

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

## Overview

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

## Methods

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

306 people shared their views:

- 27 female and 43 male informants interviewed
- 79 female and 78 male community members consulted
- 24 female and 55 male aid workers surveyed

150 documents reviewed

2 country visits

## Key Findings



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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

## Recommendations

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

## Who we are

The **Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Steering Group (IAHE SG)** conducts independent evaluations to promote system-wide learning and accountability in major crises.

As an independent body working closely with the **Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)**, we support the leadership and senior management of humanitarian organizations with evidence-based lessons to improve collective humanitarian action.

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