

# TURKEY-SYRIA EARTHQUAKE APPEAL

## Progress Report



DISASTERS  
EMERGENCY  
COMMITTEE



**Your generosity at work.**

Majd\*, a student at a school in Aleppo province, Syria, with toilets and washing facilities that were rehabilitated by Action Against Hunger using funds from the DEC's appeal.

Published January 2024



## APPEAL TIMELINE

Phase 1 covers the first six months and focuses on emergency response.  
Phase 2 runs for the next 18 months, with focus shifting to the longer term.

### Phase 1

#### 6 February 2023

A huge earthquake hits southern Turkey at 4.17am, followed by another hours later

#### 9 February 2023 DEC launches the Turkey-Syria Earthquake Appeal

#### 19 February 2023

Search and rescue ends in most areas

#### 23 February 2023

Donations to the appeal reach £100 million

#### March 2023

Turkish government announces plans for container sites

#### March-April 2023

Flooding affects southern Turkey and Syria

#### July 2023

Extreme heatwave sees temperatures soar in affected areas

#### 3 August 2023

Donations to the appeal reach £150 million

#### 31 August 2023

End of DEC Phase 1 emergency relief projects

### Phase 2

#### 1 September 2023

Start of DEC Phase 2 recovery projects



# FOREWORD

On 6 February 2023, two earthquakes struck Turkey (now known as Türkiye). These were the largest the country had seen in the last 100 years. The first earthquake had a magnitude of 7.8 and the second one had a magnitude of 7.6. Tens of thousands of lives were lost, and widespread damage was caused to homes across southern Turkey and north-west Syria.

The first earthquake struck without warning in the early hours of the morning while people were sleeping. A few hours later, the second earthquake created even more damage in much of the same area. Around 300,000 buildings were destroyed across the two countries, including blocks of flats, hospitals and schools, along with damage to roads, power and water supplies. Nearly 18 million people were left in immediate need of humanitarian assistance, including clean water, food and a place to live.

The Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) launched the Turkey-Syria Earthquake Appeal on 9 February. Within two weeks, the appeal had raised £100 million. DEC member charities and their local partners were responding in the affected areas in both Turkey and Syria within hours of the first earthquake, providing food, water, shelter, bedding and medical treatment to people who had been affected. In the weeks and months since the earthquakes, they have continued to provide a wide range of support to meet people's basic needs.

Thanks to the generosity of the UK public, over £150 million has been raised since the appeal was launched. This total includes £5 million from the UK Government as part of the Aid Match scheme. With this money, DEC charities and local partners have been able to support hundreds of thousands of people in the affected areas across both countries.

The first phase of the DEC response ran for six months from 9 February to 30 July 2023. In this period, DEC member charities focused on giving vital support to the most affected communities, including providing food and direct cash payments, repairing damaged water infrastructure and building toilets. From August 2023, activities have shifted towards longer term support, including restoring people's livelihoods, while still helping to meet the basic needs of the most vulnerable people affected by the disaster.

This report explains how DEC member charities and their local partners have responded to the disaster, providing an overview and giving examples of what the funds achieved. It shows how DEC funding has helped member charities and their local partners to respond to the immediate impact of the earthquakes and to start to prepare for the long road to recovery.

*Throughout this report names marked with \* have been changed to protect identities.*

**January 2024**  
Date of Report  
publication

**January 2025**  
End of DEC funded  
projects, with work  
being taken forward by  
DEC member charities

Amal\* sits with her son in front of a tent in Aleppo province, Syria, four days after the earthquake.

# THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

Around 4.17am local time on 6 February 2023, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck south-eastern Turkey, followed a few hours later by a 7.6 magnitude earthquake. The earthquakes affected a large area of southern Turkey and north-west Syria, killing over 56,000 people with countless more injured.

Nearly 18 million people were directly affected by the earthquakes across the two countries. At least 300,000 buildings were destroyed or badly damaged, leaving people out in the cold winter weather without shelter. Supplies of food, clean water and power were disrupted, and hospitals and schools were damaged. In Turkey, 3 million people have been displaced to other parts of the country while many others are now living in overcrowded tents in camps and adapted shipping containers.

Due to more than a decade of civil war and instability, Syria has one of the largest displaced populations in the world. Before the earthquakes, around 60% of people in north-west Syria had been forced to flee their homes to avoid conflict. Many people live in temporary shelters and tent camps with limited access to food, clean water and healthcare. The earthquakes added another crisis onto an already devastating situation. Estimates show that around 2 million people are now living in camps and shelters in north-west Syria. Overcrowded camps and communities have been placed under even more strain by the arrival of families whose homes were destroyed or badly damaged by the earthquakes.

## LOCATION AND IMPACT OF THE EARTHQUAKES



Data: US Geological Survey. The area shows shaking of MMI 4.5 and above.

## Country contexts

The situation in the two countries is very different. The Turkish government's Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) is leading and coordinating the response in Turkey. Immediate support focused on search and rescue, providing medical care to injured people, and delivering food, water and emergency shelter to vulnerable communities. AFAD has set up formal camps to house people in tents and shipping containers. Many people have moved to other parts of the country after losing their homes. Since the first hours of the earthquakes, DEC member charities and their local partners have been contributing to the response, helping to meet people's critical needs. This includes providing clean water, food, shelter, heating, warm clothes, safe and accessible sanitation facilities, and quality healthcare.

In north-west Syria, the underlying context is complex. More than a decade of conflict and upheaval has left the population coping with multiple crises. People have been dealing with displacement, food and water shortages, rampant inflation, currency devaluation, a lack of jobs, and a fuel and energy crisis for years.

The frontline between government-controlled and non-government-controlled areas runs through the region worst affected by the earthquakes. This has made it harder for humanitarian agencies to rapidly reach the people in most urgent need of help.

There is no overall coordinated response to the earthquakes in a country still divided by conflict. With many people already living in extreme hardship, earthquake damage has further damaged basic services like hospitals and water systems, and disrupted supply routes for humanitarian aid. This has also

made it difficult to bring construction materials or heavy machinery into the area.

Coming on top of the existing and prolonged crisis in Syria, the earthquakes have made the need for humanitarian support even more urgent and harder to deliver. However, as many DEC charities were already working in Syria, they have been able to adapt and scale up their work.

## Challenging weather conditions

The humanitarian response to the earthquakes has been affected by weather extremes. The earthquakes happened in harsh winter temperatures, with people needing immediate access to emergency shelters, as well as blankets and hot meals. Heavy rainfall and floods hit Turkey and Syria in March and April, requiring quick intervention with appropriate clothing and support to avoid illness and disease further impacting communities. In July, both countries experienced record high temperatures, so member charities and their local partners increased clean water supply to communities. The heatwave was also difficult for staff working on the ground. DEC member charities and local partners adjusted working hours to protect staff from the intense heat in the middle of the day.

Almost a year on from the disaster, despite the huge efforts of the international community, the needs in both countries remain high due to the huge amount of damage caused. Many people require ongoing material support and help to recover their livelihoods, and there is also a need for mental health and psychosocial support to help people cope with the difficult experiences they have endured and reduce the risk of developing anxiety and depression.

Families on the grounds of a former carpark at a theme park, now used as a Turkish Red Crescent camp to house some of the tens of thousands of people displaced by the earthquakes in Osmaniye, southern Turkey.





Lila 6, has her face painted at a primary school in Twickenham during a fundraising event run by the Give from Heart volunteering group.

# FUNDRAISING FOR THE TURKEY-SYRIA EARTHQUAKE APPEAL

The DEC Turkey-Syria Earthquake Appeal was launched on 9 February 2023 with TV broadcasts on the BBC presented by Tamsin Greig and on ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5, and Sky presented by Daniel Craig airing after the evening news. The BBC also aired radio appeals presented by Jo Whiley, Rev Richard Coles, Reece Parkinson, Ankur Desai and Gideon Coe. Commercial radio appeals were voiced by Sir Michael Palin. The appeal was announced at an online press conference including aid workers on the ground that was carried live on BBC News and Sky News. The launch of the appeal was featured on the front page of the Metro newspaper, BBC Radio 4's Today Programme, BBC Breakfast, ITV's Good Morning Britain, ITV News, Press Association and many more. Over £32 million was raised within 24 hours of the appeal being launched.

As well as receiving £5 million in Aid Match funding from the UK Government, £500,000 was donated by the Scottish Government and £300,000 from the Welsh Government. Their Royal Highnesses The King and Queen Consort and The Prince and Princess of Wales made generous donations. The Prince and Princess also met community fundraisers supporting the appeal in March 2023.

A variety of community fundraising events were organised around the UK in support of the appeal, including collections at the Leicester Comedy Festival and a ukulele festival in Belfast, a 'Skippathon' at Charing Cross station in London, and a chain of restaurants adding £1 to diners' bills to pass on to the appeal. Transport for London staff also held collections raising over £10,000.

Corporate support for the appeal was also strong, with partners in the financial sector raising over £4 million, including NatWest who put a notification on their banking app. The Premier League donated £1 million and £2.2 million was raised through the Big Give. The video game Football Manager added an in-game advert for the appeal, reaching over 20 million people around the world. There was also strong support from BT Sport (now TNT Sports), British Airways and from the out of home advertising industry, which donated substantial billboard space to help publicise the appeal.

On 24 February ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5, Sky, STV, UKTV, Warner Bros and Ocean Outdoor took part in an ad break takeover, showing the appeal with Daniel Craig.

By the end of the two-week campaign, over £100 million had been raised by the DEC and its member charities. By January 2024, this had risen to £155 million (with £107 million coming directly to the DEC and £48 million being raised by the member charities) making the appeal the third largest in the DEC's 60-year history.



The Prince and Princess of Wales met fundraisers at an event at Hayes Muslim Centre, London, to raise money for the appeal.

£155  
million  
raised

09/01/2024



Rumeysa, a psychologist, and Nur, a pharmacist and psychosocial assistant, both with the Independent Doctors Association, a partner of International Rescue Committee, provide psychosocial support to people living in a container camp in Turkey.

