

Real-Time Response Review
& Perception Survey of
Türkiye/Syria
Earthquake
Appeal 2023

For Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS AND TERMS	3
I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
II. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	7
Background	8
Türkiye	8
Syria	9
DEC Türkiye/Syria Earthquake Appeal	9
Group Prioritisation	9
III. METHODOLOGY	10
Conceptual Foundation of the Real-Time Review	10
Real-Time Review Matrix and Questions	10
Response Review Design	10
IV. SAMPLING.....	11
V. LIMITATIONS.....	13
VI. RESPONSE REVIEW FINDINGS	17
CHS 1: Was the humanitarian response appropriate and relevant?.....	17
CHS 2: Was the humanitarian response effective and timely?.....	21
CHS 3: Did the humanitarian response strengthen local capacities and avoid negative effects?	30
CHS 4: Was the humanitarian response based on communication, participation, and feedback?	33
CHS 5: Were complaints welcomed and addressed?	34
CHS 6: Was the humanitarian response coordinated and complementary?.....	36
CHS 7: Were humanitarian actors continuously learning and improving?.....	38
CHS 8: Were staff supported to do their job effectively, and were they treated fairly and equitably?	38
CHS 9: Were resources managed effectively, efficiently, and ethically?	41
Grand Bargain Commitments	43
Cross-Cutting Issues (Gender equality, Environment, Safeguarding and Do no harm)	46
VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	49

ACRONYMS AND TERMS

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
CFRM	Complaint and Feedback Response Mechanism
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standard
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DEC	Disasters Emergency Committee
ET	Evaluation Team
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
FCDO	The Foreign, Commonwealth, & Development Office
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FSPs	Financial Service Providers
FR	Field Researcher
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GoS	Government of Syria
HH	Household
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
KII	Key Informant Interview
LC	Local Council
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning
MPCA	Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
NFI	Non-Food Items
NWS	Northwest Syria
OM	Operation Manager
OECD	the Economic Cooperation and Development
OPR	Operational Peer Review
PWD	Persons with Disability
QAA	Quality Assurance Advisor
RR	Response Review
RTR	Real-Time Review
SADDD	Sex, Age and Disability Disaggregated Data
SNGOs	Syrian Non-Governmental Organisations
TOR	Terms of Reference
TL	Turkish Lira
TSE	Türkiye Syria Earthquake
TUR	Türkiye
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WG	Working Group

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On February 6, 2023, a [7.8-magnitude earthquake](#) devastated South-East Türkiye¹ and North-West Syria (NWS), followed by several strong aftershocks. The earthquakes, the largest in centuries in the region, struck in the heart of winter, [killing more than 50,000 people](#) and causing mass destruction of buildings and infrastructure across both countries. [More than a million survivors were left homeless](#), forced to live outside in bitterly cold weather. The earthquakes exacerbated an already complex situation in the region, which has been destabilised by years of conflict and displacement.

During Phase 1 (February to July 2023) of the DEC funded Türkiye/Syria Earthquake (TSE) Appeal, fourteen DEC member agencies worked closely with multiple local partner organisations across the region to deliver humanitarian assistance in both Türkiye and Syria. Operations in Syria encompassed areas in NWS and the Government of Syria (GoS) regions. As part of its commitment to accountability and learning, the DEC commissioned [NSDation Consultancy Services](#) to conduct a real-time response review of the TSE Phase 1 response.

The Response Review (RR) was a two-part process encompassing a real-time review (RTR) with DEC Secretariat, DEC member agencies, local partner, and local actor key informants (KIs) and a perception survey with a sample of the affected population. The overall objective of the response review was to evaluate the response against the [Core Humanitarian Standard \(CHS\)](#) and [Grand Bargain commitments](#) and to provide real time lessons so that DEC member agencies can adapt their programming. The key findings of the response review are as follows:

CHS 1

The humanitarian response appropriate and relevant

Overall, the DEC funded TSE response was found to be appropriate and relevant, with some gaps noted. The response appropriately identified affected individuals' and groups' needs across the three hubs² with most recipients indicating that aid met their urgent needs. A strength of Phase 1 of the TSE response was its high level of adaptability in responding to the evolving needs of affected populations. However, needs assessments tended to be more general than targeted leading to challenges in reaching the most vulnerable, and in a few cases, recipients' expectations of aid were not met, particularly in the amounts of Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA).

