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Rapid insights on Earthquake in Türkiye and Syria

IFRC

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Introduction

A rapid desk review was carried out by Geneva's Strategic Planning Department and RO Europe's PMER using the IFRC Evaluation Databank to focus on evaluative initiatives related to IFRC's response to the earthquake in Türkiye and Syria. The idea behind this effort is the quick capture of lessons learned that could be vital in preparing and addressing the current emergency affecting both Türkiye and Syria, as well as to serve as part of any desk review for any upcoming evaluative initiatives to follow.

It is clear that this review will not include all the documents available on IFRC's response in both countries, as well as that some of these lessons learned and/or recommendations may have already been addressed. It is hoped though that the quick capturing of these lessons learned will provide an overview that could help the operation in capitalizing on opportunities, assisting in understanding any potential barriers/challenges in such an operation, and providing useful information that will facilitate the transitioning of emergency response into annual plans under the Unified Planning Process.

INSIGHTS FROM PAST MAJOR EARTHQUAKES:

NEPAL

- In future large-scale relief operations, there is a need to call upon longer-term **recovery** expertise early on in the response. This position should be embedded into the relief operation at an early stage to research and fully understand the context and capacities, so that recovery plans can be built on realistic foundations, and to ensure a smooth transition from relief to recovery phases.
- The provision of **livelihoods** supports (training and cash grants) as well as construction of shelters, through an owner-driven approach.
- Use of cash grants to meet **winterization** needs in the months that followed.
- **Cash transfer** for shelter construction through banking system in an owner-driven approach of shelter construction was considered helpful for maintaining accountability. However, it should consider issues such as remoteness and literacy, allowing for other options (mobile banking, cash in envelope, etc.)
- **Integrated Recovery Programme** and **Federation-wide integrated plan of action** and tracking system established as a good practice.
- More than 3,400 volunteers were trained on **GESI and disability inclusion** and 3,300 staff and volunteers took an oath on **Child Protection and Anti-Harassment Code** of viii Earthquake Response Operation: Integrated Recovery Programme Conduct.
- **Context overlaps & Potential Areas for Mining of Learnings:**
 - multiple major earthquakes within same region;
 - clustered earthquakes (multiple quakes within a matter of days within the same sub-region, paired with many aftershocks of a higher magnitude);
 - winterization of shelter-assisted populations in post-earthquake response

INSIGHTS FROM PAST MAJOR EARTHQUAKES:

HAITI

- **Between emergencies**, assemble a package of sectoral resources and messaging on cross-cutting issues; quality and accountability standards; as well as technical and construction ones.
- Prioritize **early advocacy** with government counterparts. Ensure that advocacy messages are up to date and in appropriate languages.
- Consider the feasibility of piloting a community helpline / support for a **shelter ombudsman** in a future emergency.
- **Use scenario-planning**, “when” information and project management tools to test delivery assumptions and targets and identify bottlenecks and forecast progress.
- Review Cluster strategy and action plans monthly. Identify, justify and communicate changes in writing. Ensure current strategy is identifiable and accessible.
- A **beneficiary survey and mid-term programme review** indicated the unexpectedly long distance walks between T Shelters and water points, and the cultural importance of having a protected veranda for cooking. By holding a large contingency fund it was possible to both revise phase two of the programme and retro-fit phase one to ensure shelters were adapted to include a veranda and install rainwater catchment. Subsequent surveys and beneficiary interviews on water indicated improved hygiene practice. Where lighting was introduced along with verandas there were examples of improved commerce, protection and education.
- A key learning is that shelter is a complex programme area. It requires not just a physical structure, but an **understanding of the environmental, social, cultural and economic context**. If the approach is flexible, open to adaptation and open to active observation and listening; one should not be too concerned to start a shelter programme with limited assessment, one should be **open to taking risks, making mistakes and adapting the programme as it progresses**.
- **Context overlaps (potential target areas for further mining of learnings):**
 - Overlaying multiple complex and chronic crises;
 - Strong role for HNS in Shelter Cluster Coordination

- Important to have strong community engagement, as well as communication activities with various stakeholders and communities from the start of the operation about the National Society, its mandate, principles, and values. This will continue to ensure the National Society's uninterrupted access to the remote and highly vulnerable areas.
- Ensure that there is integration and complementarity of activities in emergency operations with ongoing programmes.
- Multi-purpose cash grants for relief operations is a welcomed modality both in the National Society's Post Distribution Monitoring Unit and with the affected population.

