



On 10 February 2023, Amirah, 2.5, is screened for malnutrition by a UNICEF-supported mobile health team worker, using a mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) tape, in the Alsulheeh neighbourhood, Aleppo City, North Syria. ©UNICEF/UN0781268/Al-Asadi

Earthquake Response in Syria

Humanitarian Situation Report

for every child

Reporting Period: 6-16 February 2023

Highlights

- UNICEF’s earthquake immediate response plan aims at reaching 5.4 million people, including 2.6 million children, from February to May 2023.
- As cluster lead for WASH, Nutrition and Education and as responsible for the areas of Child Protection, UNICEF is coordinating with partners in the affected areas to assess damages and the impacts of the earthquake and plan the necessary response.
- UNICEF partners on the ground have provided around 200,000 people with life-saving WASH supplies and services, including 96,654 affected people residing in 74 reception centres in Northwest (NW) Syria.
- Twenty-one UNICEF-supported Mobile Health and Nutrition Teams (MHNTs) were immediately redeployed to provide health and nutrition services and supplies to over 31,500 affected people. Additional 136 interagency emergency health kits have been shipped and will arrive in NW Syria within days to support 940,000 earthquake affected people for three months.
- UNICEF is currently also setting up temporary learning spaces in the form of prefabricated classrooms and tents in areas where schools were severely damaged or rendered unusable. UNICEF, as a sector lead, together with partners, has started rapid safety and infrastructure damage assessments of educational facilities and has prepositioned education supplies for 50,000 children.
- UNICEF-supported Child Protection mobile teams in Aleppo, Hama and Latakia were redeployed to support displaced families with psychological first aid and other mental health and psychosocial support, reaching approximately 18,265 children, parents and caregivers.

Affected population

8.8 million people
3.7 children

People to be reached

5.4 million people
2.6 million children

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS¹

US\$172.7 Million

PROGRAMME	AMOUNT (USD)
WASH	47,800,008
Health	29,265,371
Nutrition	18,361,542
Education	31,300,000
Child Protection GBVIE	19,950,000
Cash transfers and social protection	23,623,079
Cross-sectoral (PSEA, AAP, Evaluation, RO technical support)	2,400,000
Total	172,700,000

Situation and Humanitarian Needs

In the early hours of 6 February, multiple earthquakes, the strongest being of 7.7 magnitude on the Richter Scale, struck southern Türkiye and northern Syria. At least 1,206 aftershocks have been confirmed as of date of publication. Severe human and material damages were reported mainly in Aleppo, Hama, Idlib, and Lattakia Governorates, and impacting almost every person living in Northwest Syria (NW Syria).

The earthquakes have created a disaster of colossal proportions and casualty numbers keep climbing. As of 13 February, in Syria, at least 5,814 people have reportedly been killed and around 11,000 injured. This includes over 4,400 deaths and more than 8,600 injuries in NW Syria with many still trapped. While the full extent is still unfolding, women and children are likely to be most affected.

Many homes and basic service infrastructure have been destroyed or damaged. More than 8.8 million people – including 3.7 million children – have been affected and many are now in urgent need of food, water, shelter, and emergency medical and psychosocial assistance. It is estimated that between 50,000 and 60,000 individuals are taking shelter in reception centres. Ongoing winter season with below freezing temperatures, pre-existing largescale needs and damaged social service infrastructure are exacerbating the severity of humanitarian needs. The recent cholera outbreak alongside significant shortages in electricity, water and fuel, within an overall context of economic crisis after 12 years of protracted crisis have all impacted the situation.

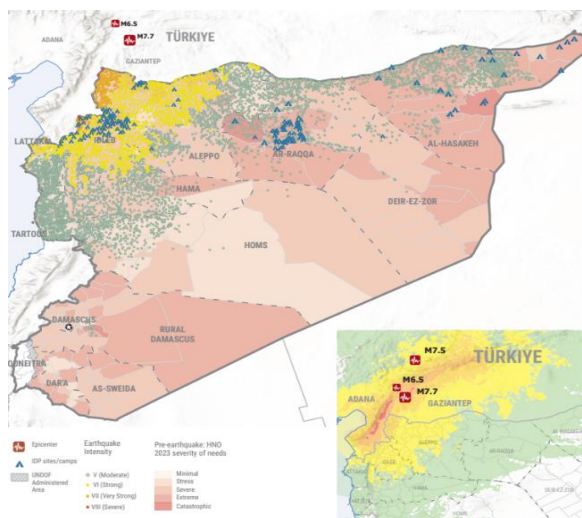
An UN interagency mission to Sarmada in Idlib Governorate took place on the 14 February, and a second one on 15 February to Afrin through Bab Al-Salam border crossing. Key highlights from the meeting with the local authorities and NGOs indicated the high needs for health, shelter, education, reconstruction and cash amongst the earthquake affected population, but also amongst those who were suffering prior to, from the ongoing 12-year conflict. The health situation of children was a specific concern, highlighting the poor living conditions and lack of medical clinics and supplies after the earthquake. UNICEF is planning additional missions into NW Syria while access allows.