CHS 2

The humanitarian response was largely effective and timely

The response effectively provided high-quality assistance for short-term needs, aided by strong cooperation and communication between organisations. Challenges like cash transfer issues in Syria and staff personally affected by earthquakes hindered both timeliness and effectiveness. One weakness was the emphasis on short-term needs, with limited focus on addressing longer-term priorities like livelihoods. DEC member agencies and local partners routinely used quality assurance mechanisms in the three hubs. Monitoring systems were widely employed, but a focus on outputs over outcomes may have obscured intervention effects. Affected people remain concerned about their short-term needs, such as winterisation and continued MPCA, as well as medium- and longer-term issues.

¹ Türkiye is the new internationally recognized name for the country that was Turkey.

² Türkiye, Syria northwest, and government-controlled areas of Syria.

CHS 3

The humanitarian response, to some extent, strengthened local capacities and avoided negative effects

The Response Review found that while Phase 1 of the TSE response focused more on short-term urgent needs rather than on long-term solutions and capacity strengthening. Environmental mainstreaming was not a priority in Phase 1, but examples of efforts to minimise negative environmental effects were captured. Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) activities in Phase 1 were limited to a small number of cases of emergency response and community empowerment programmes and some efforts to strengthen the built environment.

CHS 4

The humanitarian response was based on strong communication and a certain level of participation, and feedback

Communication between DEC member agencies, local partners, and other local stakeholders was a key factor supporting the effectiveness and timeliness of the response. In some cases, local authorities across the three hubs participated in the response, supporting the tailoring of activities to meet specific community needs, but this did not happen consistently across areas.

CHS 5

Complaints were welcomed, but not always addressed

DEC member agencies and local partners in the three hubs established a wide range of complaint and feedback response mechanisms (CFRM) to solicit feedback from community stakeholders and members on issues related to assistance. CFRM were not always utilized due to varying awareness of CFRMs among affected populations, potential gender-related barriers, and the choice of some individuals not to use CFRMs, with evidence indicating varying responsiveness from DEC member agencies when complaints were submitted.

CHS 6

The humanitarian response was coordinated and complementary

Coordination and complementarity efforts among DEC member agencies, local partners and other stakeholders increased in the early days of the TSE response and remained steady throughout Phase 1.

CHS 7

Humanitarian actors made some efforts to continuously learn and improve

DEC member agencies and local partners experienced some organisational learning as a result of their monitoring activities and ad-hoc information sharing, but formal learning opportunities were not prioritised during Phase 1.

CHS 8

In some cases, but not all, staff were supported to do their job effectively and were treated fairly and equitably

Supporting staff was a key priority during the TSE response Phase 1 given that many employees throughout the region had been personally affected by the earthquakes. Staff of both DEC member agencies and local partners in NWS and Türkiye reported high levels of support in the forms of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), training, and financial supplements. In GoS, the levels of employee support appeared to be lower than that in the other hubs and uneven across organisations.

CHS 9

Resources were managed effectively, efficiently, and ethically

There is substantial evidence to support that DEC member agencies managed resources efficiently and effectively. In addition, most respondents found aid distribution to be fair and inclusive. However, concerns were raised regarding alleged cases of favouritism, as well as instances of potential bias in aid provision.

Grand Bargain Commitments

The TSE Phase 1 response was well localised across the three hubs with DEC member agencies and local partners engaged in co-creation during design and implementation. DEC member agencies engaged in capacity strengthening with local actors and demonstrated flexibility when it came to leading and adapting activities. Many local partners in NWS and Türkiye participated in aid related decision-making, while in GoS, there was variation across local partners. During Phase 1, very few joint efforts among networks of DEC-funded organisations were identified, representing a missed opportunity for collaboration.

