



# TECHNICAL BRIEF ON UNHCR-WFP JOINT APPEALS PROCESSES FOR TARGETED ASSISTANCE



**UNHCR**  
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Programme

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This technical brief provides an overview of appeals processes for targeted assistance implemented by UNHCR and WFP. It is intended to support staff in UNHCR and WFP country offices in planning for the establishment and maintenance of appeals processes, or in strengthening existing processes, including the allocation of necessary financial and human resources. The document is primarily aimed at UNHCR and WFP technical staff in country offices but may also be useful for regional bureau and headquarters staff providing support, as well as donors involved in funding targeted assistance.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Appeals processes are an integral part of responsible and accountable targeting. As no targeting approach ever perfectly captures all forcibly displaced people who are vulnerable in meeting their essential needs, a robust appeals process plays a crucial role in identifying those that have fallen through the cracks.

To ensure that appeals processes fulfil this role, they should help address the erroneous exclusion of vulnerable individuals and households, including those that do not meet the eligibility criteria. Moreover, appeals processes should be initiated before any changes are made to people's assistance and provide regular opportunities for appeals to be submitted thereafter.

Rather than establishing appeals mechanisms from scratch, appeals processes should be integrated into existing feedback mechanisms to the greatest extent possible, particularly in terms of feedback channels and data systems. A variety of channels should be used to receive and respond to appeals, as well as to communicate key messages about the targeting and appeals process. The channels should be chosen based on forcibly displaced people's preferences as to how they like to communicate and receive information.

Appeals processes must be sustainably resourced to make sure that the capacities are in place to receive and follow up on appeals in an effective way, including through household visits where necessary. Similarly, establishing an adequate appeals 'resource buffer' is an essential part of every targeting process to ensure that there is funding set aside for successful appellants to be included in the appropriate vulnerability category and receive assistance accordingly.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

When humanitarian organizations implement targeting or prioritization<sup>1</sup> with the aim of providing assistance according to vulnerabilities, needs and capacities, and in line with available resources, forcibly displaced people are often grouped into different **vulnerability categories**. Households that are more vulnerable in meeting their essential needs receive a higher level of basic needs assistance than less vulnerable households, while households that are considered to be self-reliant stop receiving basic needs assistance after a transition period.<sup>2</sup>

Households that are not in agreement with their vulnerability categorization, meaning that they are either receiving a lower level of basic needs assistance or no assistance at all, should have the **option to appeal** to have their vulnerability level and categorization reviewed.

This technical brief highlights **key considerations** to reflect on when strengthening or setting up appeals processes as they relate to targeted assistance, based on **lessons learned** from joint UNHCR-WFP appeals processes supported by the [UNHCR-WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub](#) (Joint Hub) in different contexts.<sup>3</sup> Concrete **examples** of joint appeals processes from Uganda, Rwanda, Niger and Mauritania can be found [here](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Targeting is the process by which people in need are identified to enable the provision of timely and relevant assistance. Prioritization is resource-driven and occurs when funding shortfalls mean that not all needs can be met with the available resources.

<sup>2</sup> This technical brief focuses on household and individual level targeting and prioritization. To simplify the language of the document, only "household-level targeting" will be mentioned from here on, but the same considerations are equally valid for individual-level targeting as well as household and individual-level prioritization. Additional considerations specifically regarding prioritization are highlighted where relevant. Furthermore, even though this brief primarily focuses on the targeting of basic needs assistance, it should be noted that the different assistance packages for the different vulnerability categories should also include an appropriate livelihoods component to help strengthen the self-reliance of targeted households that have the potential to become self-reliant.

<sup>3</sup> For broader guidance on joint feedback mechanisms and communication with communities, see for example: [Designing and Implementing Joint Feedback Mechanisms: Introduction \(Option A, Option B, Option C, Option D\)](#); [UNHCR Operational Guidance on AAP](#); [WFP Protection and Accountability Handbook](#).

## 2. SCOPE OF JOINT APPEALS PROCESS

The following sections discuss key elements of the scope of an accountable joint appeals process, which should aim to address both **implementation exclusion errors** and **design exclusion errors** so that vulnerable households which are in need of assistance but that have been excluded from it (or that are receiving a lower level of assistance) are identified and recategorized.<sup>4</sup>

To ensure that these recategorizations (and the related changes in the assistance level) happen in a timely manner, an appropriate timeframe must be chosen for the appeals process, which is discussed in more detail in the below section on the **appeals window**.

