Receiving and Documenting Complaints and Referral Mechanisms
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• Next steps:
  – Referrals
  – Victim assistance strategy
Receiving a complaint

- Receive initial complaint
- Consider immediate protection needs
- Establish nature of complaint
- Decide who deals with complaint
- Follow up complaint
Role of complaint recipient

- Encourage reporting and receive complaints
- Give guidance on what happens with the report
- Pass report through appropriate channels
  - Make referrals as necessary

REMEMBER:
Person receiving complaint is:
NOT an investigator
NOT a counselor
Qualities of effective complaint recipient

- **Knowledge**: Must know what s/he is talking about. All information given must be consistent & accurate.

- **Responsibility**: To facilitate the interview in a way that respects complainant’s values, personal resources & capacity for self-determination.

- **Neutrality**: Should not project own biases or offer own judgments.

- **Patience**: Should give complainant ample time to tell her/his story.

- **Focus**: Should only ask relevant questions.
Principles of receiving complaints

• Protection, safety, and security
• Identification of welfare support required and referrals
• Preserve confidentiality as far as possible
  – absolute confidentiality may not be possible, as reacting to the allegation may require interventions
• Involve as few people as possible
• Support the victim in referring to local authorities if a there is a crime
• Forward the allegation for action via established mechanisms
Basic phases of an interview

- Rapport-building
- Information-gathering
  - Free narrative
  - Questions
- Closure and next steps
Rapport-building

- Introduce yourself and welcome the complainant
- Make them feel comfortable
- Reassure them that they did the right thing in coming
- Explain your role is to take the complaint – that you are not making any decisions, simply gathering information
- Explain the boundaries of confidentiality and obtain their consent to your sharing the information on a “need-to-know” basis
Information-gathering

• Let them tell their story in a free narrative
  – Do not interrupt
  – Show you are listening by concentrating, remaining attentive & focused
  – Silence is OK; allow complainant time to think and choose words

• Ask for clarification to make sure you have understood

• Use open rather than leading questions
  – “what did you mean?” and “then what happened?” not “did you mean X?” or “did you then do X?”

• Do not make judgments; avoid “why” questions

• Use simple language
Anonymity

- If the person reporting wishes to remain anonymous, all other information must be forwarded through appropriate channels.
- An anonymous complaint might be more difficult to investigate – the person needs to know this.
- In this case they will be told that his/her identity will not be disclosed during the investigation *without his/her permission*. 
Closure and next steps

*This reassures complainants their complaint is taken seriously*

- Let them know what may happen next – do not guarantee an outcome
- Explain how long the process might take
- Explain that you (or someone else) will be in touch again
- Provide contacts if the complainant has questions
- Explain that someone else will decide what happens next
- Explain that the allegation will be followed up
- Tell them they will be informed of the outcome
Special considerations for children

- Children may be as reliable as adults
- Take their report seriously
- Children may have special needs with regard to interviews, i.e., timing, language
- Consider whether parent or caregiver should be present
Receiving complaints

- Be prepared to receive complaints from:
  - UN staff
  - NGO staff
  - Local community - family, friends, neighbors, witnesses
  - Victims themselves
  - Others?
Documentation

- Keep a written record
  - e.g., the IASC Model Complaint Form
- Forward complaint for action as soon as possible, as per agency reporting procedure
Assessing physical safety & welfare

DISCUSS:

- How do you assess?
- How do you organize referrals?
SEA victim assistance

Identifying services & creating a referral pathway

- Conduct an assessment of available services and gaps in services in health, legal, psychosocial, and material support
- Develop a referral plan and list of referral agencies for basic support and extended support
- Identify victim support facilitators to assist the complainant/survivor to access services
- Identify standards for confidentiality, data collection, coordination among service providers