PRACTICAL LEARNING *for* **INTERNATIONAL ACTION**

"Accountability starts with me."

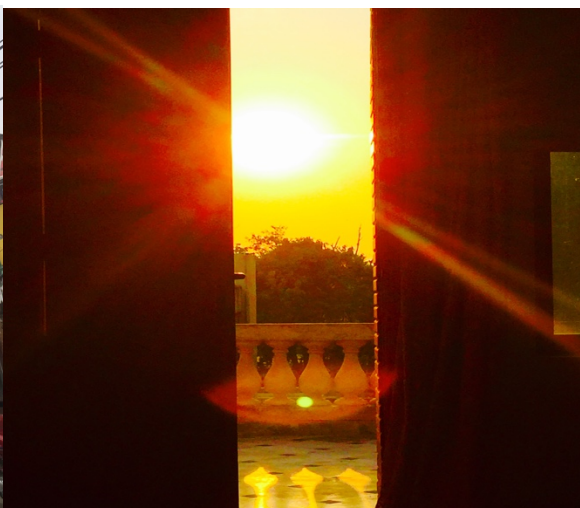*Opening Inclusive Feedback Channels in Pakistan*

Feedback Loops Case Study
CDA-World Vision Pakistan

Sarah Cechvala
CDA Collaborative Learning Projects
December 2015

Cover Photos: Islamabad and Rawalpindi, Pakistan – December 2015. Credit: Sarah Cechvala

About CDA

CDA Collaborative Learning Projects (CDA) is a non-profit organization committed to improving the effectiveness of those who work internationally to provide humanitarian assistance, engage in peace practice, support sustainable development, and conduct corporate operations in a socially responsible manner. An electronic copy of this resource is available on the CDA website. CDA is keen to hear how you are using our materials. Your feedback informs our ongoing learning and impact assessment processes. Email your feedback to feedback@cdacollaborative.org

About this Case Study

This document was developed as part of a collaborative learning project directed by CDA. It is part of a collection of documents that should be considered initial and partial findings of the project. These documents are written to allow for the identification of cross-cutting issues and themes across a range of situations. Each case represents the views and perspectives of a variety of people at the time when it was written.

These documents do not represent a final product of the project. While these documents may be cited, they remain working documents of a collaborative learning effort. Broad generalizations about the project's findings cannot be made from a single case.

CDA would like to acknowledge the generosity of the individuals and agencies involved in donating their time, experience and insights for these reports, and for their willingness to share their experiences. Not all the documents and examples shared with us have been made public. When people in the area where a field visit has been conducted have asked us to protect their anonymity and security, in deference to them and communities involved, we keep those examples private.

CDA Collaborative Learning Projects
One Alewife Center, Suite 400
Cambridge, MA 02140 USA
http://www.cdacollaborative.org

CDA Collaborative Learning Projects is committed to improving the effectiveness of those who work internationally to provide humanitarian assistance, engage in peace practice, support sustainable development, and conduct corporate operations in a socially responsible manner. CDA is widely recognized as a thought leader on effective listening and feedback processes, with evidence-informed recommendations on improving community engagement and accountability practices. Our collaborative learning process examines effective practices amidst operational and organizational challenges in order to generate practical lessons and evidence-based guidelines for enabling feedback utilization in programmatic and strategic processes. We are learning what makes feedback loops effective in long-term development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding programs.

This case study is a result of a learning partnership between CDA, World Vision UK (WV UK), and World Vision Pakistan (WVP). It documents WVP's experience integrating accountability and feedback loops into long-term development programs. World Vision and CDA collaboratively seek to document emerging lessons on feedback utilization in organizational decision-making, course correction, and program review and redesign. The case study represents a snapshot of the experiences and viewpoints shared at the time of the field visit. Broad generalizations cannot be made from a single case study; it is meant to contribute to a larger learning process on feedback loops.

The primary focus of this case is to document lessons learned during WVP's pilot of the Accountability Learning Initiatives (ALI). The ALI project is a WV UK-funded initiative that provides support and funding to several country offices (Pakistan, Nepal, Somalia, and Ethiopia) to examine, enhance, and improve existing accountability practices in their development programming. World Vision Pakistan hosted the CDA team over the course of a ten-day field visit to Islamabad, Pakistan, during which CDA met with "users" of WVP's pilot feedback mechanism. The CDA team used semi-structured interviews that created space for open-ended discussions that explored people's experiences with and perceptions of the WVP's ALI pilot, which was called the 'beneficiary feedback mechanism' (BFM).

> *For the purposes of this case, "a feedback mechanism is seen as effective if, at minimum, it supports the collection, acknowledgement, analysis, and response to the feedback received, thus forming a closed feedback loop. Where the feedback loop is left open, the mechanism is not fully effective."* See: Bonino et al 2014(a)

World Vision Pakistan collects and uses feedback in both development and humanitarian programs. Globally, World Vision's Programme Accountability Framework (PAF) sets the direction for organizational accountability to the children and communities with whom WV works, and outlines

WV's commitments to accountability as a minimum set of standards and criteria for program implementation.

WVP has existing successful feedback mechanisms, notably a national toll-free line originating from its emergency response to Pakistan's 2010 floods. However, analysis of user data indicated that women were an underrepresented group in terms of feedback provision. In order to address this gap, WVP focused the ALI project on increasing female participation in feedback channels in the pilot site of Rawalpindi.

After consulting female beneficiaries of WVP's Urban Program in Rawalpindi, WVP established the BFM, which relied on a female staff member to increase formal and informal meetings with female community members as a channel for feedback and information provision. Generally, WVP's feedback channels, such as its toll-free line are managed by a Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) team member who is part of a programmatic team (such as the Urban Program, which is often based in the field). However, unlike existing WVP feedback channels, the BFM was placed entirely under the MEAL team in the headquarters office, in Islamabad.

CDA's case study process examined the elements[1] commonly associated with effective feedback mechanisms in humanitarian contexts, which include: Cultural and Context Appropriateness, Expectations Setting and Knowledge, Feedback Collection, Verification and Analysis of Feedback, Acknowledgement and Response, Feedback Utilization, Individual and Organizational Support, Partnerships, and Periodic Reassessment and Adjustment. Key highlights based on our observations of these elements are outlined in this summary. However, this does not capture the full richness of the case, which provides a more comprehensive account of the voices of those who participated in CDA's action-research process.

KEY OBSERVATION: ORGANIZATIONAL LOCATION OF FEEDBACK SYSTEMS

Deciding to place the BFM under the MEAL team had advantages and disadvantages. While its separation from project teams encouraged beneficiaries to be more open about their feedback, it also created a barrier to their fuller engagement. Project staff felt they were not adequately involved in the design, implementation, and monitoring of this channel; and therefore, they felt little accountability for it, and some even suspected it was a system to monitor their activities. A lack of collective accountability (by both the project and MEAL teams) to the feedback from the BFM inhibited the mechanism's effectiveness.

[1] Bonino, Francesca and Paul Knox Clarke 2013.

KEY OBSERVATION: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL REFERRAL SYSTEMS

The internal referral process for BFM data followed a different pathway than other feedback entering the organization (such as calls to the national toll-free number). MEAL staff noted that this divergent internal process fostered resentment and confusion among the project team about the purpose of the feedback data and its relevance to their work. Establishing a clear pathway for information to travel through the organization is fundamental. Referral systems should outline who and how feedback is responded to, even if it is outside the agency's remit.

When feedback is outside the agency's mandate, there should be a clear external referral system in place. This can help to address the issues that accompany unsolicited feedback channels. In the case of WVP, while we observed a system for sharing this type of feedback with other actors, it was complicated by issues of trust between communities and their government, the role of local community-based organizations (CBOs), and historical perceptions related to responsiveness and capacity of local government bodies. Given Rawalpindi's weak government, communities have developed higher expectations that WVP will respond to their needs, and when the agency is unable to address unsolicited requests, it can further erode trust between the community and WVP.

KEY OBSERVATION: UNSOLICITED FEEDBACK & RESPONSE

The BFM channel was designed to be open-ended, which led to not only a high volume of feedback, but a significant amount of feedback that was unrelated to WVP's projects. Staff members often felt disempowered to respond to queries that were beyond WVP's scope, and felt an aversion to consistently disappointing community members with unsatisfactory answers. This led to significant delays in feedback response, which in turn strained relationships between project staff, community members, and the MEAL team. While this is indeed challenging, when operating a feedback system, providing a response is fundamental regardless of the level of satisfaction. It is critical for organization's to develop ways to respond to unsolicited feedback, including clarifying the scope of said organization's interventions and explaining an external referral system.

Table of Contents

I - Background

This case study is a result of a learning-focused collaboration between CDA Collaborative Learning Projects (CDA), World Vision UK (WV UK), and World Vision Pakistan (WVP). World Vision UK partnered with select national offices to pilot different ways of improving accountability to communities by providing technical support, capacity building, and funding. These pilot projects, called "Accountability Learning Initiatives" (ALI), enabled national offices to integrate accountability into long-term development programs, while adapting the mechanisms to their particular context and capacity.[2] World Vision is applying lessons from the pilots to provide direction for accountability work in other operational areas around the world. This case study documents WVP's experience integrating accountability into development programs in an urban pilot site in Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

The Accountability Learning Initiative is not a specific methodology or a consistent approach used across the country pilots; rather, the initiative allows WV country programs to assess existing accountability practices and provides the opportunity to improve and scale up such practices. In this case study, the term ALI refers to the pilot, called the Beneficiary Feedback Mechanism (BFM), which was observed in WVP's Urban Program in Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

The purpose of this case study is to contribute to the growing evidence base on feedback loops and accountability practices in development programming. World Vision and CDA collaboratively seek to document emerging lessons on feedback utilization in organizational decision-making, course correction, and program review and redesign. World Vision has a vested interest in evidence-based guidance on strengthening accountability to communities and improving feedback practices in development programs. For CDA, lessons documented in this and other case studies will contribute to a collaborative learning process focused on factors that enable effective feedback loops in humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding programs.

CDA started its research on feedback loops in 2011 and later joined the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) in an action-research project on feedback mechanisms in humanitarian contexts. From 2012 to 2014, CDA and ALNAP conducted case studies,[3] identified patterns.

---

[2] Other pilot countries in 2014-2016 include: Pakistan, Nepal, and Somalia. More information about WV UK and the Accountability Learning Initiatives can be found at: http://www.worldvision.org.uk/our-work/accountability/#section04

[3] For more on CDA-ALNAP humanitarian feedback mechanisms research, see: http://cdacollaborative.org/cdaproject/humanitarian-feedback-mechanisms-research/

The primary focus of this case is to document lessons learned during WVP's piloting of the Beneficiary Feedback Mechanism (BFM), launched as part of the Accountability Learning Initiative (ALI). World Vision Pakistan hosted Sarah Cechvala, who conducted the case study field visit over a ten-day period in December 2015.

World Vision (WV) has integrated key elements of accountability into its participatory program planning process. WV uses a Programme Accountability Framework (PAF) to ensure that programs are designed and implemented in a way that empowers children, communities, and local partners to hold WV accountable. Aligned with WV's accountability framework, ALI seeks to enhance WV's accountability and feedback mechanisms and is supported by World Vision UK (WV UK) in terms of funding and technical assistance. Between March 2015 and March 2016, ALI was piloted in four WV country offices: Ethiopia, Pakistan, Nepal, and Somalia.[4]

During the visit, CDA met with community members who have used WVP's accountability and feedback channels and those who have not. CDA also interviewed members of community based organizations (CBOs) and youth groups.

At the national office,[5] CDA spoke with the technical teams implementing programs in Rawalpindi,[6] the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) team, Quality Assurance (QA) staff, emergency and humanitarian program staff, human resources officers, and senior leadership. At the time of the visit, the MEAL team, including the MEAL manager and a Community Feedback Officer (CFO), were overseeing the ALI pilot. These staff members debriefed and validated CDA's findings and initial conclusions at the end of the visit.

The visit also offered an opportunity for CDA to participate in the Global Poverty Action Fund Beneficiary Feedback Mechanism Pilot Learning Event hosted by World Vision UK and the local NGO Rahnuma.[7] On Day Two of the event, INGO and government representatives shared lessons learned from their accountability and feedback practices. CDA presented experiences from its joint-research initiative with ALNAP and some of the initial observations from the ALI project in Ethiopia, and initial findings from this case study in Pakistan.