Opportunities for Türkiye and Syria

Challenges for Türkiye and Syria

In an operation of a big scale and complexity, a gradual scale down strategy is needed, in parallel to the institutional strengthening with the National Society. This will allow the National Societies to adapt its operation gradually over the years.

Prices and availability of medical consumables can change in an evolving environment. Sustainability of health services (plan and tendering for national and international procurement of medicines; medical equipment; materials; and PPE for staff and volunteers if still relevant) should be considered in advance.

In a dynamic and complex operating environment, IFRC and its partners need to be flexible to position themselves as "One RCRC Movement."

National Societies have interventions to meet unmet and complex needs in hard-to-reach areas. Flexible funding will allow IFRC to support the National Society's needs in its interventions, especially in areas where other agencies have limited access.

Lack of sufficient human resources to support the present and potential scale of crisis, as well as the Zone with the support it requires.

Türkiye



Context in Türkiye

- On 6 February 2023, at 04:17 am, a magnitude 7.7 earthquake occurred, followed by multiple aftershocks at a maximum level of 6.7. At 13:24 on the same day, a second earthquake occurred, with a magnitude of 7.6.
- The earthquakes severely affected the 10 provinces of Kahramanmaraş, Adana, Hatay, Gaziantep, Adiyaman, Diyarbakir, Malatya, Sanliurfa, Kilis and Osmaniye, where about 13.5 million people reside.
- As of February 15, 2023, over 35,000 deaths, 105,000 injuries; 70,000 persons displaced; 150,000 people are homeless, and 1 million people are staying in temporary shelters.
- The strategy of the IFRC response will be to contribute to support 300,000 affected people in the affected areas for a period of 24 months and will focus on the following areas: disaster management, blood services, social services, and migration services. TRC has a leading role in the mass feeding working group, and Shelter Cluster Coordination, and has been providing hot meals since the beginning of the response.
- There has been a DREF allocation of 2 million and an Emergency Appeal for Türkiye with a Federation-wide Funding Requirement of 450 million, which includes an IFRC Secretariat Funding Requirement of 350 million.

Mandates



The Turkish Red Crescent Society, established in 1868, is the largest humanitarian organization in the country. As an auxiliary to the public authorities, the National Society provides aid for vulnerable people in need during disasters and non-emergency contexts. It has 264 national branches, 11,100 National Society staff and 200,000 volunteers. With a mandate to support the public authorities in humanitarian services, the National Society strives towards eliminating hunger and poverty in society, helping migrants and promoting healthy ageing, meeting blood needs sufficiently, developing resilience against natural hazards and human-made disasters, and creating a more viable environment with better access to education.

Mandates



The IFRC is present in support of the National Society through its Türkiye Delegation in Ankara, led by the Head of Delegation, and supported by teams of international and national staff dedicated to cash transfer, migration and disaster response programming; humanitarian diplomacy (HD) and external partnerships; finance and administration; procurement; human resources (HR); communications; learning, capacity support and external engagement; assurance and audit.



ICRC does not currently have a presence in-country in Türkiye but is in frequent contact with TRC and IFRC offering support. As per existing surge agreements, IFRC is ready to facilitate deployments of experts for ICRC-specific areas of work, should TRC request support. The Membership Coordination team in Türkiye is assuming Movement Coordination function for the operation, including regular coordination and information sharing with ICRC, and advocacy for ICRC-specific technical areas in the operation, as needed.

Key insights – Planning and Analysis



Risk Analysis: Risks were not well assessed until after the transition to the protection approach (second phase of the EA); risks assessments remained inadequate for the duration of the EA.

Scenario Planning: Planning and taking action proactively were the key learnings. Preparing alternative solutions for different scenarios strengthens the coping mechanisms.



Risk Analysis: Key underlying institutional risks remained unidentified. Constrained efforts to scale up capacity from Relief to Protection was mainly challenged by institutional inefficiencies.

Key Insights – Operational Capacity

Emergency Needs Assessments and CEA



Early feedback from the affected population as part of needs assessments was crucial. Lack of feedback from them resulted in considerable quantities of in-kind food being wasted (Turkish bread) – Result: transition from in-kind (bread) to conditional cash for food (e-cards) in the camps.

Extensive use of **Focus Groups and Advisory Groups** were strong recommendations; findings analysis encourage the continuous adaptation of activities according to beneficiary needs; but need to ensure equal membership from different (Syrian refugee/ host) communities in groups, and a gender balance as well.



Long term Planning - If people are unlikely to be able to return to their home(lands) quickly, it is highly likely that the situation will change from emergency to long-term programming due to additional political or physical contexts, this should be taken into consideration when planning in the beginning.