Cross-Cutting Issues

While DEC member agencies and local partners across the three hubs made noticeable efforts to include all groups of people in assistance, the Response Review evidence suggests that Persons with Disabilities (PWD) faced greater barriers to access. The Response Review did not identify any gender-based differences in aid distribution, but it did uncover some differences in participation and awareness between men and women.

Conclusion

During Phase 1, DEC member agencies and local partners involved in the DEC funded TSE response made significant strides in responding to the crisis and addressing the immense needs of affected populations. During Phase 2, DEC Secretariat, DEC member agencies, and local partners can draw valuable lessons from Phase 1 gaps and successes to enhance future efforts.

II. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This report describes the Response Review findings of the DEC funded TSE Phase 1 response (February to July 2023) implemented by fourteen DEC member agencies. The two-part Response Review, consisting of RTR and a perception survey, was designed to provide the DEC, DEC member agencies, and local partners with real-time insights to enhance learning and inform adjustments to the response in subsequent phases of programmes.

The overall objectives of the **RTR** were as follows:

- Evaluate the response against the Development Assistance Committee of the Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/DAC) criteria, CHS commitments, Grand Bargain commitments, and lessons from previous crises, identifying strengths and areas for improvement.
- Provide actionable recommendations to DEC member agencies for real-time adjustments and informed decision-making in ongoing programmes, highlighting good practices in DEC-funded humanitarian operations.
- Obtain feedback from local and national partners on their relationship with DEC member agencies and support provided for locally led humanitarian activities, fostering stronger collaborative partnerships.
- Identify gaps, unmet needs, and challenges in DEC-funded humanitarian operations in Türkiye and Syria, considering both sectoral and cross-cutting perspectives, with a focus on inclusiveness and overcoming barriers to reach marginalised groups.
- Extract key learnings from the response and engage DEC member agencies through workshops and written outputs to facilitate knowledge sharing, reflection, and informed decision-making for future programming.

The overall objectives of the **Perception Survey** were as follows:

- Assess the impact of surveying the affected population on member agencies' alignment with local priorities, community perceptions, and priorities, and their incorporation into the DEC member agencies' learning efforts.
- Assess community perceptions and priorities to incorporate their perspectives into DEC member agencies' learning efforts.
- Examine variations in perceptions among diverse community members to address disparities in experiences and needs.
- Empower affected communities to shape assistance and contribute to quality programs.
- Extract key lessons learned and engage DEC member agencies for knowledge sharing and continuous improvement.

Background

On February 6, 2023, a [7.8-magnitude earthquake](#) devastated South-eastern Türkiye and NWS, followed by several strong aftershocks. The earthquakes, the largest in centuries in the region, struck in the heart of winter, [killing more than 50,000 people](#) and causing mass destruction of buildings and infrastructure in urban and rural areas across both countries. [More than a million survivors were left homeless](#), forced to live outside in bitterly cold weather and [burn piles of debris](#) to keep warm. The earthquakes exacerbated an already complex situation in the region, which has been destabilised by years of conflict, refugee movements, and internal displacements.



Türkiye

Türkiye, which is criss-crossed by two main fault zones, the East and North Anatolian, [is one of the most seismically active regions in the world](#). The provinces in Türkiye most affected by the February 2023 earthquakes were Kahramanmaraş, Hatay, Malatya, Adiyaman, Diyarbakir, Gaziantep, Kilis, Osmaniye, Adana, and Sanliurfa. [Around 15 million people live in these provinces, including over 1.7 million Syrian refugees and approximately 4.6 million children](#).

For the eighth consecutive year, Türkiye is the country with the most refugees in the world. In recent years, the country has granted temporary protection status to around [3.6 million individuals from Syria as well as 320,000 individuals from Afghanistan, Iraq, and other non-European countries](#). In addition, the country recently opened its doors to [145,000 refugees from Ukraine](#). While Türkiye has made considerable progress in providing registered refugees with access to education and healthcare, most refugees in Türkiye continue to face uncertain and precarious circumstances, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR](#). After many years of displacement and a lack of regular income, many of these people

have already depleted their resources. As a result of these pre-existing vulnerabilities, Syrian refugees in Türkiye were in dire need of assistance after the earthquakes, along with the wider affected population.