---

[4] See CDA World Vision Pakistan Case Study and Nepal Case Study for more about integrating accountability into development programs in Pakistan and Nepal. For more see: Cechvala, Sarah 2016. Cechvala, Sarah and Isabella Jean 2016.

[5] All staff working in Rawalpindi are based in the WVP's national office (NO), in Islamabad.

[6] Which include the following programmatic teams: communities for improved child well-being (CICWB) project team, including the community voice in action (CVA) officers; Urban Program (UP) team; and the Non-Formal Education team.

[7] Rahnuma: Family Planning Association of Pakistan is a local NGO. For more see: http://www.fpapak.org/

The methodology for this case study is adapted from the CDA-ALNAP joint research on effective humanitarian feedback mechanisms.[8] The CDA team used semi-structured interviews that created space for open-ended discussions to explore people's experiences with and perceptions of ALI. The case study approach allows for in-depth qualitative inquiry and examination of features that contribute to effective feedback loops, including use of feedback in decision-making. For the purposes of this case, *"a feedback mechanism is seen as effective if, at minimum, it supports the collection, acknowledgement, analysis, and response to the feedback received, thus forming a closed feedback loop. Where the feedback loop is left open, the mechanism is not fully effective."*[9]

CDA has documented the use of feedback for internal monitoring and reputational risk management, for accountability to partners, donors, and communities, and for program modification and advocacy with donors. In our analysis of feedback utilization, we do not judge or attempt to measure the magnitude of change created as a result of utilization. This focus is primarily on whether or not feedback has been used in decision-making, whether it has produced change, and how. When possible, CDA attempts to trace the pathway through which information (from a single person or aggregated from multiple voices) leads to response and/or action and identify the factors

that enable this process. As past studies have demonstrated, accumulated feedback does not necessarily lead to utilization. It is CDA's hope that this case will contribute to the evidence base on how development organizations utilize community feedback in their decision-making.
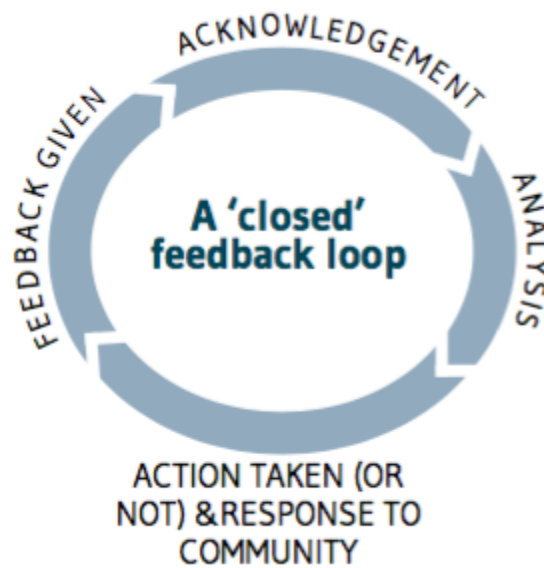

Image 1: Bonino, Francesca, and Paul Knox Clarke 2013.

---

[8] Bonino, Francesca and Paul Knox Clarke 2013.

[9] See: Bonino, Francesca et al 2014(b).

This section considers the political and cultural context in which WVP operates and focuses on factors that may hinder or advance accountability commitments and practices. We also consider the institutional context and the factors that enable or deter effective feedback processes at WVP.

4.1 Operational Context

Pakistan is positioned at the crossroads of China, Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East. Geopolitically, the country's location has made it the frontline for the Cold War and the War on Terror.[10] Pakistan is affected by the protracted conflicts of its neighbors (namely Afghanistan)[11] and the consequences of such violence (e.g. mass migration, violent extremism, and foreign interventions). Currently, the country hosts 1.5 million refugees, which is the world's largest protracted refugee population in a single country.[12] Afghans comprise the majority of registered refugees residing in Pakistan. Furthermore, the Government of Pakistan estimates that there are

an additional one million undocumented Afghans in the country.[13]

The challenges associated with its conflict-affected neighbors are further compounded by ongoing political instability and insurgencies within the country.[14] Historically, militancy and criminality are common features of the Pak-Afghan border and the countries tribal belt, which encompasses the Federal Administered Tribal Areas[15] of the country in the northwest province.[16] However, over the past decade Pakistan has experienced an escalation in violent sectarianism across the country (See image 2).

Growing instability due to sectarian conflicts and violence on its borders are just two factors that have pushed the country into a social, political, and economic impasse.[17] Currently, the country suffers from dramatic poverty rates. It is estimated that 73 percent of the population lives on less than US $1.25 a day, with roughly 56.2 million people who cannot even meet their basic food consumption needs. The 2010

---

[10] Asia Society 2016.

[11] The World Bank 2016.

[12] HRW 2016.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Azam 2014.

[15] FATA in Pakistan is a semi-autonomous tribal region in northwestern Pakistan, bordering Pakistan's provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan to the east and south, and Afghanistan's provinces of Kunar, Nangarhar, Paktia, Khost, and Paktika to the

west and north. The Federally Administered Tribal Areas comprise seven tribal agencies (districts) and six frontier regions, and are directly governed by Pakistan's federal government through a special set of laws called the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR). For more see: http://www.understandingfata.org/about-u-fata.php

[16] ICG 2014 and Azam 2014.

[17] Sunawar 2015.
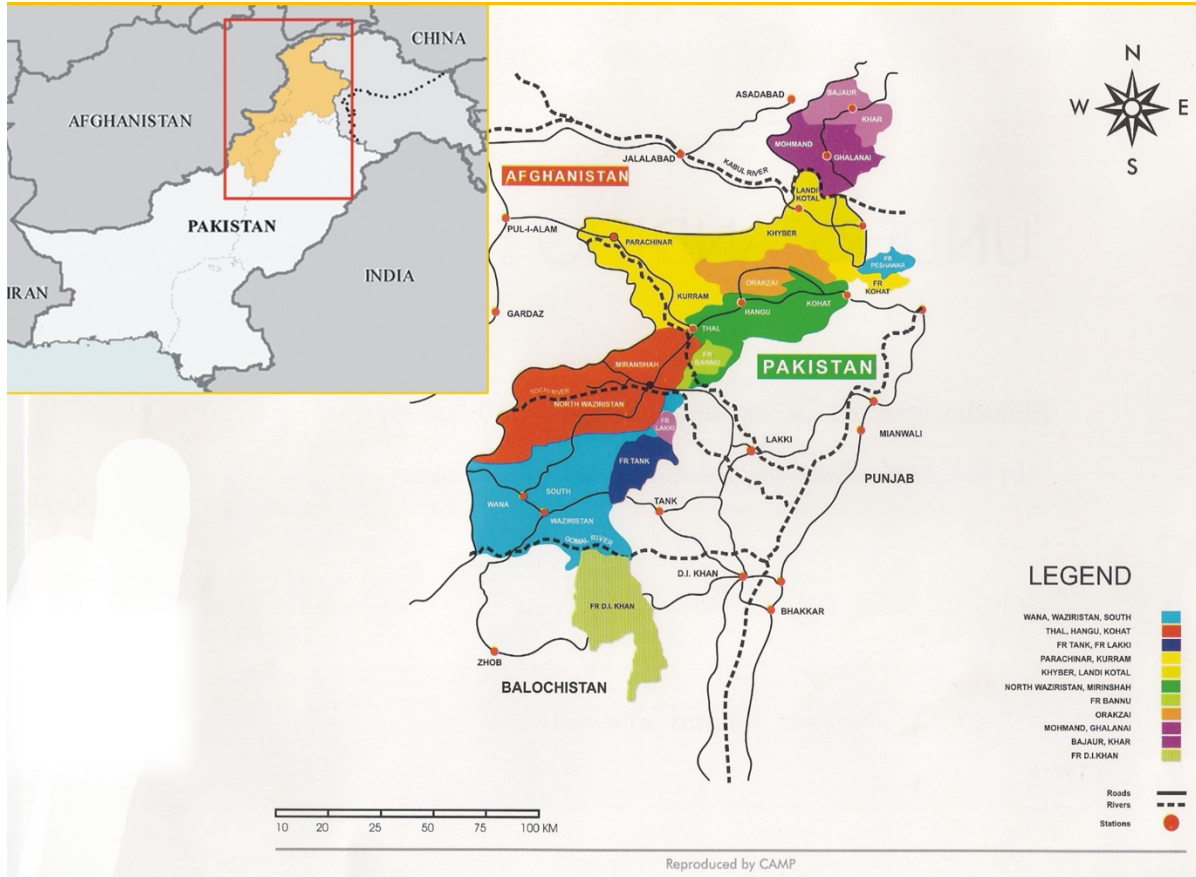
Image 2: Map of Pakistan and Fata. Source: http://www.understandingfata.org/about-u-fata.php

Human Development Index ranked Pakistan 125 out of 169 countries.[18]

Pakistan is also susceptible to natural disasters, particularly floods, draughts, cyclones, earthquakes, and landslides. Over the past decade, natural disasters, such as the 2005 and 2013 earthquakes and the 2010-2013 floods, have compromised and inhibited economic development in rural areas of the country.[19] Data suggests that between 1990 and 2013, 71.2 million people have been affected by natural disasters across the country.[20] Poor development and livelihood opportunities in rural areas of the country have also fostered an uptick in internal economic migration rates to

---

[18] WVP 2015.
[19] For more see:
http://ispace.researchstudio.at/sites/ispace.researchstudio.at/files/240_full.pdf

[20] Ahmad 2015.

large cities. One report estimates that economic migrants constitute roughly 20 percent, or one fifth, of the total migrants in the country.[21]

Large cities, such as Rawalpindi, are greatly affected by economic and social challenges, while also suffering from many of the attributes commonly found in large urban contexts. Weak infrastructure, including roads, buildings, electricity, and sanitation, is a chronic issue, which is further exacerbated by rapid urbanization.[22] Pakistan currently has the highest urbanization rate in South Asia.[23] Between the 1981 and 1998 censuses, the population in Rawalpindi was estimated to have grown roughly 36 percent.[24] The United Nations Population Division (UNPD, 2012) estimates that by 2025 almost half of the country's population will reside in cities.[25] Population growth in urban areas is mostly comprised of economic migrants, refugees, and internally displaced persons (IDPs), mainly from the FATA and border areas with Afghanistan and disaster-affected regions.[26]

In 2013, UNHCR estimated that in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, there were more than 33,000 registered refugees and IDPs, not counting an estimated several thousand who are unregistered.[27] Large migrant populations living in unplanned settlements further strain already anemic municipal systems and infrastructures.[28] Rapid urbanization in areas such as Rawalpindi has created communities with diverse cultural, lingual, and historical backgrounds.[29] These urban migrant populations also tend to be very socially and religiously conservative. Issues such as domestic and gender-based violence are prevalent though under-reported, mostly due to cultural norms and stigmas related to masculinity.[30]

Rawalpindi also has high levels of child labor, abuse, and exploitation. Accessing state benefits, such as entering government schools, can be challenging for migrant children as well as other poor and vulnerable children. State mandates require public school children to present their birth certificate in order to enter school, yet locating birth certificates poses a challenge for many children. Limited access to schooling, coupled with high levels of poverty, forces children to work to support their families.

---

[21] Memon 2005.

[22] The sewage system in the city, for example, covers only roughly 35 percent of the population. See more: http://applications.emro.who.int/dsaf/dsa1220.pdf

[23] Projected population of 335 million by 2050, and an annual urbanization rate of 3.06%. For more see: Sawas, Amiera et al 2013.

[24] During this time population density was also suggested to increase from 636 to 1146 people per square kilometer. Sawas, Amiera et al 213.

[25] Sawas, Amiera et al 2013.

[26] Hetland, Atle 2013.

[27] Urban Refugees in Pakistan 2016.

[28] Kugelman, M. 2013.

[29] For example, Pashto, predominately spoken by Afghans and those from the border areas, is more commonly spoken in Rawalpindi than the national language of Urdu.

[30] Sawas, Amiera et al 2013.

It is estimated that roughly 54 percent of children in Rawalpindi are out of school.[31] Even with national legislative protections for children, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that 12 million children across Pakistan are child laborers. Globally, Pakistan is ranked third in terms of the prevalence of forced and child labor.[32]

Limited access to schooling has also engendered high levels of illiteracy among children. Current statistics show that 54 percent of households with school-aged children have at least one child out of school, 40 percent of school-aged children have no formal education, and 47 percent of 16 to 18 year-olds are illiterate.[33] High rates of illiteracy are also common among adults. Roughly 71 percent of households do not have a family member who is able to read or write.[34] Women have lower literacy rates than their male counterparts: roughly 36 percent of women across the country report that they can read and write.[35] These numbers are reportedly worse in among rural populations and migrant communities in urban areas.[36] Drug abuse is also a chronic challenge in urban migrant communities that suffer from rampant unemployment and lack of access to education.

