



YOUNG
LIVES
FOUNDATION

23 NİSAN
HATIRASI



DISASTER RELIEF REPORT II

OBSERVATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS
What have we done? What will we do?

Kahramanmaraş Earthquakes
06.02-01.05.2023

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Executive Summary

Young Lives Foundation responded to earthquakes with its professional team from the first day of the disaster. YLF continues its earthquake relief work in Hatay, Adiyaman, and Diyarbakir by expanding it to cities indirectly affected by the disaster. Young Lives Foundation transfers its experience in the fields of education, livelihoods, employability skills, protection, child protection, social cohesion, and past disaster reliefs to the current earthquake relief work.

YLF published its first report, which includes its studies and observation notes, under the name “Emergency Earthquake Response Report Kahramanmaras Earthquakes 6-26.02.2023”. This second report covers the studies carried out in Hatay, Adiyaman, and Diyarbakir provinces between February 6 and May 1.

The report is based on the field observations, the data obtained from interviews with the local people, YLF volunteers in that region, technical and administrative personnel. The report includes the foundation's activities to date (Table 1), suggestions and action plans (Table 2), which cover the details of future studies in response to earthquakes.

The activities carried out to date are based on the experiences of the YLF, the suggestions and observations of the foundation's field team, who are familiar with the culture of the people most affected by the earthquake. These activities are culture-, time- and period-oriented, sustainable, long-term, and need-specific. They are different in every field of need, but they are not independent of each other and complement each other. YLF continues its relief work by determining the target group, primarily adolescents and women. In this way, the relief work can be more effective and functional in the medium and long term.

Beyond the material and spiritual losses, the earthquake disaster has caused great sorrow and pain throughout the country. Despite all these adversities, the spirit of solidarity demonstrated by the government, non-governmental organizations, and the people working together to heal the wounds resembles the spirit of the Turkish War of Independence.

The February 6 earthquakes, in all their aspects, have profoundly affected the country in terms of economic, social, and administrative consequences, and it is expected that their repercussions will be felt on this scale.

YLF is aware that healing wounds can only be possible through joint efforts, transparency, and minimizing inequalities, and it is working towards that goal. Meeting the basic needs of the affected population, gradually restoring their routines, ensuring their psychological and emotional well-being, and making them feel safe and protected are integral parts of this process. YLF continues its work by the needs through collaborative partnerships and a comprehensive approach.

Introduction

This report is based on field observations conducted after the two major earthquakes measuring 7.7 and 7.6 that occurred on February 6, 2023, in Hatay and its districts, Adıyaman, and its districts, and Diyarbakır and its districts. The data used to compile this report were obtained through interviews with the local population, YLF volunteers and staff working in the region, as well as technical and administrative personnel.

The destructive impact of the earthquake has produced consequences on a wide area with diverse economic and social characteristics and a large population. While this broad scale is considered throughout the reporting process, it also highlights the challenges of reaching a comprehensive assessment. In other words, obtaining complete and micro-level results encompassing all regional differences can only be achieved through more comprehensive and long-term studies. In light of these considerations, this report aims to present YLF's post-earthquake efforts, its future action plans, and recommendations for earthquake response.

According to the Address-Based Population Registration System (ABPRS) data, the disaster area covering the provinces of Maraş, Hatay, Malatya, Adıyaman, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Diyarbakır, Kilis, Osmaniye, Adana, and Elazığ had a population of 14,196,000 as of December 31, 2022. This number corresponds to 16.4% of the total country population of 85.3 million, indicating that one out of every six individuals resides in the affected regions. Additionally, approximately half of the registered Syrian population under temporary protection, which amounts to around 3.5 million people, lives in these 11 cities comprising the disaster area. The total number of Syrians under temporary protection in the region exceeds 1.7 million, constituting 11.5% of the population in this area. Four of the top five provinces with the highest number of Syrians under temporary protection are located in the disaster area.

According to official figures, in the region where nearly 15 million people reside, including 2 million Syrian refugees, the earthquakes resulted in the loss of over 50,000 lives, with over 80,000 people injured. More than 30,000 buildings collapsed, and over 2.7 million people were displaced. Many of these individuals are still living in temporary settlements. The disaster area covering 11 provinces is roughly one-sixth of the country's size. In addition, the cities that did not experience direct destructive consequences, such as Kayseri, Niğde, Bingöl, and Tunceli, also witnessed numerous earthquakes that caused widespread concern. These earthquakes also resulted in the deaths of 7,259 individuals in neighboring Syria.