### 2.1 Implementation exclusion errors

**Implementation exclusion errors** refer to vulnerable households that meet the eligibility criteria for assistance but that are not receiving any assistance or an incorrect level of assistance. In contexts where registration data is available (e.g. refugee registration data in proGres) and used for selecting households eligible for assistance, joint appeals processes usually address implementation exclusion errors by correcting the registration data of households that are eligible for assistance but that are not receiving any or an incorrect level of assistance due to outdated, inaccurate or missing data. While a wide variety of other types of implementation exclusion errors exist, this brief focuses on addressing errors linked to registration data.<sup>5</sup>

Addressing implementation exclusion errors involves the updating of registration information that can affect a **household's vulnerability categorization** and hence the level of assistance it receives. What registration data is relevant in a specific context depends on the **eligibility criteria** that are used for targeting. For example, in contexts where a mix of socio-demographic and protection-related eligibility criteria are used, this would mean the updating of information on **household composition** (e.g. births, deaths, marriages, separations, resettlement, etc.) and **specific needs** (e.g. serious medical conditions, disabilities, women at risk, older persons at risk, children at risk, unaccompanied or separated children including child-headed households, etc.).

Depending on the context, registration information is either updated by a **government agency** or by **UNHCR**, and often in close collaboration with **protection partners** who carry out household visits where necessary to assess and record up-to-date information on specific needs.

### 2.2 Design exclusion errors

While addressing implementation exclusion errors is essential to reducing the exclusion errors of a targeting process, it is crucial that additional efforts are made to identify and respond to design exclusion errors, i.e. those that are linked to the targeting design. **Design exclusion errors** refer to vulnerable households that are in need of assistance but that do not meet the eligibility criteria and are therefore not included in the targeted group (in short: vulnerable non-eligible households).<sup>6</sup>

Design exclusion errors exist because targeting approaches have limitations and cannot perfectly capture all households that are vulnerable. This is because several trade-offs must be made during the development of targeting approaches, e.g. in terms of the limited availability, comprehensiveness and/or quality of the data that is

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<sup>4</sup> In humanitarian operations where lives and livelihoods are at risk, priority is usually given to minimising exclusion errors rather than inclusion errors. **Inclusion errors** refer to households that are receiving assistance even though they are not in need. In some operations, for example, forcibly displaced people are encouraged to indicate self-reliant households that are not in need of assistance. However, potential risks, especially in terms of social cohesion, should be considered before implementing such an approach – in contexts where social cohesion is weak, such an approach will likely be too risky. Independently of how exactly inclusion errors are addressed in a certain context, households that are considered as erroneously included and that therefore stop receiving assistance should have the option to appeal.

<sup>5</sup> Examples include **implementation exclusion errors** in the selection of eligible households in the context of community-based targeting; errors in the creation of distribution lists; or eligible households facing barriers in accessing important information or the appeals process, leading to a lack of awareness of the targeting and appeals process and/or challenges in registering for targeted assistance or submitting an appeal.

<sup>6</sup> In the context of prioritization, the main focus is rather on identifying *highly* vulnerable households that do not meet the eligibility criteria.

used for vulnerability analyses, or as a result of efforts to reduce the number of eligibility criteria to facilitate community participation during design and implementation.<sup>7</sup>

### *Targeting design phase*

To the extent possible, design exclusion errors should be reduced during the **design phase of a targeting approach**. This can be done through quantitative error analyses to validate the targeting approach, as well as through consultations with a diverse range of forcibly displaced people about which types of households are most vulnerable in meeting their essential needs (qualitative validation)<sup>8</sup>, considering age, gender and other diversity factors when selecting consultation participants.