While an increasing number of displacements have been recorded in earthquake affected areas in Syria, water and sanitation infrastructure has faced extensive damage in all affected areas. Water supply and sewage networks have been damaged and disrupted, increasing the possibility of cross-contamination during times of no pumping and causing losses in the much-needed potable water. Several elevated water tanks, used to guarantee the needed water pressure in the network, were either completely collapsed or heavily damaged.

In addition, hygiene kits, jerry cans, water purification items, installation of water tanks and rapid emergency repair of water and sewage networks are required. A partner assessment conducted by REACH in NW Syria has found that at least 25 per cent of the WASH services are damaged, leaving individuals vulnerable to communicable diseases.

For Health, significant needs were identified during the initial rapid assessments conducted by health authorities and partners. An interruption in access to essential health services, as well as overcrowding of existing facilities, might also result in increasing maternal and child deaths, vaccine preventable diseases as well as deaths from chronic diseases. There is a high concern of a resurgence of the cholera outbreak. In NW Syria, 52 health facilities were partially destroyed while three were completely destroyed.

UNICEF and other education partners were immediately mobilized to identify the impact of the devastating earthquake on schools and children's learning, assessments are ongoing and data verification processes, reported numbers are likely to change due to the evolving situation. As of 14 February, it has been reported that over 900 schools in Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Idlib, Lattakia and Tartous have sustained damages at varying levels. In addition, over 170 schools were reported as being used as shelters across these governorates. As a result, more than



Source: Earthquake inter-agency flash appeal for Syrian Arab Republic (February 2023)

535,000 children who go to schools that are damaged or used as shelter will not be able to resume their education until these schools are safe and ready.

The assessments in shelters in Aleppo and Lattakia confirmed high levels of distress among children and families, children suffering panic attacks and experiencing violence. Due to family separations and lack of shelter, children have become more vulnerable and at greater risk of exploitation and abuse. The lack of winter clothing was also of concern.

Humanitarian Leadership and Coordination

UNICEF is scaling up its presence across the earthquake governorates of Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Idleb, Lattakia and Tartous. UNICEF is committed to supporting the leadership and coordination of humanitarian response through its leadership or co-leadership of cluster coordination for the WASH, Nutrition and Education Clusters and the Child Protection Area of Responsibility.¹ Currently, 61 staff with managerial, technical and senior cluster coordination and information management capacity are being surged both into Damascus/ field office locations and into Gaziantep. In addition, around 40 staff are providing support to earthquake affected areas through support missions.

UNICEF will ensure affected persons are reached through messaging on prevention and access to services, and existing complaints and feedback mechanisms (including sexual exploitation and abuse) will be scaled up across all interventions.

As part of the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), UNICEF is increasing the operating hours of its service line to accommodate the increased number of calls during the weekend. In addition, an agreement has been reached among sister UN Agencies on how to refer and manage cases to address the diverse needs of the affected population, in the areas, including but not limited to, shelter, non-food items (NFIs), health, gender-based violence, legal documentation, and reunification with families. At the same time, the agencies have agreed to share their respective services in the affected areas so the callers can be immediately referred to and provide with necessary support.

Aside from the community engagement and social and behaviour change support mainstreamed across all programmes, UNICEF will lead the coordination across UN and non-UN organizations for a relevant response in this area. In addition, UNICEF will lead strategic activities catered to building resilience of children and their families affected by the earthquake and strengthening partners' emergency preparedness following the humanitarian programme cycle.

UNICEF Response

UNICEF's earthquake response plan aims to reach 5.4 million people, including 2.6 million children, in the first three-month period of the response from February to May. Overall, UNICEF will address the immediate life-saving and urgent humanitarian needs of girls, boys, adolescents, and families through an integrated and gender-responsive approach prioritizing highly affected areas and areas of large displacement. UNICEF will leverage the established system for AAP and the prevention of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation. In line with the Core Commitments for Children in humanitarian action, priority will be given to restoring essential health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), psychosocial support, family separations, protection case management, provision of cash and winter items where possible.