4.2 Organizational Context

Following the devastating 2005 earthquake, WVP commenced its humanitarian operations in Pakistan. After its response efforts had concluded, WVP expanded its work across the country to include longer-term development initiatives in the areas of health, education, and livelihoods development. Currently, the organization operates in three provinces with roughly 118 field staff and approximately 42 staff at the national office in Islamabad.

Strong government oversight of NGOs in Pakistan has generated restrictions for the INGOs in Pakistan. In 2015, the government developed a new policy framework called the Policy for the Regulation of International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) in Pakistan, which regulates the operation of INGOs working within the country. Its intended purpose is to harmonize INGOs' operations in the country by granting the government the authority to monitor INGO activities, verify and account for their funding sources, and posit geographical priorities for their programming. In addition, this policy mandates that all INGOs operating within the country must register their organization and activities with the government. Implementation of this new policy has been an evolving process for both the

---

[31] WVP 2014.
[32] Mehboob, Shazia 2015.
[33] WVP 2014.
[34] Ibid.

[35] As compared to approximately 63 percent of men.
[36] World Vision Pakistan (WVP) with Community World Service Asia. 2015

government and INGOs, which has affected organizational operations and programs.[37]

Stemming from WVP's response to the 2010 floods in Sindh Province, where Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) standards (now core humanitarian standards – CHS)[38] were used to assess and act upon community needs and preferences, the organization established feedback mechanisms across all its field offices. Building on its strong humanitarian accountability and feedback practices, WVP has robust institutional knowledge and capacity to augment its development-related accountability practices. Many of the channels for feedback collection now used by the development teams, for example, are products of the humanitarian response initiatives.

Operationally, WVP has a fairly decentralized structure, in which autonomous decision-making is possible at the field level. This flexible and local decision-making allows for faster programmatic modifications (specific to program implementation) based on input from local communities. While program quality assurance (QA) steps are embedded into activities at the national level, the MEAL team operates separately from the program teams. However, at the field level, there is a MEAL officer who is part of the program team (and reports to the area supervisor,[39] who manages the field programs). In addition, the ALI project introduced a new position called the Community Feedback Officer (CFO), who was a member of the MEAL team at the national office (and reported to the MEAL Manager), rather than a member of the program team (like other MEAL officers) (See Image 3).

World Vision Pakistan's Urban Program field team is located at the national office[40] due to the recent closure of the field office in Rawalpindi.[41] The team's location in Islamabad has limited their ability to provide a sustained presence in the community. Given the impediments related to building relationships in an urban context,[42] WVP's urban team noted that the location has exacerbated challenges to gathering and responding to feedback from beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.

---

[37] See more:
http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/pakistan.html
[38] See more:
http://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org/files/files/Core%20Humanitarian%20Standard%20-%20English.pdf
[39] World Vision Pakistan refers to its field offices as overseeing area development programs (ADPs). So, the field office manager is technically the ADP manager. However, for simplification purposes, this case study will refer to this senior field manager as the field office manager.

[40] The UP team, however, spends most of their time in the field in the urban area of Rawalpindi.
[41] Rawalpindi is located roughly 20 kilometers from Islamabad meaning that field staff travel approximately 30 minutes from the national office when visiting communities in the Urban Program.
[42] E.g. transient populations, diverse language and cultures, and occasionally limited interactions and relationships among neighbors.
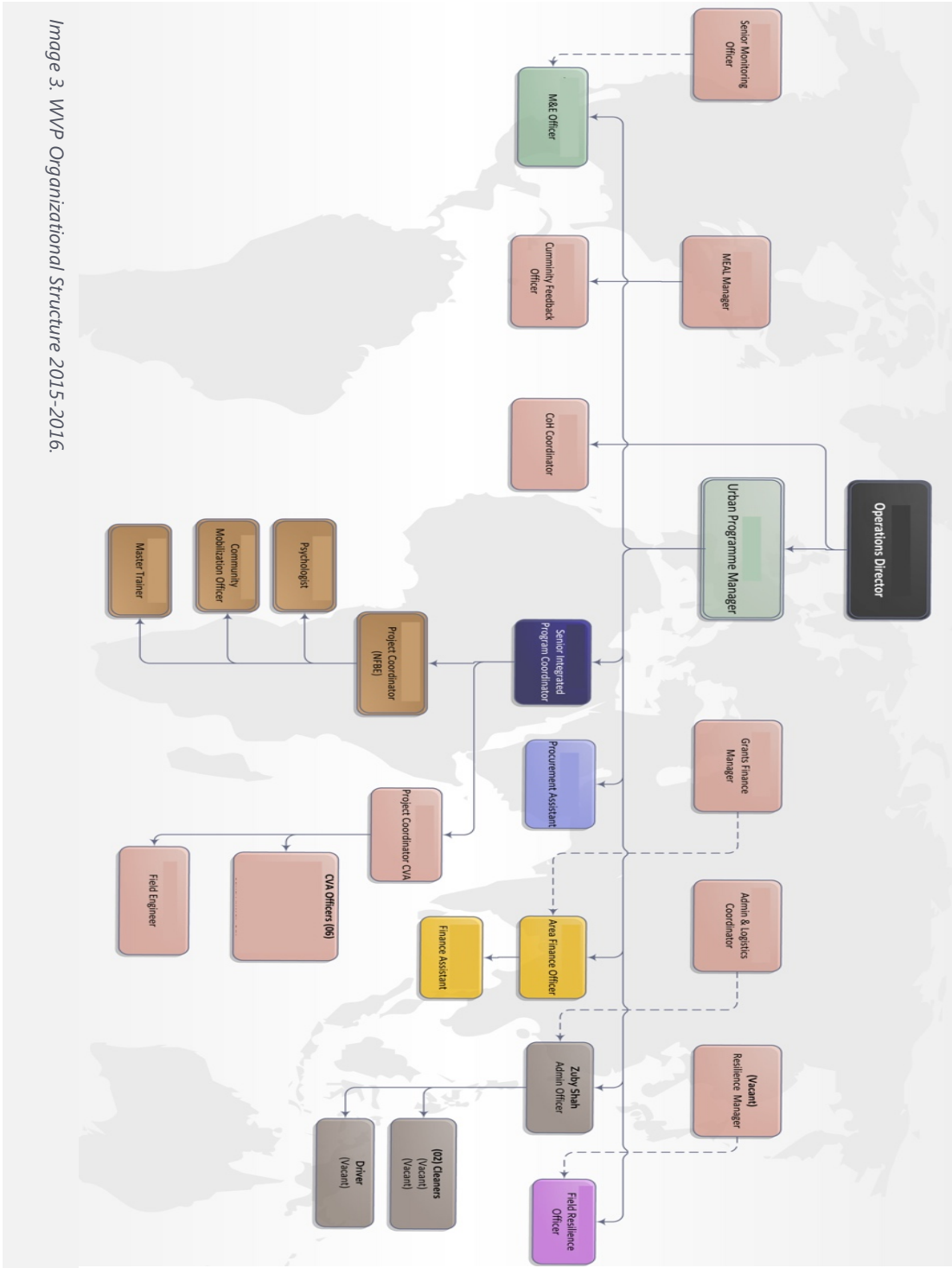
Image 3. WVP Organizational Structure 2015-2016.

World Vision has demonstrated a long-standing commitment to accountability and has an agency-wide program accountability framework (PAF).[43] The PAF sets the direction for organizational accountability to the children and communities with whom WV works and outlines WV's commitments to accountability as a minimum set of standards and criteria for their implementation. The four pillars of program accountability embedded in WV's approach to development programming are: Providing Information; Consulting with Communities; Promoting Participation; and Collecting and Acting on Feedback and Complaints.

In addition, WV has signed on to and met requirements for several other codes and standards regarding both quality and accountability at the sector-wide and global level.[44] Driven by its agency-wide commitments, WV country offices are required to establish and use accountability mechanisms and complaints procedures. Tracing the influences of these agency-wide initiatives is beyond the scope of this case study. CDA's interest is focused on examining organizational support and incentives for effective feedback processes, and therefore, we will discuss several specific examples highlighted by staff in relevant sections below.

5.1 Existing Channels for Collecting Feedback

World Vision Pakistan collects and uses feedback in both development and humanitarian programs. In response to the 2010 floods, the Humanitarian Emergency Accountability (HEA) team developed several mechanisms for collecting and responding to feedback. Most notable is WVP's *national toll-free helpline*. This channel has recently been expanded to capture feedback from anyone in Pakistan across both WVP's humanitarian and development programs. Data received from the hotline is managed by the MEAL team at the national level.

Development programs implemented by WVP's field offices across Pakistan use formal and informal channels for community feedback and complaints. The *project design* and subsequent *redesign phase* provide reflection time with the community and the Program Design and Quality (PDQ) team. This process ensures that feedback and learning are incorporated into programmatic decisions. This approach reflects WV's overall commitment to regular reflection and dialogue with children and communities, which aims to enhance local participation and ownership. Feedback is also routinely gathered as part of WVP's *monitoring and evaluation*

---

[43] WVI 2010.
[44] These include Sphere, Red Cross Code of Conduct, Common Humanitarian Standard (formerly HAP), INGO

Accountability Charter and Disaster Emergency Accountability Framework among others.

process, which uses quality assurance surveys that inform project results. If an external evaluation is conducted at the end of a program cycle, the consultant solicits community feedback as part of that assessment.

Program implementation directly involves the community during and after broad consultations to discuss the implementation process and to solicit input. In Rawalpindi, WV's citizen voice and action (CVA) approach is used by the field team. CVA is WV's social accountability and civic engagement approach that seeks to equip local communities with a structured set of tools designed to empower them to protect and enforce their rights.[45] While focused on advancing local social and governmental relations for the purposes of improving service delivery, CVA requires hefty community consultation, including the creation of CBOs.

CBO leaders and executive members are selected through broad-based community consultations after a series of meetings to inform communities about the purpose of the CBOs. WVP's CBO selection criteria demands

the inclusion of the most vulnerable community members and women into the executive body. CBOs can either be a mix of male and female community members or entirely female-driven organizations. Overall, these representatives act as a conduit between the community and government, and represent community interests during engagements with government officials. **CBOs** also provide WVP with another channel to enhance engagement with female beneficiaries and the broader urban female population in order to collect their feedback. In addition, women and children in Rawalpindi commonly used the ***field office and program "drop-in centres"***[46] as safe channels through which to provide feedback and discuss communal challenges with WVP field staff and CBO leaders.

Suggestion boxes are also feedback channels used in both WVP's development and humanitarian programs. Until the closure of the field office in Rawalpindi, WVP had a suggestion box in the office. WVP staff hold ***regular community meetings*** that serve as another informal channel for gathering local input and

---

[45] At its core, CVA also attempts to convene local communities and their government with the aim of improving dialogue between the two in order to advance the quality of services or policy implementation at the local level. CBOs working with WVP in Rawalpindi were established through the CVA initiative. In this case, through the CVA process individuals in the community came together and engaged in a community driven initiative (CDI) where CBOs were erected in order to work on various

community development schemes. For more see: http://www.wvi.org/article/citizen-voice-and-action
[46] MANZIL project focused on supporting youth at-risk for child labor and sexual abuses through income-generating projects and providing basic non-formal education in order to mainstream at-risk youth into public schools. As part of this project, WVP had established 'drop-in centres' in the community where youth receive non-formal education and other support.

feedback. *Periodic focus group discussions* are conducted so program teams can hear community perspectives and complaints. WVP's field staff also coordinate directly with CBOs.

5.2 Beneficiary Feedback Mechanism

World Vision's Accountability Learning Initiative (ALI) is a pilot funded by World Vision UK (WV UK), in Ethiopia, Pakistan, Nepal, and Somaliland. The purpose of the pilots is to boost the existing feedback and accountability practices in WVP's development programs. Overall, the central goal of ALI is to empower children and communities to claim program entitlements and hold WVP and other stakeholders accountable to their commitments. The pilot was designed to test approaches for institutionalizing accountability practices and to document, share, and apply lessons from those tests in the field. The Pakistan pilot (called the Beneficiary Feedback Mechanism – BFM) sought to improve accountability to women and children by boosting existing feedback and accountability practices in WVP's development programs.