Needs and trends change in time in migration settings. This change itself is a process which needs to be monitored and observed regularly although the target population remains the same. Two-way dialogue should be fostered and maintained with community to ensure the needs are relevant and accessible

Key Insights – Operational Capacity

NS-specific Areas of Intervention



Asset Management: If TRCS plans to collect items no longer required by the affected population after initial use, they need to be collected more promptly to minimise damage

Livelihoods The literature suggests that people come to Turkey for protection. As they realised that they could not return to Syria in the foreseeable future, they increasingly saw the camps as an unsustainable solution as they had no access to the labour market. The EA rightly developed a livelihood component, but initially this lacked an employability focus.

Facilities infrastructure along with the establishment of a dedicated ablution and praying space. The need for a bigger garden/playground was also expressed. Possibilities might be explored to use the garden/outdoor facilities of a nearby school, for example, for children`s activities.

Targeting: Adult women, older men and individuals with health problems are the groups that are less likely to be in employment and hence more vulnerable.

PSS: Its availability shall be better promoted as psychotherapy is not that known among the visitors. There are some challenges faced when it comes to referral of psychosocial cases: the affected population do not feel comfortable to go to the hospital with such cases, also reluctant to take medicines as they consider it embarrassing.

Key insights – operational capacity

Access to Services



Access & Advocacy: Key informants report that large numbers of Syrian refugees still lack access to labour, medical care and social cohesion services. They also report ‘inadequate’ advocacy on these topics, suggesting the need to review TRCS efforts (through humanitarian diplomacy) addressing policy level and strategic challenges to meet the longer-terms needs of people seeking protection in Turkey.

Access & Transportation The issue of transportation was raised several times by the affected people interviewed. It would be useful to arrange transportation, such as a shuttle, for those who have to travel a lot to reach major service centres. If the issue of transportation is solved, not only the number of people reached would rise, but also the level of the courses` attendance.

Access & Health Services: No mechanism was in place to follow up on health referrals. Where assisted people were referred for more specialized health or PSS support, there was no follow-up to check if this service was received or if further support was needed. Also, Syrian refugees did not always have the language proficiency to complete surveys in Turkish.

Key Insights – Operational Capacity Community Centres



Gender: The involvement of men into the courses and activities of the community centre should be promoted, as there is a considerably higher number of women benefitting from the services of the centre. Men do not tend to participate in evening classes. Some assisted persons highlighted that through sport activities, a lot more men could be involved.

Childcare: Establishment of a “day-care centre/nursery/kindergarten” for those parents, who want to attend the courses of the centre, but might be not in the position to do so, because they do not have anyone to take care of their babies/smaller children while they are in the courses. In addition, a nursing room would also be good to allow parents to not have to change diapers in the bathrooms.

Language: More speaking classes/establishment of speaking groups would be necessary to practice, and learn the language of “everyday life.” This would be necessary to allow for daily exchanges at children's schools, hospitals and shops/markets.

Key Insights – Operations Support



Communication with the Affected Population: It is recommended that TRCS share on social media more frequently. WhatsApp usage can be made more professional and systematic.

Data Collection; Poor data quality was reportedly the main reason for the fact that EA updates only identified needs in generic terms, with inconsistencies in specification of numbers and locations.



Support Services: Information management, financial reporting and especially human resource management need to be strengthened to maximise EA impact.

Key insights – operations support

Resource Mobilisation



Risk Assessments and Expectation Management: The extent to which needs and assessments of risks, in particular programming, institutional and contextual risks, meet IFRC commitments does not yet seem to match ECHO and other donor expectations. Donor relationships were mixed and the main lesson learned here is the need for strengthening the risk approach as outlined.

Donor Relationship Management Suggested good practice of obtaining agreements that allow for any remaining funds to be carried forward into the post-EA timeframe through the Country Operational Plan (COP) for specific programs where needs continue.

Advocacy and Sustainability: It was important to make advocacy for the needs on the ground as well as to fundraise to ensure the sustainability of the services when they were most needed.

Key Insights – Operational Capacity

Staff & Volunteer Management



Volunteer Management: Retention of volunteers was low. Volunteers were often incentivized to join other NGOs. Additionally, a higher ratio of female volunteers to male volunteers affected the ability to do household visits, if such visits need to be conducted by male volunteers.

Staffing: In general, it would be necessary to recruit more case/social workers and interpreters, especially taken into account their involvement in the referral system – they are often overwhelmed with and traumatized by cases they deal with. The need to have women interpreters was expressed several times.