Before the earthquake, there had been over US\$6 million in supplies pre-positioned in NW Syria, as a contingency in case of non-renewal of the Security Council Resolution of 10 January 2023. As a result, when the earthquake hit, UNICEF was able to dispatch key life-saving supplies such as hygiene kits, drinking water and high energy biscuits to the affected population within 48 hours of the earthquake. This was essential as the border crossing into NW Syria was closed for three days.

UNICEF's humanitarian response is scaling up through the expansion of its already existing programmes mobilized to deliver assistance throughout Syria. In addition to private sector partners, UNICEF has 29 NGO partners active in Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Lattakia and Tartous, covering about 4,000 communities. In addition, UNICEF has also 17 partners active in NW Syria, across 343 communities. These partnerships have been in place for several years due

¹ All cluster coordinators costs are included into sectoral programme budgets

to the ongoing crisis before the earthquake and are now being scaled up and redeployed/repurposed to respond to the earthquake.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

As WASH sector lead, together with local partners, UNICEF teams have undertaken assessments of key WASH infrastructure in all affected governorates and will continue to do so over the coming weeks given the large number of potentially impacted infrastructure to be assessed. Those initial assessments carried out on 7 February in Aleppo, Hama, Idleb and Latakia indicate an immediate need for water trucking to temporary shelters and other displacement sites, as well as locations where the network is no longer functional. In response, UNICEF provides water trucking to an estimated 100,000 people in Aleppo and Latakia, including to neighbourhoods where water pumping has been stopped as a precautionary measure for fear of potentially damaged water and sewer networks that could contaminate drinking water. Assessments of required repair works for water and sewerage networks are currently being undertaken so that interventions can start on a priority basis. Given the risk of water borne disease outbreaks, including cholera, UNICEF started the monitoring the quality of drinking water jointly with Aleppo water authorities at the water source (Suliman Al Halabi water station), tankers, and end users continues on daily basis. Free residual chlorine levels ranged from 0.21 to 0.43 mg/l which meets the required standards. This effort will continue across the affected governorates. Also, UNICEF continues to provide sodium hypochlorite to all affected areas covering an estimated 70 to 75 per cent of the population. Aqua tabs were also distributed, especially when water sources are unsecured reaching 1,748 people in affected areas in Latakia governorate. In addition, UNICEF is currently intensifying hygiene promotion activities in the affected areas.

In NW Syria, whilst assessments are continuing, UNICEF partners on the ground in NW Syria have reached 96,654 affected people residing in 74 reception centres with life-saving WASH supplies and services. Households have received hygiene kits (18,832 family kits) and services such as water trucking; solid waste management and desludging of septic tanks are ongoing, reaching 60,340 individuals in Afrin and Idleb. Hygiene promotion remains an integral part of UNICEF and partner programming, responding to the ongoing cholera outbreak.

Health and Nutrition

With the support of key health partners in NW Syria, 12,607 individuals so far have received medical consultations and life-saving health services in 13 centres across communities in NW Syria in Aleppo and Idleb primarily for earthquake related injuries and trauma. An additional 136 interagency emergency health kits have been shipped from UNICEF's Supply Division and will arrive within days in NW Syria to support 940,000 earthquake affected people for three months. In nutrition, UNICEF's partners in NW Syria have activated nine rapid response teams as well as three fixed sites and six mobile sites treating children with Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM). A total of 4,473 children under five and pregnant and lactating women (PLW) were reached with nutrition services. A total of 1,015 children were screened for malnutrition of which six, representing 100 per cent of children identified with SAM, were treated. High energy biscuits were distributed to 220 children under five in the affected areas including in Afrin, A'zaz, and Harim.

Rapid nutrition assessments started on 7 February and have been undertaken in 166 collective shelters (out of 235) located in Jebel Samaan, Manbij and Ain-Alarab. A total of 7,881 children under five were screened for malnutrition (using mid-upper arm circumference), among them 48 were identified as moderately malnourished while 15 were identified as severely malnourished and were subsequently provided with a treatment programme. In addition, 1,728 PLW were screened for malnutrition whereby 105 of them were identified to be acutely malnourished and provided with treatment. Screening activities took also place in Latakia and Tartous and findings from these assessments are forthcoming.