### *Joint appeals processes*

**Joint appeals processes** can also help identify vulnerable non-eligible households. One possible way this can be achieved is by **systematically and regularly analysing a combination of quantitative data** (appellants' updated registration data and vulnerability assessment data for vulnerability correlation analyses) **and qualitative data** (focus group discussions with forcibly displaced people) to develop additional eligibility criteria for vulnerable but non-eligible households<sup>9</sup> as needed. For example, the UNHCR and WFP Lebanon country offices have set up an appeals mechanism, the Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM), which operates based on this logic.<sup>10</sup>

Another possible approach to identify vulnerable non-eligible households is to reassess such households' vulnerability levels through home visits, using a **rapid assessment tool** that collects information which goes beyond the indicators of the existing targeting approach. It should be noted that the Joint Hub is not aware of any UNHCR and WFP operations where such an approach has been employed within the context of a joint appeals process. Operations that are open to testing such an approach should consider the risk that a significant share of non-eligible households would likely appeal if the option of requesting such a household-level reassessment were offered. Therefore, forcibly displaced people should not be invited to request such a reassessment themselves, but the concerned households should rather be proactively identified and referred by **field staff** in close coordination with community representatives<sup>11</sup>, who appeal on behalf of these households.

The actual rapid reassessments should be carried out by field units that are different from those who made the referrals in the first place, to ensure appropriate checks and balances. Due to the increased workload linked to such household-level reassessments, this approach would most probably be more suitable for smaller operations. As for all appeals follow-up, **regular spot checks** should be carried out to assure the quality and integrity of review processes and to mitigate potential fraud risks. The practice of regular spot checks – and the potential consequences if misconduct is discovered – should be clearly communicated to staff and community representatives alike.

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<sup>7</sup> For example, for consultations with forcibly displaced people on draft eligibility criteria during the design phase to be manageable, it is helpful to avoid having a very large number of draft criteria to consult on. Another example is that transparency on (a limited number of) eligibility criteria during implementation will likely contribute to understanding and trust and enable forcibly displaced people to self-assess against the criteria, which can help reduce the number of appeals that are received.

<sup>8</sup> Ideally, diverse community feedback is sought on a concrete list of draft eligibility criteria.

<sup>9</sup> It may also be possible to include some of the vulnerable non-eligible households by broadening the scope of one or several of the existing eligibility criteria. However, it is important that operations keep in mind that any changes to existing criteria should not lead to changes in the categorization of (and assistance to) correctly categorized households, so that these households can count on predictable assistance for at least a certain minimum time period (e.g. one year) from the moment they are initially categorized.

<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that while a strong continuous registration process is in place, and refugees are regularly reminded to keep their registration data updated, at the time of writing the GRM uses appellants' registration data without ensuring that it is up to date. Moreover, the use of vulnerability assessment data and community feedback to establish additional eligibility criteria linked to the GRM process has been limited.

<sup>11</sup> Even though field staff know the communities they work with very well, they might still miss relevant vulnerable households. Community representatives, on the other hand, usually know their communities even better, but in some contexts, there is a risk that marginalised forcibly displaced people are overlooked or ignored. Therefore, field staff and community representatives should collaborate closely in the identification and referral of relevant households.

## Monitoring

In complementarity to the joint appeals process, operations should ensure the regular analysis and triangulation of appellant households' **updated registration data** with findings from **outcome monitoring**<sup>12</sup> as well as **community feedback** on the eligibility criteria to assess if there are any vulnerability profiles that are not being captured by the established eligibility criteria. Community feedback should not only be collected during the design phase but also regularly during implementation of the targeting approach (through community consultations and the existing feedback mechanisms). In contexts where outcome monitoring, community feedback and appellants' updated registration data indicate that the eligibility criteria are missing important vulnerability profiles, the criteria should be adapted and/or additional criteria should be developed.

## 2.3 Appeals window

The timeframe during which appeals are received, also called the '**appeals window**', can either be open-ended, meaning that appeals are received continuously, or it can open at certain intervals, e.g. for several weeks or months every six months or every year. Ensuring an open-ended appeals window is ideal since it strengthens the responsiveness of the appeals process by addressing changes in appellant households' vulnerability level in a timely manner (e.g. if a household head who was previously the main source of income has an accident and thereafter lives with a disability, the vulnerability level of that household likely goes up). If appeals windows are opened at longer intervals, any changes in households' vulnerability levels over time take longer to respond to, which increases these households' exposure to the risks of negative coping strategies.