According to the World Bank data, residential buildings directly affected by the February 6 earthquakes accounted for 53% (\$18 billion) of the total damage, while non-residential areas such as schools, public buildings, healthcare facilities, and private sector buildings accounted for 28% (\$9.7 billion) of the damage. The remaining 19% (\$6.4 billion) of the damage occurred in infrastructure-related areas such as roads, energy, and water resources.¹

Beyond the material and spiritual losses, the earthquake disaster has caused great sorrow and pain throughout the country, leaving a long-lasting social memory of trauma and scars that may endure for generations. However, despite all these adversities, the spirit of solidarity demonstrated by the government, non-governmental organizations, and the people working together to heal the wounds has revived the spirit of the Turkish War of Independence. While the primary consequences of the February 6 earthquakes were experienced in the earthquake-affected regions, they have profoundly affected the country in terms of economic, social, and administrative consequences, and it is expected that their repercussions will be felt on this scale.

¹Earthquake Damage in Türkiye Estimated to Exceed \$34 billion: World Bank Disaster Assessment Report (27 February 2023) <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/02/27/earthquake-damage-in-turkiye-estimated-to-exceed-34-billion-world-bank-disaster-assessment-report>

WHAT HAVE WE DONE? WHAT WILL WE DO?

Initial Response

YLF initiated its initial response to the earthquake with a professional team of 10 members in Hatay on February 7. In parallel, field teams based in Diyarbakır conducted their operations in Diyarbakır during the first week of the earthquake, and then the transition of the Diyarbakır team to Adıyaman was facilitated, where fieldwork commenced. As of April 29, operations continue in Hatay, Adıyaman, and İzmir with a crew of 30 members.

The primary objective of the initial response in Hatay, Diyarbakır, and Adıyaman was to meet the immediate needs of the earthquake-affected individuals. Within this framework, the needs of the affected individuals were communicated to the volunteer team established at the central office. Once the needs were confirmed, the field teams were directed to the respective areas. Within the scope of the initial response, efforts were made to address the needs of food, hygiene, clothing, shelter, and heating for those affected by the earthquake. Additionally, special attention was given to meeting the specific needs of individuals with special requirements. As part of this, distributions were made for crutches, adult diapers, and newborn baby care supplies.



Meeting the immediate needs has been a significant part of YLF's initial response. However, drawing from previous disaster and crisis management experiences, YLF has also recognized the need to identify other fields, such as education, psychosocial support, and protection. In response, YLF has designed a comprehensive and sustainable work plan. Key elements such as the socialization and security needs of women in the region, the necessity of different safe spaces for children and adolescents, and the importance of structured programs rather than one-time interventions have been identified, shaping medium and long-term projects. Our work in these mentioned areas will be further detailed in the subsequent sections of the report.

Aids & Efforts	in Hatay Province	in Adiyaman Province	TOTAL
Distribution of Aids (Food, clothing, shelter, and hygiene kits)	3.450 families were reached in 14 districts.	618 families were reached in 9 districts.	4.068 families were reached. Distribution Details <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food: 12,880 parcels • Blanket: 2,500 pieces • Bed: 80 pieces • Baby care products: 28,000 diapers, 400 baby formula, 500 pacifiers/bottles • Toys: 600 pieces • Clothing: 43,000 pieces (underwear, outerwear, socks, gloves) • Shoes: 3,000 pieces • Stove/electric heater: 1,092 units • Hazelnut shell: 204,190 kg • Generator: 8 units • First aid kit: 140 pieces • Tent: 89 pieces • Tarpaulin: 54.000 m².
Water, Hygiene, Sanitation	88 WCs 8 accessible WCs 24 shower cabins were installed in 6 different regions.	Water and hygiene products were distributed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilet/shower cabins: 128 • Hygiene and cleaning products: 5,648 parcels • Water: 133,852 liters • Water tank: 30 500 liters, 2 10 tons • Mask: 15,000 pieces • Patient diapers: 4,000 pieces
Food and Kitchen	Food and kitchen sets were distributed. A kitchen with a capacity of 3000 people was set up in Narlıca tent area.	Food was distributed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food: 12,880 parcels • Kitchen set: 160 pieces • Mobile Kitchen
Psychosocial Support	Activities were carried out in 13 fields. 600 children were reached.	Activities were carried out in 10 fields. 916 children were reached.	1.516 children were reached in 23 regions. Besides, psychosocial support studies were carried out with 8 public servants.
Assessment of Young Lives Foundation Beneficiaries's Level of Earthquake Vulnerability			3,339 children and 1,746 families from 16 provinces affected by the disaster.