© Ozge Sebrece / DEC / picture

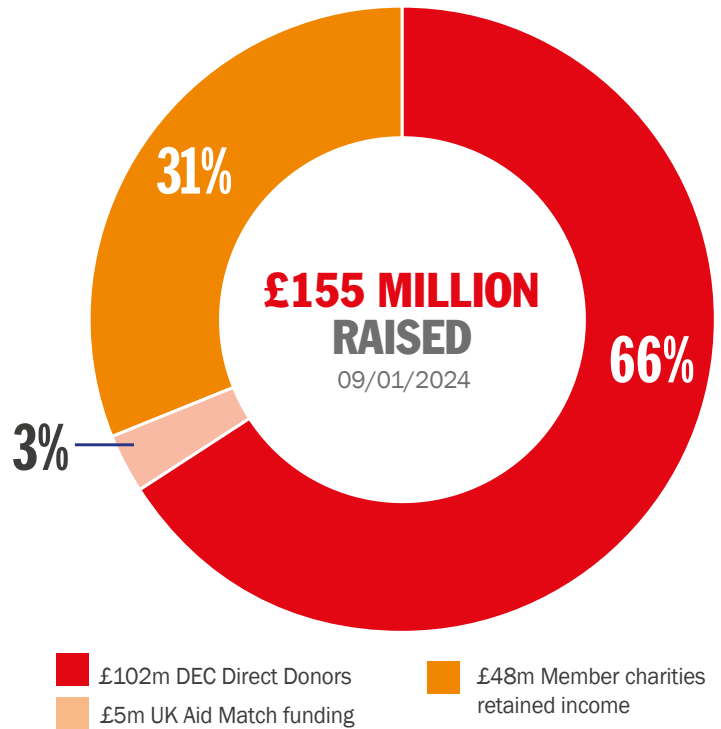


# HOW THE DEC IS HELPING

The DEC Turkey-Syria Earthquake Appeal has raised £155 million as of January 2024. Of this, £102 million was raised by the DEC, plus £5 million through the UK government's UK Aid Match scheme. The remaining £48 million was raised by DEC member charities using DEC co-branding.

Since the launch of the appeal, DEC member charities have been working directly and alongside local partners to use these funds to meet the needs of hundreds of thousands of people in Turkey and Syria.

There are 14 DEC member charities involved in the earthquake response.



## BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE BREAKDOWN

Phase 1 confirmed budget

**£30.6 million**

Phase 1 six-month expenditure

**£31 million\***

\*DEC member charities brought forward funds allocated to Phase 2 of the response to provide additional support during the first phase.

In the first six months of the DEC Turkey-Syria Earthquake Appeal, member charities and local partners provided:



**921,000**

people with access to safe drinking water



**285,000**

people with cash payments or vouchers to buy food, medicine, clothing and other household items



**269,000**

people with emergency food parcels or vouchers to buy food



**186,000**

people with hygiene kits containing laundry and dishwasher detergents, toothbrushes, toothpaste and soap



**150,000**

people with kits including blankets, kitchen items and clothing



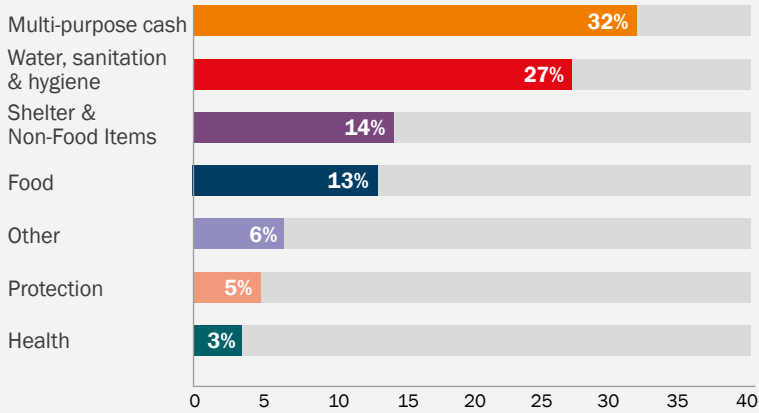
**34,100**

people with access to mental health or psychosocial support programmes

# HOW THE DEC IS HELPING

## SIX MONTH EXPENDITURE BY SECTOR

9 February – 31 July 2023

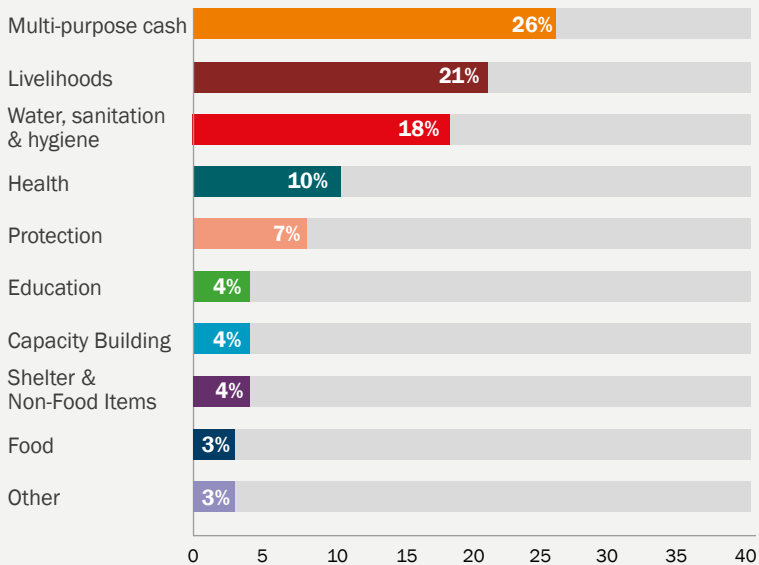


## DEC MEMBER AND PARTNER BREAKDOWN

DEC member charities	Local partners in Turkey and Syria	Spent by local and national partners
14	31	£9.3 million

## PHASE 2 PLANS BY SECTOR

August 2023 – January 2025



## Meeting immediate needs

The appeal has focused on getting help where it's most urgently needed and supporting the most vulnerable families and communities. In the first six months, member charities and their local partners used DEC funding to deliver 23 projects with nine in Turkey and 14 in Syria.

In the first six months of the response, these projects focused on providing:

- Cash assistance: providing cash payments or vouchers so people can buy what they need, like food, clothes or household items
- Water, sanitation and hygiene support (WASH): giving people access to clean drinking water, repairing damage to water infrastructure, and supplying hygiene kits containing items like sanitary pads, underwear, soap and toothbrushes
- Shelter: providing temporary tents, tarpaulins, kitchen utensils, mattresses, blankets and warm clothing to people who had lost their homes and belongings
- Food parcels and vouchers: setting up community kitchens to provide hot meals, distributing emergency food parcels and vouchers for food
- Healthcare: setting up mobile health clinics, and helping to restock medical kits and medicines
- Protection: providing counselling sessions to people struggling with their mental health and helping vulnerable groups to stay safe.

Phase 2 of the DEC response runs from August 2023 to January 2025. During this period DEC members and local partners are support the ongoing recovery of Turkey and north-west Syria. Together, they will focus on supporting people to regain their livelihoods, take part in activities that produce an income, rebuild vital water supply and sanitation infrastructure, and rebuild communities.

In Turkey there is a continued focus on cash assistance, with plans to reach more than 130,000 people, while in Syria healthcare and water, sanitation and hygiene are priorities, with plans to provide over 680,000 people with improved access to clean water and 640,000 people with healthcare assistance such as medical consultations, distribution of medications and the provision of first aid kits. However, DEC funding is designed to be flexible to allow member charities to adapt their programmes quickly, and plans may change according to the changing needs on the ground.

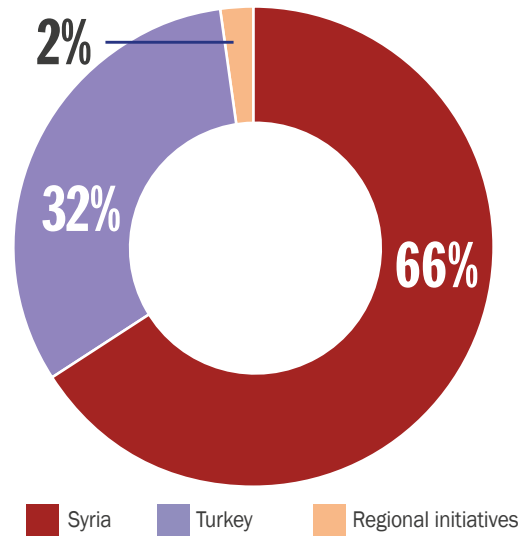
### How we report our spending

During an appeal, the majority of donations come straight to the DEC while others go directly to member charities. The DEC only oversees and reports on the donations that come directly to the charity, which for this appeal is £107 million. So far, the DEC has allocated £91 million to member charities, which will be spent over two years. Further funds will be allocated to members, to be spent before February 2025.

This report explains how member charities and their partners are using DEC funds to support the people of Turkey and Syria. In the first six months of the response, £31.5 million was spent, with £10.0 million in Turkey and £20.8 million in Syria and £0.6 million on regional quality and accountability initiatives.

A small percentage (8.2%) of funds are used to cover DEC fundraising, administration and operational costs. These costs are crucial as they help the DEC to raise the money to fund its work, ensure that funds are spent well and make sure the charity runs efficiently and effectively.

### SIX MONTH EXPENDITURE BY COUNTRY



### Why more money has been spent in Syria than Turkey

While the earthquakes caused devastation in both Turkey and Syria, the situation in the two countries has been different (see page 4). DEC member charities base their decisions on what aid to provide and where depending on the needs on the ground and what other support is already being provided.

In Turkey, the national disaster management agency, AFAD, has been coordinating the humanitarian response and providing significant aid. In Syria, 12 years of conflict meant there was no single coordinated response to the earthquakes and fewer national resources available to assist affected communities.

The needs in Syria were already high and were compounded by the earthquakes. For example, fragile water infrastructure was badly damaged by the earthquakes with no one to repair it, and cholera was present in some areas. Many people were already living in camps before the earthquakes. These camps then had to host more people who lost their houses in the earthquakes.