Appeals should be received, followed up on and responded to **before changes are made to households' assistance** to the greatest extent possible. This is crucial to avoid vulnerable households temporarily receiving less assistance or no assistance until their appeals have been dealt with and they are reincluded in the correct vulnerability category. The final decision on when to initiate the appeals process should be taken based on the context, considering the number of appeals that are expected, the staff capacities that are available to follow up on appeals, the types of follow-up that will be necessary depending on the eligibility criteria, and the time required to endorse changes in vulnerability category for successful appellants.<sup>13</sup>

**Reappeals**, meaning appeals from households that are not appealing for the first time, should be received if these are based on a new change in their vulnerability level. This precondition should be clearly communicated at community level as well as at the time of receiving a household's reappeal.

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<sup>12</sup> Both assisted and non-assisted households as well as all targeting variables should be included in outcome monitoring.

<sup>13</sup> In contexts where the appeals process is initiated before the start of distributions of (re)targeted assistance, but there is not enough time to follow up and respond to all initial appeals before changes to the assistance are planned to take effect, the agencies should consider delaying any changes in the assistance to households that have appealed but that have not yet received a response, only adapting their assistance, where relevant, once their appeal has been reviewed and responded to.

### 3. SUSTAINABLE RESOURCING

When targeting is rolled out, **households are informed about their eligibility for assistance**, for example with extremely/and or highly vulnerable households receiving the highest level of basic needs assistance available, moderately vulnerable households receiving a lower level of assistance, and self-reliant households receiving no basic needs assistance.<sup>14</sup>

As soon as households are informed about their vulnerability categorization and what this means for their assistance, those among them who feel that they have been incorrectly categorized will want to submit an appeal. This usually leads to a **significant early peak in appeals**.

The graph on the right is an example from a targeting process in **Rwanda** in 2021 and illustrates how there were two peaks in the number of appeals received during the first two months of targeting implementation, with the number of appeals increasing sharply after the initial distributions of targeted assistance.<sup>15</sup>

While UNHCR and WFP operations will already have their regular feedback mechanisms and respective staff capacities in place, implementation of an appeals process leads to a **significant additional workload**, at least during the initial phase. To ensure that appeals can be received, referred, followed up on and responded to in an effective and timely manner, it is important to ensure appropriate resourcing of the joint appeals process.

Not having an effective appeals process in place increases **potential risks**, including, among others:

- An increase in the use of **negative coping strategies** by vulnerable households not receiving adequate assistance.
- Decreasing **community trust** in UNHCR, WFP and partners, leading to a worsening of relations between forcibly displaced people and humanitarian organizations, with potential spillover effects such as protests and/or security risks as well as reduced access to forcibly displaced people.
- Negative impacts on **organizations' reputations**, which may impede future interventions.

#### 3.1 Key requirements

During the **resource planning** for the joint appeals process, the following key requirements should be considered:

- **UNHCR, WFP and partner staff capacities** for:
  - Regular communication activities
  - Intake of appeals (e.g. help/protection desk staff and helpline operators)
  - Appeals data management, including data cleaning, processing and referrals
  - Follow-up on appeals, including registration and protection case management (for implementation exclusion errors) as well as regarding vulnerable non-eligible households<sup>16</sup>
  - Provision of responses to appellants

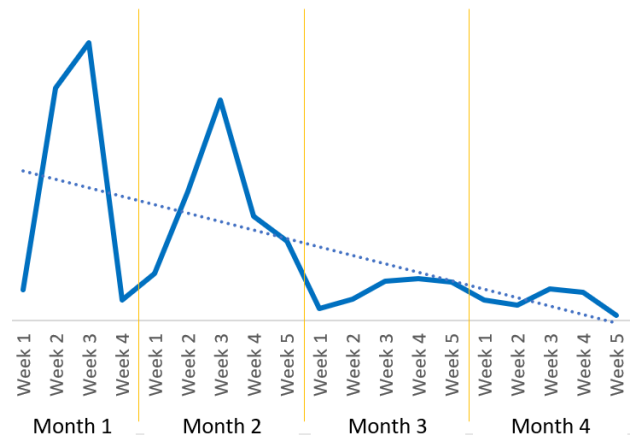


Figure 1: Trend in the number of appeals during the first four months of the joint appeals process in Rwanda

<sup>14</sup> As mentioned above, the different assistance packages for the different vulnerability categories should also include an appropriate livelihoods component to help strengthen the self-reliance of targeted households that have the potential to become self-reliant.