Table 1. Young Lives Foundation – Response Details

Target Group

YLF, in line with its mission, prioritizes a people-centered approach without discrimination and works to support the access to education and psychosocial well-being of children and youth aged 11-18. Drawing from previous experiences, the foundation ensures the identification of the needs of this age group and designs its interventions accordingly in disaster-affected areas.

Providing psychosocial support to children and adolescents in the aftermath of a disaster, particularly during a period of rapid changes and development such as adolescence, is essential to promote psychological resilience and support healthy developmental processes. In planning psychosocial support interventions, YLF considers the needs of children and adolescents, designing activities that support their psychological, cognitive, and emotional well-being in alignment with their developmental stages and age groups. The foundation's holistic approach also includes all the groups surrounding adolescents within its scope of work.

YLF continues to foster the well-being of adolescents by providing them with safe spaces specific to their needs where they can comprehensively interact with their peers.

“ One of our child beneficiaries wrote a news article expressing their longing for Galatasaray while participating in a newspaper page design activity. In response, we contacted the official Gala supporter group and organized an event for the children in the tent area to watch the Galatasaray match. We all watched the game together using a projection, and their excitement was priceless. ”
(YLF Adiyaman Field Worker)

Psychosocial Support

In planning psychosocial support interventions, it is essential to consider the age groups and developmental levels of children and adolescents. YLF has observed that psychosocial support programs have focused more on preschool and primary school children during their activities. At the same time, adolescents do not prefer to participate in such activities alongside younger children. Therefore, YLF has designed post-disaster psychosocial support programs specifically tailored to children and adolescents, providing them with separate spaces that support their psychological, cognitive, and emotional well-being and meet the needs of their developmental stages. Different programs have been developed for three age groups: 6-9, 10-13, and 14-18.

Restoring a sense of control and security for children and adolescents is essential in the aftermath of a disaster. Therefore, instead of one-time independent activities, programs that establish routines, complement each other and consist of multiple sessions were preferred in planning psychosocial support activities. Maintaining a consistent environment for psychosocial support activities and continuing the sessions with the same experts aims to encourage children and adolescents to participate in these sessions at designated intervals and establish routines. To achieve this, programs consisting of 8-10 sessions were designed for different age groups.



Children in the 6-9 age group explore and try to understand the world through play and imagination. The program aims to support children in expressing themselves, developing positive peer relationships, strengthening their attention, concentration, and focus capacities, and coping with difficult emotions using imagination and creativity.

Children in the 10-13 age group may have more difficulty coping with traumatic experiences following a disaster, along with the challenges brought by the transition to adolescence. Adolescents' aggressive behaviors and aggression toward others can also be observed after a disaster. Therefore, post-disaster psychosocial support programs for children and adolescents in the 10-13 age group include peer relationships, self-esteem, emotional awareness, anger control, problem-solving, and coping skills.

Increased tobacco, alcohol, and substance use have been observed in adolescents and youth following the stress, anxiety, loss, and traumatic experiences caused by an earthquake. Based on field observations and literature on adolescent mental health, a "Life Skills Education Program" was developed for the 14-18 age group as part of psychosocial support activities. This program aims to support young people exposed to the disaster either directly or indirectly in expressing themselves, developing awareness about addiction, acquiring healthy life skills, and contributing to their identity development.

Young Lives Foundation plans to implement a psychosocial support program specifically designed for the 14-18 age group in adolescent-friendly spaces. The organization aims to provide a space for adolescents who experience challenging experiences such as transitioning to adulthood, the desire for independence, and identity development to share these experiences in specially designed areas and support their self-esteem by making them feel valued. These spaces are also designed to serve as socialization environments for adolescents who have lost their friends or have been separated from their friends due to relocation or resettlement to different cities after a disaster.



Education

During the post-disaster period, it has been observed that the current situation and needs in the affected areas constantly change. Sharing information about the education processes in earthquake-affected regions is crucial for planning educational activities after a disaster. In this context, Young Lives Foundation facilitated in-depth interviews and surveys with field teams to gather their current observations and insights. Based on this information, data regarding post-disaster education processes were collected for the Sakarya, Istanbul, Hatay, and Adiyaman regions. The report prepared based on the information received from the field included the following topics and the education processes were formulated based on this data:

- Accessibility and participation in education,
- Barriers to accessing education,
- Good practices in education,
- Children's situation,
- Children's educational needs,
- Parents' perspectives,
- Observations of field workers.