While the needs in both countries are huge following such a devastating disaster, it's essential that experts on the ground make the decision about where to focus aid to make sure the response is as effective as possible.

Huda\* watches as a doctor from Age International's partner the Syrian Expatriate Medical Association examines her grandson Usama\* in northwest Syria in the days following the earthquake.





**Helping to rebuild lives.**

# HOW WE'RE HELPING: **TURKEY**

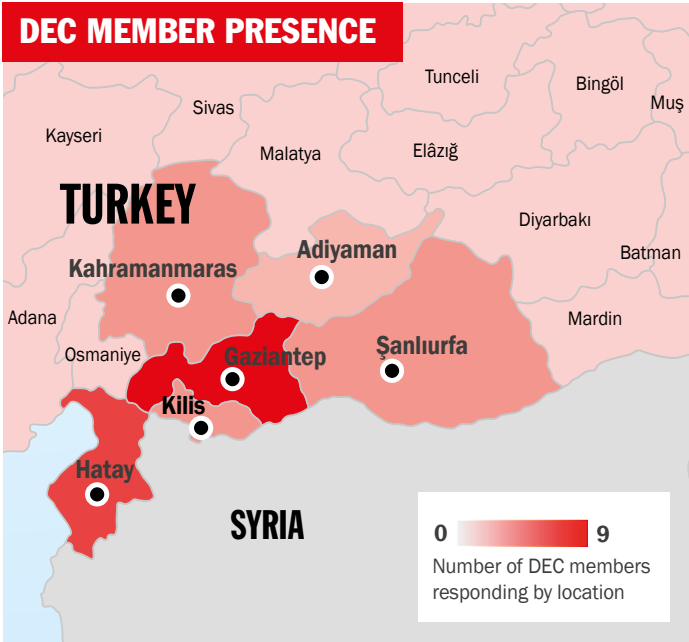
## Humanitarian situation in Turkey

More than 298,000 buildings in southern Turkey (now known as Türkiye) were destroyed or severely damaged in the earthquakes, forcing millions of people from their homes. Three million people have relocated to other areas of Turkey, but many who have stayed in the affected areas are living in temporary settlements.

Government authorities set up formal camps and supplied them with food, clean drinking water, electricity, sanitation and other services. These sites began as 'tent cities' in the immediate aftermath of the earthquakes. Over time they have been turned into formal camps, with shipping containers being converted into makeshift homes. Due to the scale of the reconstruction, it's expected that families could stay at these sites for at least two years.

In April 2023, an estimated 1.6 million people were living in tents, often in areas close to their destroyed or damaged homes. These settlements were typically smaller than the formal camps and were dispersed around rural areas with limited access to support services.

While the government has made efforts to move people to formal settlements, in August more than 135,000 families were still living in informal sites with some lacking access to clean drinking water and toilets. Vulnerable groups, such as Syrian refugees, have found it difficult to access healthcare because they don't have an address or ID card registration. Many families are likely to remain living in tents for some time. From harsh winter conditions in the weeks after the earthquakes, to heavy rainfall and flooding in April, followed by searing heat in July, these families have already experienced the worst extremes of weather as they prepare for more cold weather this winter.



### In the first six months of the response:



**126,000**  
people received food assistance through emergency food parcels and vouchers for food



**154,000**  
benefitted from cash or voucher assistance to buy food, clothes or basic household goods



**46,800**  
people received household items such as blankets, mattresses kitchen items and clothing



**54,200**  
people received hygiene kits containing laundry and dishwashing detergents, toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap and shampoo



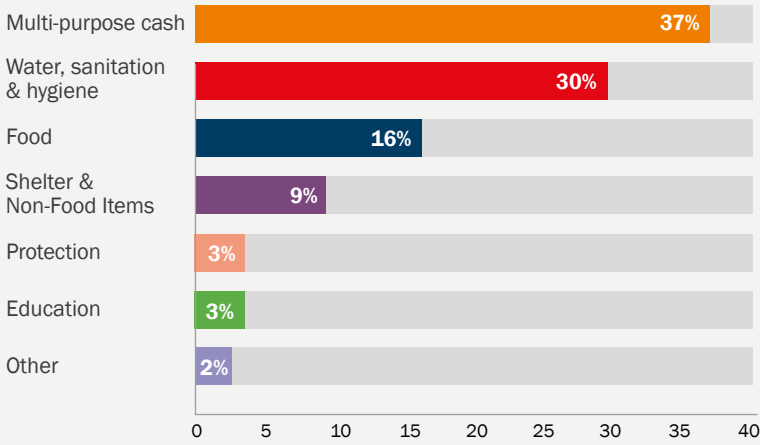
**12,900**  
people were supported through mental health and psychosocial support programmes



**11,700**  
children received educational kits to support their return to school

**TURKEY: EXPENDITURE BY SECTOR**

9 February – 31 July 2023



**BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE BREAKDOWN**

Phase 1 budget (February - July 2023)

**£10.3 million**

Phase 1 expenditure (February - July 2023)

**£10 million**

**DEC MEMBER AND PARTNER BREAKDOWN**

DEC member charities	Local partners in Turkey	Spent by local and national partners
9	7	£1.1 million

**How DEC members are responding in Turkey**

The Turkish government is leading the overall earthquake response, and nine DEC member charities are working directly or through seven local partners or affiliates to provide support. In the first six months, DEC member charities have used funds to reach and support the most vulnerable people. Already disadvantaged by pre-existing social, economic and gender inequalities, vulnerable groups – including women, children, refugees and migrants, and other low-income groups – have even greater needs since the earthquakes.

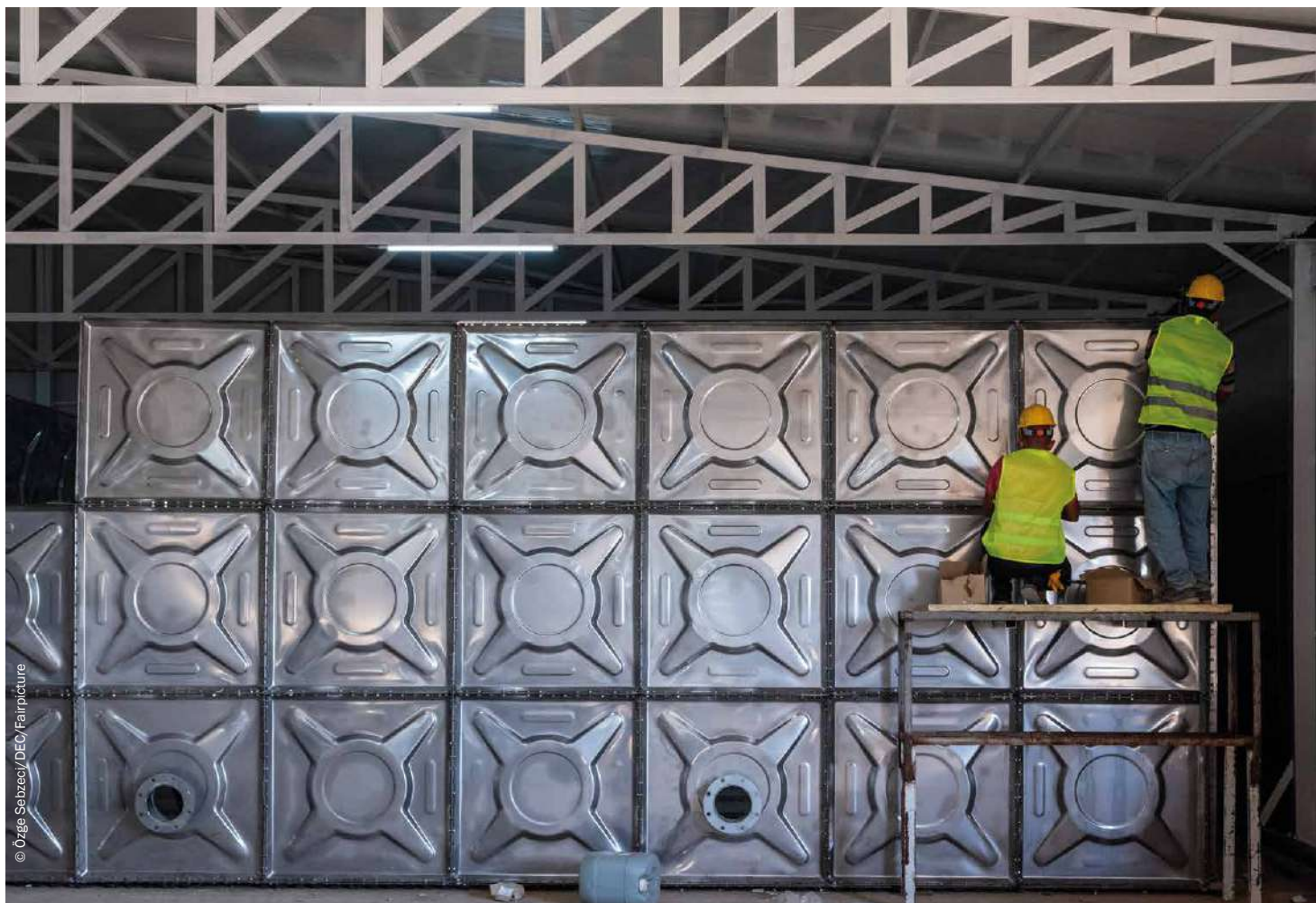
There is increased focus on restoring livelihoods, with member charities providing vocational training, grants for people setting up small and medium-sized businesses, assistance for farmers and support for women’s cooperatives. Save the Children plans to organise business incubation and accelerator events for young people to develop their business ideas. DEC member charities also plan to improve access to mental health and psychosocial support for children, women and vulnerable people. However, DEC funding is designed to be flexible to allow member charities to adapt their programmes quickly, and plans may change according to the changing needs on the ground.

The following sections provide details and examples of work carried out to date in some of the main areas of focus for DEC member charities in Turkey, but do not cover the full breadth of the response.