Demographic information pertaining to community feedback entering the organization was analyzed in order to identify who was using the available feedback channels. The primary data points were derived from the national toll-free helpline usage information; however, the MEAL team also monitored the usage of suggestion boxes and evaluated participation during mix-gender community meetings. Initial assessment findings indicated very low female participation in the national toll-free helpline: 89 percent of overall helpline users were men, whereas only 11 percent were women and children. Analysis also indicated that to-date, female community members had never used the suggestion boxes as a channel through which to provide feedback.[47]

Recognizing that women are fundamental stakeholders of WVP's programs and services, WVP's MEAL team designed the BFM to bolster women and children's participation in the feedback mechanisms and accountability systems. WVP's accountability assessments indicated that women's preferred feedback channel was direct discussion with female staff during field visits.[48] This preference was echoed in our conversations with female community members as well. In order to build upon these stated community preferences, WVP launched the BFM as a formal mechanism through which women and children could access WVP staff more frequently in order to provide feedback. This pilot ran from December 2014 to March 2016.[49]

---

[47] WVP 2014, citing 2013 assessment data.
[48] Ibid.

[49] At the time of the CDA visit, the BFM was only integrated into the CICWB project within the WVP's UP. WVP plans to close the CICWB project in June 2016, as

A female *Community Feedback Officer (CFO)* [50] was hired with the specific purpose of increasing female participation in feedback practices in order to enhance their involvement in and ownership of WVP programs. In this role, the CFO convenes formal and informal meetings with female community members (usually with the support of CBOs), which are separate from programmatic-focused meetings conducted by the field team. Beneficiaries engaged in the piloting of the BFM are part of WVP's urban program in Rawalpindi. While the CFO work closely with the program team, this position is situated at the national level under the MEAL team. In addition, the BFM pilot is was overseen and managed by the MEAL manager.

Currently, WVP has two urban projects, one focused on education and the other on child well-being.[51] The child well-being program uses the CVA approach to allow communities to advocate for the rights and needs of their children. Unlike program-related feedback mechanisms or monitoring efforts related directly to tracking program outputs and impacts, the BFM has been designed to allow for open-ended conversation and feedback. While the BFM collects feedback related to WVP and

its programs, it also provides a platform for female participants to give general feedback regarding broader needs. The intent is to foster a space in which WVP can learn about female beneficiaries' experience with WVP programs, as well as more about their general condition. Building upon the learning in this pilot phase, WVP aspires to scale-up the BFM process into new programs across the country between 2015-2017.

---

donor funding for urban areas has dramatically decreased as attention has turned to humanitarian efforts and highly underdeveloped, remote rural areas.
[50] Gender dynamics were considered in the staffing of the CFO position. Many of the program field staff are also female to ensure access for the urban team to female beneficiaries.

[51] Prior to CDA's visit, WVP had closed two of their longer-running programs in Rawalpindi called MANZIL and ART. MANZIL was focused on supporting youth at-risk for child labor and sexual abuses through income-generating projects and providing basic non-formal education in order to mainstream at-risk youth into public schools. ART was aimed at empowering youth to demonstrate leadership in protection of child rights.

VI - Effectiveness of World Vision's Feedback Mechanism Observations on Specific Features

In previous research, CDA and ALNAP identified and tested several propositions[52] commonly associated with effective feedback mechanisms in humanitarian contexts, including, in no particular order:

Cultural & Context Appropriateness	Expectations Setting and Knowledge	Feedback Collection
Verification & analysis of feedback	Acknowledgement and Response	Feedback Utilization
Individual and Organizational Support	Periodic Reassessment and Adjustment	Partnerships (added at a later stage)

CDA's ongoing research and advisory work with partner organizations points to these features as critical for the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms in development programs. This section presents CDA's findings regarding these features based on desk review, interviews, and observations in the field.

In addition, partnerships are an emerging area of consideration for organizational accountability practices. Given that WVP's CVA approach has established a number of CBOs in Rawalpindi, findings related to feedback and accountability between WVP and its partners are of particular interest to program

effectiveness. These relationships will also be explored more in Section 6.8: Partnerships.

6.1 Cultural and Context Appropriateness

Accountability mechanisms are a common feature of humanitarian interventions in Pakistan. People affected by emergencies and the humanitarian assistance that follows have become accustomed to seeing different complaint and feedback channels in their communities. WVP is among the many agencies that has invested resources into developing context-appropriate feedback collection tools. Recently, the organization has transitioned its efforts towards longer-term development programming, which has allowed WVP to leave many emergency related feedback channels in place.[53]

Maintaining these humanitarian channels means that consultation regarding the preference of feedback channels and information provision in a development context was limited. When repurposing channels developed in a humanitarian context to development programs, they often need to be adapted to the current needs of the community. While community consultation regarding preference and appropriateness is generally

---

[52] Bonino, Francesca and Paul Knox Clarke 2013.
[53] This includes WVP's national toll-free hotline that is accessible to the entire country (beneficiaries and non-

beneficiaries have access to) suggestion boxes, and community meetings.

part of the design of WVP's feedback systems, in this case, community members cited a lack of full consultation about development feedback systems. One youth group member explained, *"We were not consulted in the creation of the feedback mechanisms, but we should have been."*

Generally, however, community members were satisfied with the diversity of feedback options available to them. Several community members said that no other institutions in Rawalpindi request their feedback. Outside of international NGOs many community members explained that they have never interacted with a feedback mechanism. One women's group member noted, *"No one else asks us for our feedback."* Limited experience in providing feedback has, in some cases, created barriers for feedback collection, particularly from female beneficiaries.

Contextual constraints, particularly relating to gender dynamics, have rendered challenges in ensuring WVP's constituents have access to and are able to use the various feedback channels. The largely transient nature of the urban population has been a factor that limits broader community engagement in WVP's feedback practices. Barriers to female participation in Rawalpindi often relate to cultural constraints stemming from the large number of migrants from the tribal areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

High levels of illiteracy among women in Rawalpindi is also an impediment to female use of suggestion boxes and emails. However, many suggested that women often overcome barriers created by illiteracy by receiving assistance from community members who can read and write. Lack of access to mobile phones is also a deterring factor for female use of the national helpline. While mobile phone usage across the country is high and generally inexpensive, cultural restrictions inhibit many women from having a phone. Female participation in mixed-gender community meetings is also low. A female CBO member explained that men rarely allow women to participate, and when they do attend meetings, many do not speak up for fear of communal admonishment. Another female CBO member explained that prior to the BFM, women almost exclusively channeled feedback through a male family member or, in some cases, directly to female program staff of WVP.

In the design of the BFM, WVP conducted a limited number of focus group discussions to gain community insight. However, broad engagement of all feedback users, including community members, CBOs, and the program team, was not done systematically or at all. One female CBO member explained, *"They [WVP] didn't take our suggestions. We were not consulted."* Recognizing this gap in the BFM design, several WVP program staff explained that the limited inclusion of community members in the design was an oversight that

VI - Effectiveness of World Vision's Feedback Mechanism Observations on Specific Features

weakened the mechanism's effectiveness. In addition, minimal involvement in the BFM's design and implementation by the program team engendered concerns of ownership. One staff member said, *"We are also part of World Vision, we should be part of the vision [of the BFM and feedback practices more broadly]."*

The CDA team noted that the WVP project team was much more critical in their commentary of the BFM and its overall impact. This is perhaps because project staff felt more empowered and

comfortable to make critical statements about the mechanism. While community criticism of the BFM was raised during discussions, it was much more limited, perhaps due to contextual limitations, than the input by WVP project staff. Along with a critical perspective, the WVP staff also provided perspectives on how to improve upon feedback systems in the future (which will be described throughout this case).

BOX 1 – USER ENGAGEMENT IN FEEDBACK DESIGN

The users of a feedback system are first and foremost crisis-affected people. Ideally, feedback mechanisms should be built upon the tools that are commonly used, preferred, and well-understood in a given context by the people expected to give feedback. However, the utility of a feedback mechanism is increased when all potential stakeholders are consulted in the design of the mechanism, including staff with different levels of responsibility for management and decision-making. Consulting with the potential users of feedback data within the organization is critical, and commonly overlooked during the design phase. Program staff can help to identify the type of information they need in order to make decisions about program modifications or improvements[1]. Mapping potential organizational users and ensuring that time is allocated to include them in the design and implementation of a feedback mechanism can help to enhance its effectiveness. Designing consultations to ensure they elicit the type of information that can be used by staff for programmatic decisions will help to collectively set indicators for the feedback system. In addition, regular consultations about the parameters of the feedback process will help to improve expectations about the role, purpose, and function of the feedback mechanism. If WVP is to scale-up the BFM process, consultation with the community, CBO partners, and agency staff in the design will enhance its effectiveness.

----
[1] See: Bonino, Francesca et al 2014(a) and Bonino, Francesca et al 2014(b).

6.2 Expectation Setting and Knowledge

> *Keeping a low profile will not allow for the systems to make you accountable. It's better to be open and accountable to deal with issues when they're small so you can build trust.*
>
> *-World Vision Pakistan Senior Manger*

Information Provision about WVP

Information provision is a fundamental pillar of World Vision's global program accountability framework (PAF). The BFM pilot provided one opportunity to test and improve methods for the provision of accurate and transparent information about World Vision to community members. Community members' knowledge of WVP generally comes from CBO members and other intermediaries. CBO members explained that sharing information is a critical part of their work with communities. CBOs attributed their effectiveness in information provision to the duality of their role as a CBO and community member.

Unsurprisingly, those regularly engaged in program activities demonstrated better understanding of WVP's programming and mandate. Program staff and community members highlighted WVP's struggle to provide information about their work and mission to the wider community, which is linked to the transient nature of Rawalpindi's population. Community members explained that they are busy, which makes it challenging to participate in sensitization campaigns. While WVP distributed pamphlets about the organization and programs to community members, staff noted their limited utility in terms of who reads them and the communities' limited information retention. However, several non-beneficiary community members suggested that IEC (information, education, and communication) materials helped to improve community understanding of the organization.

Staff acknowledged that WVP was not sufficiently informing the community about the organization's mandate, goals, and programs. WVP program staff have strong relationships with community members as the organization has been implementing urban programming in Rawalpindi for five years. However, the closure of the field office has decreased WVP's presence in Rawalpindi and has raised concerns about community engagement. Even though the program team frequently visits the community, many staff members mentioned that it is difficult to develop relationships with those outside of their direct beneficiaries. Recognizing funding restrictions, identifying a way to sustain a field presence can enhance trust and increase

information sharing through direct face-to-face interaction (a preferred channel) with the broader community. (See Box 2: Noticeboards for Information Provision)

BOX 2 - NOTICEBOARDS FOR INFORMATION PROVISION

Noticeboards provide another channel for information provision. Commonly used in rural settings where they can be erected in a central location, in this case, noticeboards can offer a consistent space to share information. In the case of WVP, noticeboards may also alleviate some of the burden from CBOs as the primary source of information. If WVP is to reopen its Rawalpindi office, it would be a good location for the board. Without an office, boards that describe WVP's mandate, programs, and various feedback channels could be set up in CBO offices alongside information about the CBO[1]. Information should be presented in both Urdu and Pashto and should be updated regularly. In the context of Pakistan, issues of insecurity and contextual limitations, such as the new legislation for managing INGOs, should be considered when determining the best methods for information provision.

---

[1] In some cases, CBO offices do list general and specific programmatic information.

Information Provision & Expectation Setting about the Beneficiary Feedback Mechanism

Female community members have a strong understanding of how the BFM works and why WVP instituted the mechanism. However, there is confusion about how the information from this channel is used by WVP. Limited community knowledge about how community feedback actually informs WVP's programmatic decision-making undermines the effectiveness of the feedback mechanism (See Box 3: Information Provision about WVP's Feedback Mechanisms).

Leveraging CBOs' relationships with community members is one way to improve how information is shared with the community. CBO members offered to go door-to-door to increase community awareness and participation in the BFM. Field staff noted that more frequent sensitization training is needed in order to increase CBOs' ability to explain the BFM and its purpose. Staff could also ensure that they are setting aside time in community meetings to explain the purpose of BFM and solicit feedback on the spot.

