

Free Yezidi Foundation
Accountability to Affected Populations Framework
2024-2025

1. Introduction

The Free Yezidi Foundation (FYF) places accountability to affected populations (AAP) at the core of its mission to support the Yezidi community in the aftermath of the 2014 Yezidi Genocide. FYF promotes the rights and well-being of Yezidis in Iraq and the diaspora, with an emphasis on women’s empowerment, the pursuit of justice, and helping the community rebuild through trauma treatment, education, training, and economic development. Yezidi and women led, FYF ensures that its program activities are finely attuned to the diverse needs of the most vulnerable within affected populations. FYF’s programs are not only shaped by the insights of those most vulnerable but are also steered by their leadership, ensuring a profoundly responsive approach.

This framework delineates FYF's dedicated commitments to advancing the protection of the communities it serves. Rooted in a rights-based approach, FYF prioritizes respect for the rights, dignity, and safety of those affected by disaster, conflict, and protracted displacement. At its core, FYF positions women, men, girls, and boys receiving humanitarian assistance as the principal stakeholders. FYF upholds their fundamental right to actively participate in decisions that impact their lives, access pertinent information for informed decision-making, and voice grievances if assistance proves inadequate or leads to unintended repercussions.

These commitments encompass the provision of transparent information regarding FYF's actions, decisions, and resource allocation. Moreover, they involve actively seeking and integrating community feedback into programming, with a focus on understanding the capacities and strengths of the most vulnerable individuals. By implementing robust accountability mechanisms, FYF aims to cultivate trust, forge genuine partnerships, and ultimately enhance the effectiveness and longevity of its programming efforts.

This framework supplements and is integrated into FYF’s additional internal safeguarding policies and procedures to protect FYF staff and affected people, including: Protection and Case Management Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs); Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Policy; Policy Book; Security Policy; and Strategic Plan 2023-2027.

2. Key Definitions and Concepts

Accountability to Affected Populations: This framework utilizes the Interagency Standing Committee (IASC) definition of AAP: *“Accountability to affected people is a commitment by humanitarians to use power responsibly: to take account of, give account to, and be held to account by the people we seek to assist. In humanitarian action, this includes enabling affected people to meet their different needs, address their vulnerabilities, build on pre-existing capacities and drive program adaptation through systematically sharing timely, relevant and actionable information*

with communities, and supporting the meaningful participation and leadership of affected people in decision-making, regardless of sex, age, disability status and other diversities.”¹

Community members: Within this framework, the term encompasses all individuals engaged in and affected by FYF and its initiatives. This includes participants in project activities, their families, and communities, extending to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and mass atrocities, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and religious and ethnic minorities (REM).

Stakeholders: FYF defines stakeholders as a broad spectrum, including donors, local partners and organizations, and national and regional government actors. This encompasses entities not only in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) but also in FYF's specific operating locations within the governorates of Duhok and Ninewa. These partnerships are diligently established and maintained to ensure the effective implementation of initiatives.

Governance: FYF defines governance as the operational systems and leadership structures within the organization. This includes FYF's internal processes, policies, and organizational structure.

3. AAP Commitments

FYF's AAP commitments are guided by the Four IASC Commitments² and will be outlined in detail in this framework. These commitments represent the standards by which FYF is accountable to the community members it strives to support:

3.1. Leadership

At the core of FYF's ability to uphold its AAP commitments outlined in this framework lies its leadership, comprising individuals who represent the most vulnerable within the communities it serves. This leadership cadre includes local, minority, and female leaders who have been directly impacted by protracted conflict and displacement. It also encompasses survivors of mass atrocities and SGBV.

FYF's leadership is dedicated to enforcing, institutionalizing, and seamlessly integrating this AAP framework into internal policies and procedures. Transparency in governance is a cornerstone of FYF's ethos, entailing the provision of easily accessible information to community members and all stakeholders regarding organizational structures and processes. This transparency ensures accountability, including, but not limited to, the timely communication of its exit strategy in the event of security threats jeopardizing the organization's safe operations. Detailed protocols for such situations are outlined in FYF's Security Policy.