A psychosocial support project in a rural Gaziantep school affected by the earthquake run by a local partner of Save the Children.

## HOW WE'RE HELPING: WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE



Oxfam workers construct earthquake-resistant water tanks to provide residents of a container camp with access to clean water.

Clean drinking water, sanitation and hygiene are basic needs for people affected by disasters. Contamination of water leads to illnesses like diarrhoea, cholera and dysentery. Together with local authorities, DEC member charities have been repairing water points, installing new ones and transporting water in bulk by truck to reach both formal and informal camps.

In the first six months, Oxfam and its local partners provided clean water and improved sanitation and hygiene across several locations. This included 415 prefabricated toilets and 205 shower cabins, supporting over 8,000 people. Oxfam also repaired unusable and broken toilet and shower units, including the facilities in a temporary school. Toilet cleaning kits were provided, and 89 commodes were given to people with disabilities and pregnant women. Over 49,000 litres of fresh drinking water were distributed in one province, benefiting over 2,900 people.

Working with community volunteers, Oxfam has also run hygiene awareness sessions for women and girls. This has included going to speak to people in their tents, group

discussions and walks in the community, delivered in local languages. These sessions covered the importance of clean drinking water, health, hygiene and sensitive issues like managing their periods. The charity has reached more than 2,400 women and girls.

Hygiene and dignity kits were also distributed by several DEC member charities and their local partners, reaching 54,200 people in the first six months. DEC member charities made sure that the hygiene kits met the needs of women and girls by visiting households and asking what they needed. Save the Children teams visited communities in their tents to make sure that dignity kits containing personal hygiene items were delivered directly to women and girls.

In the second phase of the response from August 2023 to January 2025, DEC member charities plan to provide 56,000 people with improved access to latrines and water for washing, and to provide a further 5,000 people with hygiene kits. Action Against Hunger plans to provide two mobile laundry units for use by people living in informal settlements in Adiyaman and Hatay provinces.



Semir, 57, from Syria, stands with his grandson Burak\* in the entrance to his tent in Gaziantep province, Turkey.

## “We left our homes with nothing”

Semir lost his house in the earthquakes. He is now living in a tent provided by Oxfam with five family members. The charity is supporting Semir and his family, as well as providing toilets and showers for the whole community.

“We left our homes with nothing. We lost most of our things. On the third day after the earthquakes, we received tents and have stayed here to this day.”

“[The Oxfam team] come to us every day and ask us about our needs. They provide us with food, and have given us cleaning supplies, a fan and water. These things comforted us a lot. There are many things like this that put our minds at ease.

There are toilets and bathrooms. Everything is there and in a good condition. Every day I use the bathroom and shower, especially in this hot weather. I can perform ablution [for prayers]. They’ve made it much easier for me.

We thank every person who provided aid to this camp. The things you provided to us exceeded our expectations.”



# HOW WE'RE HELPING: CASH ASSISTANCE

Cash assistance gives people cash payments or vouchers so that they can choose how to meet their own needs. It allows people to take a more active role in their own recovery and is demonstrated to be an effective and dignified form of assistance in situations where the economy is functioning and markets are open. Rather than creating dependency on aid, cash assistance enables families to choose what to spend the money on and plan for how and when to spend it. Cash assistance also stimulates local demand and boosts the economy, contributing to the overall recovery process.

Cash assistance is also helpful for the most vulnerable, such as people with disabilities and older people, whose needs are not always met by traditional aid packages. It gives them the flexibility to pay for the specific items that they need. For example, families may need specific supplies for young children, whilst older people may have requirements relating to specific diets or medical needs.

In the aftermath of the earthquakes, vouchers which could be spent in local supermarkets were one of the quickest and most efficient ways to get immediate support to people in urgent need. Through its partner, the Turkish Red Crescent, the British Red Cross distributed over 140,000 DEC-funded e-vouchers in 76 provinces with a value of over £2 million in the six months following the earthquake. This supported people affected by the earthquakes who had relocated to other parts of Turkey. For use in the Turkish supermarket chain, A101, the cash assistance programme was successful in quickly providing support where it was most needed. People used the vouchers to buy food, hygiene items like detergents and cleaning products, and items for babies. The programme was adapted to meet increased demand during Ramadan.

In the second phase of the response from August 2023 to January 2025, DEC member charities plan to continue to focus on cash assistance in Turkey, aiming to provide more than 130,000 people in Turkey with payments or vouchers to help them meet their basic needs.

Adile, 56, and her son Berat, 15, in their new house. They survived the earthquake in Adiyaman but their house collapsed. They are among many families who are received DEC-funded supermarket vouchers through the British Red Cross.





Cash cards funded by the DEC allow families to choose what they need to buy and help them to meet their basic needs.

## “We were able to shop according to our needs and fill the gaps”

Emrah and his family had their home and most of their belongings destroyed by the earthquakes. Vouchers for a Turkish supermarket are helping him to buy essential items to meet his family’s basic needs.

“We had to leave our house and belongings behind. Initially, we stayed in a tent for almost two days. Then we realised that our house was no longer habitable.

We couldn’t find a job, so we are earning a living through scrap related activities. [We were] provided with three A101 supermarket cards, a total of 1,500 Turkish Lira.

We’ve purchased groceries and food, as well as stationery items for our children. We were able to [buy] the essentials such as sugar, oil and other items that our children needed. As the relief boxes did not provide enough, we were able to shop according to our needs and fill the gaps.”

## HOW WE’RE HELPING: FOOD

After the earthquakes, some people in rural areas and informal camps had limited access to food due to market disruption affecting the availability and price of food. This made cash or voucher support less suitable in these areas.

In the aftermath of the earthquakes, the Turkish Red Crescent, using a range of funding sources, led the provision of hot meals to help people survive. DEC member charities and partners also stepped in to provide additional support to help meet the high level of need. In the first six months of the response, over 126,000 people received food assistance in Turkey through emergency food parcels and vouchers for food through DEC funding.

For example, DEC member charity Islamic Relief provided emergency food for immediate consumption (such as dates, cakes, juice and water) to over 5,300 families. Food parcels containing essential items were given to 4,400 families. These contained rice, bulgur wheat, sugar, olive oil, sunflower oil and tomato paste, which could be stored and used as needed by the families.

CARE International used DEC funding to provide food to areas that were hardest hit by the earthquakes and where other services are limited. They focused on reaching women and girls, people with disabilities and older people. Food baskets containing one month’s supply of food were given to 3,000 households living in tents and shipping containers. Households with more than eight people received double baskets to make sure they had enough food.

As well as food parcels, DEC member charities set up community kitchens providing hot meals to displaced families. Two community kitchens, supported by Action Against Hunger, prepared 226,000 hot meals for 3,000 people. Oxfam worked with women’s cooperatives and community groups to set up community kitchens, providing hot meals to 450 people. Oxfam also supported a women’s cooperative to produce and distribute packaged food items to 1,800 children. This not only provided food to children in need, but also supported seven women and their families with an income.

In the second phase of the response from August 2023 to January 2025, food is expected to be a smaller part of the DEC-funded response, but ActionAid plans to provide food to vulnerable families while CARE International is planning to provide supermarket food vouchers. Action Against Hunger and Save the Children are providing targeted nutrition support for babies and young children.

## We are providing lifesaving assistance”

Julia is food security and livelihood emergency coordinator for Action Against Hunger working in Turkey.

“After an emergency like these earthquakes, food shortages are very high, so it is difficult for people to cover their basic needs. Food is one of the most important life-saving activities we are contributing to. We are giving fresh food and hot meals according to the local diet.

“ We are supporting the [community] kitchens to provide and distribute hot meals to the population as food shortages are very high right now. It’s not possible to find food in the markets, so we are providing this type of lifesaving assistance to enable people to meet their basic needs in terms of food security ”

Families queuing for food distribution on the grounds of a car park now used as a Turkish Red Crescent camp to house people displaced by the earthquakes in southern Turkey in February 2023. This work was not funded by the DEC.





# Meeting basic needs.

# HOW WE'RE HELPING: SYRIA

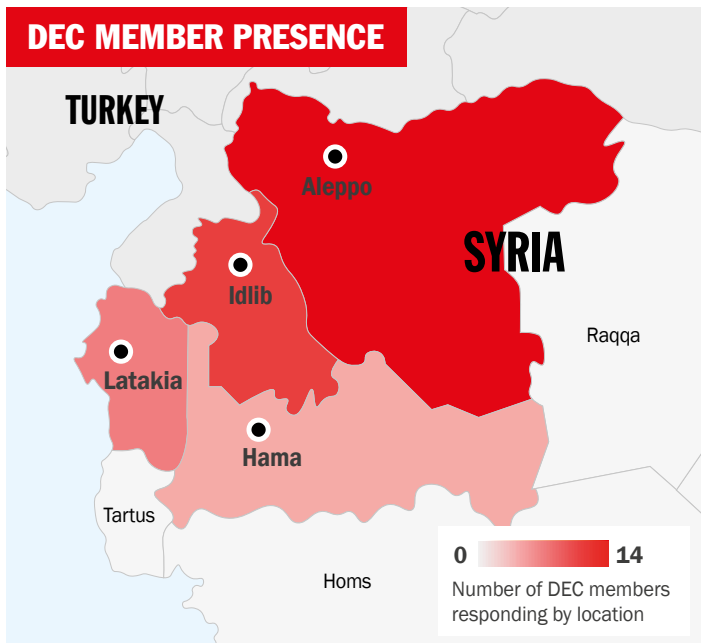
## Humanitarian situation in Syria

Even before the earthquakes hit, there were 15.3 million people in Syria in need of humanitarian assistance as a result of the ongoing conflict. In 2022, 85% of households were unable to meet their basic needs and only 59% of hospitals and 57% of primary healthcare facilities were fully functional. In north-west Syria, one of the last areas not under government control, many people are living in camps without proper access to sanitation and hygiene facilities. The pressure on services was already immense with an ongoing cholera outbreak and many people living in poverty.