Following the earthquake, hundreds of buildings were damaged, rendering the homes and belongings of many affected individuals unusable. Consequently, children and adolescents have lost their toys, books, and other learning materials. Restoring children to their previous routines is of paramount importance in supporting their psychological well-being after a disaster. To help children cope with the challenging experiences they faced after the earthquake and support their well-being, Young Lives Foundation prepared kits consisting of stationery materials, toys, reading books, and textbooks to be distributed to the affected children. When creating the kits, care was taken to select age-appropriate books and toys for different age groups, specifically 4-6, 7-11, 12-14, and 15-18, by their developmental stages. Additionally, we ensured that the selected books did not contain elements that could trigger traumatic events experienced during the disaster.



Supporting Women's Well-being

It has been observed that women in the disaster area experience psychological, emotional, and physical distress as they are away from their routines, unable to socialize and feel unsafe. A women-friendly space will be established in Hatay to support women's well-being.

The aim is for 600 women, with a daily target of 20, to benefit from the services provided in a safe space where they can meet their basic needs and socialize.

Helping the Helpers

Efforts are being made to support the well-being of field teams working with individuals affected by the earthquake. Ensuring the well-being of service providers is as important as the well-being of those receiving assistance to maximize the effectiveness of post-disaster interventions. With this approach in mind, "Helping the Helpers" activities are being carried out.

On March 2nd and 13th, in Mersin and Şanlıurfa, respectively, "Helping the Helpers" activities supported the psychological well-being of YLF field teams continuing their post-disaster work in Adiyaman and Hatay. The activities included psychological debriefing techniques, allowing participants to express their feelings and thoughts, listen, gain information, and share experiences. Through these activities, participants were able to process and restructure their emotions and thoughts. Expressive art therapy methods were also incorporated to address challenging emotions and provide information to field teams about trauma-related symptoms, self-care skills, coping mechanisms, and other related topics.

Involving all actors who interact with children in disaster response efforts is essential and necessary. Therefore, child-focused interventions are planned to include parents, teachers, and public sector employees. This comprehensive approach aims to strengthen the capacities of all actors involved in working with children and support children's well-being. In line with this approach, a psychosocial support group was conducted in Adiyaman to enhance the psychological well-being of librarians working with children affected by the earthquake.

The psychosocial support intervention in Adiyaman aimed to facilitate self-expression, help participants make sense of their emotions, and provide a platform for sharing experiences. It also aimed to support participants in coping with emotional challenges such as stress and anxiety, introduce new coping strategies, and strengthen their capacities.



Special Days

Iftar Gatherings Organized by YLF

The Young Lives Foundation provides training and material support to individuals and organizations who intend to conduct field visits and interact with individuals affected by the earthquake to enhance their preparedness. As part of this initiative, orientation training was provided to employees of QNet, one of the collaborating organizations, during iftar gatherings organized in the field. The orientation training, facilitated by the Young Lives Foundation experts, covered essential aspects to consider when engaging with children and provided information about the Young Lives Foundation's Child Protection Policy. Additionally, a briefing note was shared with QNet employees regarding the protection of rights for children and adults during field visits, as well as guidelines on how to approach communication with individuals affected by the earthquake.



23 April National Sovereignty and Children's Day & Eid al-Fitr Double Celebration Gathering

To celebrate the April 23rd National Sovereignty and Children's Day, activities were organized for children in both the Young Lives Foundation earthquake centers and tent cities in Hatay and Adiyaman. 230 children came together to celebrate the double holiday in Hatay and Adiyaman. Various activities such as body percussion, algorithmic thinking and coding, t-shirt painting, board games, persona card workshops, and face painting were conducted. The program, which received significant interest from the children, was concluded with the "Wishing Balloons" activity, organized to increase their positive thoughts and hopes for the future and allow them to express their wishes in a tangible way. On the April 23rd National Sovereignty and Children's Day, which Atatürk gifted to all children, efforts were made to encourage children to return to their old routines and celebrate their own holiday to their hearts' content.



Detection of the Level of Impact of YLF Beneficiaries from the Earthquake

After the disaster, communication was established with the families of scholarship students living in earthquake-affected areas. Information was gathered about their level of impact from the earthquake. Monitoring was conducted for 3,339 children from 1,746 households within the scope of projects to prevent child labor related to the earthquake. Detailed information was obtained regarding their attendance in education, the condition of their homes, their shelter conditions, and their migration to seasonal agriculture.

Team Management & Capacity Building

In selecting newly employed staff, attention was given to factors such as familiarity with the culture and dynamics of the earthquake-affected region, expertise, and knowledge of the languages spoken in the area (such as Kurdish, Arabic, etc.). It is known that individuals affected by traumatic experiences like earthquakes often have difficulty expressing and sharing their challenging experiences. Conducting activities with individuals affected by the earthquake through people from the same region, speaking the same language, and sharing the same culture supports interpersonal communication and sharing. As a result, individuals affected by the earthquake feel understood and can express themselves more comfortably. Orientation training sessions were conducted to strengthen the sense of belonging of newly employed staff, inform them about post-disaster activities, and provide guidance on working with individuals affected by the earthquake.