3.2. Participation and Partnership

FYF actively involves community members in decision-making processes throughout a project's life cycle, ensuring representation, amplification, and influence for those most vulnerable. This

¹ [Interagency Standing Committee \(IASC\).](#)

² [Interagency Standing Committee \(IASC\) 2017. Commitments on Accountability to Affected People and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#)

approach empowers community members as proactive contributors to the design and execution of FYF's programmatic activities, fostering the mobilization of local community leadership. In line with its commitment to bolster local capacity and adhere to the Sphere Minimum Standards for humanitarian response, FYF endeavors to coordinate closely with pertinent local, regional, and national authorities in Federal Iraq and the KRI, alongside civil society organizations and relevant UN bodies. This collaborative effort aims to mitigate inefficiencies, enhance coverage, and promote effective local ownership of initiatives.

3.3. Information, feedback, action

Accountability hinges on open dialogues with community members and stakeholders regarding their expectations and preferred channels of communication for receiving information, offering feedback, and lodging complaints. It also relies on the informed consent of beneficiaries to either receive or opt out of services, with FYF committed to maintaining confidentiality and privacy in all feedback mechanisms. Detailed procedures for complaints and feedback, covering both sensitive and non-sensitive issues, are established by FYF and outlined comprehensively in its Protection and Case Management SOPs, Policy Book, and within this framework. These procedures are designed to address a spectrum of concerns, ranging from day-to-day programmatic matters to more serious allegations such as sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud, and mismanagement. Furthermore, they include provisions for organizational learning and continuous improvement.

3.4. Results

As part of an ongoing feedback loop aimed at learning and improvement, FYF is dedicated to monitoring and evaluating its programming, performance, and accountability commitments within a survivor-centric, do-no-harm framework, as detailed in its Policy Book and Protection and Case Management SOPs. The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) approach incorporates contextualized indicators to gauge both short-term and long-term impacts of interventions, drawing on a blend of quantitative and qualitative data collected from diverse sources, including inputs from affected individuals. Additionally, monthly risk assessments are integral to FYF's M&E strategy across all programs, serving to identify and mitigate protection risks for affected individuals and communities, while allowing for real-time adjustments to program activities. The findings from M&E efforts inform both intermediate and final reporting and continually influence FYF's humanitarian response efforts.

4. Commitments in practice

4.1. Leadership

4.1.1. Transparency and integration of AAP into organizational policies and procedures

FYF has seamlessly woven its AAP framework into every aspect of its strategic planning and management processes, PSEA and security policies, risk analyses, staff recruitment and training, and all stages of programming activities—from proposal development and implementation to M&E and reporting. This comprehensive integration ensures that the voices and priorities of affected individuals are not only heard but also actively responded to in a coordinated fashion.

Moreover, FYF commits to contextualizing this framework to the unique requirements of each program cycle, acknowledging the diverse needs among affected individuals and communities.

In upholding transparency, the commitments outlined in this framework are condensed, translated, and made easily accessible to community members. They are disseminated through printed materials distributed at all FYF locations and are also available on our website. Additionally, we offer a diverse range of feedback mechanisms, which will be elaborated on in detail later within this framework. The selection of communication methods and channels has been directly influenced by input from community members who are currently utilizing FYF services. FYF remains steadfast in its commitment to regularly updating these approaches based on ongoing consultations and feedback from community members.

4.1.2. Risk management

FYF has established a robust security policy and regularly conducts risk assessments to minimize potential harm to both staff and beneficiaries in operating environments, encompassing Iraq as a whole and the governorates of Duhok and Ninewa. These measures ensure continued accountability to vulnerable populations, even during periods of limited access. The systems developed to uphold duty of care include educating staff about work-related risks, equipping them with the necessary skills to manage and mitigate these risks, and ensuring access to post-incident care when needed. For affected populations, this entails facilitating access to safe transportation, as well as providing protection and MHPSS services. This support extends to affected populations participating in livelihoods and education programs. Additionally, efforts are made to enhance awareness of rights, thereby empowering beneficiaries to report incidents of violence and discrimination more effectively. To reinforce accountability, clear communication of risk ownership and security management responsibilities is documented in official records, such as employment contracts, job descriptions, and terms of reference.

