



# Learning Brief

Growing a Community Feedback Mechanism

Lessons from GOAL Turkey

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**Date:**

April 2022

**Title:**

GOAL Turkey - Growing a CFM

**Country/  
Region:**

Turkey

**Sector:**

MEAL

**Intervention  
Dates:**From July/2018 to  
December/2021

## Executive Summary

In this brief GOAL outlines lessons learnt in Turkey on the development, roll-out, and growth of a new Community Feedback Mechanism (CFM). The brief demonstrates that building trust with the target community is paramount in terms of the CFM gaining acceptance and wide usage. It also demonstrates the importance of gender awareness when thinking about CFM staffing and how, having a more gender balanced team, makes a CFM more accessible and inclusive.

## Background

[GOAL](#) is an international humanitarian and development organisation working in 14 countries to relieve the suffering of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people.

The beginning of conflict in Syria in 2011 triggered a mass displacement of people, both internally and to cross-border countries. Turkey became the number one country in the world in terms of the number of migrants hosted. The number of Syrian refugees living under temporary protection in Turkey has now reached over 3,600,000. Cities such as İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep, Adana, Kilis, Hatay, and Mersin became hosts to large Syrian populations.

[GOAL Turkey](#) has been operating since July 2018 when the agency began implementing LINK, an ECHO-funded protection programme. In December 2018, a Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Team was established. This was followed by a CFM in May 2019, underpinned by standard operating procedures, and adapted global guidelines.

Initially managed solely by GOAL Turkey's MEAL Manager, an Accountability Assistant was hired first in 2019, with another joining in 2021. From the outset, GOAL Turkey's CFM has been promoted widely in target communities, using innovative techniques such as mugs and pens. Strong promotion of the mechanism meant that, from 2019, when GOAL Turkey received 69 communications, to 2021 when over 5,000 were received, the CFM grew at a fast rate. This learning brief documents some of the methods GOAL Turkey used to develop and strengthen its CFM, as well as approaches to increasing the awareness and acceptance of the CFM in the community. It is hoped that new and existing international humanitarian and development programmes may draw learning from which to start or strengthen their CFMs.

## Lessons Learnt

GOAL Turkey's four primary lessons on the development of their CFM are:

1. Ensuring that an active system is in-place so that all communications are responded to within a set timeframe and that all CFM users receive updates or a full response to their issue. This helps build **trust and acceptance** in the community. CommCare (an application used for data collection) has helped in this regard.
2. Ensuring that the CFM Team has a **gender balance**. It is essential that female members of the community have a native-speaking female CFM representative whom they can talk to if they are to provide feedback and in different languages.
3. Ensuring that **serious complaints are handled effectively and separately**. Either through an ad hoc or permanent Serious Complaints Committee.
4. Including a CFM section in each M&E tool (Satisfaction surveys, PDMs, etc) to ensure the efficiency and relevancy of the current active CFM system, **assess gaps, and hear suggestions to take corrective actions** if any.

### Innovations

- In October 2019, GOAL Turkey established a **Serious Complaints Committee** to oversee response to, and investigation of, serious complaints (fraud, abuse, exploitation). Chaired by MEAL and composed of senior management in GOAL Turkey, the Committee works closely with the Complaints Response Group and Investigations Unit in GOAL HQ. This Committee helped GOAL Turkey to effectively manage its response to serious issues and act quicker where needed.
- GOAL Turkey **utilised a range of channels** for its CFM. These are WhatsApp, a toll-free hotline, an email address, and suggestion boxes at field offices.
- As well as the standard use of posters and banners to advertise the CFM, GOAL Turkey **distributed mugs and pens with CFM information**, during field visits.
- Usage of WhatsApp was important to GOAL Turkey's CFM. As well as receiving communications **WhatsApp was used to circulate mass messaging regarding programming**, services, and beneficiary lists.
- Due to the high ratio of literacy among GOAL Turkey's targeted populations, the team have developed a **digital solution for community engagement called BETH** (Beneficiary Empowerment Tool for Humanitarian), an android application installed on programme participants' phones giving them the ability of direct communication easily to GOAL staff, answer surveys, send feedback and request information/assistance. The BETH tool is media oriented, meaning that it mostly uses media (photos, videos, and voices) to communicate with end-users (GOAL beneficiaries) since some can be illiterate or semi-illiterate.
- While initially hiring a male Accountability Assistant, GOAL Turkey also **hired a female to the role of Accountability Assistant** in 2021. This resulted in a jump in communications from adult women, as detailed below.
- GOAL Turkey have added a question to the CFM intake form, asking users if they'd **prefer to speak with a male or female staff member** to disclose their communication.
- After GOAL Turkey's CFM case load began to increase, case management in Excel became complicated. The team therefore switched to **CommCare to manage CFM cases** and record case data more effectively. The use of CommCare for the CFM has allowed for more information to be collected about each case and for each case to be managed more efficiently.

The **Community Feedback Mechanism (CFM)** is the overall system that includes ways for stakeholders to share feedback and concerns, the systems and processes GOAL has for managing and analysing feedback and concerns, and the processes GOAL has for using feedback data to inform decisions and for closing the feedback loop.



- The two Accountability Officers (covering five project locations) routinely **conducted visits to field sites** and social support centres, meeting the targeted population to field feedback, concerns, suggestion, and any challenges they faced. **Focus Group Discussions** are also conducted to collect feedback about the CFM.

### Observations

- **Spikes in CFM usage were consistently noted during and immediately after in-kind distribution undertaken by GOAL Turkey.** This falls in-line with the global GOAL observation of in-kind support generating most CFM traffic.
- Women are usually more comfortable disclosing issues to other women, more so than to men (PSEA Task Force). Today, the majority (70% in 2021) of GOAL Turkey’s CFM users are adult females. In 2019, this was closer to 50%. GOAL Turkey noted that **after the female Accountability Assistant joined, the number of adult female CFM cases increased by 160%** (379 to 985). This was particularly noted in face-to-face communications, where females went from being the minority to the majority, after a female Accountability Assistant was hired.
- The toll-free hotline is the most used channel in GOAL Turkey’s CFM. However, there are **costs associated with running a toll-free line.** GOAL Turkey also noted that users often failed to hang up once calls had ended, incurring more costs.

## Recommendations and Conclusion

### Recommendations

Having a gender balanced CFM Team is crucial to gaining the trust of female community members and encouraging them to use the mechanism. Females are less likely to share issues with male CFM members. Meanwhile, male community members do not seem particularly put off by having to speak to women.

Community interest in GOAL and its CFM will likely jump in and around the distribution of in-kind support. Therefore, CFM promotional materials (such as posters and banners) should be on display as much as possible during distribution times and close to distribution centres.

CommCare is a very useful application to assist CFM teams in more efficient case management, as well as collecting and categorising more kinds of data. This also helps increase the acceptance and trust for the mechanism in the community. CommCare does require investment in staff training for it to be used effectively. This should be considered when switching to CommCare.

When developing a toll-free hotline, it is important to be aware of the costs for the agency. Country programmes should work with their service provider to ensure there are no hidden costs associated with the mechanism.

### Conclusion

GOAL Turkey’s CFM has grown at a faster rate than most others in the agency. While CFM usage is often down to cultural, local, contextual, and programmatic factors, a country programme can find means of encouraging more usage, making the mechanism more inclusive and accessible, making the community more aware, and ensuring the mechanism is as efficient as possible.

### References/ Citations:

[ALNAP - What Makes Feedback Mechanisms Work? \(2016\)](#)

[PSEA Task Force - Guidelines on Setting Up a Community Based Complaints Mechanism](#)

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