The earthquake on February 6th, centered in Kahramanmaraş, differs from previous disasters in terms of its intensity, the extent of the affected geographical region, and the scale of destruction and losses. When evaluating the post-disaster efforts in the earthquake-stricken areas, we observed that the adopted approaches and used materials were primarily influenced by the experiences gained from the 1999 Gölcük Earthquake.

The Young Lives Foundation believes that besides drawing from past experiences and literature, acquiring knowledge that can respond to current conditions and needs is important. In line with this, capacity-building training programs were planned for the teams to support the work conducted in the post-disaster period in the Adiyaman and Hatay regions. The following training topics were covered as part of the capacity-building program:

1. Considerations in post-disaster psychological first aid & psychosocial support processes
2. Working with grief and loss
3. Considerations for communicating with trauma victims, children, and families
4. Team communication
5. Promoting self-care and well-being of the field team
6. Post-disaster protection processes

“ *The ability of our field teams to communicate in the native languages of the individuals in earthquake-affected areas (Kurdish and/or Arabic) has helped us establish trust quickly and enabled us to act more swiftly in identifying and addressing needs and providing assistance.*

(YLF Adiyaman Field Worker)

”

Water, Hygiene, Sanitation

Young Lives Foundation has quickly adapted its experience in the placement of toilet cabins and shower cabins in tents and other shelter areas through the renovation activities of the Elimination of the Child Labour in Seasonal Agriculture Project to meet the needs of access to water, toilets, and sanitation in the earthquake-affected areas. In addition, the distribution of hygiene kits and basic care supplies has been ongoing since the first day of the earthquake.

- Two 10-ton drinking water tanks were allocated to two different temporary shelter areas (Narlıca 1st Region and Narlıca Schools Region) in Hatay/Antakya/Narlıca.
- In Hatay province, 30 units of 500-liter water tanks were distributed to earthquake-affected individuals in need.
- In six different temporary shelter areas in Hatay province, 88 squat toilets, 8 accessible toilets, and 24 shower cabins were allocated.
- A total of 5,648 hygiene kits have been distributed.



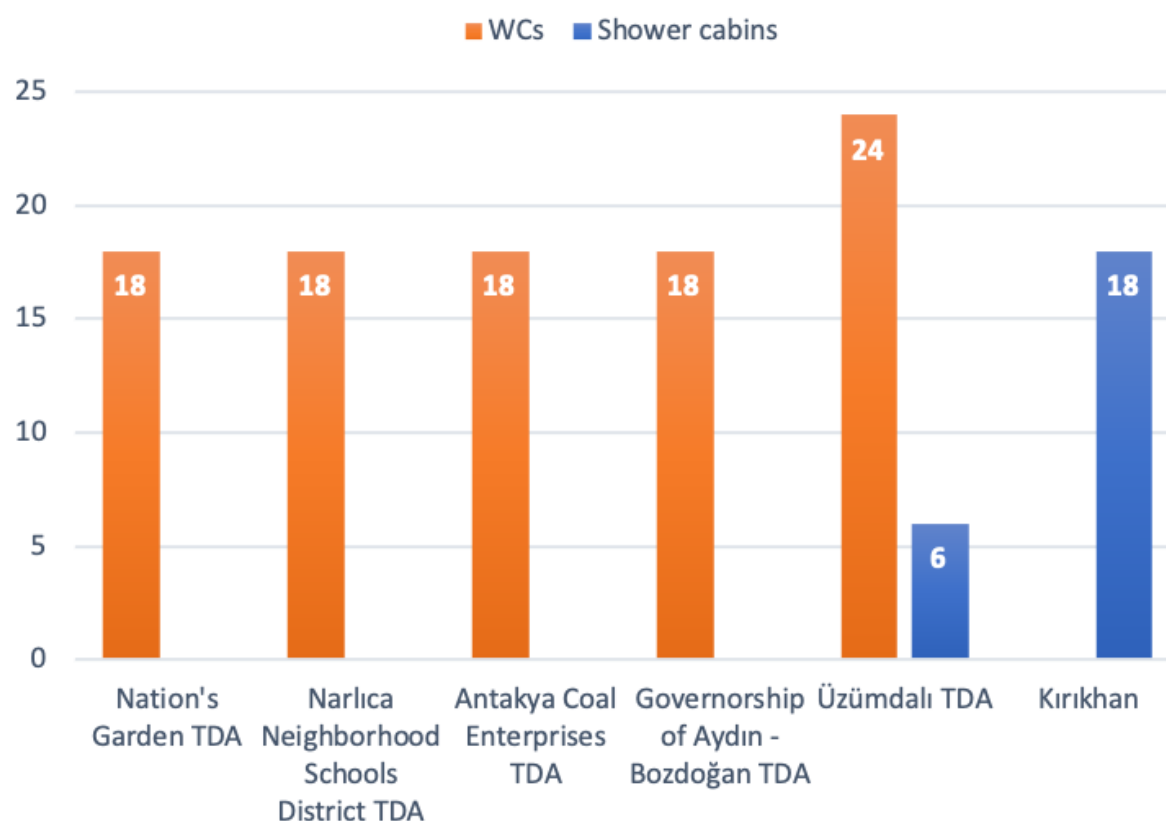
“ The comment made by an individual in Hatay/Defne, Çekmece Neighborhood, recognizing us and stating, "I remember this logo and vest. On the second day, it was only you here; there was no one else." increased our motivation on our relief work. (YLF Hatay Field Worker) ”