The impact of the earthquakes on north-west Syria was devastating. It put increased strain on basic services, with up to 50% of health facilities in affected areas reported to have sustained some damage from the earthquakes. At least 25% of water and sanitation infrastructure was damaged, reducing people's access to safe drinking water and increasing the risk of cholera and other diseases. Due to damage to school buildings and schools being used to host displaced people, more than two million children were reported to not be in school. People's livelihoods and ability to work have also been badly affected. Families have been left without adequate shelter, food, water and essential services.

While international donors have supported the earthquake response in Syria, much of this funding was money previously allocated to pre-existing humanitarian needs in Syria. While funding has gone to support people in newly established camps, support for ongoing humanitarian needs, like food, clean water and healthcare in existing camps, is even more thinly stretched.

A large proportion of people displaced from their homes by the earthquakes have moved to pre-existing camps. This means essential services have been unable to keep up with needs. At the beginning of the earthquake response, people in existing camps were generally welcoming of new families joining their communities.



## In the first six months of the response:



**143,000**

people received food assistance through emergency food parcels and vouchers for food



**131,000**

individuals benefitted from cash or voucher assistance to buy food, clothes or basic household needs



**103,000**

people received household items such as blankets, plastic sheeting, kitchen items and clothing



**132,000**

people received hygiene kits containing laundry and dishwashing detergents, toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap and shampoo



**913,000**

people gained access to safe drinking water



**21,200**

people were supported through mental health and psychosocial support programmes



**42,300**

people received access to healthcare services such as medicines and items like bandages, syringes and casts.

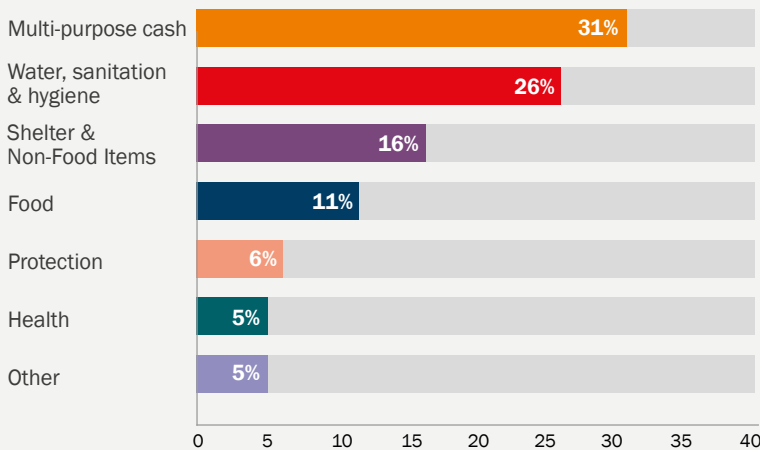


© Ramli Sabbaghly/SEWA

Action for Humanity, a partner of Age International provides essential items to families affected by the earthquakes in Syria.

**SYRIA: EXPENDITURE BY SECTOR**

9 February – 31 July 2023



**BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE BREAKDOWN**

Phase 1 budget (February - July 2023)

**£19.6 million**

Phase 1 expenditure (February - July 2023)

**£20.8 million**

**DEC MEMBER AND PARTNER BREAKDOWN**

DEC member charities	Local partners in Syria	Spent by local and national partners
14	24	£8.2 million

However, due to scarcity of resources, including water and food, tensions have risen between people already living in the camps and those who have arrived since the earthquakes. Six months after the earthquakes, it was estimated that 2 million Syrians were still living in camps.

Intense rainfall in March resulted in flooding and further damage to areas affected by the earthquakes. At least 42 sites in Syria were affected, with floods destroying or damaging more than 1,600 tents which were sheltering 7,500 people. In July, temperatures rose above 40 degrees celsius for prolonged periods during a heatwave, which was especially risky for people living in tents. In autumn, increased shelling along the frontline between government and non-government-controlled areas, which runs through the worst affected provinces, caused further displacement and made access more difficult for aid agencies.

**How DEC members are responding in Syria**

The humanitarian needs are vast, including healthcare, food, water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter, protection and education. Fourteen DEC member charities are responding in Syria with DEC funding, working with a total of 24 local partners. Due to in-country sensitivities in Syria, some members are not named in this report.

In the second phase of the response covering August 2023 to January 2025, cash assistance and the provision of clean water continue to be major areas of focus. Member charities have been helping people prepare for the winter by supplying shelter materials, fuel, warm clothing, sleeping bags and cash grants to improve shelters. There is increased focus on providing healthcare, with member charities planning to reach 644,000 people with medical consultations, the distribution of medicines and provision of first aid kits. This work includes plans to rebuild damaged health centres and train medical staff.

Longer term work to restore people’s livelihoods, is also planned, including distributing seeds, tools, cash grants and technical support. For example, Islamic Relief aims to vaccinate 200,000 sheep across Idlib and Aleppo provinces. Member charities are also providing mental health and psychological support to vulnerable groups and strengthening the resilience of communities for future disasters. However, DEC funding is designed to be flexible to allow member charities to adapt their programmes quickly, and plans may change according to the changing needs on the ground.

The following sections provide details and examples of work carried out to date in some of the main areas of focus for DEC member charities in Syria, but do not cover the full breadth of the response.

## HOW WE'RE HELPING: SHELTER



© Save The Children

Save the Children supported temporary shelters like this in northwest Syria through local partners in the immediate aftermath of the earthquakes. Families received items such as blankets, clothes, emergency supplies and food.

Many DEC member charities and their partners were already working in north-west Syria when the earthquakes hit. This means some were able to help with the search and rescue effort. ActionAid supported a local partner working in two heavily affected districts to rescue 2,896 people. The charity has also been carrying out assessments of buildings and helping to remove rubble.

Local authorities and volunteer engineers have been assessing the safety of damaged buildings, but the extent of the disaster outstrips their capacity. Action Against Hunger has been providing training and operational support to local engineers to carry out structural assessments of damaged buildings. This is helping to identify homes that people can safely return to, and define necessary repair work in other cases. The charity originally planned to train 130 professionals, but due to the success and impact of the activity, it scaled up the project to train 306 engineers.

As the earthquakes happened during harsh winter conditions, DEC member charities initially helped families to access temporary shelters, blankets and mattresses, warm clothes, and heating. One member and its partners distributed 696

tents during February and March, supporting 3,890 people, and kits with blankets and mattresses supporting 5,830 people. Furthermore, heating support including stoves or fuel was provided to 1,180 families, supporting a total of 6,350 people.

As well as tents, Concern Worldwide used DEC funds to build 400 'better shelter' units. These flat-pack, temporary single-room buildings are more robust than tents. They have a lifespan of three years and are built to withstand a variety of weather conditions. They provide a more comfortable living environment with a design that maximises natural light and ventilation.

After intense rainfall in March caused damage to more than 1,600 tents, some DEC members moved families from flooded settlements and found other areas to set up again.

In the second phase of the response from August 2023 to January 2025, various DEC member charities are providing households with cash grants or materials to improve their shelters and stay warm over the winter months. Tearfund plans to rehabilitate the damaged houses of more than 2,200 of the most vulnerable people in Aleppo province.



The Syrian Expatriate Medical Association, a partner of Age International, delivers water to people affected by the earthquake.

© Remi Sabbagh/SEMA

## “The situation is very, very difficult here”

Sohail and his family had previously been displaced from their home by the crisis in Syria. They had been living in temporary accommodation for four years and struggling to get by without regular income. Then the earthquakes struck.

“It was an indescribable day. At the first vibration of the earthquake, thank God, I could get into my wheelchair and managed to get out with my wife and children. Our building collapsed completely. We only managed to save ourselves and the clothes we were wearing, nothing more.

We live in a tent now and life is tragic here. The situation is very, very difficult – for instance, there are four families staying in one tent all together. It’s very sad because we don’t have many clothes for the children in this freezing cold weather. “

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**“I just want a house for my family, nothing more. I just want a house for my children and a suitable job to make a living for my children.”**

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Sohail has received support from the local partner of a DEC member charity. The partner organisation has been distributing food and items such as mattresses, pillows, solar panels and heaters.



## HOW WE'RE HELPING: FOOD

Soaring food prices and insufficient income mean millions of families are struggling to make ends meet, during the worst economic crisis Syria has ever seen. Food prices rose dramatically after the earthquakes in the worst affected areas and remain high. In one area of north-west Syria, the price of bread increased by 20% week-on-week. Prices for staple ingredients, like lentils, oil and rice, continue to soar. In an area with so many people displaced by conflict, this means most people are dependent on food provided by non-governmental organisations and charities.

Many DEC charities used appeal funds to provide food over several months to make sure support was substantial and long-term. For example, working with local councils and other organisations on the ground, Islamic Relief delivered emergency food parcels to over 5,400 households in the first six months following the earthquake including rice, bulgar, lentils, pasta, oil and margarine. These parcels aimed to give enough food for an average family of five for a three-month period. Action Against

Hunger distributed over 7,200 ready to eat food parcels in the same period. These were given to shelters and families taking care of orphans under the age of 16.

Several DEC member charities provided Iftar meals to communities, the fast-breaking evening meal of Muslims during Ramadan. In one area, Christian Aid invited vulnerable children and their carers to take part in a full-day activity including meal preparation, entertainment and games to celebrate this special time.

In the second phase of the response from August 2023 to January 2025, food is a smaller part of the DEC-funded response as the focus shifts more towards cash payments and livelihoods assistance, but some member charities are planning on using DEC funds to reach families in need of food support. For example, one member charity plans to deliver monthly food parcels to 1,000 households over the course of 10 months.



© Karam Al-Masri/DEC

Khalil\*, an aid worker for DARNA, a local partner of a DEC charity, delivers bags containing food and other aid items to residents of a camp in northwest Syria a week after the earthquakes in February 2023.

## “I’m able to provide for myself and my family”

Mustafa, 61, was raising livestock before the earthquakes struck. Now he lives with his wife in a temporary tent provided by aid organisations and has received cash assistance from DEC member, Age International.

“Four months have passed since the earthquakes brought us back to zero. Our family home collapsed and only three of my animals survived. We received support immediately after the earthquakes. On the second and third day, various parties mobilised to provide us with mattresses, food and some meals. We received tents about a week after the disaster.

