August 2025

Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the Response to the Earthquakes in Syria

IAHE

Overview

- This is an independent, inter-agency evaluation of the collective response of IASC member agencies in meeting the humanitarian needs of communities affected by the earthquakes in Syria (and Türkiye).
- It covers the period between February 2023 —when the earthquakes happened— and August 2024 (the start of data collection).
- This document only provides information about the collective humanitarian response in Syria.

Methods

Utilization-focused evaluation with participatory, mixed-methods approach and conducted by an independent evaluation team.

306 people shared their views:
- 27 female and 43 male informants interviewed
- 79 female and 78 male community members consulted
- 24 female and 55 male aid workers surveyed

150 documents reviewed

2 country visits

Key Findings

Communities led life-saving efforts, swiftly rescuing survivors and meeting urgent needs, demonstrating the power of community-led humanitarian action in the absence of formal search and rescue teams.

Flexible cash and voucher assistance was valued by affected communities. In the former Non-Government Controlled Areas (NGCA), existing financial service agreements enabled quick cash delivery, while Government Controlled Areas (GCA) faced data protection challenges.

Despite limited early support for vulnerable groups, the cross-border response **improved community engagement and localized coordination**, enabled by unprecedented access.

The Flash Appeal had limited impact, as donors responded directly and overall funding fell short of earthquake-related needs.

The Scale-Up did not help to overcome **coordination challenges** within the WoS, marked by Competition, rather than collaboration between GCA and NGCA.

Pooled funds provided critical early support, with the Syria Cross-border Humanitarian Fund (SCHF) innovating with a CERF loan for rapid disbursement. Still, CERF prioritization under the Whole of Syria Coordination (WoS) structure excluded key cross-border actors.

The earthquakes revealed **structural imbalances in humanitarian partnerships**, as local NGOs faced delayed funding and duplicative due diligence, reinforcing transactional relationships with international actors and highlighting the need for more equitable collaboration.

Duty of care for aid workers—especially Syrian NGOs in NGCAs—was inconsistent, raising long-term well-being concerns. The SCHF set a positive precedent by covering duty of care costs for Syrian NGO partners.

Recommendations

- Invest in community-based NGOs (especially in hard-to-reach areas), local structures such as camp management, Area Mukhtars (community leaders), and local unions, and advocate for them to get greater direct access to humanitarian funding.
- Develop an emergency preparedness plan, taking into account the new context and risks.
- Inter-cluster groups should consolidate needs assessment data and strengthen the capacity of small Syrian NGOs, volunteer groups, and local associations to identify the needs of vulnerable groups.
- Scale up good practices implemented in the former Non-Government Controlled Area, including Accountability to Affected People mechanisms, such as the Safeline and the Rumor Tracker, to the rest of the country.
- Strengthen the role of volunteer groups in humanitarian response and ensure that Syrian NGOs have a significant role in coordination and decision-making.

FAO Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations · ICRC · ICVA · IFRC · IOM-OIM · OCHA · UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS · SCHR · UNDP · UNFPA · UNHCR · unicef · UN WOMEN · WFP World Food Programme · World Health Organization · ALNAP