Number of WC and Shower Cabins Beneficiaries Installed in Hatay Temporary Accommodation Areas (TDAs)

Hatay	Number of Beneficiaries
Nation's Garden TDA	1,000
Narlıca Neighborhood Schools District TDA	600
Antakya Coal Enterprises TDA	450
Governorship of Aydın - Bozdoğan TDA	2,000
Üzümdalı TDA	5,000
Kırıkhan	950
TOTAL	10,000

Efforts in water, hygiene, and sanitation will continue. With the projects planned to be implemented in a short period of time, sanitation of at least 55 shower and toilet cabins will be regularly carried out. Distribution of products such as soap and tissue will be conducted to ensure sustainable use of the shower and toilet cabins. In addition to sanitation activities, the project aims to provide regular access to clean water for at least 600 people daily.



Food Security

Access to food is one of the most critical areas requiring immediate intervention after an earthquake. Providing access to ready-to-eat food was prioritized in the early days of the earthquake response, followed by establishing a kitchen with a daily capacity of 3,000 meals in the Hatay Narlıca region on March 8, 2023, to meet the need for hot meals. Since March 8, 2023, two meals have been served every day.



Protection

YLF closely monitored and shaped its work in the field of protection since the first day of the earthquake. Projects in earthquake-affected areas will include increasing awareness, conducting needs assessments, providing guidance and case management to ensure access to essential services, minimizing individual sensitivities, and informing individuals about legal and healthcare services. The aim is to have 900 individuals benefit from protection activities within 6 months, and this number is expected to increase with new project initiatives.

“*When we delivered the aid kits to our beneficiaries, it was very impactful for us to see that despite being in need, they were hesitant to accept the assistance, and their eyes filled with tears when they received it.*”
(YLF Hatay Field Worker)

Planning for Medium & Long Term Activities

YLF gained experience in crisis intervention and psychosocial support for the affected communities after the Soma mine disaster in 2014. This experience highlighted the need for longer-term interventions in disaster-affected areas. In line with this, YLF supports its staff in the earthquake-affected region not only with their expertise but also by prioritizing personnel from the relevant areas to facilitate long-term projects.

Young Lives Foundation has established community centers in Adiyaman and Hatay to enhance the effectiveness and functionality of medium and long-term activities. Through discussions with funding institutions following the disaster, YLF has outlined the details of its planned activities, which can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Details of the Planned Activities

Activity	Project Province
Psychosocial support, needs assessment, and protection activities for individuals in the disaster area (referrals, distribution of kits, and access support to essential services).	Adiyaman District & its rural area
Psychosocial support (PSD) for women and children who have been displaced due to the earthquake. Needs assessment and distribution of kits through household visits. Support for stationery materials for children.	Izmir
Mental health and psychosocial support services, needs assessment, protection, case management, referrals, and access support to essential services for individuals in the disaster area.	Adiyaman District & its rural area
Sanitation of WCs and shower cabins, solving clean water need. Establishing safe spaces for women. Distributing hygiene kits and providing clean water specifically for women.	Hatay

OBSERVATIONS & SUGGESTIONS

The mentioned activities are based on the experiences of the Young Lives Foundation (YLF) and the observations of the YLF field team, who are familiar with the culture of most of the earthquake-affected population. These recommendations and initiatives are designed to be culturally sensitive, responsive to the specific time and context, sustainable, long-term, and tailored to the needs of the affected communities. They address different areas of need but are interconnected and complementary. The detailed steps for the next phase are outlined below.