We observed that issues related to limited sensitization about the BFM also related to "internal users" such as program staff. Program staff cited that they were insufficiently sensitized about the purpose of the mechanism in relation to their roles and responsibilities. Several staff explained that their involvement the BFM pilot has been limited to selecting the

VI - Effectiveness of World Vision's Feedback Mechanism Observations on Specific Features

---

BOX 3 - INFORMATION PROVISION ABOUT WVP'S FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

Community members demonstrated a robust knowledge of the existing feedback channels, especially the national helpline. We were impressed with the number of WVP beneficiaries that could recite the toll-free number from memory. After 2010 flooding, WVP conducted an accountability assessment. In light of the assessment findings, a toll-free national office helpline was established in 2011. WVP launched a strong messaging campaign that included the helpline number. Stickers, radio messages, and community meetings were also used to provide information about WVP's feedback channels.

---

communities with access to the mechanism; they felt they were not included in the identification of indicators to measure the BFM's outcomes. One field staff said, *"When you exclude a major stakeholder from the process, the feedback loop will have holes."* Some project staff expressed concerns that the BFM was simply a tool for the MEAL team to act as a watchdog over their work. Others noted fears about the BFM exposing more issues than the program team could address.

MEAL team members, however, indicated that program staff were provided with a two-day orientation and training regarding the implementation of the mechanism. This contrast between the two teams' perceptions of the process and level of engagement in the design and implementation of the BFM highlights gaps in communication and understanding about how programmatic information gathered through the BFM is collected, shared, and used. Galvanizing internal

buy-in, particularly from program staff, can be challenging, and yet is fundamental for feedback effectiveness primarily because program staff are often the first to use feedback information to make programmatic changes. In this case, program staffs' feelings of exclusion from the design and implementation of the BFM created ownership challenges among the WVP teams.

In addition, program staff noted that the launch of the BFM raised expectations about what the organization does and what it can offer in terms of service delivery. Challenges related to information provision in this urban community have been exacerbated as the BFM provides a platform for community members to discuss issues unrelated to WVP and its programs. One staff member explained that the lack of information about WVP has led to an influx in requests that fall outside the organizational remit. He said, *"Our mandate was not clearly communicated to beneficiaries. We never said to*

the community what our limitations are, which means [the] community's wish lists and expectations keep increasing." Staff and community members also explained that the open-ended nature of the BFM process, and the lack of sensitization about its purpose, has created confusion for community members. One project staff member explained that the primary challenge of the mechanism is that, *"the community does not know the value or role of the BFM."* While open-ended listening is essential, its purpose should be explicit and well-articulated both internally and externally in order to be effective. If expectations are not managed through clear communication about the purpose and process of the feedback mechanism, tensions between WVP and the community could escalate.

6.3 Feedback Collection

World Vision Pakistan has been in the process of expanding its humanitarian feedback channels to its development programs. Some channels were adapted to fit within the program goals and to ensure that they were contextually appropriate. A national office staff member explained that in development programming, the intent is for the community to drive the change, whereas in the humanitarian sector, the feedback mechanism is built to filter requests. He said, *"We listen and learn on a daily basis [in development programs] ...When you create a*

resource [referring to the BFM], it's like opening the flood gates."

Most community members described at least one method through which they can reach WVP with feedback; and many were able to describe more than one channel. Overall, female beneficiaries knew about the BFM and felt confident in providing feedback to the CFO during meetings or informal discussions. People understood that they have options to access WVP and could identify the most appropriate channel for their type of feedback. It is an encouraging sign that many community members perceived the feedback channels as accessible, safe, and trustworthy. The section below will look at each channel more closely.

National Toll-Free Helpline

In 2011 following 2010 floods, WVP launched a national toll-free helpline to collect and respond to feedback about WVP's humanitarian efforts. Over time, this toll-free line was expanded to serve the organization's long-term development initiatives. The number has been provided throughout the country, and even community members who have not worked directly with WVP know that they can access the organization via the phone line.

The helpline receives four to five calls daily from both WVP beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. Generally, the type of feedback entering the organization via the helpline is complaints regarding delays in assistance, issues of favoritism by WV staff, and beneficiary exclusion.[54] When calls come into the organization, they are answered, responded to, documented, tracked, and analyzed by the MEAL. The MEAL team has a specific member whose role it is to manage this process. It was encouraging to see that WVP had established an internal system to document, track, and analyze feedback from this channel. One MEAL team member, however, explained challenges with this channel: *"The helpline opens the door for complaints and leaves the team where they have to return with an unfavorable answer."*

WVP staff, CBOs, and some community members (mostly men) agreed that the helpline is the best channel to provide confidential information, and receive an immediate response. While most community members felt comfortable using the helpline, women and children rarely use this channel.[55] Cultural barriers are directly linked to the limited use by women, who prefer face-to-face interactions or to have a male family member call. (See Box 4: Call Out Service)

BOX 4 – CALL OUT SERVICE

Given community members' positive sentiment about and confidence in the helpline, WVP could use the channel to proactively capture unsolicited feedback. This means that WVP could use the helpline to perform a "call out service." WVP could get community members' phone numbers and task the call center staff with calling and soliciting feedback from 10-20 people a week/month. Successful examples of "call out services" have been seen in Afghanistan, where agencies wanted to solicit feedback from beneficiaries living in remote areas[1]. Open-ended feedback received through a call out process would also augment the feedback entering the organization via the BFM.

----
[1] For more examples see:
http://www.save.gppi.net/fileadmin/Downloads/Community_Feedback_Mechanisms_in_Somalia_and_Afghanistan.pdf

---

[54] WVP 2014.

[55] WVP MEAL team said that of all the feedback entering the organization via the hotline, only 11 percent is from women.

VI - Effectiveness of World Vision's Feedback Mechanism Observations on Specific Features

Suggestion Boxes

Due to the closing of the field office in Rawalpindi, there are no suggestion boxes in Rawalpindi. Many community members (particularly men and boys) felt that the suggestion boxes are essential channels to ensure anonymity, and wanted to see them reinstituted. CBOs also expressed disappointment that this channel no longer exists. Several boys explained that they preferred the suggestion box because it provides physical evidence of feedback and also creates a "paper trail." (See Box 5: Suggestion Boxes in Rawalpindi)

Overall, women explained that suggestion boxes did not suit their needs for providing feedback. Low literacy rates among women is another reason for their limited use of

---

BOX 5 - SUGGESTION BOXES IN RAWALPINDI

Reopening the suggestion boxes (and accompanying noticeboards) as a channel is an immediate piece of feedback for WVP. If re-established, noticeboards should be in Urdu and Pashto in order to clearly explain the purpose of the boxes, how feedback will be used, and by whom. CBOs, youth groups, and WVP staff all gave suggestions about how to reinstituted this channel:

- CBOs noted that suggestion boxes could be erected in their offices, which may be helpful for CBOs and WVP to gain information from the community. CDA noted that if this is to happen, clear expectations about who the feedback is for (CBOs, WV, or both), who will open and view the feedback, and how it will be used should be clearly discussed between WVP and CBOs. Decisions from these conversations should be clearly presented to communities to avoid misunderstanding. WVP staff also raised concerns of CBOs' level of influence on who can and will provide feedback if the boxes are placed in their offices. In addition, MEAL staff noted that erecting boxes in CBO offices would specifically hinder female participation in accessing and using this channel.
- Boys explained that they would use a suggestion boxes if they are placed in schools. Considerations regarding ownership and use should be clearly discussed and articulated between school administration, WVP, students, and their families.
- WVP field staff suggested that if the urban office is not reopened, WVP could consider erecting suggestion boxes in the non-formal basic education centers.

suggestion boxes. However, community members explained that it is common to bypass issues of illiteracy by asking someone who can read and write to document their feedback. In some cases, women indicated a preference to using the suggestion box rather than making a phone call to the helpline. Several women explained that depending on where the boxes are located, they would have better access to them, whereas their husbands control the use of the phone. Several community leaders also described suggestion boxes as a poor channel because it only facilitates one-way communication, as opposed to two-way channels (such as face-to-face or the helpline).

Community Meetings & Face-to-Face Discussions

WVP has several in-person channels through which they collect feedback, including: monthly program meetings and informal discussions with various stakeholders (program staff, intermediaries, and CBO leaders). Unsurprisingly, community members, particularly women and children, explained that they preferred face-to-face interactions with staff and CBOs as a vehicle to provide feedback. One youth group member said, *"The project team is the best way to communicate. They can easily address our issues because of the regular visits to the community."* Women requested frequent meetings with program staff and the

CFO as a way to increase participation in the feedback process.

In addition, female community members explained that they go through female CBO leaders because they have regular access to them. Many female community members also indicated that since these intermediaries live in the community, there is often a deep-rooted sense of trust between them and the program beneficiaries. Trust and confidence between intermediaries and the female community members was described as a critical factor for women to feel comfortable voicing feedback. (See Box 6: Considerations for Engaging Intermediaries as Feedback Channels).

BOX 6 - CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENGAGING INTERMEDIARIES AS FEEDBACK CHANNELS

Lessons from CDA's work in the area of aid effectiveness suggest that while it is important to work through partners (such as CBOs) to spread information, sometimes intermediaries can act as gatekeepers. This can create additional conflict or challenging dynamics between the organization and community if it is not managed well. WVP should work to ensure that all partners have the same information and share it with all community members.

VI - Effectiveness of World Vision's Feedback Mechanism Observations on Specific Features

Feedback collected on the margins of program meetings and informal discussions, however, are not always documented by staff. One field staff member explained that they don't use logbooks because it would be very difficult to track feedback. She argued, *"It [collecting and tracking feedback] is not part of our jobs."* Capturing feedback, however, is particularly important to ensure that feedback is tracked, aggregated, and appropriately responded to. Instituting the practice of logging feedback, including training staff on how to record feedback, can help to ensure information is not lost. For the mechanism to work effectively, it is important to strike a balance between the "proceduralization" of feedback collection and documentation and the empowerment of field staff to respond immediately to resolve issues.

Beneficiary Feedback Mechanism

The BFM's purpose is to augment the channels through which women and children can provide feedback to WVP. More frequent community meetings and a designated female CFO are the primary methods through which to increase female participation in feedback processes. The CFO officer, as part of the MEAL team, convenes these formal and informal interactions approximately three to four times a month. Feedback gathered from these meetings is intended to supplement WVP's understanding

of females' perceptions and experiences. The MEAL team stressed that the BFM was not intended to be an additional structure, but rather as a part of WVP's usual participatory programming process.

Unlike WVP's other feedback channels, the BFM was not designed to exclusively elicit feedback about WVP programs. Through the use of open-ended conversations, the BFM also seeks to gather feedback about the general condition of females in the community. Occasionally, female program team members joined the CFO during BFM sessions to ensure that they were able to see these exchanges first-hand. Community members, however, indicated that these meetings were not useful because the presence of the program staff restricted their ability provide honest program-related feedback.

6.4 Verification and Analysis of Feedback Information

At the national level, WVP has a clear hierarchy and process to address both sensitive and non-sensitive feedback. Sensitive information is referred to the MEAL team, who undertakes an investigation and verification process.[56] In this case, sensitive information commonly includes concerns related to favoritism toward beneficiaries or CBOs, staff or CBO behavior or misconduct, and misappropriation of resources.

---

[56] One NGO staff provided an example of a CBO that accused a vender of manipulating the contracts, which

was followed-up by the MEAL team and substantiated through an investigation in the field.

VI - Effectiveness of World Vision's Feedback Mechanism Observations on Specific Features

Senior leadership is brought in when disciplinary action is necessary or when the complaints refer to any serious offenses such as corruption, fraud, exploitation, or abuse. We were impressed at the community members' level of understanding of this process. Many community members explained that they knew how WVP would follow-up with sensitive feedback, and had confidence in the system. (See Box 7: Addressing Sensitive Issues)

BOX 7 - ADDRESSING SENSITIVE ISSUES

Field staff described the process for dealing with sensitive issues. When issues are raised to field staff, a summary report is prepared and presented to the MEAL Manager. A meeting is convened between those involved, and a verification process is initiated. If the preliminary findings indicate that complaint may be factual, then a formal investigation is launched. The preliminary findings are collected by the MEAL staff independently, and depending on the complaint, the relevant members of the staff are included into the process. At any point, if necessary, senior leadership is engaged for help and guidance.

We observed that the internal referral process for BFM data follows a different pathway than other feedback entering the organization. Feedback from other channels (such as the helpline, suggestion boxes, and programmatic meetings) are first documented by members of the program staff (including the MEAL officer who is part of the program team), and then travels to the area supervisor. Non-sensitive feedback is then discussed among the program team and issues are addressed and responded to by the relevant specialist.