Gender and Security: Gender plays a pivotal role in vulnerability, often resulting in varying levels of risk exposure for different staff members within the same environment. Men and women may encounter distinct threats and vulnerabilities. FYF acknowledges gender as a critical consideration when assessing risks. Therefore, it's crucial to recognize how cultural and social norms surrounding gender intersect with the risk factors outlined in this document. Through its PSEA and Sexual Harassment Policy, delineated in the FYF Policy Book, FYF is unwavering in its commitment to safeguarding beneficiaries and cultivating a secure working environment for all staff. This entails fostering a culture of respect and accountability.

Non-Discrimination & Equality of Risk Treatment: FYF maintains a non-discriminatory stance and approach towards security management, aiming to ensure that risk treatment options offer equitable protection for all staff members and affected populations, to the best of its ability. This may necessitate varying risk treatment approaches, strategies, procedures, or resource allocations tailored to specific individuals or groups, even if they are operating in the same context or program.

4.1.3. Accountability to and support of staff and community members

As detailed in FYF's Policy Book, regular capacity-building trainings are conducted, and psychosocial support is provided as necessary to FYF employees, contractors, and partners. These

initiatives are designed to ensure that staff members are equipped with a comprehensive understanding of internal policies and procedures, enabling them to fulfill their roles effectively, nurture their potential, and foster and acknowledge excellence in performance. This includes both an annual review process and ad-hoc mechanisms for assessing staff performance, which inform and facilitate ongoing staff development efforts.

Moreover, FYF has implemented robust SOPs that explicitly address safeguarding the individuals we assist from diverse forms of abuse and exploitation. Additionally, an internal PSEA policy is in place to safeguard our staff members. This policy is disseminated to staff during the hiring process and reinforced through bi-annual training sessions. Such measures are especially critical when engaging with vulnerable populations, as they help mitigate the risk of vicarious trauma. They also provide crucial support to our staff, the majority of whom are women and survivors of SGBV and/or mass atrocities with displacement backgrounds.

As part of its commitment to local empowerment and inclusivity, FYF operates with an organizational policy that prohibits the deployment of expatriate staff in the field. Instead, all FYF field personnel are recruited from the communities they serve. This approach ensures genuine inclusion, representation, and active participation at the institutional level. Moreover, this organizational model not only emphasizes FYF's dedication to sustainable programming but also underscores its efforts to foster local community empowerment through jobs creation and holistic community development initiatives.

FYF upholds an unwavering commitment to fostering inclusivity throughout its hiring process and workplace, ensuring a discrimination-free environment based on ethnicity, gender, age, religion, political beliefs, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, or any other protected status. Job descriptions explicitly outline the required knowledge, skills, and a commitment to non-discriminatory conduct necessary for effective collaboration with FYF.

Recognizing that building trust within vulnerable communities is essential for effective service delivery, FYF prioritizes the recruitment of female staff, including in leadership roles. While cultural diversity among staff is acknowledged as vital for effectively serving all vulnerable groups, FYF recognizes the lingering social fragmentation resulting from the 2014 Yezidi Genocide in Iraq. This reality is reflected in the composition of our field staff, which predominantly consists of Yezidis, underscoring the complex dynamics and challenges faced in fostering social cohesion within this context.

4.2. Participation and Partnership

4.2.1. Policies and processes documenting and identifying community members

FYF unambiguously defines its target beneficiaries in its Strategic Plan 2023-2027, both internally and through various public platforms such as its website and social media channels. The organization is dedicated to supporting the Yezidi community in the aftermath of the 2014 Yezidi Genocide, acknowledging the urgent need for comprehensive and tangible support to aid in rebuilding, recovery, and fostering resilience. As a women-led organization, FYF places significant emphasis on collaborating with women from diverse communities, particularly

minority groups in Iraq, who face compounded vulnerabilities due to marginalization, violence—including SGBV—and prolonged displacement.

Through its programming and internal policies, FYF actively nurtures the leadership potential of Yezidi and other minority women, empowering them to become catalysts for change within their communities. Gender equity principles are deeply embedded within FYF's operational framework and human resources practices, reflecting the organization's unwavering commitment to promoting the rights of women and girls.

FYF envisions success not only in the tangible development and advancement of Yezidi and other minority women within their communities but also in their emergence as influential changemakers and community leaders within both Yezidi and broader women's rights advocacy spaces.