<sup>15</sup> In this context, the appeals process opened at the same time as targeted assistance packages were introduced.

<sup>16</sup> For more information on potential approaches to follow up on vulnerable non-eligible households as part of a joint appeals process, see section 2.2.

Where existing staff capacities are limited, **surge staffing** for a limited time period may be necessary so that the initial peak in appeals can be dealt with in an effective and timely manner.<sup>17</sup>

The capacities of **community representatives** to support communication activities and refer appellants should also be taken into account, considering their other responsibilities as community representatives as well as their personal livelihood activities.

- **Tablets and/or laptops** to facilitate the recording of and follow-up on appeals.
- **Hiring of additional vehicles** for household visits, where relevant.
- **Regular training of key staff** involved in the appeals process such as help/protection desk staff, helpline operators and caseworkers as well as **community representatives** on the targeting approach and eligibility criteria, the appeals process, the key messages to share with forcibly displaced people, and respectful behaviour.
- **Communication with communities**, including staff travel to conduct community meetings, radio announcements, SMS, posters, leaflets, etc.

### 3.2 Scenario planning

Resource planning should include **different scenarios** in terms of the number of appeals that may be received, considering the following:

- Whether it is a **targeting or a prioritization process** (with prioritization processes likely leading to a higher number of appeals since not all identified needs are met).
- **What share of households will be eligible** for assistance or a higher level of assistance (i.e. coverage; with a higher share of households covered likely leading to a lower number of appeals).
- **What levels of assistance** the different vulnerability categories will receive (with a larger difference in assistance levels likely leading to an increased number of appeals).
- The **approach used to select eligible households** (e.g. using recently verified or older registration data, or a community-based approach).
- The **level and quality of community engagement** (e.g. community consultations on draft eligibility criteria, the level of transparency on the final eligibility criteria<sup>18</sup>, or the frequency and reach of communication activities).
- The frequency and length of **appeals windows** (with one-off appeals windows likely leading to an increased number of appeals).

In the Joint Hub's experience, the **share of households** that appeals can be anywhere between approximately **15 percent to 40 percent** (referring to the share of households that were initially not categorized as *most vulnerable* and were therefore not going to receive the highest level of assistance available).

For example, in the above-mentioned targeting process in Rwanda in 2021, after 6 months of implementation 16 percent of households (not categorized as *most vulnerable*) had appealed, while in a prioritization process in Uganda in 2022 23 percent of households had appealed after 4 months, and in a targeting process in Mauritania in 2022 41 percent of households had appealed once the appeals window was closed.

It is important to keep in mind that the **resourcing needs** of a joint appeals process **change over time**. While there may be a need for surge capacity to deal with the initial peak in appeals, e.g. during a period of 3 months, the number of incoming appeals will fall to a much lower baseline over time, which should enable operations to

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<sup>17</sup> In contexts where an appeals process takes place before the start of distributions of (re)targeted assistance, there is the option to phase the appeals process by geographic zone or vulnerability category to manage limited staff capacities. For example, different zones of a refugee settlement could be asked to come forward and appeal at different times of the process, so that one zone can be managed at a time.

<sup>18</sup> For example, if a categorical targeting approach is implemented and the eligibility criteria are transparently communicated, households can assess themselves against these criteria before deciding whether to submit an appeal or not.



manage the continued follow-up on appeals with existing feedback mechanism, data management, registration and caseworker capacities.

If additional resources are required, UNHCR and WFP should **jointly fundraise**, underlining the importance of appropriately resourcing the joint appeals process to ensure its effectiveness and accountability, as well as to support quality programming and responsible targeting.

### 3.3 Appeals resource buffer

To ensure that households that have successfully appealed can be included in the appropriate vulnerability category, an **appeals buffer** with the sufficient resources required to provide higher levels of assistance to these households should be established.