However, feedback from the BFM is collected by the CFO and then travels to the MEAL manager where it is initially reviewed by the MEAL team at the national office. Commonly, the CFO passes on programmatic feedback to the relevant specialists by email or in-person conversations. When feedback relates to a specific program, the relevant specialist would address and respond to the issue. However, when feedback is more open-ended it is unclear who was responsible for following-up. While monthly meetings between the MEAL and Program teams include moments for shared review of BFM feedback, decisions regarding who should respond was not always determined or agreed upon.

MEAL staff noted that this divergent internal process fostered resentment and suspicion among the program team about the purpose of the feedback data and its relevance to their

work. Fears stemming from these separate internal systems also inhibited cooperation between the teams. Internal and external feedback referral processes need to have clear instructions for all those involved (including staff). Establishing a clear pathway for information to travel through the organization is fundamental. Referral systems should outline who and how feedback is responded, even if it is outside the agency's remit (discussed further in Section 6.5: Feedback Acknowledgement and Response). (See Box 8: Consistent Referral, Verification, and Analysis Processes)

BOX 8 - CONSISTENT REFERRAL, VERIFICATION, AND ANALYSIS PROCESSES

Feedback from all channels should follow the same process and protocols for verification and analysis. Allowing the information from the BFM to be integrated and tracked with the other feedback is essential so that all information can be followed-up on in a timely manner. Furthermore, a consistent process will allow feedback data to be aggregated over time in order identify trends for decision-making purposes.
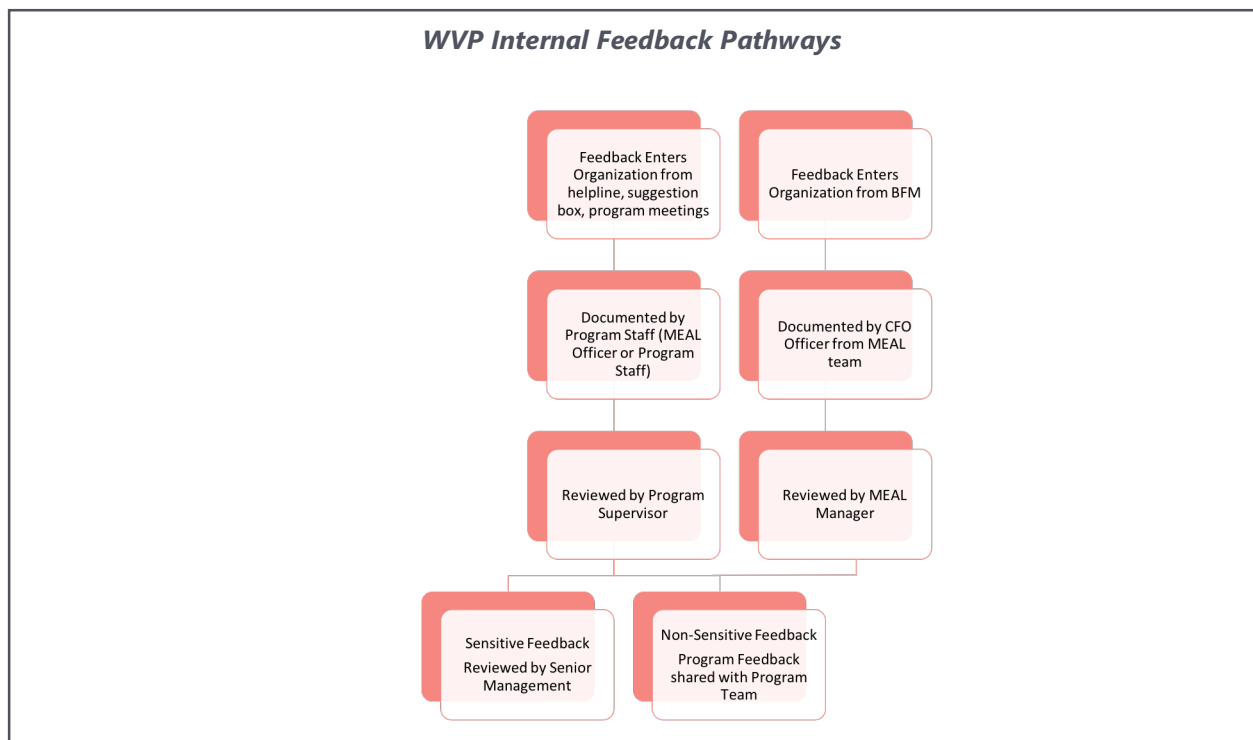
WVP Internal Feedback Pathways

- Feedback Enters Organization from helpline, suggestion box, program meetings
- Feedback Enters Organization from BFM
- Documented by Program Staff (MEAL Officer or Program Staff)
- Documented by CFO Officer from MEAL team
- Reviewed by Program Supervisor
- Reviewed by MEAL Manager
- Sensitive Feedback Reviewed by Senior Management
- Non-Sensitive Feedback Program Feedback shared with Program Team

Image 4: CDA 2015 – WVP Internal Feedback Structures

6.5 Feedback Acknowledgement and Response

> *When you see logbooks, you will see changes at the programmatic level, but you will not see larger programmatic policy changes. We can't make larger changes from logbooks, and this is missing now.*
>
> *-World Vision Pakistan Staff Member*

Response is the cornerstone of trust between community members and WVP and essential in maintaining positive relationships. WVP's methods for responding to feedback include: verbal responses given by program staff, the CFO, and CBO leaders in formal and informal community meetings; over the phone (particularly for the helpline); and occasionally by email. Community members expressed a moderate level of confidence that WVP would respond to their feedback. A girls' youth group member said, *"They listen to our complaints and they are serious about resolving our issues. And, of course, they will come to listen to us again."* (See Box 9: Frequently Asked Questions)

Despite these successful and encouraging practices, concerns were raised by community members and staff about slow, and in some cases a lack of, responses to feedback. Lagging response times could be linked with two divergent referral systems for the BFM and other feedback channels as well as the type of feedback generated by the BFM. Given the open-ended nature of the BFM, feedback is commonly unsolicited (meaning feedback does not directly relate to WVP and falls outside of pre-determined areas of interventions).

BOX 9 - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Compiling frequently asked questions (FAQs) that come from community members will help field staff, CBOs, and the CFO respond to feedback in a consistent way, and may help to alleviate some of the stress expressed by the field staff. Many staff mentioned that responding to reoccurring questions had become burdensome. Posting these on noticeboards (in Urdu and Pashto) in CBO offices and/or in non-formal basic education centers will allow community members to review them. FAQs should be updated periodically as new questions and issues arise from any channel. Updated FAQs should be disseminated to WVP field staff, call center staff, CBO leaders, and other intermediaries so that they can provide up-to-date, relevant information and answer questions on the spot.

VI - Effectiveness of World Vision's Feedback Mechanism Observations on Specific Features

Staff indicated that they often feel that they could not respond to unsolicited feedback because they did not have the answers. In some cases, staff noted a lack of empowerment to respond to unsolicited feedback due to weak internal and external referral processes. One program staff member said, *"With the BFM, we opened Pandora's box, and we cannot respond to all of it."* A MEAL team member said, *"When* *feedback is not confined to the services provided, it builds the expectations and the hopes of the community. The BFM is doing this!"* Several female community members, however, expressed the importance of the BFM. One woman said, *"Even if World Vision cannot solve our problems, we still want the space to voice our concerns and problems."* (See Box 10: Lessons about Unsolicited Feedback).

BOX 10 - LESSONS ABOUT UNSOLICITED FEEDBACK

Lessons from CDA-ALNAP's work on effective feedback loops demonstrate the importance of listening to unsolicited feedback. There is a risk of overlooking the 'big picture' feedback, because it often touches on issues beyond the scope of work or remit of a single agency or of a single cluster. In humanitarian contexts, unsolicited feedback or "big picture" feedback can:

- Highlight strategic issues at the broader level of the humanitarian response and strategies taken to support people's and national government's relief, recovery, and reconstruction efforts;
- Challenge the very premise of a programme or its relevance and context appropriateness; and
- Present intended and unintended impacts of the programme (i.e. 'your assistance is undermining local capacity', 'assistance is causing tensions in the community' [aka 'doing harm'], 'we need livelihoods not hand-outs').

However, unsolicited feedback is often overlooked and difficult to document, record, and follow up to, because:

1. It may touch on issues that go beyond the scope of work of a certain programme or of an agency;
2. It may challenge the very premise of a programme, its theory of change, and its relevance; and
3. It may call for significant programme and strategy re-design, as opposed to just a smaller 'tweak' in something that an agency is already doing.

The most effective feedback mechanisms observed were those that started by strengthening the practice of gathering and responding to day-to-day feedback, but also found ways of taking note and using broader, unsolicited feedback for different purposes, including referral, passing it on to other actors, or advocating with other humanitarian agencies or local authorities.

Source: Bonino, Francesca, with Isabella Jean, and Paul Knox Clarke. Humanitarian Feedback Mechanisms: Research, Evidence and Guidance. London: ALNAP/ODI, 2014.

VI - Effectiveness of World Vision's Feedback Mechanism Observations on Specific Features

Questions about institutional ownership of BFM feedback mechanism between the MEAL and program teams limited the effectiveness of the response processes. As part of the BFM, the CFO presents feedback data on a monthly basis during program team meetings. However, when sharing feedback with the program team, the CFO explained that there is uncertainty regarding whose responsibility it is to respond to the community and when the response should occur. She noted that she often feels helpless when she does not have an answer to complaints and inquiries because they relate to programmatic issues or context-related challenges. One MEAL staff member noted that while processes exist (in terms of internal referral and response), they are not commonly practiced. Program staff explained that due to this lack of clarity on roles, no one feels as if they should be the one to respond to BFM feedback.

Feedback collected through the BFM is often viewed by field staff as extraneous and beyond of the scope WVP's mandate. Several indicated that the perceived unessential nature of the feedback was the reason for the lack response by staff. Field staff felt very little accountability to the feedback from the BFM. This contrasts with feedback from the helpline, where program staff are *"mandated to deal with it, and the MEAL team only supervises and sometimes verifies it."* (See Box 11: Internal Referral Systems for Improved Response)

A lack of clear systems, in some cases, has also lead to redundant response efforts by the program and MEAL teams. One program staff explained, *"Information is lost. Then when I hear something, I do not know if it has been dealt with."* In addition, the CFO noted that these weak response processes have affected her relationship with community members. She

---

BOX 11 - INTERNAL REFERRAL SYSTEMS FOR IMPROVED RESPONSE

Internal acknowledgement and response timeframes are critical for any feedback mechanism to work effectively. Establishing channels of internal communication and referral processes between all staff will help to ensure that feedback is responded to in a timely manner, and so everyone is aware of the feedback and the response. Identifying a way to collectively review feedback can both boost response times and eliminate duplicative efforts. Program review and reflection process should be embedded into staff meetings between those interacting at the field level. WVP could consider instituting "review of community feedback" as a standing agenda item for regular field staff meetings, which should include program and MEAL staff.

explained, *"Do you know how embarrassing it is to [go] back to the community, and when they ask for a response to their question, you can't give them one? What if that happened over and over again?"* She had begun to shift her schedule so as not to return to the community without a response to programmatic-related inquiries. Female community members noted that limited responses or lengthy delays in response times, particularly when using the BFM, have diminished their confidence in the mechanism and WVP. One CBO member said, *"When they [WVP] don't respond, we feel that they do not take our feedback seriously."*

Notably, program staff indicated an aversion to providing unsatisfactory responses to community members' feedback. The increase in unsolicited feedback from the BFM has coincided with an increase in negative or unsatisfactory responses. Field staff noted that in some cases they have stopped responding because it has become too difficult to constantly deliver disappointing answers. One program staff member said, *"We burden them [community members] by asking questions without actions."* No one likes to be the 'bearer of bad news,' so feedback commonly goes unanswered when the response is negative.