Syria

In Syria, the earthquakes decimated the country's war-torn North, which was already infrastructurally unstable from years of bombardments. The governorates most affected by the earthquakes were Aleppo, Latakia, Tartous, Hama, and Idlib. Before the earthquakes, more than 15.3 million people across the country already required ongoing humanitarian assistance due to over 12 years of internal conflict. According to [Relief web](#), residents of Syria were also grappling with harsh weather conditions, a cholera outbreak, COVID-19, food insecurity, international sanctions and financial crises. As a result, many people were highly vulnerable to the effects of the earthquakes.

DEC Türkiye/Syria Earthquake Appeal

In response to the earthquakes, the DEC promptly launched the Türkiye/Syria Earthquake Appeal on 8 February 2023. The appeal convened 14 DEC member agencies and 26 national and local partners to respond comprehensively to the humanitarian crisis. The response efforts were concentrated in six provinces in Türkiye: Gaziantep, Hatay, Adiyaman, Kahramanmaras, Killis, and Sanliurfa. In Syria, operations were centred in two hubs (NWS and GoS) in the Idlib, Aleppo, Hama, and Latakia governorates. The DEC's fundraising campaign raised a total of £150 million to date³.

The DEC member agencies involved in the appeal outlined a two-year response plan for the allocation of DEC funds, divided into **Phase 1**, covering the initial six months, and **Phase 2**, spanning the subsequent 18 months. To address immediate humanitarian needs, specific sectors were identified for budget allocation: food, cash assistance, non-food items, health, protection, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) interventions.

Group Prioritisation

Another important aim of the TSE response Phase 1 was to prioritise groups in both countries according to their potential vulnerabilities. These groups included people with disabilities (PWD), older people, members of female-headed households, pregnant women, children, Syrian refugees currently residing in Türkiye, and those in Syria internally displaced from ongoing conflict. Due to the impact of the earthquakes, it was recognised that the level of need, to some extent, is general within host communities in both countries.

³ <https://www.dec.org.uk/appeal/Türkiye-syria-earthquake-appeal>

III. METHODOLOGY

Conceptual Foundation of the Real-Time Review

The following criteria, principles, insights, and questions provided a conceptual foundation for the evaluation:

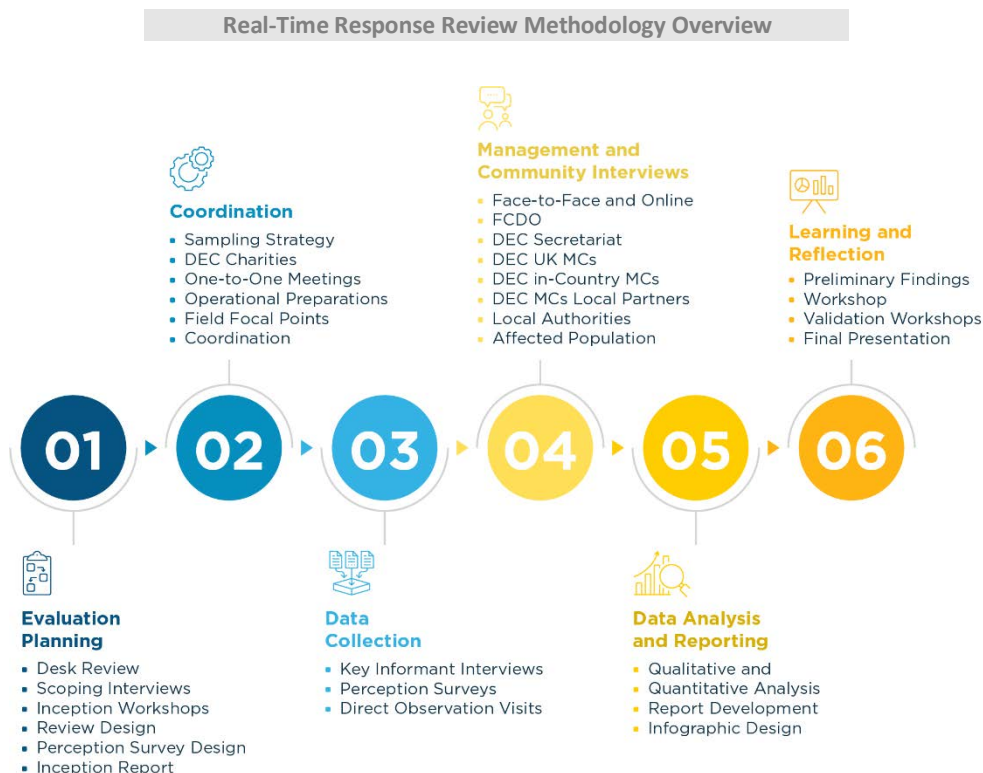
- [OECD DAC criteria.](#)
- [The Core Humanitarian Standard \(CHS\) commitments.](#)
- [Grand Bargain commitments.](#)
- Insights gleaned from previous humanitarian crises and earthquakes.
- Questions from the DEC terms of reference (TOR).