4.2.2. Working with partners and other stakeholders

FYF strategically channels its resources to cultivate a diverse range of partnerships spanning local entities, institutions, private sectors, and governmental bodies across the phases of proposal development, design, and program implementation. In the pursuit and establishment of these partnerships, FYF conducts thorough assessments of its own capacities, strengths, and areas for improvement. This enables the organization to effectively identify and leverage local networks that promote reciprocal capacity exchange models, facilitating knowledge-sharing, fostering equitable partnerships, and amplifying a unified voice.

In recognition of the persistent gender disparities within society, FYF places paramount importance on collaborating with other local NGOs led by women. This prioritization underscores FYF's commitment to ensuring representation and inclusion within its initiatives, thereby contributing to the broader efforts to address gender inequality.

Continual coordination with regional protection and MHPSS working groups, local government bodies, and Asayesh is a cornerstone of FYF's operations, guaranteeing that all program activities adhere to government regulations. Furthermore, FYF collaborates closely with camp management, which plays a pivotal role in facilitating access and ensuring alignment with UNHCR cluster initiatives. This collaborative approach ensures that FYF's efforts are aligned with broader humanitarian strategies and regulatory frameworks, optimizing impact and efficacy.

Finally, the establishment and activation of survivor-centric referral systems, in coordination with other protection actors, highlight our steadfast commitment to delivering comprehensive support to survivors.

FYF has established memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with all programmatic partners, highlighting a shared commitment to accountability through a collaborative process. These agreements detail commitments to the communities they serve, methods for fulfilling these commitments, staff requirements, protocols for sharing information between partners, mechanisms for community participation, procedures for addressing complaints, and joint monitoring and evaluation strategies.

Moreover, FYF upholds accountability to affected populations when interacting with donors by advocating for flexibility to align donor requirements with community needs, prioritizing the latter's paramount consideration.

4.3. Information, feedback, action

FYF has implemented user-friendly and easily accessible complaint and feedback mechanisms, available through various channels detailed below. Our outreach teams, known as Harikara, distribute leaflets to community members in both Kurdish and Arabic, covering the areas where our interventions occur. These leaflets provide clear instructions on how individuals can securely, anonymously, and promptly submit complaints or feedback. This includes not only feedback on the mechanisms themselves but also on FYF's publicly available AAP frameworks. This ensures continuous communication with community members, empowering them to hold FYF accountable.

FYF acknowledges that accountability hinges on the informed consent of community members, allowing them to either consent to or withdraw from services and provide feedback. This consent is contingent upon community members being adequately informed about the implications of both the services offered and the feedback mechanisms provided. Informed consent comprises three essential components:

- **Capacity:** Community members participating in FYF services or providing feedback have the ability or capacity to make clear, competent decisions on their own behalf;
- **Comprehension of Information:** Community members participating in FYF services or providing feedback clearly understand the information presented to them and their options available;
- **Voluntariness:** Community members give consent freely with no coercion or pressure from FYF.

4.3.1. Feedback access points for community members

Below access points have been identified based on preferred means of communication by community members.

- **Option 1:** All FYF offices have a post box attached to the outside wall, which can be accessed by the community, without having to enter office premises. The boxes are fixed in a position that is not monitored by CCTV cameras;
- **Option 2:** FYF's complaints and feedback mechanisms leaflet also provides alternative contact options, such as a phone number which can accept complaints/feedback via both calls and texts (i.e., SMS and WhatsApp);
- **Option 3:** The leaflet contains a QR code, which community members can scan, taking them to FYF's website with AAP commitments and possible feedback options. The QR is also listed on the postbox for those wishing to submit virtual feedback.

Independent of the channel used, all complaints and/or feedback can be submitted anonymously. To increase accessibility and transparency of the process, both FYF's M&E Officer and the Protection Manager are responsible for managing the complaints and feedback process.

The complaints/feedback boxes at FYF's offices will be reviewed bi-weekly. All complaints and/or feedback will be recorded in an online tracker as soon as they are reviewed/received by the M&E Officer/Protection Manager.

Depending on the urgency of the matter, all complaints and/or feedback will be addressed between a period of 24 hours to two weeks. There shall not be any efforts to identify and/or respond to the person who submitted the complaint/feedback unless it was explicitly requested, and contact information was provided.