Providing a response is essential regardless of the level of satisfaction. If the response is unsatisfactory to a beneficiary, there are options for how to follow up, including: offering an explanation as to the why the agency cannot fulfill the request, or clarifying what the organization can and cannot do, while also explaining the external referral system for unsolicited feedback. However, if an agency is unwilling or unable to respond to the feedback, especially regarding requests for services, this can impact the agency's relationship with community members. In some cases, community members explained that a continued inquiry to WVP would help to reverse an unsatisfactory response. As a program staff member explained, *"No may not mean no. No is basically not a no for [some] people."* (See Box 12: Providing Unsatisfactory Response to Feedback)

External referral systems are also critical for effective feedback processes, and require strong relationships with the government and other actors. In the case of WVP, while we observed a system for sharing information outside the agency's remit, contextual limitations weakened the process' effectiveness. However, it was encouraging to see that community members and staff alike acknowledged that the CVA approach had established an external feedback referral system between the government and CBOs. This approach allows communities, through their CBOs, to advocate to the government regarding their needs. CBOs felt that WVP had facilitated the appropriate links to the government, so relevant feedback could be shared and discussed.

CDA-ALNAP guidance suggests that responding to feedback does not necessarily mean that the requests that have been submitted through the feedback channel are all going to be satisfied, or even that they can possibly be satisfied. It seems there is a continuum of feedback response actions that range from:

- Responding to feedback by clarifying why a program, an agency, or a cluster can or cannot help in satisfying certain requests or suggestions to change some elements of the response, and being transparent as to what can be achieved by a program or agency;
- Responding to feedback by making some changes in targeting criteria and selection of eligible program participants and aid recipients; and / or
- Responding to feedback by using it to make actual, tangible changes in the type and quality of assistance provided or aid delivery.

Source: Bonino, F. with Jean, I. and Knox Clarke, P. (2014) Humanitarian feedback mechanisms: research, evidence and guidance. ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP/ODI.

Direct communication between the government and communities, however, is limited.

Community members explained their aversion to contacting the government as a lack of trust in the government's capacity or willingness to support communities.[57] CBO representatives echoed that when they raise issues to the government, they often do not receive a response. One staff member explained that the political instability and blatant issues of corruption in Pakistan have clouded community members' trust of almost all state systems, processes, and responses. Another staff member noted that when government officials do not respond to community/CBO requests, it exacerbates tensions between the community and WVP. In these scenarios, community members often turn to WVP to solve issues ignored by the government; however, when WVP is unable to address the requests, it can begin to erode the relationship between the community and WVP. (See Box 13: CVA in Practice in Pakistan).

---

[57] CBOs articulated hope that the recent local elections would increase the ability for community members to access local leaders, and for local administration to address community issues.

> **BOX 13 – CITIZEN VOICE AND ACTION IN PRACTICE IN PAKISTAN**
>
> Community Development Plans are conceived by CBOs as part of the CVA approach. These plans lay out formal requests to the government regarding basic needs such as infrastructure, access to water and sanitation, and education. WVP has seen this referral process work effectively. For example, women in Rawalpindi drafted a plan regarding the congested space in formal education centers. A CBO championed the plan and brought it to the appropriate government agency. In this case, the government responded by building a new center and augmenting the number of staff working there. While this was a positive example of the CVA process, staff noted that this is not commonly the case when working with the government. One MEAL staff member noted that the government does not tend to engage in any formal referral mechanisms, particularly when it might enable international or local NGOs to follow-up on the progress.
>
> Even though the CVA provides a channel through which communities can advocate to the government about the issues that are most pertinent to the community, WVP staff noted challenges related to the approach. Currently, WVP still responds to small-scale infrastructure-related needs, such as water provision, road construction, etc. This scenario has sent mixed messages to community members. On the one hand, CBOs need to advocate to the government to address community-related issues; on the other hand, WVP still funds and responds directly to community development requests. WVP staff noted that this process has elevated community expectations that the organization will always respond to their needs, which has increased the frequency and persistency of request.

6.6 Feedback Utilization

Utilizing feedback to improve programs or alter the direction of a project is a critical yet challenging element of effective feedback mechanisms. For WVP, most changes have occurred at the field-level and were enabled through problem-solving led by the program team. At the end of a program meeting, for example, female participants told staff that holding the meeting at a hotel far away from the community was inhibiting wider attendance by female beneficiaries. Program staff took this under consideration, and shifted the meetings to CBO offices in the community. One female community member told CDA, *"This happened*

VI - Effectiveness of World Vision's Feedback Mechanism Observations on Specific Features

because of our suggestions." (See Box 14: Feedback Utilization in a Humanitarian Context)

WVP's humanitarian team provided several examples of how feedback had been used in emergency response efforts. For example, during the 2011 flood response, WVP was running a food distribution center. The selected location for the distribution warehouse generated tension between two communities. Clashes arose because it was located in one community and was far away from the other. After gathering feedback from both communities, WVP identified a school in the middle of the two villages and moved the distribution site. This programmatic change, based on community feedback, improved relations between the communities almost immediately.

More significant changes to project design usually require input from relevant team members in Islamabad. Currently, the MEAL team prepares quarterly monitoring reports, which are shared with senior leadership via email. Feedback reports are also generated monthly, but are not shared beyond the program teams. Programmatic changes have occurred through this process, including shifts to the BFM mechanism itself (which were underway at the time of this case study). (See Box 15: Feedback Utilization and Changing the BFM)

While there are cases in which feedback data was used to inform decisions, senior leaders explained that this type of data is not used frequently enough to inform decision-making. Staff echoed this concern and noted the inconsistency with which senior managers even look at feedback data. One staff member explained, *"We have not seen any major shifts in the project yet. But, we don't prepare analysis and don't share information with the SMT [senior management team], and this is creating a missing link."* This comment clearly illuminates gaps in the institutional processes, as the MEAL team staff noted that these reports are prepared and shared with management. Limited knowledge of the process was explained by another program staff member who said, *"No one reads them [the reports]!"* Senior leadership noted that feeble institutional referral processes weakened effective feedback practices. He explained, *"When building a culture of accountability, you have to face a price sometimes, a tough price because you need robust systems."*

VI - Effectiveness of World Vision's Feedback Mechanism Observations on Specific Features

> ### BOX 15 - FEEDBACK UTILIZATION AND CHANGING THE BFM
>
> User feedback from both community members and staff regarding the BFM channel indicated gaps in the mechanism and its effectiveness. Specifically, gaps in communication, participation, ownership, and inadequate information about roles and responsibilities between the MEAL and program teams were inhibiting the pilot's effectiveness. Community members noted confusion and frustrations relating to the new role of the CFO, and project staff discussed challenges relating to the deterioration of relationships due to confusion about this new position. Such data was shared with senior managers, who encouraged the MEAL team to convene a BFM workshop to deconstruct barriers between the teams, air grievances, streamline communication, and identify an improved process for the mechanism going forward. This workshop allowed the teams to achieve the following:
>
> - Feedback collection shifted to focus more on the project's level of engagement as opposed to the open-ended nature of the BFM.
> - A predetermined questionnaire was produced to collect feedback from groups such as CBOs, community leaders, and beneficiaries. This survey was not a checklist, but rather focused on collecting project-related feedback.
> - Weekly meetings were established between the CFO (and sometimes the MEAL Manager) and the program team to address outstanding issues.
> - An internal protocol was established that called for all feedback to be responded to within two weeks.

Quality Assurance staff explained that analysis of feedback data needs to be done at different levels, including at the policy-level, with action points. One MEAL staff member said, *"Data needs to be packaged well in a systematic way that allows me to see patterns or weaknesses."* Efforts are underway to enhance community feedback for senior-level decision-making. The MEAL team has implemented more frequent meetings with leadership to review feedback data, and is planning to include analysis of community feedback into the monthly monitoring reports. (See Box 16: Improving Feedback Utilization by Senior Managers).

VI - Effectiveness of World Vision's Feedback Mechanism Observations on Specific Features

---

BOX 16 - IMPROVING FEEDBACK UTILIZATION BY SENIOR MANAGERS

WVP can enhance how senior leaders utilize community feedback data by:

- Instituting an organizational system for capturing learning from community feedback processes and sharing it with senior management on an ongoing basis; and
- Identifying ways to present findings from feedback analysis in a compelling way with action points for leadership. Aggregating data to show trends and patterns over time is more useful for decision-makers than anecdotal information about people's preferences.

Larger program and policy revisions would require disaggregated analysis (gender, age, location) and aggregated analysis to ensure that it is representative of the population that WVP is serving. Supplementing this analysis with additional data points outside of community feedback will strengthen action points as well.

6.7 Partnerships

World Vision Pakistan's partners in urban Rawalpindi are community-based organizations (CBOs), which are established through the Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) approach. CBOs have their own mandates, operating budgets, and program plans. However, these organizations were designed in consultation with, receive oversight from, and are predominately funded by WVP. We observed that WVP commonly engages CBOs as an extension of its operations. WVP relies heavily on CBOs to disseminate information, convene community members, and act as an intermediary in order to gather and respond to community feedback. CBOs are critical for WVP

to implement successful feedback mechanisms and accountability practices.

In general, CBOs described a positive relationship with WVP and program staff. Many suggested that they felt comfortable providing feedback to WVP, particularly through program staff. Several partners, however, discussed issues of favoritism in CBO selection, specifically in terms of to whom WVP listens and from whom they receive feedback. Examples of this type were captured through feedback channels and

escalated to the appropriate MEAL staff and investigated accordingly.[58]

CBOs use informal and formal meetings, one-on-one conversations, and even door-to-door efforts to collect and respond to community feedback. One CBO suggested that they had stronger feedback systems because they are working directly with their neighbors. However, most CBOs expressed interest in instituting more formal feedback systems. Many felt that they could learn about best practices through WVP's experience with various feedback channels, including the BFM. This includes sharing lessons learned and training on skills needed to support a feedback mechanism in order to help CBOs bolster their own accountability practices. CBOs also noted their lack of engagement in the design phase of the BFM. Many felt that their opinions in designing the channel would have helped to improve its effectiveness.

Monthly meetings between CBOs and WVP program staff were discussed as a potential way to improve feedback responsiveness. Confidence in the BFM could be bolstered through more frequent meetings between the CFO and CBOs. At present, there is no joint feedback system between WVP and CBOs, and feedback is shared informally between the

organizations. Sharing in formation more frequently between CBOs and WVP will improve both organizations' understanding of community dynamics and expectations.

6.8 Individual and Organizational Support

> *Accountability needs to be embedded [in our] values and built into our compliance systems.*
>
> *-World Vision Pakistan Senior Management Team Member*

This case study demonstrates the significance of institutional mapping when identifying where a feedback system should sit within an organization. CDA's research highlights that advance planning is critical in allowing organizations to identify where a mechanism is best suited institutionally, who has the skills to manage it, what existing systems can support it, and what systems need to be created. Such a process can help implementers to better leverage existing systems used to collect, analyze, and respond to community feedback; and can support leaders to demonstrate that

---

[58] Investigations were undertaken by WVP staff and CBOs. A detailed review of project-related

documentation was done. Senior managers supported the investigation process.

collective accountability leads to more effective practices.

The WVP BFM pilot demonstrates that institutional barriers can engender vast impediments for effective accountability practices. WVP staff raised questions about the effectiveness of the BFM under the MEAL department. One program team member explained that, *"the project staff have a legacy with the community, and they [the community] know the staff and there is trust there. But for the BFM, the community doesn't have the same relationship with the person [CFO] and there is less understanding with the community regarding the purpose."* CBOs echoed concerns that the BFM was not utilizing WVP's existing relationships with the community.

Providing the program staff with a role and responsibility in the BFM pilot emerged as a critical lesson for the MEAL team. A manager noted that the role of CFO should have fallen under the program team and not the MEAL team. Another staff echoed this and said, *"The implementation [of the BFM] must be done by the project staff not the MEAL team. Right now, this type of engagement has created confusion for community members."* A MEAL team member suggested that management of the pilot by the program team would have enhanced the mechanism's utility. He explained that if BFM was located under the program

team, then *"they can start seeing solutions to the challenges as they arise."*

However, it is also important to consider the limitations of placing the CFO within the program team. Community members noted that the presence of project staff did inhibit their level of comfort to discuss programmatic-related issues. Potential constraints and advantages should be outlined by all feedback users and determining the institutional position of a feedback mechanism.

A lack of collective accountability (by both program and MEAL teams) to BFM feedback inhibited the mechanism's effectiveness. One staff member noted, *"Everyone needs to be involved in the process. You cannot have one team or one person working on it."* Another staff member noted, *"We are one team and we need to see us as working together."* All Urban Program staff felt that the BFM was a system to monitor their activities because they were not engaged in its design, implementation, or oversight. One program staff member said, *"MEAL should not be policing us, but instead coordinating with the project team."* MEAL team staff echoed these same concerns, and said, *"This [the BFM] has become a hurdle for the CICWB team [program team] because they saw it as an external monitoring system."* Cultivating internal buy-in for feedback systems is critical in order to foster a sense of responsibility to the mechanism. Staff ownership allows for

increased clarity about staff's role in and responsibilities to a feedback mechanism.