Community Centre – language: It was suggested to organize Arabic courses for the staff and volunteers. It would be advisable to organize Arabic courses for the staff and volunteers of the community centre, to ease the communication between them and the affected population. Also, it might be good to consider organizing Arabic courses for children at the Community Centre, to ensure that they do not forget their own culture, traditions, language and do not lose their cultural identity.

Syria

A photograph showing the aftermath of destruction in Syria. A large pile of rubble, including concrete blocks and twisted metal, dominates the foreground and middle ground. In the background, a multi-story building has been severely damaged, with its structure exposed. Several people are visible on the rubble and on the remaining parts of the building. A group of individuals wearing bright red uniforms, likely rescue workers or military personnel, are seen moving through the debris. The sky is overcast and grey, contributing to a somber and desolate atmosphere. The word "Syria" is overlaid in white text on the left side of the image.

Context in Syria

- On 6 February at 4:17 am, a 7.8 degrees magnitude earthquake struck southern Turkey near Syria's northern border.
- SARC's analysis currently stated that Aleppo, Latakia, Hama, and Tartous are the governorates affected the most by the earthquake, and assessments in neighboring governorates are underway.
- According to the Syrian MoH's recent figures, as of 7 February, 10:30 am local time, the number of casualties stood at 812 deaths and 1,431 injuries in Government of Syria (GoS) controlled areas and are expected to increase as extraction efforts continue and tremors continue to be felt long after the initial earthquake.
- The strategy of the IFRC response will be to contribute to support 300,000 affected people in the affected areas for a period of 11 months and will focus on the following areas: Integrated assistance, Health and Care including WASH, Protection and Prevention.
- There has been a DREF allocation of 2 million and an Emergency Appeal for Syria with a Federation-wide Funding Requirement of 200 million, which includes an IFRC Secretariat Funding Requirement of 100 million.

Mandates



The Syrian Arab Red Crescent was founded in 1942. It has a network of 14 branches, one in each of the country's administrative districts, as well as 73 active sub-branches. It has 5,749 staff with 8,031 volunteers. Its key focus will be on the “do no harm” principle, climate sensitive planning, resilience building, and protection, gender and inclusion. It remains the largest provider of humanitarian assistance in Syria and, in partnership with UN agencies, INGOs and the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, reaches more than six million people each year. Its strategic priorities are community resilience, continued relief operations and building response capacity, drawing on its experience in relief, livelihoods and cash programming.

Mandates



Since the mid-1990s, **the IFRC** has supported the efforts of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, and has played a key role in strengthening the operational and structural capacity of the National Society. The IFRC support to the Syrian Arab Red Crescent centres on strategic and operational coordination, National Society development, and humanitarian diplomacy. The IFRC also provides technical support on a wide range of National Society services in Syria, including emergency relief, livelihoods, health, water and sanitation,



The **ICRC's** operation in Syria is its largest in the world, with more than 850 staff working across its main delegation in Damascus (covering Rural Damascus and the southern administrative districts), Aleppo, Homs, Hama, Hassakeh and Tartous. The ICRC works closely with the National Society and supports it in meeting the food, water and health needs of people affected by the ongoing conflict and helping them start to rebuild their lives.

Mandates



community services, community engagement and accountability and international procurement services. The IFRC has also assisted with longer-term sustainability such as capacity building and organizational development for the National Society's headquarters and regional branches.

Key Insights - Analysis and Planning



Pre-Disaster Meetings and Agreements

- Set up an interdepartmental coordination at the HQ level immediately after the launch of the operation which would make it more effective and efficient in terms of clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the departments and resources available for the mobilization of assistance and support functions including follow-up on the operation and any necessary adjustments to the operational strategy.



Business Continuity Planning

- The development of a 3 to 5 year development strategy for the countries of the zone.

Emergency Response Procedures

- The IFRC Secretariat should complete and publish the Global Disaster Response Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs), with a modification for how the decision is made on the location and organisation of the Secretariat leadership of the response to a major crisis.

Pre-Disaster Meetings and Agreements

- The MENA zone should issue a written communication to clarify respective roles and responsibilities of the Syria team and Syria crisis team.
- The IFRC Secretariat in Geneva should appoint 1 delegated focal point for the Syria crisis, dedicated to the task of linking the operations coordination to the regional coordination level.

Scenario Planning

- The IFRC Secretariat should work to improve the quality of its own, and NS, response planning and preparedness, in particular, needs assessment, vulnerability analysis, and gap analysis, including assessment of non-RCRC actors, and the consultation with the affected population.

Key Insights - Coordination



Coordination with Authorities

- SARC's good relations with relevant parties had allowed for a good understanding on the role of the Red Cross and has resulted in better access to hard-to-reach areas.