Real-Time Review Matrix and Questions

Drawing from the above, the ET developed a comprehensive evaluation matrix to serve as a framework for gathering and organising information relevant to the evaluation objectives. The matrix (Annex A) integrated established humanitarian evaluation criteria, the evaluation questions from the TOR, and Grand Bargain commitments.

Response Review Design

The Response Review relied on a mixed methods approach based on qualitative data from key informant interviews and quantitative data from perception surveys. The ET employed a wide array of stakeholders to ensure that the perspectives of DEC member agencies, local partners, local authorities, and affected community members would be incorporated into the Response Review.



IV. SAMPLING

The scope of the Response Review focused on both Türkiye and Syria, concentrating on three geographical hubs, Türkiye, NWS, and GoS areas. Data collection occurred during the months of July and August 2023.

The findings of the response review were obtained through key informant interviews involving DEC member agencies in the UK and within the respective countries, local partners, the DEC Secretariat team, The Foreign, Commonwealth, & Development Office (FCDO), as well as local authority and community representatives, totalling 47 interviews in all.

Conversely, the perception survey primarily involved conducting quantitative surveys with affected populations, amounting to a total of 789 surveys in both countries. These surveys sampled a diverse range of sectors and activities, as depicted in the following visuals.

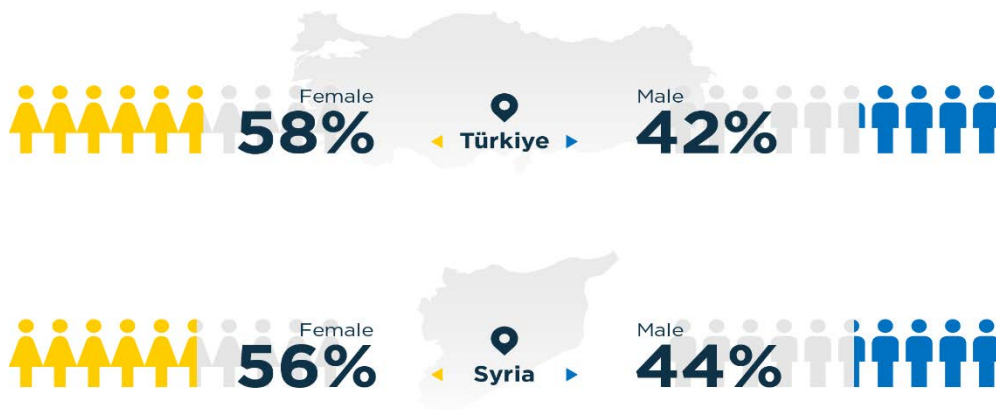
Response Review Site Visit Overview



Data Collection Overview



Perception Survey Respondents by Sex



Sampled Sectors and Activities



V. LIMITATIONS

Several obstacles were encountered by the ET during the Response Review process. These had a limiting effect on the completeness of data collected and the depth of analysis possible. They include the following:

- DEC member agencies participation:** Not all DEC member agencies were able to participate in the Response Review due to availability and time constraints. Consequently, the planned sample size for key informant interviews and perception surveys was reduced.
- Limited ability to disaggregate:** For a small number of locations in Türkiye there is lower confidence in the quality of demographic data due to issues with data collection which, for some findings, has limited the ability to disaggregate.
- Sector analysis as an addition to the Response Review design:** Key trends were not possible to identify for all sectors based on the variation in sample sizes by activity such that when an activity was sampled across DEC member agencies, local partners, and locations (e.g., MPCA) trends were identifiable, but when an activity had a limited sample size, comparison was limited. It is worth noting that sector analysis was not originally included in the Response Review design but requested later by DEC member agencies.
- Local authority availability:** Engagement with local authorities proved challenging due to prolonged coordination processes or unavailability which often resulted in a lack of response. Consequently, the input and perspectives of local authorities in certain locations were limited.
- DEC member agencies KI availability:** Due to the nature of the emergency and the critical timing between finalising Phase 1 and setting up Phase 2 plans, not all key informants from the DEC member agencies were available to participate in the Response Review. This occasionally meant interacting with junior staff and may have affected the capacity to address the more strategic aspects of the Response Review.
- Wide scope:** Due to the Response Review's wide and complex scope, it was not feasible to assess individual activities in detail. It is worth noting that individual DEC member agencies have been conducting their own reviews, and this review should be considered as a supplement to them.
- Limited observations:** Some planned direct observation visits could not be carried out as scheduled due to the completion of activities before the field visit (e.g., community kitchen activities). This resulted from a lack of up-to-date information on activity schedules at the time of sampling.
- Attribution issues:** During the perception survey conducted in Türkiye, respondents often made general references to the overall situation rather than specifically discussing DEC-funded assistance. These general references have been noted whenever they appear in the Response Review findings.

VI. RESPONSE REVIEW FINDINGS

The below findings are based on qualitative data from the RTR and quantitative data from the perception surveys and are presented in relation to the [CHS](#) and [Grand Bargain commitments](#). Also presented in this section are findings related to key cross-cutting issues.

CHS 1

Was the humanitarian response appropriate and relevant?

Finding 1: Overall, the TSE response appropriately identified affected individuals' and groups' needs across the hubs; however, concerns regarding fragmentation and assessment fatigue have arisen.

After the earthquakes, affected populations were in dire need of everything from food, shelter, and hygiene facilities to health care, psychosocial services, and cash supplements for buying necessities. To stay abreast of the evolving needs of the population and to respond to them accordingly, DEC member agencies and local partners operating in the earthquake-hit regions conducted regular rapid and general needs assessments. The needs assessments that were conducted with DEC funds consulted a good proportion of the affected communities.

Findings from KII respondents revealed that several DEC member agencies and their local partners operating in the same areas conducted needs assessments around the same time. DEC member agencies' staff explained that they or their local partners conducted various assessments, including rapid assessments, multi-sectoral needs assessments, and sector-specific needs assessments such as shelter assessments.

This suggests fragmentation of coordination in the initial response and an overreliance on primary data collection efforts. This issue was additionally identified by respondents as a broader concern within the TSE response, as numerous INGOs and national agencies conducted general assessments of needs, contributing to assessment fatigue among survey respondents who were already burdened by the earthquake disaster.

However, some DEC member agencies' staff noted that these assessments may have been conducted in different areas in NWS, given that most DEC member agencies were already working and coordinating within their respective operational areas. This led to a higher likelihood of assessment duplication in Türkiye, where the focus was primarily on the seven most impacted provinces. Additionally, in Türkiye sharing of reports and publications was not particularly active or streamlined during the initial stages of the response and DEC member agencies do not receive formal updates from authorities regarding needs assessments, camp details, or plans for relocating people between camps. They also do not receive such information through their local partners, which places them in the position of having to collect these details independently. One DEC member agency KII respondent mentioned:

“Many NGOs conducted needs assessments, but people often wondered why they were being asked questions without receiving immediate assistance.”

For GoS areas, a DEC member agency pointed out that not all agencies within the coordination mechanism were actively engaged and that information sharing within this coordination structure was limited. Although reports were channelled through the coordination process, they often lacked the level of detail needed for effective programme planning and implementation except in some cases, such as the shelter needs details in Aleppo.