Today, my wife and I are thankfully in a better position. The 250 USD of cash support we’ve received has eased our burden considerably, and we’ve been able to meet our basic needs. If we need food or medicine, I now know that I can go to the market and buy what we need.”

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**“The cash support has had a big positive impact on my life. I’m able to provide for myself and my family.”** ”

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Mustafa\* outside his tent at a camp in Syria. Age International’s partner Syria Relief has given people like Mustafa direct cash payments to meet their immediate basic needs.

**MUSTAFA\***



# HOW WE'RE HELPING: CASH ASSISTANCE



Derifa\* buys fruit and vegetables after receiving a cash payment from Syria Relief, a local partner of Age International, in June 2023. Before, she relied on her sons to support her but she said they had lost everything in the earthquake and now lived in separate camps.

Providing families with cash or vouchers gives them the ability to decide what to spend the money on to make sure it meets their particular needs. Many DEC members and their partners have used cash assistance to support people in north-west Syria affected by the earthquakes. Cash assistance is particularly useful to people where markets are still working and is more efficient as it doesn't require transporting large quantities of food or other goods. However, with food prices soaring, many vulnerable people and people whose livelihoods have been impacted can't afford to pay for basic household needs.

The support has often been ongoing. For example, working through local partners, one DEC charity gave 100 USD a month, over five months, to 1,000 households in areas where markets and shops are operational. Working with local partners, the charity has given priority to pregnant and breastfeeding women, people with disabilities and chronic illnesses, and older people.

The International Rescue Committee distributed cash assistance of 150 USD to 10,468 households, which benefitted over 56,000 people in the first six months after the earthquakes. The charity worked with other organisations to identify communities which needed the most support. For example, areas with newly displaced people and female-headed households. Age International gave one-off assistance of 100 USD to 1,400 families. The charity also gave multiple rounds of cash assistance, with 996 families receiving 350 USD in three payments.

An evaluation of cash assistance carried out by Tearfund shows that 98% of people who received it said they were able to meet some, most or all of their emergency needs. The cash was mainly used to buy food, hygiene items and clothing, or cover the cost of education, transport and house repairs.

Member charities are continuing to focus on providing cash assistance in Syria in the second phase of the response, planning to reach over 87,000 people with payments to help them meet their basic needs between August 2023 and January 2025.



LAMA\*

Lama\* dries tomatoes to make tomato paste outside the school that her family is sheltering in, in November 2023. Action Against Hunger provided taps, toilets, showers and lighting to the 210 families sheltering there.

## “Life became normal somehow, as if we are staying in our homes”

Lama\*, 49, and her family had been forced to flee their home due to the conflict in Syria. When it was safe to return, they found it damaged and patched it up as best they could. The earthquake struck four months after Lama’s husband had passed away and destroyed the house completely. She took her four children to shelter in a nearby school, along with over 210 other families.

“Since the earthquake we have faced so many challenges. First, the level of poverty we reached. We had a simple life before, but with the earthquake we became very poor. Not only our family but all families. There are women who lost their men, children who lost their limbs.”

“The shelter here is a school so at the beginning there were no services, not enough toilets, no showers, no lighting. Action Against Hunger came and they found how tragic the situation was. We were 210 families using only five toilets and no showers.”

“They installed new toilets, for men and women and people with disabilities, new water taps, new showers. They increased the number of sanitary facilities until they were sufficient for everyone. They also installed solar panels, which was a great step. We now have lighting and hot water. Life became normal somehow, as if we are staying in our homes.”

## HOW WE'RE HELPING: **WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE**

The already fragile water and sanitation infrastructure in north-west Syria was significantly affected by the earthquakes. There was extensive damage and disruption to water reservoirs, water towers, water stations and networks of sanitation facilities. This greatly increased the risk of cholera and other diseases. As more people were displaced into overcrowded camps and temporary shelters by the earthquakes, it became even more urgent to provide clean water, adequate sanitation and hygiene facilities.

DEC funds have been supporting a range of initiatives in areas affected by the earthquakes to give people access to clean drinking water and repair infrastructure. World Vision used water tankers in the immediate aftermath of the earthquakes to give over 7,200 households access to safe drinking water. The charity also provided water storage tanks for over 8,600 people and helped to repair 17 water stations and six water networks.

However, as time passed, charities sought longer-term solutions, repairing and installing water infrastructure which had been damaged or destroyed in the earthquakes. For example, Oxfam improved access to safe water for 597,000 people by supplying generators, repairing damaged water networks and installing water tanks in affected areas.

To improve hygiene, one DEC member worked with field teams to identify camps in need of toilets and hand washing facilities. Once the camps were identified and permits secured, 15 units were built and installed. Each unit is made up of 11 toilets, six hand washing points and two laundry washing points. These have given 3,300 people access to clean and safe hygiene facilities.

Member charities are continuing to focus on repairing and installing water infrastructure in Syria in the second phase of the response, planning to provide improved access to clean drinking water to more than 686,000 people between August 2023 and January 2025.

Ahmed, a resident of a shelter in Aleppo province, Syria, helps Oxfam workers to fill a water tank.



© Hassan Beial/DEC

**“All we wanted was to feel safe”**

Samer and his family of five have endured multiple displacements over recent years. The family were living peacefully in north-west Syria for two years until the earthquakes hit. Now they live in a temporary camp, where a DEC member charity and its partner provide safe drinking water.

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**“My house wasn’t properly built, so it was severely affected. We managed to get out – but how could you go back to your house when you see it is falling apart? We just couldn’t. They provide us with potable water on a daily basis. They fill the tank and the next day they check the tanks and add more water.”**

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Samer is well aware of the risk of disease, with cholera spreading across the region. Samer and his family use the water for drinking, cleaning vegetables and cooking. It is one less thing to worry about on what Samer calls his family’s “search for something we call peace”.

## “People in Syria have been through so much”

Clynton Beukes is the programme director for World Vision’s Syria response. The DEC member charity is providing humanitarian aid to earthquake-affected communities. Here, he talks about how the charity has been prioritising the distribution of clean water and putting safe sanitation systems in place to help prevent disease.

“People in Syria have been through so much. From being displaced due to the conflict, to living in camps, a cholera outbreak, the earthquakes and now the heatwave. Normal is redefined daily and none of it is normal.”

“Water provision is a serious issue and the fact that cholera exists in north-west Syria is a symptom of the immense strain that the water system is under. What you find in places where there is no proper sanitation is that cholera begins to run rampant. Then you throw in the earthquakes, and communities are living near one another, relying on single-

source water tanks and on the same latrine. Those are prime conditions for cholera to snowball.

This is why we decided to use DEC funding to focus on water, sanitation and hygiene because preventing cholera and other diseases is much better than having people go into an already overburdened healthcare system.

The needs here are still huge.

Moving on from the initial shock and awe of the earthquake things have stabilised a little, but the needs here are still huge. People right now are in a situation that I don’t think any of us could ever imagine ourselves being in or wish on anyone.

I was truly astounded by the generosity of the British public to the people of Syria and Turkey. It’s been humbling to see the amount that’s been raised, and we have been able to use that to meet the needs of people affected by the earthquakes. I can tell you without doubt that your donations have meant more than just money to people in Syria. They feel like they’ve been seen when they thought they had been forgotten.”



In the early days after the earthquake charities like Oxfam used trucks to provide clean water to people in Syria.



A distribution of household items including blankets by Islamic Relief in northwest Syria the day after the earthquakes.

## “Continuous support is essential”

Amr Mohamed is the programme coordinator for Islamic Relief in Syria. The charity has been providing a range of support to people affected by the earthquakes using DEC funds. Here, Amr talks about preparing for another winter and helping people to rebuild their livelihoods as the response moved into its second phase.

“When the earthquakes happened in February it was a very harsh winter. It was extremely cold and raining every day. In the initial stage of the crisis, we received funds from the DEC to distribute essential food and non-food items, as well as provide shelter and hygiene kits. We transported water using trucks, constructed emergency latrines, and rebuilt water networks and waste management systems.

“The number of people affected by this crisis has put more pressure on the local markets and accessibility of food and other items. Economically it’s very difficult and we’re facing inflation every day, both in Turkey and Syria.”

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**“ It’s a critical situation ”**

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“Six months on, most people are still in need of humanitarian assistance on a daily and monthly basis. Continuous support to people affected by the earthquakes is essential and it’s something we really need to focus on.

“Heading into another winter brings additional challenges. It’s a critical situation. We’re distributing a lot of heating materials, including to schools to try and maintain children’s education during the winter.

“For phase two, our DEC-funded intervention will look at sustaining the livelihoods of those affected by the earthquakes. For farmers and people making a living from livestock, we’ll be doing a vaccination campaign of livestock and providing veterinary clinics so we can help improve the health of animals. We’ll also be distributing agriculture kits including seeds. We have to move forward and maintain and sustain people’s livelihoods.”

# CHALLENGES ACROSS THE RESPONSE

There are always challenges in the response to a large-scale humanitarian crisis, but the extent of the destruction wrought by the earthquakes, existing level of need in Syria and extreme weather have caused considerable challenges for communities affected by the earthquakes, as well as for DEC member charities and their local partners as they respond on the ground.

## Extreme weather conditions

Both countries have experienced severe weather events, exacerbating the needs of people impacted by the earthquakes. Harsh winter conditions in the immediate aftermath of the earthquakes made it even more urgent to provide adequate shelter and warm clothing to people who had lost their homes and belongings.

In mid-March, Syria had intense rainfall which caused flooding and further damage to earthquake-affected areas. At least 42 camps were affected, with over 1,600 tents providing shelter for 7,500 people destroyed. Some member charities in Syria moved people away from flooded settlements and helped them to find safer areas to set up again.

In April, heavy rainfall and a tornado in Turkey caused flash flooding and damage to campsites. A DEC member provided 1,033 raincoats and rainboots to people in local communities to keep them dry.