The **size of the resource buffer** should be decided keeping in mind the need to address both implementation exclusion errors as well as design-related exclusion errors. As mentioned above, in Mauritania 41 percent of households that were initially not categorized as *most vulnerable* decided to appeal; 60 percent of these appellant households were successful and were therefore recategorized into a higher vulnerability category. This means that 25 percent of the households that were initially not categorized as *most vulnerable* ended up moving to a higher vulnerability category because of the appeals process<sup>19</sup>. In comparison, in Rwanda 16 percent of households decided to appeal and 71 percent of these appeals were successful, resulting in 11 percent of the households that were initially not categorized as *most vulnerable* moving to a higher vulnerability category.

Where an appeals buffer has been used up, additional funding should be sought. Alternatively, the assistance levels can be adapted to allow an increased number of vulnerable households to receive the larger and/or smaller assistance packages. Finally, there is also the option of creating a waiting list for successful appellant households that cannot be immediately recategorized due to limited resources.

## 4. APPEALS INTAKE AND RESPONSE CHANNELS

When choosing the channels to be used for receiving and responding to appeals, it is important to ensure that the **preferences of forcibly displaced people** are respected by reviewing previous assessments of communication preferences, possibly carried out as part of broader needs assessments, post-distribution monitoring or community consultations.

In situations where the preferred channels for making appeals and receiving responses are not yet known, **communities should be consulted in an inclusive manner** by selecting a diverse range of consultation participants considering age, gender and other contextually relevant diversity factors. Consultations should also involve forcibly displaced people that are most at risk of facing access barriers, such as people with disabilities or other specific needs, older people, people living in remote locations, as well as ethnic, religious and other minorities. Appellants' preferred channels and languages for receiving responses to their appeals can also be confirmed during the reception of appeals (and in the case of phone calls and SMS, appellants' current mobile phone numbers can also be verified).

To increase access to the appeals process, it is recommended to offer a **variety of channels** that forcibly displaced people can use to make their appeals. Ideally, all the channels of **existing feedback mechanisms** should be used for receiving appeals. Moreover, staff members engaging in live interactions with forcibly displaced people (e.g. at help/protection desks or on the phone) should have the necessary soft skills and be part of teams that are balanced in terms of gender and age, to the greatest extent possible.

In operations supported by the Joint Hub, including Uganda, Rwanda, Niger and Mauritania, **face-to-face channels** such as help desks and protection desks were used much more frequently for submitting appeals compared with remote channels such as helplines. At the same time, interestingly, in Uganda, the most popular

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<sup>19</sup> In Mauritanian context, this meant that successful appellant households either moved to the *highly vulnerable* or the *moderately vulnerable* category, coming either from the *least vulnerable* or the *moderately vulnerable* category.

channel for receiving a response was the mobile phone (by phone call). Forcibly displaced people's communication preferences will vary between different contexts and depend on factors such as access to mobile phones (including phone credit, mobile networks and electricity), literacy levels (including digital literacy levels), gender dynamics, etc.

## 5. APPEALS DATA MANAGEMENT

When choosing the **data system(s)** to use for recording, processing, referring, following up on, responding to and closing appeals, the focus should be on making the appeals data flow as robust and streamlined as possible, while ensuring data protection and privacy. Ideally, robust data systems are already in place as part of the existing feedback mechanisms, and these can be built upon.

WFP and UNHCR usually use **different data systems** for their feedback mechanisms. While WFP normally uses SugarCRM and UNHCR may be using proGres, operations often use alternative data systems. When setting up a joint appeals process, it is important to understand what data systems the agencies are already using for their existing feedback channels.

Ideally, the WFP and UNHCR data systems would be linked through a robust interoperability solution, enabling the quick and safe referral of appeals. However, such an interoperability solution is currently in development and not yet available. Alternatively, the data system of either one of the agencies can be used, while the other agency feeds into that same data system through a separate **online form** (e.g. using Kobo to feed into proGres or MoDa to feed into SugarCRM). Whichever approach is used, once the appeals have been gathered in a central location, the data will have to be **cleaned**, e.g. by removing duplicates.