Twenty-one UNICEF-supported Mobile Health and Nutrition Teams (MHNTs) in Aleppo (including Manbij and Ain Al-Arab), Hama, Idleb, Latakia and Tartous were immediately redeployed to affected areas to provide health and nutrition services and supplies to affected populations, including in shelters, covering so far over 31,500 people in Aleppo, Hama, Idleb, Tartous and Latakia. The UNICEF-supported mobile teams also continue to provide primary health care consultations (12,418), breastfeeding counselling (5,778), nutrition screening (9,717 children and 2,595 pregnant and lactating women (PLW)), and referrals for children and PLW.

Given the urgent health needs, UNICEF has delivered medical and nutrition supplies, as well as locally procured medical consumables covering the needs of around 16,817 people (9,717 in Aleppo, 681 in Hama, 599 in Idleb, 5,380 in Lattakia, and 440 in Tartous). Efforts in response to the earthquake and population movement are ongoing jointly with WHO, and in coordination with the local departments of health in Aleppo, Homs, Hama, Lattakia and Idleb. As of 14 February, 1,349 children under 5 years of old and 62 women received a Tetanus and Diphtheria vaccine.

Large quantities of essential health supplies were procured to be delivered to the affected areas to cover 250,000 people in different instalments, the first instalment of medical supplies (including the Interagency Emergency Health kits, obstetric surgical kits, resuscitation kit, trauma kit and midwifery kits) was airlifted from Dubai and Copenhagen to cover over 50,000 people and were distributed to Aleppo, Hama, and Lattakia. For nutrition, micronutrient supplements were dispatched to affected areas and will cover 113,000 children 6-59 months plus 1,000 pregnant and lactating women for three months.

Education

UNICEF, as a sector lead, together with partners, has started a rapid assessment of the safety and infrastructure of educational facilities in affected areas to ensure schools are safe for children to return. As of date, 221 schools (174 in Aleppo and 47 in Hama) are being assessed in preparation for immediate repairs and light rehabilitation. This is done in coordination with the WASH sector to ensure that children can resume their education in a safe environment with adequate and single-sex WASH facilities. UNICEF is also coordinating with Directorates of Education and engineers' syndicates in Aleppo, Hama and Latakia to identify schools that are safe to reopen, with debris removal and minor repairs expected to begin within a week. As of date, 124 schools in Aleppo have reopened, while in Hama 27 schools have been identified as unsafe to reopen due to structural damage or being in close proximity to unsafe structures.

UNICEF has prepositioned education supplies for distribution to schools and shelters, covering the immediate needs of approximately 50,000 children in Aleppo, Hama and Lattakia. Additional emergency education supplies, such as recreational kits, cleaning kits and classroom tents, are currently being procured offshore. Given that many schools require more structural rehabilitation, UNICEF is currently preparing to set up temporary learning spaces in the form of prefabricated classrooms and tents in areas where schools were severely damaged or rendered unusable in Aleppo and Lattakia.

In NW Syria, schools have been suspended until at least the 18 February whilst the search and rescue efforts are ongoing. UNICEF has deployed an engineering consultancy firm and is working with local education directorates of education and education partners in NW Syria to conduct a rapid structural assessment for all schools in affected areas, starting from Aleppo. Schools will be assessed and classified according to the level of damage and safety which will be critical for supporting temporary learning spaces.

Child Protection

In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, UNICEF and partners also identified and provided immediate support to 94 children severely affected by the earthquake, of whom 71 were unaccompanied or separated from their families. Support included family tracing and reunification, alternative care with the extended family, case management and referral to specialized services through trained case workers and case managers.

The UNICEF-supported Child Protection mobile teams in Aleppo, Hama and Latakia were redeployed to provide displaced families with psychological first aid and other mental health and psychosocial help, reaching approximately 18,265 children, parents and caregivers while approximately 5,000 other people were oriented on child protection and gendered based violence, as well as appropriate coping mechanisms. The support is largely provided through 27 mobile teams reaching shelters that inhabit displaced families. Ten existing child friendly spaces in Aleppo resumed activities with children after being assessed as safe, while three additional child friendly spaces have been established in three shelters in Hama. A total of 751 children and their caregivers were reached with the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse awareness activity including complaint mechanisms. In order to quickly expand the reach of psychosocial support (PSS) for children who are heavily traumatized by the earthquake, UNICEF also trained additional 273 frontline workers on psychological first aid (PFA), while mobilizing longer term mental health and psychosocial support and parenting programme. UNICEF is bringing in supplies to

supplement Mental Health and Psychosocial Support activities, including winter clothing for children, blankets, tents, tarpaulins and recreational kits.