A more strategic approach to the assessment of needs would have been to draw more on recently published (multi-sector) assessment data which would then have reduced duplication of assessment efforts, increased speed of response, and reduced assessment fatigue. This may have also given DEC member agencies and local partners more time and funds to investigate individual needs more thoroughly as opposed to general ones. Positively, the Response Review did identify a number of cases where DEC member agencies capitalised on assessment data shared through working groups (WGs) such as the [Cash Working Group](#), the Assessment Registry for Syria⁴ and Türkiye⁵ organized by [OCHA](#) and some participated in the informal WhatsApp group created by [REACH](#)⁶ to coordinate assessment details instead of conducting their own assessments, and/or combined this information with that of their own needs assessment.

To ensure accurate targeting, DEC member agencies used vulnerability criteria to prioritise assistance, considering factors such as family composition, heads of household, and housing conditions but as most needs assessment data was general, detailed targeting was generally not applied.

Outside of needs assessments, DEC member agencies adopted a wide range of approaches to ensure that assistance reached those most affected by the earthquake. The following is a list of examples:

- In Türkiye, one DEC member agency conducted a detailed assessment of individuals in need of assistive devices and customised assistance accordingly. Several other DEC member agencies in Türkiye noted operating in locations where no other organisations were present, primarily through coordinating with WGs such as shelter.
- One DEC member agency implemented a community verification system to assist families who had lost identity documents, helping these families avoid being unjustly excluded from aid. In addition, a complaint hotline was introduced for individuals whose names were missing from local council lists, enabling these individuals to register complaints. This system facilitated swift resolution so that individuals could register for assistance.
- In NWS, one DEC member agency coordinated closely with the Local Council and established community committees to oversee and assess needs among affected families.

⁴https://response.reliefweb.int/turkiye-cross-border/turkiye-cross-border-operation-assessments?_gl=1*13l8r32*_ga*NTUyMTc2NzgyLjE2OTgyMjc2MTc.*_ga_E60ZNX2F68*MTY5ODIyNzIxMjE0LjE2OTgyMjc2MTc.*_ga_42DECmemberagency4wLjA

⁵<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiZjRjNTNkYzYtNGMyNC00ODY2LTIjOTEtMDhIM2Q5ZWZM3MwUxliwidCI6ImU1YzY3M3OTg5LTY2NjQ5NzY0YTBjLTY1NDNkMmFmODBiZSIsImMiOiJh9>

⁶<https://www.impact-initiatives.org/what-we-do/news/turkiye-and-syria-emergency-response-activated-following-two-powerful-earthquakes/>

- In GoS areas, one DEC member agency mobilised their large network of volunteers who visited all affected areas.
- In GOS, one DEC member agency explained that shelter needs were well coordinated as three local associations were appointed to assess specific IDPs needs and coordinating interactions between various actors and aid providers for the shelters.

Finding 2: *The response across the three hubs was characterised by high levels of adaptability contributing to the meeting of urgent needs.*

One strength that emerged through the Response Review was the high level of adaptability of the response. The flexibility of DEC funding was widely acknowledged by RTR respondents who stated that it allowed for rapid project adaption to meet the evolving needs of affected people. Interviews with DEC staff underscored that DEC member agencies have demonstrated a clear commitment to flexibility in programming. This flexibility was evident in their substantial revisions to Phase 1 plans, interim reports, and final reports based on input from local partners, coordination with clusters, periodic needs assessments, monitoring efforts, and face-to-face discussions with affected community members.

The following are examples that highlight cases of adaptability.

- In one case in Türkiye, the DEC approved an unplanned activity to hold a carnival for Eid with gifts, entertainment, craft, and other creative activities, as well as relaxation exercises for 132 orphans and 40 widowed caregivers. The carnival was a form of unstructured MHPSS that preserved Eid traditions and created a much-needed respite for participating children and caregivers.
- In another instance in NWS, a DEC member agency adapted their original plan by adding an activity to provide Iftar meals for 1000 families during the fasting month of Ramadan.
- In GoS areas, DEC member agencies had to adapt their targeting strategies due to the government's decision to close newly established camps within one month of the earthquake. For instance, one DEC member agency refrained from constructing latrines and redirected assistance to a different area, while another DEC member agency postponed the distribution of winterization kits due to procurement delays and the approach of the summer season.