Many program staff, felt that gathering and responding to feedback was not part of their job. Formal feedback systems within WVP are usually managed by the MEAL team. However, effective organizational practices rest on individuals and teams. CDA's research demonstrates that feedback mechanisms are more effective when feedback is part of managerial practice and wider organizational culture.[59] Several senior managers suggested that accountability should be in the job descriptions of all program staff. Managers explained that this would allow them to appraise staff performance on areas related to accountability, which can boost staff's recognition of its significance. One manager said, *"We need to start putting more of this*

[accountability] into job descriptions and agreements. Accountability needs to go up and down the organization." (Box 17: Staff Skills for Effective Feedback Mechanisms)

CDA's case studies of accountability practices in other WV country programs[60] have demonstrated that there is a marked difference in the level of commitment and motivation by staff based on how much support they receive from leadership. Managers help to set norms and shape the organizational culture for accountability. One senior manager said, *"For accountability to work, it has to be part of the project design. It needs to be integrated into the work."* Endorsement of the BFM by senior management may have improved the pilot's effectiveness and helped to advance the use of feedback institutionally. Another manager noted that leaders can play a more active role in

---

BOX 17 - STAFF SKILLS FOR EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

CDA's experience suggests that facilitation and listening skills are critical for staff to collect, use, and respond to feedback. Through trainings or joint skill-building sessions between the program and MEAL teams, WVP can develop staff capacities. Focusing on how to gather, respond to, and use unsolicited feedback will be essential. Staff need to see how and why "big picture" feedback relates to their work.

---

[59] Bonino, Francesca et al 2014(b).

[60] Cechvala, Sarah 2016; Cechvala, Sarah and Isabella Jean 2016.

advancing accountability practices institutionally. He said, *"Staff need to think: accountability starts with me."*

6.8 Periodic Reassessment and Adjustment

Accountability and feedback mechanisms need to be periodically assessed and adjusted because needs and preferences of community members, WVP staff, and CBOs will change with time. If WVP plans to integrate the BFM process into other projects, it should be done based on lessons from the pilot, and include important steps that support documentation, internal learning, and adaptation. A senior leader noted, *"We are not completing the loop. We are just reporting and not taking it back for learning."*

Given the various institutional barriers which challenged the BFM's effectiveness, the MEAL team convened a lessons learned workshop (described above in detail). The purpose of this meeting was to bring the program and MEAL teams together to reflect upon the process after roughly seven months of implementing the pilot. This workshop focused on the importance of collective accountability and sought to improve communication and coordination between teams and ensure the documentation of lessons learned.

It is encouraging to see that WVP built moments for reflection into the piloting of the BFM. Establishing these moments to pause for reflection can foster a space to collectively assess feedback and make adjustments. Ensuring that these types of intermissions are part of future implementation plans will allow for clear periods for the program and MEAL teams to collectively assess the information coming in through the various feedback channels.

World Vision Pakistan has a history of providing robust feedback channels, from their humanitarian response to the 2010 floods to their current development programming. A national toll-free number, a strong MEAL team, and robust feedback management protocols formed a foundation of WVP's accountability commitments. Through its ALI pilot, WVP sought to strengthen its feedback systems by reaching women and children, who had previously been underrepresented in the existing feedback channels. While successful in expanding WVP's feedback channels to reach more female beneficiaries, BFM's effectiveness was hindered by challenges related to its conception and institutional location. The design and implementation process led to the establishment of a semi-parallel feedback system, which fostered a degree of internal tension between MEAL and program teams, and positioned the BFM to primarily capture feedback outside of the organization's mandate and programs.

As certain cultural norms presented a barrier for women's participation in existing channels (such as the helpline or suggestion boxes), WVP created a complementary channel that consisted of female WVP staff, notably a Community Feedback Officer (CFO). This channel was unique not only in that it appealed to women, but was very open-ended, allowing community members to voice concerns about issues outside the scope of WVP's work. Initially, this led to an overwhelming degree of

utilization of the mechanism, which taxed WVP's internal capacity to manage the feedback, which in turn strained WVP's ability to provide prompt responses. The open-ended nature of this feedback further exacerbated matters as staff were expected to respond not only to a high volume of feedback, but a significant amount of feedback about issues outside of WVP's remit.

While managing unsolicited feedback or giving unfavorable responses is certainly challenging, it is still the responsibility of service providers to listen and respond. Open-ended feedback and iterative, community-driven conversations strengthen trust and bolster relationships. People's lives are complex and rarely fit into the pre-determined boxes and logical frameworks that donors fund. CDA's experience demonstrates that acknowledgement and response are often the most challenging components to close feedback loops. However, eliciting feedback without providing a response undermines the purpose of requesting feedback in the first place.

The challenges presented by this open-ended system may have been alleviated if the BFM had more efficiently leveraged existing feedback mechanisms and program staff. Institutional location and management of the BFM lead program staff to feel detached from the mechanism and its outputs. If program staff were more involved in the development and oversight of the BFM, it may have engendered

higher-rates of response to feedback and could have allowed for greater decentralized response and problem-solving. More strategic mapping regarding the placement of this feedback channel, and clearer protocols relating to internal and external referral systems for this feedback, could have facilitated this complex yet important process.

This case also underscores some findings from CDA's research in this domain. Leadership sets the tone for organizational culture. Challenging operational contexts such as Pakistan require leadership that can cultivate collective accountability that extend from WVP's beneficiaries all the way to its institutional practices. Packaging and sharing feedback in a way that is user-friendly, action-oriented, and strategic can support utilization practices by key decision-makers. Understanding how to integrate local-partners into accountability mechanisms will also enhance organizational effectiveness; and WVP has demonstrated initial success with its work with CBOs.

In many ways, WVP is a 'victim of its own success.' A strong desire to enhance its accountability systems to ensure access to the most vulnerable was the impetus for the development of the BFM. In its conception the BFM not only sought to elicit a better understanding from the community regarding WVP, its programs, but also broader communal challenges related to life in Rawalpindi. However, erecting such a mechanism with

insufficient internal systems and practical understanding of its application led to a flood of feedback that overwhelmed institutional capacities, instead of enhancing programmatic decisions and organizational practices. By continuing to reflect on the protocols, responsibilities, and resources that support this mechanism, WVP can learn from this experience to ensure that this important feedback channel can continually support organizational growth.

Ahmad, Nadeem. 2015. *"Pakistan National Briefing: Number of people affected by disasters."* Leadership for Environment & Development (LEAD) Pakistan March 2015. http://www.lead.org.pk/lead/attachments/briefings/LPNB2.pdf

Asia Society. 2016. *"Pakistan: A Political History."* http://asiasociety.org/education/pakistan-political-history

Azam, Maryam. 2014. *"Genesis of Militancy in Pakistan."* Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) Journal 1: Winter 2014 102-123. http://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Article-no.-6-Maryam.pdf

Bonino, Francesca, and Paul Knox Clarke. 2013. *Effective Humanitarian Feedback Mechanisms: Methodology Summary for a Joint ALNAP and CDA Action Research.* ALNAP-CDA.

Bonino, Francesca, with Isabella Jean, and Paul Knox Clarke. 2014(a). *Closing the Loop: Effective Feedback in Humanitarian Contexts, Practitioner Guidance.* London: ALNAP-CDA Collaborative Learning Projects.

Bonino, Francesca, with Isabella Jean, and Paul Knox Clarke. 2014(b). *Humanitarian Feedback Mechanisms: Research, Evidence and Guidance.* London: ALNAP/ODI.

CDA Collaborative Learning Projects (CDA). 2016. *"Humanitarian Feedback Mechanisms Research."* CDA Collaborative Learning Projects; Cambridge, MA: http://cdacollaborative.org/cdaproject/humanitarian-feedback-mechanisms-research/

Cechvala, Sarah and Isabella Jean. 2016. *CDA Case Study: Accountability Learning Initiative: World Vision Ethiopia March 2016.* Collaborative Learning Projects, Cambridge, MA.

Cechvala, Sarah. 2016. *CDA Case Study: Strengthening Accountability in Nepal - World Vision International Nepal January 2016.* Collaborative Learning Projects, Cambridge, MA.

CHS Alliance, Groupe URD and the Sphere Project. 2014. "Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability." https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/files/files/Core%20Humanitarian%20Standard%20-%20English.pdf

Hetland, Atle. 2013. *"Refugees on the fringes of Islamabad."* Dawn: http://www.dawn.com/news/1028875

Human Rights Watch (HRW). 2016. *"Pakistan: Extend Afghan Refugee Status Through 2017."* HRW; New York, NY: https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/16/pakistan-extend-afghan-refugee-status-through-2017

International Crisis Group (ICG). 2014. *"Policing Urban Violence in Pakistan."* Asia Report 255 (23 January 2014). http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/255-policing-urban-violence-in-pakistan.pdf

Kugelman, M. 2013. *"Urbanisation in Pakistan: causes and consequences."* NOREF Policy Brief.

Lubna Rafiq, Thomas Blaschke, Peter Zeil, Bakhtiar Feizizadeh. 2011**.** "Hazardscapes: Ranking Disaster Risk in Pakistan at District Level." GI4DM conference, Antalya, Turkey http://ispace.researchstudio.at/sites/ispace.researchstudio.at/files/240_full.pdf

Mehboob, Shazia. 2015. *"Stolen childhood: Child labour continues to destroy lives."* The Express Tribune Pakistan: http://tribune.com.pk/story/939254/stolen-childhood-child-labour-continues-to-destroy-lives/.

Memon, R. 2005. Pakistan: Internal Migration and Poverty Reduction. Collective for Social Science Research, Karachi, Pakistan.

Rahnuma. 2016. *"Rahnuma: Family Planning Association of Pakistan."* http://www.fpapak.org/

Sagmeister, Elias, Julia Steets and Lotte Ruppert. 2016. *"Community Feedback Mechanisms in Somalia and Afghanistan Listening to Communities in Insecure Contexts."*

Secure Access in Volatile Environments (SAVE); Interim report, January 2016: http://www.save.gppi.net/fileadmin/Downloads/Community_Feedback_Mechanisms_in_Somalia_and_Afghanistan.pdf

Sawas, Amiera et al. 2013. *"Urbanization, Gender and Violence in Rawalpindi and Islamabad: A Scoping Study."* Environment, Politics and Development Working Paper Series Department of Geography, King's College London.

Sunawar, Lubna. 2015. "Pakistan as a Frontline State in War Against Terrorism: Cost & Benefit Analysis." *Journal of Political Studies* 22, no. 1 (2015): 43.

The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL). 2016. *"NGO Law Monitor: Pakistan."* http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/pakistan.html

The World Bank. 2016. *"Countries: Pakistan Overview."* http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/pakistan/overview

Urban Refugees in Pakistan. 2016. *"Summary Rawalpindi."* http://urbanrefugees.datanirvana.org/?cat=12

World Health Organization (WHO). 2010. *"Urbanization and health: health equity and vulnerable populations."*

http://applications.emro.who.int/dsaf/dsa1220.pdf

World Vision International (WVI). 2013. "Citizen Voice and Action."
http://www.wvi.org/article/citizen-voice-and-action

World Vision International (WVI). 2010. "Programme Accountability Framework."
http://9bb63f6dda0f744fa444-9471a7fca5768cc513a2e3c4a260910b.r43.cf3.rackcdn.com/files/1814/4069/6145/Integrated_Programme_Accountability_Framework.pdf

World Vision Pakistan (WVP). 2015. *"Project Design Document – Reach Further Reach More."* Rawalpindi District (Punjab Province) Pakistan: October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2015.

World Vision Pakistan (WVP) with Community World Service Asia. 2015. "Contextual Analysis Report on Beneficiary Feedback Mechanism."

World Vision Pakistan (WVP). 2014. *"Project Design Document – Beneficiaries Feedback Project."* Area Integrated Program Rawalpindi World Vision Pakistan: 17 September 2014.

World Vision UK (WV UK). 2016. *"Accountability to Communities."* World Vision UK; London, UK:
http://www.worldvision.org.uk/our-work/accountability/#section04