustainable and relevant.

1 These country offices were chosen given their interest and context variation from acute and mature crisis.

Primary Audience

AAP officers, Protection, RAMAN, & Programme staff.

Background

Alongside the Disability Inclusion (DI) Roadmap 2020-2022, WFP launched a multi-year research partnership with Trinity College Dublin (TCD) to develop an evidence base for effective programming that is inclusive of food insecure persons with disabilities. Accountability to affected populations (AAP) is a core component of a people-centred approach. WFP's revised strategy for AAP 2021 – 2026 focusses less on activities in favour of processes, across the three key commitment areas of inclusion, community feedback and response, and information and knowledge management. In seeking to generate evidence on how CFM hotlines and processes can support programmatic inclusion, TCD analysed 5,299 cases and the respective intake forms from Moldova and Syria. These evidence-based recommendations for inclusion mainstreaming across CFM hotlines are being standardised across WFP.

1. Keep inclusion inclusive – Using a holistic inclusion lens

Disability inclusion warrants specific attention, funding, action, and expertise. The evidence from WFP CFM hotlines shows that considering inclusion beyond only disability is effective in operationalising a people centred approach. Findings from CFM hotlines show the value of focussing less on *disability identification* (e.g., disaggregation) and instead drawing insight from alternative demographic markers, and questions regarding barriers and needs.

Remove: Disability disaggregation

Use of the WGQ-SS in CFM hotline contexts is not supported by CO experience.² This is because disability disaggregation generally did not provide actionable insight, increased call length (and caller expense, where lines are not toll-free), and risked more calls dropping before resolution. Syria trialled an alternative, adding a 'disability' tag to each case where disability was spontaneously mentioned. However, analysis of 4,460 case records³ showed that this tagging did not provide

Methodology

Country offices were chosen according to their interest and to explore context variation from acute and mature crisis. All data collected through CO CFM hotlines and anonymised by CO staff prior to TCD analysis. Latent and semantic thematic coding of qualitative data using Quirkos v2.4. Analysis of quantitative data using SPSS v27. Discussion and review of intake forms with relevant CO staff, and HQ AAP Data Team.

Country Office	Data Source
Syria	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intake form review• Qualitative & quantitative analysis of 4,460 hotline calls (i.e. all cases from 2nd January 2022 to 28th February 2022)
Moldova	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intake form review• Qualitative & quantitative analysis of 839 hotline calls (i.e. all cases from 1st of April 2022 and 27th April 2022)• Focus Group Discussion (five national hotline operators)

usable information, and was not applied consistently by operators.

Replace with: “Are you calling on behalf of yourself or somebody else? Why?”

Asking callers whether they are calling on their own or someone else's behalf, and why, can be used as an indirect method to explore (in)accessibility, and prioritise additional CFM feedback channels to complement hotlines.

In Syria, 2.8% (n=123) of analysed CFM calls were on behalf of someone else,⁴ compared to 19% of calls (n=152) in Moldova.⁵ Analysing the reasons why can identify relevant inclusion actions. For example, if women are hesitant to call, female only lines can be advertised, whereas if women don't have access to phones, alternative feedback channels like distribution helpdesks can be provided. If disability is identified as a reason for not calling directly, consulting with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) can assist in identifying more suitable AAP feedback channels.

² Where disability disaggregation of data is appropriate, the Washington Group Short Set of Questions is the recommended tool. See [here](#) for specific findings regarding their use in WFP activities.

³ TCD reviewed all cases collected through Syria CFM hotline from 2nd January 2022 to 28th February 2022, resulting in 4,460 cases.

⁴ 118 calls recorded as such, and a further five calls with indicative qualitative narrative

⁵ TCD reviewed the CFM intake tool and anonymous data collected through the Moldova CFM between the 1st of April 2022 and 27th April 2022

Add: 'How do you learn about this hotline number?'