When the heatwave hit in July, members and their local partners worked hard to make sure local communities were supported. For example, a member in Syria increased its distribution of fresh water to 53 camps to help people stay hydrated. The heat also made working conditions for staff and volunteers with DEC member charities and local partners increasingly difficult. A local partner in Turkey adjusted the working hours for its field staff to protect them from the intense heat.

In recent months, member charities have been working to prepare people for another cold winter in tents and temporary accommodation by helping to improve shelters and providing warm clothes and sleeping bags.

## Financial constraints

There were a number of financial challenges for DEC member charities and local partners in Syria and Turkey. This was due to international sanctions on Syria and the longer verification process for transferring money to Turkey.

Cash assistance is essential as it allows the most vulnerable, such as people with disabilities and older people, to pay for specific items they need, including medicines and fuel for heating. Their needs aren't always met by traditional aid packages. Cash also allows people to take on a more active role in their own recovery as they can plan how and when they want to spend the money.

In Syria, one DEC member charity couldn't withdraw US dollars from Post and Telegraph Organization branches. This led to delays and difficulties in providing cash assistance to people affected by the earthquakes. The member decided to distribute Turkish Lira instead of US dollars to make sure families got the cash support they needed.

The fluctuations in exchange rates have affected the prices of goods and services, particularly medical equipment. DEC member charities and local partners in Syria monitored the local market and spoke to suppliers to identify the best prices for quality medical devices.

When a member charity transferred funds to a partner in Turkey, there were hold ups in receiving the money. This delayed getting crucial support to people affected by the earthquakes. The member managed the situation by getting an advance on the money from its partner. Now, member charities are resolving these issues by working closely with their banks to find the best way to transfer funds. They are also planning transfers in advance and communicating delays to their local partners.



Damage in Antakya, Turkey after the earthquake.





A community health care worker for Violet, a local partner of ActionAid, carries out development checks on Safaa's eight-month-old son in a camp in northwest Syria as part of outreach from a local maternity hospital run by the organisation.

### Community tensions

DEC charities and partners in Syria saw tension increasing between people living in camps and between displaced people and host communities. Camps that were already overcrowded and lacked resources before the earthquakes have been put under huge strain. People who were living in the camps before the earthquakes felt that their needs weren't being met.

The aim of the DEC humanitarian programme is to focus on people affected by the earthquakes, while also supporting other vulnerable people in the same locations. It was important that member charities and partners targeted the most vulnerable people from all community groups to ensure that assistance was provided equitably and to avoid creating unintended tension between people. They did this by working closely with community leaders and other stakeholders, such as local authorities or members of community-based organisations. DEC members and partners talked to them about the programme's objectives and who it was trying to reach, and by collectively agreeing the criteria to benefit from assistance.

### Logistical challenges

A significant challenge for DEC partners in north-west Syria is safely accessing areas that are dangerous due to active conflict.

The region worst affected by the earthquakes in north-west Syria is on the frontline between government and non-government-controlled areas. The conflict has made it difficult to get permission to carry out activities in these areas. Increased conflict and shelling in autumn 2023 also caused disruption to programmes and staff travel.

There has been difficulty getting supplies across the border from Turkey to north-west Syria because the few border crossings were damaged and sometimes closed. This has put pressure on the general availability of food and other resources in north-west Syria, including timely provision of emergency items. DEC members and partners are monitoring the border situation closely, so they can best support people affected by the earthquakes.

# IMPROVING HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMME DELIVERY

The DEC is committed to using learning from emergency responses to make sure funds are used appropriately and that humanitarian programmes meet the highest standards. This helps to make sure that people affected by the earthquakes have their needs met and that their dignity is respected.

Here is some of the best practice used by DEC member charities in Turkey and Syria to meet this commitment:

## Being accountable to communities

It is important that communities can feedback and make suggestions or complaints to DEC members and local partners about the work they are doing. This makes sure that the DEC, members and partners are held accountable and improve their work.

DEC member charities, including CARE International in Syria, used a variety of ways to collect feedback from communities. This included online feedback forms, helpdesks at distribution sites and face-to-face conversations with community volunteers.

In Turkey, Save the Children have set up an information, support and feedback hotline in Turkish, Arabic, Kurdish and English. The charity's monitoring and evaluation teams have also carried out interviews, run focus group discussions and distributed surveys.

Feedback is used to improve and refine programme activities. For example, Save the Children in Turkey started distributing hygiene and dignity kits tent-by-tent to make sure women and girls received them.

In Syria, Oxfam worked with communities to develop a process for people to lodge complaints and make suggestions to the organisation. Consultation sessions with people from local communities were used to inform this work. The charity and its local partners developed and built an online platform to collect community feedback and complaints and to record how they responded and whether there was a resolution.



Shagufta Yaqub of DEC speaks to Oxfam KEDV aid worker Caroline in a tent camp in Turkey.



Ayat, a volunteer for Violet, a partner of ActionAid, plays with a child at a shelter where orphans and widows with children are living following the earthquake.

## Including people with specific needs

When a crisis happens, the most vulnerable people in a community are most affected. This can include older people, people with disabilities, women and girls, women who are pregnant and breastfeeding, and ethnic and religious minorities. DEC member charities and local partners worked hard to meet the specific needs of the most vulnerable people in communities that have been affected by the earthquakes.

For example, in the aftermath of the earthquakes, Save the Children identified that pregnant and breastfeeding women in Turkey would benefit from additional support. They ran a nutrition programme with local partners and local health authorities to support these women. For breastfeeding women whose homes had been damaged, the charity set up safe spaces where they could breastfeed in privacy. They also provided advice and support to mothers on healthy feeding practices and distributed hygiene feeding kits to the most vulnerable.

Save the Children also supported women in female-headed households, single women and single caregivers, who were identified as being vulnerable. This is because they were more likely to have to manage the primary caregiving role of children and the responsibility for income generation.

In Turkey, Oxfam mobilised 30 community members from eight informal camps to distribute protection kits, containing a mattress, blankets and handheld solar lights, to families living in informal settlements. The volunteers played a key role in identifying people with specific needs such as those who might need mental health support, and people with disabilities. Volunteers also shared information with the charity about specific issues that they noticed - for example, a lack of access to healthcare services for older people and people with disabilities.

DEC member charities in Turkey, including Action Against Hunger, supported vulnerable groups such as minority and refugee populations (Syrians, Kurds, Uzbeks and Afghans). In Syria, Age International used DEC funding to provide cash assistance to 187 families from a Kurdish community.

The International Rescue Committee in Syria made sure that people with disabilities and older people could access distribution points, so they could collect items they needed. This included providing seats in waiting areas and improving accessibility for those using wheelchairs or who have difficulties with vision or movement.



© Bradley Secker

Food aid being distributed by Action Against Hunger in Gaziantep province, Turkey, in February 2023.

### Supporting a locally-led response

All member charities are working closely with local partners to make sure there is a locally led response to the earthquakes. Local partners have knowledge of the area, good relationships with local authorities and other organisations, and are accepted by the communities they work with. By working with local partners, member charities can easily target those most in need of urgent support.

A total of 24 local partners were involved in the DEC-funded response in Syria, and seven in Turkey. DEC member charities have long-standing and strategic relationships with local partners so they can quickly get aid to affected people and their communities. Funding to these partners accounted for 30% of the budget for the first six months of the response.

Christian Aid already had strong links with local partners in north-west Syria before the earthquakes. In the weeks before the earthquakes, predicting a challenging period of weather, the charity sent money to one of its partners to put together kits containing warm clothing and cooking utensils. These were then provided straight after the earthquakes to affected communities.

ActionAid made sure its response was led by partners right from the start. It engaged partners in Syria to identify local needs, design the response and support its delivery. This helped to build local knowledge and get aid to where it was most needed. This collaboration also helped ActionAid to identify at least 13 extra organisations, which are active in Turkey and Syria, to work with.

In Turkey, Oxfam encouraged people from local communities and civil society organisations to get involved in the response to the earthquakes and take on lead roles. This included setting up a group called the Turkey Local Humanitarian Forum to encourage local non-government organisations to provide aid to local communities, and coordinate and cooperate effectively. Oxfam also helped to get 50 women's organisations to form the Women Empowerment in Humanitarian Action Working Group. This meant that

women could participate in discussions about the response to the earthquakes and make sure their voices were part of key decisions and plans.

### Duty of care towards staff

DEC member charities have a duty of care to their staff and volunteers, as well as everyone working for their local partners. Most people involved in the response to the earthquakes are from southern Turkey and north-west Syria. Many have been personally affected by what has happened, such as losing family members and friends, their homes and belongings.

Member charities in Turkey and Syria have been extremely sensitive to the situations of local staff and volunteers who have been affected by the earthquakes as they returned to work to help people in greater need. For example, ActionAid provided an extra month's salary to staff working for local partners in Syria, to support them with any additional financial costs they were facing, including relocation costs and medical support. The charity also provided financial assistance to staff and volunteers, so they could cover the cost of activities that support their mental health and wellbeing. This includes counselling and self-care activities, such as yoga.

Meanwhile, Christian Aid used DEC funds in Syria to support staff working for local partners. Partners carried out staff assessments to understand the challenges faced by their staff. They used this information to put together staff wellbeing programmes, which included psychosocial support, cash support and food baskets.

The International Rescue Committee in Turkey saw there was a high risk of psychosocial support workers resigning due to burnout and secondary trauma. When someone is exposed to another person's traumatic experiences for a long time, this can cause them emotional distress. Recognising the risk, the team organised self-care activities for staff and workshops on secondary trauma.

## Safeguarding people affected by the earthquakes

All DEC member charities have robust safeguarding policies in place with zero tolerance of violence or abuse against children and adults in the communities they work in. Members are working with their local partners to strengthen their internal processes to make sure they have rigorous safeguarding measures in place to minimise the risks of harm and to respond effectively when concerns are raised.

All member charities and their local partners across Turkey and Syria are providing safeguarding training to staff, so they can help to keep communities affected by the earthquakes safe. For example, the International Rescue Committee in Syria provided comprehensive safeguarding training to all staff to give them the knowledge and skills to create a secure and safe environment, including running online training which covers procedures to follow when reporting violations. This is helping to safeguard both staff working for the member charity and its local partners and vulnerable people who rely on their assistance.