If a large number of appeals is expected, and considering the often-limited field staff capacities, it may also make sense to **prioritize** follow-up on some appeals over others, by following up first on appeals that have a higher chance of being successful. For example, in a context where a categorical targeting approach is implemented using registration data, an appellant household's likely vulnerability categorization – after following up on its appeal – can be assessed by checking which eligibility criteria it will meet based on its existing registration data as well as the claims made during the appeals intake (i.e. the additional criteria that the household supposedly meets). Appellant households that are likely to become eligible for increased assistance could then be prioritized for follow-up. However, how exactly certain appeals can be prioritized for follow-up depends on the targeting approach chosen in a particular context.<sup>20</sup>

In contexts where refugee registration data is used to select eligible households, UNHCR's **proGres** data system usually plays a key role in the further follow-up on appeals. Consequently, if a data system other than proGres is used for the recording of appeals, the processed appeals data must be regularly fed into proGres to refer appeals which involve the updating of specific needs information to relevant **protection caseworkers**. Protection caseworkers that are tasked with following up on protection-related appeals should have access to proGres so that they can record case management findings themselves, directly in the database. Appellants whose appeals involve the updating of family composition information should be encouraged, at the time of submitting their appeal, to approach the closest registration site managed by UNHCR or a government agency, as relevant.

## 6. APPEALS DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

Appeals data should be regularly analysed to report on **key trends** over time, such as the number of appeals received disaggregated by location, sex, age and ability, the use of different appeals intake and response channels, the different grounds for appeals, as well as the number of successful and unsuccessful appeals. Key summary statistics can be reported on in **interactive dashboards** (e.g. using Power BI or Tableau).

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<sup>20</sup> Note that a joint UNHCR-WFP innovation project is running under the UNHCR Data Innovation Fund between January 2024 and June 2025 to develop a software solution that enables the automatic triaging of appeals for further follow-up.

The **eligibility criteria** as well as the **joint appeals process** itself should be regularly reviewed using the findings from appeals data analyses. It is important to triangulate the appeals data with findings from process and outcome monitoring, community feedback collected during community consultations and through the feedback mechanisms (questions, feedback and complaints that go beyond the submission of appeals), and inputs from relevant field staff. Periodic reviews, the frequency of which should be decided considering how dynamic the context is, will help to better understand targeting design errors and any shortcomings of the appeals process, thereby contributing to improving the eligibility criteria and the joint appeals process, where relevant.

## 7. OVERSIGHT AND ENDORSEMENT OF CHANGES IN VULNERABILITY CATEGORY

Before households that have successfully appealed are included in a higher vulnerability category, any proposed **changes in vulnerability category should first be reviewed and approved** by the two agencies. Relevant decision-makers should be provided with key statistics on the appeals process, especially trends in the number of successful appeals, so they can understand how the recategorizations of successful appellant households will impact available resources (i.e. the appeals buffer).

Only after the inclusion of successful appellant households in a higher vulnerability category has been endorsed, should these households be included in the distribution cycle for the higher level of assistance. Changes in households' vulnerability category based on successful appeals should ideally be made before the start of distributions of (re)targeted assistance (as mentioned above in section 2.3), where possible, and monthly thereafter<sup>21</sup>.

One option to formalise this oversight and decision-making role is through the creation of a **Joint Appeals Oversight Committee** or similar. Such a joint committee could either be set up at the central level and/or at the regional or local level (e.g. settlement level). If such a joint committee is created, terms of reference should be developed that clarify the purpose of the committee, the frequency and participants of joint meetings, as well as the roles and responsibilities.

Besides the review and endorsement of the inclusion of successful appellant households in higher vulnerability categories, the joint committee could also monitor the overall functioning of the joint appeals process and discuss any challenges as well as opportunities for improvement, based on available appeals data as well as feedback from field staff and forcibly displaced people.

Appellants should receive a **response** to their appeal as soon as possible, ideally within one month. However, considering the time required to follow up on appeals and endorse changes in vulnerability category for successful appellants, especially during the initial peak of the appeals process, operations should aim to provide responses no later than two months after an appeal is submitted. Appellants that are unsuccessful should be referred to alternative assistance programmes where appropriate and available.

## 8. STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOPS)

**Detailed SOPs** should be developed that describe:

- The scope of the joint appeals process
- The appeals intake and response channels
- The different steps of the appeals process (i.e. how appeals will be received, recorded, processed, referred, followed up on and responded to)

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<sup>21</sup> Alternatively, successful appellant households can be recategorized on a quarterly basis. However, such an approach extends the waiting period for vulnerable households that need to be recategorized urgently and therefore likely increases their exposure to the risks of negative coping strategies.