In Moldova, 92% of calls were requests for information, compared to 77% in Syria. This points to a clear need for proactive and accessible information sharing in communities. Adding the above question can identify relevant communication channels. Disaggregating this question by easily collected demographic factors such as sex, age, linguistic identity etc. can reveal how different groups access information, and who is at risk of lack of information, or disinformation, directly informing community engagement strategies.

In Moldova, cross-tabulating this question with age categories showed that older persons (60+) were more likely to receive their information through word of mouth, while those aged 35-59 disproportionately relied on websites. Depending on the target group, this information can be triangulated with existing monitoring data, and can support investment in multi-lingual and accessible website design, or justify the use of accessible communication approaches (see [this example](#) from Mozambique).



Develop: Relevant response options

Too many data collection options slow data entry, impact accuracy, and create information overload. New or additional questions must therefore be easy to record, and provide useful insight. Use input from national CFM operators to build context-specific response categories, and periodically review CFM data

to identify response options that are never or rarely used, and which could potentially be removed.

In Moldova, 'old age' was the fourth most common reason for calls on behalf of someone else. Adding this as a drop-down response option saves time, as operators must otherwise record this in an open text box. In Syria, analysis of CFM data showed callers frequently invoked specific demographic factors, such as disability or widowhood, as relevant to their request. Systematically capturing such feedback can reveal how the community views vulnerability, supporting targeting approaches that are relevant and acceptable to the community.

2. Illuminate unknown unknowns – The power of qualitative data

AAP processes and CFMs are a natural home for qualitative data, which remains underused in WFP and has particular value in understanding experiences, such as exclusion. Qualitative data creates contextualised understanding and is a powerful tool for advocacy, achieving an impact that is difficult with only numbers. However, a robust approach to qualitative data is needed so that resulting insight is based on patterns of meaning and relevant findings, not anecdotes or impressions.

Collect: Direct Quotes

In Moldova, CFM operators were instructed to collect direct quotes from each conversation. In the early days of the response, before M&E mechanisms were widespread, the relatively higher volume of CFM calls (compared to post distribution monitoring) provided insight which was used to refine targeting criteria. The qualitative data revealed consistent patterns of Moldovan households hosting refugees in unexpected configurations. Initially, only households hosting two or more refugees were eligible for assistance, but qualitative data revealed that older Moldovans living alone were themselves economically vulnerable, and thus more likely to host only a single refugee. The targeting criteria were adjusted to allow these vulnerable hosts to access assistance. Capturing direct quotes as qualitative data also contributed positively to CFM operator morale, and a sense of impact and meaning in their work. This has a positive impact in terms of duty of care to operators and sustainability, with a protective effect for frontline AAP employees, and potential to support data quality and employee retention.

Analyse: Patterns

In Syria, the scale and established nature of WFP programming creates logistical barriers to collecting large volumes of qualitative data, or making rapid changes to targeting criteria. To ensure all recommendations were robustly backed by evidence, TCD conducted a detailed, secondary analysis of 4,460 CFM hotline cases. This analysis showed an expectation among the affected population that disability should entitle a family to assistance, and showed some evidence that the process of accessing assistance/ registration may add to vulnerability, in particular for persons with disabilities. Such insights are important to share with targeting colleagues to consider whether targeting addresses community expectations, and to identify and mitigate potential harms.

3. From cul de sac to closing the loop - Implementation opportunities

WFP must be able to use the information generated through CFMs for action, not only reporting. Moving from analysis to programme considerations does not stop with providing information or referrals to/for the caller. CFM feedback channels link WFP with the community and their perceptions of WFP. This is especially critical in remote and cash-based operations. Strategic analysis of CFM data can identify opportunities to refine programming (design, targeting, implementation, etc.). Prioritising data collection toward action ensures the community's feedback ultimately contributes to WFP accountability, and clear responsibilities and dedicated resources support action.