Coordination with the Movement

- The plans for, and progress of, the MAP process (including the Steering Group and mini-MAP) should be circulated more widely to ensure that interested stakeholders are more fully engaged.
- MAP process should include Movement-wide country plans that bring all plans together, with resources specified for regional coordination and the communication activities required.



Coordination with the Movement

- The plans for, and progress of, the MAP process (including the Steering Group and mini-MAP) should be circulated more widely to ensure that interested stakeholders are more fully engaged.
- MAP process should include Movement-wide country plans that bring all plans together, with resources specified for regional coordination and the communication activities required.
- To help ensure that all IFRC Secretariat and ICRC staff in the region understand the intention to increase cooperation between the organizations, it is proposed that the ICRC Director-General and the IFRC Secretary General send internal communications to their staff in the region.

Coordination with External Agencies and NGOs

- IFRC participation in inter-agency meeting should be more regular and equipped to exert greater influence, strengthen the perception of the RCRC role and relevance and learn from the situation analysis and strategies of other actors.

Key Insights - Operational Capacity



Mapping of NS Capacities

- Strengthen and expand SARC's expertise in assessment through targeted training and workshops.



Activation of Regional and International Support

- The Director of Zone should call for additional technical support from Geneva HQ, but not limited to, those areas where the zone office has no technical specialist. Geneva HQ should in turn, propose to zone and country offices, through the designated HQ focal point, where technical support could be provided.

Mapping of NS Capacities

- The Organisational Capacity and Certification (OCAC) process should be amended to include NS capacity for disaster management within its scope.
- Strengthen and expand SARC's expertise in assessment through training and workshops.

Key Insights - Operations Support



Communication

- The IFRC Secretariat should improve its internal communication and coordination for the Syria crisis, by convening biweekly working level operational progress teleconference/meeting at the regional level for the Syria crisis.
- To improve regular information flow with PNS and IFRC, the IFRC Secretariat should convene a teleconference, perhaps every 6 weeks.

Operations, Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Learning

- The IFRC Secretariat should convene SARC at the operational level to share practical lessons (as proposed by SARC).
- The IFRC should ensure a more predictable response to major emergencies by 1) analysing disaster and crisis risks in the countries most-at-risk of crisis or disaster (say the top 204), 2) map the likely response capacity of the National Societies in those countries, based on the National Society's own self-assessment, 3) create a dialogue and plan for how an emergency response would be scaled up, building on any OCAC and Cooperation Agreement Strategy results available, in consultation with the HNS and Movement partners active in the country.

Staff and Volunteer Management

- The Secretariat should consider how to revise its incentive systems for its managers of offices and delegations to measure and reward performance against clearly defined tasks and products, in line with the SoPs.

Key Insights - Operations Support (2)



Resource Mobilization

- A scenario planning on the funding situation based on risk assessment is critical. A mitigation strategy should also be developed and made operational in advance.



Resource Mobilization

- To gain longer-term financial support to maintain RCRC activities for Syrians and affected local communities in neighbouring countries, the IFRC will need to adapt a resilience approach and seek out development funding resources, not just traditional humanitarian donors. To be successful in this approach it will require high quality, detailed proposals covering a 2-3 year time frame.
- Working with the IFRC Secretariat HQ, the Zone should invite PNS (traditional and non-traditional) to provide or fund necessary processes and/or strategies.

Resources

- ✓ [COVID-19 Lessons Learned Workshop Report: Community-based Migration Programme | IFRC](#)
- ✓ [Evaluation of the IFRC Emergency Appeal for Syria 2012-2018](#)
- ✓ [IFRC response to the Syria Crisis 2012-2014](#)
- ✓ [Final evaluation, endline and learning for Danish Red Cross`MADAD Programme | IFRC](#)
- ✓ [Evaluation Report - Bagcilar \(Istanbul\) Community Centre project for Syrian people under temporary protection in Turkey](#)
- ✓ [Lessons learned from DREF \(MDSY003, MDRSY005 and MDRSY006\).](#)
- ✓ [MDRTR003 Turkey-Population Movement Final Evaluation Report | IFRC](#)
- ✓ [Turkey: Afyon earthquake – Final Report](#)
- ✓ [Haiti - Lessons Learned & Best Shelter Practices](#)
- ✓ [Nepal: Earthquake Five-year Federation-wide report](#)
- ✓ [Earthquake Response Operation - Integrated Recovery Programme - Report – 2019](#)
- ✓ [A Review of the IFRC-led Shelter Cluster Haiti 2010](#)

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