- Key timeframes (including the start of communication with forcibly displaced people and of the appeals process, the appeals window, as well as the response timeframe)
- The appeals resource buffer
- Decision-making on the recategorization of successful appellant households
- Referrals of unsuccessful appellants to alternative assistance programmes where appropriate and available
- Regular data analyses and reporting to inform decision-making on adapting and improving the joint appeals process as well as the eligibility criteria
- Roles and responsibilities (including in terms of coordination)
- Quality assurance (including how community satisfaction with the appeals process is monitored, as well as the regular training of relevant staff and community representatives)
- Data protection and privacy

It will be important to **involve key UNHCR and WFP units and field teams as well as partner organizations**, especially those who are responsible for case management, early in the development of the SOPs to ensure that these procedures are realistic and supported by all stakeholders.

The procedures of the joint appeals process should also be integrated into the agencies' respective **feedback mechanism SOPs**.

## 9. JOINT COMMUNICATION ON APPEALS PROCESS

A **joint communication strategy** should be developed that clarifies how forcibly displaced people and other key stakeholders will be informed about the targeting and the appeals process. The strategy should cover the **objectives** of planned communication activities, the **communication channels** that will be used to share **community-level key messages**, the communication channels that will be used to notify each household about its **vulnerability categorization**, the **key messages** that will be shared, answers to **frequently asked questions (FAQs)**, and an **action plan** describing the different steps of the process, relevant deadlines and responsibilities.

The **key messages and FAQs** should speak to the following issues:

- Targeting/prioritization:
  - Rationale behind targeting/prioritization
  - Different vulnerability categories that will be used for targeting/prioritization
  - How the vulnerability categories have been developed
  - How forcibly displaced people have influenced the design of the eligibility criteria and how they will continue to participate in decision-making through participatory monitoring
  - Eligibility criteria
  - Assistance types and levels of assistance
  - How eligible households have been selected
  - How households will be informed about their vulnerability categorization
  - Timeline
- Joint appeals process:
  - Purpose of the appeals process
  - Who can appeal
  - The fact that households have already been categorized based on the eligibility criteria and that only those households that feel they have been incorrectly categorized should appeal
  - *Where registration data is used to categorize households*: That households' registration data was used to categorize them, and that it is therefore important for households to keep their

- registration data up to date whenever there are changes in household composition, household members' specific needs or their contact information (e.g. mobile phone number)
  - Making an appeal will not automatically lead to a change in vulnerability categorization
  - How to make an appeal (appeals intake channels, locations and opening hours)
  - How appeals will be followed up on, including through household visits where needed
  - Available response channels and languages
  - Timeline
  - Response timeframe
- How to share other questions, feedback and complaints, including sensitive complaints

To help ensure that this key information reaches forcibly displaced people, it is best to communicate through a **variety of communication channels** (not only through community leaders or SMS, for example). If it is not clear which channels are preferred by forcibly displaced people, make sure to gather this information, e.g. through inclusive community consultations (considering age, gender and other diversity factors when selecting participants). Closely involving community representatives and volunteers in the sharing of key messages will usually help increase understanding of and buy-in to the targeting and appeals process by forcibly displaced people.

Communication with forcibly displaced people, including community-level key messaging on the targeting and the appeals process as well as specific communication on how each household has been categorized (and what this means for their assistance), should ideally be initiated **at least three to six months<sup>22</sup> before** making any changes to people's assistance in order to give concerned households adequate time to absorb the shared information and take informed and timely decisions.

Key messaging should never be one-off but rather a **continuous process** that starts before implementation of the appeals process and is maintained afterwards, aiming to reach as many forcibly displaced people as possible over time (e.g. by carrying out regular community meetings across the different zones of a settlement or community centres in an urban area, or by sharing regular key messages by SMS, WhatsApp and/or Facebook in more connected locations). Establishing and maintaining transparent and regular communication helps build trust and gives people regular opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback effectively.

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<sup>22</sup> Consider agricultural growing seasons and other seasonal influences on livelihoods, where relevant. In any case, a decrease or stop in basic needs assistance should be communicated as early as possible to concerned households.



**JOINT PROGRAMME EXCELLENCE AND TARGETING HUB**