A **feedback mechanism** allows recipients to express their concerns or displeasure with the commodity distribution process (for example, the distance to the FDP or rudeness of distribution staff) or the ration quality or size. Common feedback mechanisms are **suggestion boxes** or **help desks** located at the distribution site.

A **complaint mechanism** allows recipients to **confidentially report corruption or abuse of power** (especially regarding sexual exploitation), and to seek redress. A complaint mechanism may be formal or informal, written or verbal, signed or anonymous, but it must always be culturally and politically appropriate. Examples of complaint mechanisms include a complaint committee, locked box, telephone hotline, or direct complaints to project staff members trained to act as “focal points,” receiving complaints sensitively and without judgment, and ensuring the complainant’s safety. Do not require recipients to complain via local leaders or authorities, who may themselves be the source of corruption.

* Both feedback and complaint mechanisms help build a culture of transparency and accountability, and improve program quality.
* Both mechanisms should be in place in programs distributing food commodities.
* Where possible, build mechanisms on existing local systems, rather than setting up parallel mechanisms.
* Fully inform thecommunity about the feedback and complaint mechanisms, their purposes and use, and what constitutes a complaint (as opposed to feedback).
* Respond promptly to valid feedback and complaints. Specify a timeframe and document the investigation at all stages: evidence-gathering, interview, report and findings, and implementation or appeal (by either party). Keep complainants fully informed.

**Reference Materials**

Bond and One World Trust: *Self-Assessment Questionnaire for Complaint and Response Mechanisms,* London 2007.[www.oneworldtrust.org/index.php?option=com\_docman&task=doc\_download&gid=120&Itemid=59](http://www.oneworldtrust.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=120&Itemid=59)

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HAP International*: Benchmark 5: Complaints-handling, in “The Guide to the HAP Standard: Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management,* Oxford 2008.

ICVA: *Building Safer Organisations Guidelines: Receiving and investigating allegations of abuse and exploitation by humanitarian workers,* Geneva n.d. <http://reliefweb.int/report/world/building-safer-organisations-guidelines-receiving-and-investigating-allegations-abuse>

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Pepall, Joshua: *Community Feedback System: Complaint Cards and Community Complaints Fact Sheet,* WV Sri Lanka, Lanka Tsunami Response Team (LTRT), 2006.