Pre-empt: Community Needs

In Moldova, 92% of analysed CFM calls were classified as requests for information, of which 70% were specific to the registration process. This high proportion of information requests is appropriate to the early days of a crisis, when information is scarce or has not yet proliferated. In Syria, a more mature crisis, 77% of CFM calls were requests for information. When CFM data suggests an unmet need for information, closing the loop may require particular attention to groups that experiences barriers to accessing standard ways of providing information. If for example activities are being added, geographic coverage is shifting, or targeting criteria are changing, then analysis of previously gathered CFM data will support related communications

reaching those in need of information, in the way they prefer to receive it. This also supports the effectiveness of resources dedicated to such efforts, with benefits for both WFP and the affected population.

Minimise: Potential Risks

Provided the intake form collects the necessary data, CFM channels, including hotlines, can pinpoint information needs among the affected community. Proactively addressing these needs through inclusive, evidence-based community engagement can increase trust, and minimise the risk of rumours, tensions, and conflict.

This lower proportion of requests for information in Syria relative to Moldova suggests the CO has been successful in disseminating information. CFMs should strive to minimise the proportion of first case resolution (FCR) calls which are requests for basic information. Effective minimisation strategies include proactive sharing of accessible information with communities, and the use of automated responses for common requests. Resources can be allocated to pre-empt common information seeking, e.g. providing a clear decision timeline when collecting assessment data, and proactively alerting both households who are, and are not selected. This can free up hotline operators, increasing the opportunity for sensitive or risk related cases (e.g. sexual exploitation and abuse, gender based violence) to be rapidly answered and addressed.



4. Resolution to Evolution – An adaptable CFM

Different approaches to CFM data collection and analysis can support inclusion across the programme cycle. Any actions must be matched to the context. In Moldova, the CFM hotline was new and smaller scale, making it possible to adapt the intake form. In Syria, the massive volume of calls provided an opportunity to validate and adjust the intake form through large scale secondary analysis. These examples show how analysis of CFM hotline data can be structured to track key patterns over time, leading to adaptable and evolving CFMs.

Analyse: Trends over time

Analysing pattern fluctuations over the phase of the response has additional relevance for inclusion. In Moldova, calls reporting ‘Barrier to Accessing Assistance’ were a minority, but this may increase over time, e.g., if targeting criteria are tightened, or if people are re-displaced and need to update their registration details. Monitoring CFM data trends over time and disaggregating them by relevant demographic factors can give an early signal as to which groups are facing barriers to accessing assistance, enabling responsive actions to target those most at risk of exclusion, including persons with disabilities.

Add: ‘Other’ as a safety net to refine your system

Callers may provide useful yet unanticipated information that is difficult to capture/flag through closed categorisation or drop-down lists. Adding an ‘other’ category to response options as a closed (tick box) and/ or open (text box) option ensures such insight is not missed. In Moldova, the rapidly evolving crisis meant that open text boxes alongside ‘other’ were

an efficient way of understanding information callers were providing, but which did not correspond to the standardised intake categories. This enabled a relatively quick process of reviewing the data, and transforming common answers into standard response options, rapidly contextualising and streamlining data collection. Open data revealed that multiple members of a household were calling at once, hoping at least one person would get through. This reason for calling on someone’s behalf was added as a standard response option which could then be used to contextualise other findings, e.g., why there were large volumes of unanswered calls.

A closed (tick box) ‘other’ category is useful if analysis capacity is insufficient for handling open data. If the proportion of calls labelled ‘other’ trends upward over time, it will signal that the existing closed answer categories for that question are no longer capturing all relevant feedback, and adjustments need to be made.

Consider: Additional Qualitative Data Collection

The above suggestions look to streamline data collection and direct analysis to produce actionable insights. CFMs could also be used to gather specific information, by asking questions directly to callers. These could be focused on specific populations or themes, e.g., women with disabilities, or issues of aid diversion. Questions could be administered during, or limited to a specific time period, e.g., bi-monthly, during lean season, or to a subset, e.g., 10% of callers, only female callers. The additional qualitative insight could then feed back into programming - acknowledging the limitations of such a sample. To TCD’s knowledge, this has not yet been trialled in WFP, but may provide a feasible means of increasing the use of robust qualitative data.

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