Psychosocial Support

Post-disaster psychosocial support activities primarily focus on preschool and primary school-aged children. Activities targeting adolescents mainly include academic support programs. Implementing programs that allow earthquake-affected adolescents to share their challenging experiences, make sense of their complex adolescence processes, socialize with their peers, explore their potential, and acquire new skills is essential. This should be accompanied by the creation of adolescent-friendly spaces.

In addition to ongoing efforts in the affected provinces, it is necessary to carry out psychosocial support activities in regions experiencing significant migration due to the earthquake. Therefore, YLF will prioritize conducting activities in Izmir, one of the regions with a high influx of displaced individuals. These activities will address stress caused by relocation, adaptation, social integration, communication with trauma-affected individuals, and loss and grieving processes. Priority will be given to schools where students affected by the earthquake have been relocated.



Education

According to situation reports compiled from UNICEF's assessments following the earthquake, 2.5 million children in the affected regions of Türkiye need urgent humanitarian assistance. Approximately 4 million children in earthquake-affected areas have been directly or indirectly deprived of access to education, including 350,000 refugee and migrant children. According to data obtained by UNICEF, only 1,495,648 children unable to access education due to the earthquake have been able to resume their education. Approximately 254,000 of them have relocated with their families to unaffected provinces such as Istanbul, Ankara, Antalya, and Mersin and enrolled in state schools there. More than 20,000 students who had previously been displaced have returned to their settlements in the earthquake-affected areas with their families. The exact number of schools that have been destroyed, damaged in various ways, or rendered unusable due to the earthquake is still uncertain as of the end of April. Still, field observations indicate that a significant number of schools have either been completely destroyed or severely damaged. This adds another dimension to the education crisis faced by school-aged children returning to their cities.

It is known that the Ministry of National Education has established classrooms in some tent cities where education is provided. For example, in the Orhanlı tent city in the Defne district, four classrooms have been set up, and 900 children receive education at different levels according to their ages. However, due to small classrooms and high student-teacher ratios, there are challenges in ensuring the effectiveness of education. In the Çevlik tent area in the Samandağ district of Hatay, it can be observed that there is a center established solely through the initiative of volunteer teachers. Still, there is no systematic education being provided. Consequently, there is a significant challenge in terms of educational participation throughout Hatay. On the other hand, it has been noted that education has largely transitioned from tent areas to school buildings. Still, parents are hesitant to send their children due to security concerns (aftershocks and transportation). Attendance records show an average participation rate of 35% in schools. This indicates a risk of disengagement and dropout from education.

Based on individual and survey interviews conducted with field workers, the Young Lives Foundation has identified that children have become bored with one-time activities. Therefore, it is understood that children need longer-term activities and a return to a school routine. Additionally, children who continue to live in earthquake-affected areas or have migrated require access to tablets, reference books, and school materials to access educational opportunities. Moreover, it has been observed that children preparing for exams face significant challenges. They require auxiliary books, educational materials, tablets, internet access, and study areas to prepare for exams. In addition to academic support, discussions and evaluation processes are being carried out with the Provincial Directorates of National Education to conduct psychosocial support activities for children in schools.

“ *The prolonged closure of schools has caused significant distress for YKS, EYT, and YGS students. Subsequently, an educational campus was built, but due to its location in a riverbed, it frequently experienced flooding. Children and young people were relocated from tent and container areas to this campus, but an effective learning environment could not be provided.*

(YLF Adiyaman Field Worker)

”

Supporting Women's Well-being

It has been observed that women are more vulnerable to verbal, physical, emotional, and sexual abuse in communal living spaces. Increasing the safety of communal living areas, constructing women-friendly spaces, ensuring women feel safe, and protecting and supporting their well-being is essential.

Water, Hygiene, Sanitation

Post-disaster shower and toilet cabins should be installed according to Sphere standards. Allocating funds for sanitation activities in the shower and toilet cabins established after the disaster is important for ensuring people's access to hygiene under dignified conditions and preventing various infectious diseases. In parallel, necessary hygiene materials should be provided regularly to toilet and shower cabins.

Protection

During the two and a half months after the disaster, some new needs emerged while the need for specific basic necessities continued. It has been observed that there are still inadequacies in meeting basic needs such as shelter, nutrition, health, and hygiene. Additionally, individuals affected by the earthquake have been found to require legal counseling support in matters such as property ownership, insurance, and inheritance.



Livelihood Sources

Communal living spaces such as tent cities and container cities established in the affected areas pose significant child neglect and abuse risks. It is crucial to make these areas child-friendly and child-safe, establish units to supervise individuals working with children, and create complaint/feedback mechanisms to ensure the well-being of children.