4.3.2. Feedback access points for staff members

FYF has established staff policies for reporting misconduct and whistleblower mechanisms, detailed comprehensively in the FYF Policy Book. Furthermore, managers actively solicit feedback from staff members to enhance the office environment, both in the field and remotely for HQ teams, fostering seamless collaboration between field operations and headquarters, whenever feasible.

4.4. Results

4.4.1. Monitoring and evaluation techniques

Quality monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning serve as foundational pillars of effective human rights programming. At FYF, we ensure a rigorous assessment of program implementation and outcomes by close coordination between field and headquarters staff. This involves ongoing informal assessments, formal data analysis, and tailored reporting for each program. Employing a blend of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods such as surveys, focus group discussions (FGDs), and key informant interviews (KIIs), we continuously monitor progress towards target indicators, identify any unforeseen project consequences to mitigate future risks, and adapt programming based on invaluable community feedback.

Community feedback serves as a vital tool for refining service delivery mechanisms, adjusting program priorities, and addressing unforeseen challenges. This fosters a culture of accountability, transparency, and continuous learning within FYF. By embracing this iterative approach, we not only enhance the effectiveness and impact of our interventions but also empower beneficiaries to actively shape the programs and services designed to support them. To ensure our commitment to accountability and community engagement, we integrate AAP into indicator tables, which measure the number of formal community consultations held, pieces of feedback received and addressed, and the proportion of program participants who feel services are delivered in a participatory and accountable manner. Moreover, our final reporting goes beyond program outcomes and impact; it also highlights instances where community feedback directly influenced program activities, exemplifying our dedication to incorporating beneficiary perspectives into every stage of our work.

Operating within an insecure, post-genocide environment, FYF actively anticipates and endeavors to proactively mitigate significant barriers to equal participation, especially concerning feedback and data collection. Central to FYF's mission is the commitment to ensuring the inclusion of religious and ethnic minorities, with a particular emphasis on women and girls.

As part of our efforts to promote inclusivity, community members participating in programs, surveys, FGDs, and KIIs are always invited to provide demographic information through project intake forms. These forms include fields for self-identified gender, religious affiliation, ethnicity, and disability status. To facilitate accurate self-identification, the disability question encompasses examples of disabilities that individuals may not readily recognize, such as mental health conditions.

While FYF acknowledges and affirms diverse sexual identities, we refrain from requesting individuals to disclose their sexual orientations on demographic paperwork. This decision is made considering the conservative nature of the groups with whom FYF collaborates, as requesting such information may inadvertently deter participation in our programs

While data security and confidentiality are always paramount, they take on heightened significance when working with post-genocide populations still enduring ongoing violence and discrimination. Therefore, FYF implements robust measures to safeguard personally identifiable information (PII) under all circumstances.

Hard copies of surveys, demographic forms, or any documents containing PII are securely stored in locked files at FYF's centers. For M&E data containing PII, randomized case ID numbers are assigned to enhance anonymity and protection. Moreover, staff members handling sensitive case files, such as psychologists, are required to utilize two-factor authentication when accessing their devices. This additional layer of security prevents unauthorized access and ensures that data remains protected at all times.

4.4.2. Do-no-harm

FYF is dedicated to mitigating any unintended harm caused by its presence and assistance by prioritizing the establishment of rapport and trust with community members. This involves actively listening to their concerns and feedback, while respecting their autonomy. At the core of FYF's approach is a survivor-centric, do-no-harm philosophy, which emphasizes flexible and responsive engagement with community members. This ensures effective, humane, and personalized coordination and continuity in service delivery.

Central to this approach is the fundamental respect for the rights and preferences of individuals, ensuring their safety, and treating them with dignity and respect. FYF's commitment to a do-no-harm approach is reflected in its Protection and Case Management SOPs, guiding every aspect of its operations.

5. Resources

This framework draws on internationally recognized frameworks, best practices, and minimum standards for AAP:

Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC)

[Accountability and Inclusion](#)

Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC)

[Accountability to Affected Populations. Tools to Assist in Implementing the IASC AAP Commitments](#)

Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC)

[Collective AAP Framework](#)

U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration

[Accountability to Affected Populations](#)

CHS Alliance

[FAQs on Accountability to Affected Populations \(AAP\)](#)

The Sphere Project

[The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response \(Fourth Edition\)](#)