UNICEF partners in NW Syria have provided PFA for 7,042 affected people and PSS for 348 people. The first transshipment of 300 recreation kits, which will support 2,700 children with first level psychosocial support items, crossed into NW Syria on 11 February. A. UNICEF and partners in NW Syria are also carrying out specialized case management for children and have reached 147 children to date (133 of these were recorded as separated and unaccompanied). To be able to support families managing an accumulation of shocks, UNICEF and partners will be setting up integrated education and child protection points near the reception centres of families whose homes were damaged by the earthquake. This will allow children to have a safe space to play and establish a sense of normalcy in their lives.

Cash Relief Response

As of 13 February, over 45,000 vulnerable people in the most earthquake-affected areas of Aleppo and Hama have started to receive emergency cash assistance (people started to receive cash assistance within 96 hours on 9 February). UNICEF is planning to provide 200,000 vulnerable people in earthquake-affected areas of Aleppo, Hama and the coastal governorates with immediate cash relief assistance to help them cope with the dire situation, worsened by the effect of the cold weather. Unconditional cash assistance will be provided to the most vulnerable families affected by the crisis, such as families caring for children with disabilities, orphans and children with chronic illness and female-headed families.

UNICEF and partners in NW Syria are anticipating an expansion of the already existing cash programme to reach the most vulnerable families in the affected governorates by combining the current nutrition cash programme with a winterization top-up. The initial assessment carried out by REACH² on 15 February 2023 reported that 49 per cent of the population have unrestricted access to markets with only four (4) per cent reporting no access, which makes cash suitable to buy essential commodities. Cash assistance will be provided to families with children who have been affected by the earthquake, including displaced families residing in temporary shelters to meet their basic needs.

Adolescents Development and Participation (ADAP)

The engagement of young people helps expand the scope and reach of the humanitarian response while developing wellbeing, belonging and leadership and skill of young people themselves. So far, UNICEF and its local partners have mobilized more than 950 youth volunteers to support the response actions across sectors mainly in Aleppo, Hama and Latakia. This includes relief and shelters' management, packaging, and distribution of food or NFIs in collective shelters, as well as disseminating key messages.

In Aleppo, 320 young people in collective shelters received life-skills in emergency sessions to support them better cope with the emergency situation. Further, 370 volunteers provided recreational activities to 1,317 children in collective shelters in Aleppo.

Communication and Advocacy

In less than 24 hours of the earthquake, a global [statement](#) was released to highlight the impact of the earthquake on children. A global press [release](#) followed one week after the earthquake to underscore the immense needs of children affected and the ongoing UNICEF response. More than one hundred interviews were carried out with regional and international media outlets while social media [assets](#), videos and photos were produced to highlight the situation of the children, their needs and current challenges facing them to mobilize private and international support to respond to their dire needs.

² REACH Rapid Needs Assessment, 15 February 2023

Funding

Prior to the earthquake, the US\$328.5 million 2023 Syria Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC)³, which includes response activities for NW Syria, was already underfunded. The severity of humanitarian needs in Syria was further exacerbated by the earthquake, especially since people across the country were already suffering from a deteriorating socio-economic condition, a recent cholera outbreak, shortages of electricity, water and fuel and 12 years of protracted crisis.

To respond to the life-saving needs of earthquake-affected children, UNICEF Syria developed an [Immediate Response Plan \(US\\$172.7 million\)](#) which is part of the [Inter-Agency Flash Appeal](#) and will inform the revision of the 2023 Syria HAC.

Within 48 hours of the disaster, UNICEF immediately provided US\$6 million from its Regular Resources as part of the Emergency Programme Fund (EPF) to rapidly scale up the response. An additional US\$10 million from the EPF was also allocated two days ago, bringing the total to US\$16 million. The contribution of AUD\$3 million (about US\$ 2 million) from the Government of Australia was received in the early days of the earthquake. Public and private sector partners pledged additional support, including UNICEF National Committees. An allocation from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) amounting to US\$50 million was announced to support the earthquake-affected areas. As part of the first application for US\$15 million, UNICEF was allocated US\$3 million for WASH and Child Protection.

Flexible and unearmarked contributions are requested to enable UNICEF to rapidly respond based on emerging needs.

³ The 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Syria is undergoing finalization prior to the earthquake. The HAC requirement is based on 2022 and will be revised once the HRP project sheets for 2023 are finalized. Pre-earthquake, it is expected that UNICEF will require at least US\$360 million in 2023 to respond to the increased needs across Syria once the HAC is revised. The total number of people in need for 2023 has increased to 15.3 million people (including 7 million children) compared to 14.6 million people in need (including 6.5 million children) in 2022.