According to the 2021 data from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat), there are 3.841 million people employed in disaster-stricken areas, which include 11 cities. This employment in the region accounts for 13.3% of the total employment in the country. However, an important point of concern regarding employment in the region is that out of 3.8 million wage workers, 2.3 million are informally registered. At the same time, 1.5 million are informally employed without social security coverage. The informality rate in employment in the region is 39%, significantly higher than the official data of 29% for informal employment nationwide. These figures indicate that 4 out of 10 wage workers in the region were affected by the earthquake while working without social security protection.

Taking a closer look, it is observed that informality rates are much higher in regions where the agricultural sector is more active, such as Malatya, Adiyaman, Şanlıurfa, Diyarbakır, and Osmaniye. However, informal work is a widespread issue not only in the agricultural sector but also in all sectors (industry and services) in the region. Considering that employment in the region is predominantly concentrated in sectors such as agriculture, agriculture-based industry, textile products, and textile raw materials production, it should be noted that women and child labor also participate in these sectors informally, especially in agriculture. The "Household Labor Force Survey", published before the earthquake, recorded a labor force participation rate of 18.7% for children in the 15-17 age group.

When we look at the participation in employment in the earthquake-affected region through the lens of "gender equality," an asymmetric picture awaits us. While labor force participation in the region's urban areas is 70.3% for men, it is 32.8% for women. The unemployment rates in the region are 10.7% for men and 14.7% for women. It is expected that this asymmetry will increase with the occurrence of the earthquake.²



²Based on Presidency of Strategy and Budget data.

With its involvement in the mining disaster in Soma and experience in establishing a women's cooperative, the Young Lives Foundation has demonstrated that women's cooperatives can be pioneering in supporting female employment in disaster-affected areas.

“ *The experiences of women cooperatives in the region indicate that NGOs can support women's cooperatives to enable women to become self-employed. These cooperatives can provide women with various vocational trainings to engage in production activities. Additionally, a sales point can be established to sell these products.* ”
(YLF Adiyaman Field Worker)

Field observations, feedback from the local community, and YLF volunteers working in the region indicate that supporting the sale of local and regional products can serve as a temporary solution to alleviate the region's livelihood challenges. For example, new marketplaces can be opened, or the number of container markets can be increased to facilitate the marketing of these products. This would provide opportunities for local businesses while enabling the community to meet their urgent needs.

YLF considered local employment during the earthquake process and was able to involve local individuals in the recovery process. Through this employment program, six earthquake survivors worked with us regularly, and intermittent support was also provided to six other survivors. This approach helped YLF establish stronger connections with local community groups and contributed to the psychological healing of the earthquake survivors.

"We also experienced the earthquake, but being able to contribute to our community through your organization has been psychologically beneficial to us, and it has given us hope that we can heal our wounds."

To support livelihoods, the sale of locally and regionally specific products in earthquake-affected areas can be promoted, targeting both domestic and international markets. A marketplace can be established to support the sale of these products. This would ensure the local community's employment in both production and sales processes and contribute to the development of local and regional economies.

Conclusion

As the Young Lives Foundation, we see and share the concerns and sorrows of everyone affected by the earthquake. We believe that transparent planning of the conducted activities and sharing their short, medium, and long-term impacts will support the needed feelings of trust, belonging, hope, and the desire to hold onto life.

We are aware that healing our wounds is only possible through collective efforts, transparency, and minimizing inequalities. We are working towards this goal. Meeting the basic needs of those affected by the disaster, gradually returning to their routines, and ensuring their psychological and emotional well-being, as well as their sense of safety and protection, are crucial aspects of this process. We trust that together, in a coordinated and comprehensive approach, with unwavering dedication and compassion, we can achieve this and continue shaping our work accordingly.

Solidarity plays a crucial role in times of crisis. In this context, we have officially joined the Disaster Platform, with whom we have collaborated actively in the field during the post-earthquake recovery process. We hope that the unity of institutions and organizations working towards similar goals will be strengthened and reflected in the field in the future.

Beyond the material and spiritual losses, the earthquake disaster has caused great sadness and pain throughout the country, leaving long-lasting societal trauma and possibly deep wounds that may not be erased for generations. However, despite all these challenges, the spirit of solidarity created through the efforts of the government, civil society organizations, and the people working together to heal these wounds must continue. As we plan from the medium to long term, we foresee continuing our work in the disaster-affected areas for at least three more years. From the first day of the earthquake until now, we have continued our work with the support of national and international institutions and individual donors.

We invite

all institutions and individuals who want to contribute and collaborate to join us.





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