Save the Children ran safeguarding training for partner staff in Turkey to help them understand the diverse cultural, social and political nuances of the communities they are working with. This is helping to make sure all the activities

the member and local partners carry out are respectful of communities and that people who are being helped accept them. The charity also set up a telephone hotline, a dedicated email address and an online form for people in local communities in Turkey to report any safeguarding concerns to the organisation.

Meanwhile, DEC member charities and local partners all have processes in place to help safeguard vulnerable groups in communities. For example, one member charity in Syria made sure that washing facilities were safely designed for women and girls, including having separate facilities to men and boys. In Syria, Tearfund put protection measures in place for providing cash assistance to vulnerable people. Many of the people receiving cash are more vulnerable, such as older people, people with disabilities, those with chronic illness or who are pregnant. The cash was delivered within short distances from people's homes to make sure the money reached them safely.

The member charity also put measures in place to keep women and girls safe by distributing hygiene kits to open areas within the safety of the shelters or directly to people's tents.

Children play at a school in Aleppo, Syria, that was rehabilitated by Action Against Hunger after the earthquake using DEC funds.



### Protecting the environment

Climate change impacts vulnerable communities the most. DEC member charities are committed to reducing the environmental impact of their humanitarian response work, while strengthening people's ability to manage climate change and cope with the stresses and shocks it causes.

To minimise the environmental impact of the response in Turkey and Syria, during the first six months of the DEC response member charities:

- used local produce, suppliers and distributors where possible to minimise the distance that goods travelled
- decreased the need for unsustainable and expensive practices like water trucking by supporting long-term solutions like repairing water infrastructure
- used recycled paper, cardboard and biodegradable bags
- removed debris and waste responsibly
- raised awareness of the environment by working with local communities, and made sure that cleanliness was a priority
- minimised fuel consumption and integrated solar power where possible.

In Syria, ActionAid built septic tanks using high health and safety standards to protect the environment. This helped to look after the health and safety of communities and the surrounding environment.

By repairing water pipes and sewers in communities in north-west Syria, one member charity was able to reduce the bulk transport of water. This reduces the environmental impact by not relying on trucks which use a large amount of energy and release fuel emissions. World Vision built an underground sewage line to stop open sewage causing harm to the environment and public health.

Many DEC member charities are using local distributors in Turkey and Syria to deliver food and other items. They're also buying goods as close as possible to the communities they're being delivered to. Partners are sharing resources such as warehouses, goods and fuel and collaborating with local authorities to make sure waste is disposed of in a responsible way. Member charities, including Oxfam and Islamic Relief, are also using cardboard boxes to deliver items and environmentally friendly packaging which is light weight. This is helping to reduce the impact of transport and fuel emissions as lorries are carrying lighter loads.

An aid worker from Action Against Hunger checks solar panels installed by the charity with the manager of a school being used as a shelter in Syria.





Oxfam KEDV aid workers distribute hygiene, dignity and menstrual health kits to residents of a tent camp in Turkey in July 2023.

### Adaptive programming and learning

The DEC puts flexibility at the heart of its approach to funding disaster responses, giving member charities the chance to adjust planned activities quickly when circumstances change. This helps to make sure that DEC funds are used appropriately and effectively. It also supports the DEC member charities and local partners to learn from the response in Turkey and Syria and make improvements.

For example, the unexpected and changing weather conditions caused challenges for the response. Save the Children distributed rainboots and raincoats to communities in Turkey when heavy rain in March caused flooding. This was not included in the original response plan. During the heatwave in July, Oxfam provided a package of hot weather support to help people living in tents in Turkey to cope with the extreme heat and the insects and mosquitoes.

The DEC, member charities and local partners have learned that it's crucial to prepare for different weather conditions when planning and developing humanitarian programmes. This will help members and partners to quickly adapt the activities they carry out.

Action Against Hunger had planned to provide safe drinking water in Turkey but adapted its plans when other organisations started to provide this service. Instead, the charity and its local partners decided to focus on setting up mobile laundry points, which had been identified as an unmet need. It also

started distributing hygiene kits and raising awareness of good hygiene to communities.

In Syria, Age International identified a small Kurdish community living in remote locations in Afrin. Families had been affected by the earthquakes but weren't receiving any support. The member and its partners quickly adapted their programme of work and provided blankets and food baskets to the community. Further assessment identified the most vulnerable, including older people and people with disabilities, and these families were provided with cash assistance. This highlights the importance of member charities and local partners being able to adapt and provide extra assistance when needed.

Several DEC members encountered overcrowding when distributing aid in local communities. This caused safety concerns for communities and staff on the ground. Members started distributing items tent-to-tent to make it safer for everyone involved. Together, the DEC and member charities are using this learning in Turkey and Syria to plan future humanitarian programmes.

The DEC commissioned an external review of its response in Turkey and Syria, which included surveys of affected communities' perceptions of the assistance provided by DEC members. The recommendations from this study have been used to strengthen Phase 2 of the DEC response.

# REGIONAL INITIATIVES

The DEC has partnered with two organisations to run projects that support and strengthen the wider humanitarian response to the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria. The two organisations are Humanitarian to Humanitarian (H2H) Network and the Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub.

These joint projects are helping to:

- improve the quality and accountability of the humanitarian response.
- provide specialist services that complement the work of DEC member charities. These projects are strengthening DEC member charities and increasing the impact of DEC funds.

## Humanitarian to Humanitarian (H2H) Network

H2H is a group of specialist humanitarian service providers that improve quality and accountability in emergency responses.

We have partnered with H2H to co-fund its activities in Turkey and Syria. Examples of specific projects we have funded through H2H include:

- providing training to non-governmental organisations and government institutions in Turkey on the Core Humanitarian Standard, one of the main sets of quality commitments for humanitarian action. The Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) Alliance is providing this training and will run a helpdesk to provide technical support and guidance to humanitarian workers on putting these standards into practice.
- developing tools and guidance to support humanitarian organisations to communicate effectively with affected communities in Turkey and Syria. Developed by the Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities Network, Clear Global and Insecurity Insight, the tools include social media monitoring to understand perceptions of the response.
- repairing broken medical devices in six hospitals in Syria. Field Ready will train medical staff in how to identify and repair broken equipment.

## Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub

The Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub (RSH) supports small, less well-resourced civil society organisations to provide humanitarian aid. It does this by helping them to strengthen their safeguarding policy and practice against sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment. This is to prevent staff from abusing, exploiting or harassing community members through their work.

Before the earthquakes, the RSH focused on supporting Syrian organisations which were carrying out cross-border operations in north-west Syria. Since the earthquakes, the DEC has been providing funding to expand the RSH's work to civil society organisations in Turkey. The RSH is providing information and support to DEC charities and local partners in Turkey to help them develop policies and risk assessments, set up a complaints response and respond to complaints.

During phase one of the response to the earthquakes, the RSH used DEC funding to recruit two staff members to support local organisations in Turkey. The RSH developed the Turkish Ask an Expert service to give tailored support to local organisations and developed a webinar about managing vulnerable people in emergency situations.

## Humanitarian Leadership Training

One of our DEC member charities is partnering with the Humanitarian Leadership Academy to provide access to training for humanitarian workers. This includes showing them how to use an online learning hub with information about, and lessons learned from, previous humanitarian emergencies. It includes access to e-learning modules and technical guidance. Remote and in person training has also been delivered in Turkey and Syria on topics such as staff wellbeing, safeguarding, mentoring and coaching.



## “People need to recover their lives and stand up again”

Faud Sayed Issa set up a civil society organisation called Violet in 2011 to support Syrian communities in emergency situations. Here, he talks about the work that Violet has done to respond to the earthquakes using DEC funding, and shares his personal story of loss.

“After the earthquakes, the priority for people in north-west Syria was accessing shelter as they lost their houses and other temporary shelter. Now, they need livelihood projects as they lost their businesses and need to recover their lives and stand up again.

We’ve used DEC funding to distribute cash grants, support women and girls affected by gender-based violence and open a new women and children’s hospital in Syria. The hospital is providing psychosocial support, gender-based violence services and nutritional support.

“There are still a lot of daily struggles living in Syria”

Unfortunately, I lost my son and other family members to the earthquakes. My house was destroyed and my neighbourhood, with thousands of people that we knew,

were lost. We have been displaced more than six times. There are still a lot of daily struggles living in Syria. We are having a lot of bombing and shelling.

Hopefully everything will be better in the future and people who have been financially affected will get the support they need. I hope people will be able to go back to where they lived as most of them are displaced from their cities.

One day, I hope to stop Violet’s work in Syria as it means we will not have any more emergencies. And in that time, we’re going to engage more with civil society organisations and help the communities to grow.”

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**“ My message to people in the UK is that we’re not safe. We should continue helping the people in need because it could happen everywhere. ”**

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Expectant mothers attend a health awareness session led by trained staff from ActionAid’s partner Violet in northwest Syria in June 2023.



Your generosity at work.



# NEXT STEPS

The second phase of the DEC response is now underway, with an increased focus on helping people recover and rebuild their lives and livelihoods, as well as healthcare and psychosocial support. Funds raised by the DEC's appeal will continue funding this work until January 2025, after which the DEC's member charities will continue their vital work in the region using funding from other sources.

The DEC will produce a final report on the overall response after programmes end in January 2025.



DEC Chief Executive Saleh Saeed takes part in a door-to-door distribution by Save the Children in a remote mountainous village in rural Gaziantep province, Turkey, in July 2023.

## DEC MEMBER CHARITIES



actionaid

ageInternational



CAFOD  
Catholic Agency for  
Overseas Development



CONCERN  
worldwide



OXFAM



Save the  
Children

tearfund

World Vision

### DISASTERS EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

17-21 Wenlock Road  
London N1 7GT

Tel: 020 7387 0200  
[www.dec.org.uk](http://www.dec.org.uk)

Registered Charity No. 1062638  
Company No. 3356526