DEC member agencies were aware that the DEC Secretariat team was strongly committed to funding adaptive programming. This awareness created a conducive environment for DEC member agency efforts on contextual monitoring and ongoing needs assessments to tailor support in response to people's needs. One respondent mentioned that:

"Ninety-nine percent of the time, changes and modifications are approved, primarily driven by feedback from the affected population or linked to needs assessments."

Efforts to align the response with the needs and priorities of those affected were evident during the RTR. For example, in one case in Türkiye, staff adapted their information sharing approach by leaving voice messages for illiterate community members instead of sending text messages via

WhatsApp. DEC member agency staff conducted door-to-door visits, engaging with community members to understand their needs. Based on this feedback, they adapted their programming to provide MPCA support to widows. In another instance, following consultations with community members and careful consideration of their concerns, DEC member agencies adjusted their approach by replacing NFI kits with MPCA after confirming the general functionality of local markets. The introduction of MPCA allowed affected individuals to prioritise and fulfil their essential needs according to their preferences and circumstances.

Finding 3: *The majority of aid recipients across the three hubs reported that aid met their urgent needs.*

DEC member agencies' considerable efforts to respond to changing needs did not go unnoticed by aid recipients. Most surveyed community members perceived that their emergency needs had been met through DEC-funded humanitarian assistance. In NWS, 76% of community members surveyed reported that assistance had met their urgent needs. In GoS areas, 96% of surveyed members reported having had their needs met. Approximately 87% of those surveyed in Türkiye responded that their most pressing needs had been met through food provision, MPCA, health services, and WASH assistance.

Survey respondents highlighted instances where DEC assistance effectively addressed their emergency needs. For example, the provision of tents offered immediate relief by safeguarding individuals and families from the elements. These tents also provided private spaces that not only preserved the dignity of those affected but also instilled a sense of security during challenging times. Additionally, MPCA played a crucial role in facilitating the purchase of essential household items, clothing, and food. In some cases, it even addressed financial challenges by assisting in debt settlement.

Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) interventions included valuable awareness-raising sessions on vital topics such as protection and women's dignity. These were deeply appreciated, with respondents reporting improved coping mechanisms and reduced stress levels. Additionally, water provision services were seen as practical and beneficial, allowing the affected population to save the money that had previously been spent on purchasing water and allocate those funds to other essential needs. Lastly, training programmes proved to be highly valuable, with participants acquiring new and important knowledge particularly in building assessments and support.

Assistance was well received by the affected populations in Syria, with a few exceptions. In NWS, people approved of the cash assistance and free health services but noted that the hygiene kits were less effective due to poor material quality, insufficient quantity of items, and a lack of relevance to the recipients' needs. Various kinds of assistance in GoS areas helped compensate for the extremely high prices of basic goods, however, when people in these areas were asked about unfulfilled expectations for assistance, 51% indicated unmet needs for financial assistance. This observation underscores the importance of effectively disseminating detailed activity information and assistance plans to foster improved communication with and realistic expectations of affected communities.

In Türkiye, most respondents indicated that their needs had been met, but 13% expressed that assistance had been inadequate and should have been longer term especially for food and cash which were only provided for few rounds. Some individuals did not participate in protection sessions, perceiving that these activities did not meet their needs at that time. DEC member agencies and local partners were, at times, challenged by low activity turnout to which they discovered was due to intense heat during the day as well as participants being afraid to leave their tents for fear of theft. Additionally, among those who received health services, some perceived that physiotherapy sessions were insufficient in addressing their specific health-related concerns.

Finding 4: *The Response Review found some cases in which affected community members' expectations of aid were not met and a level of mixed feeling about the fairness of aid distribution.*

Conceivably, due to the scale of the earthquakes, areas of unaddressed needs remain in the three hubs. In NWS, community members reported unmet needs in MHPSS and the need for continued assistance for shelter, food, health, hygiene, cash, infrastructure rehabilitation, and livelihood support. In GoS areas, safety and health needs were reported as unmet, with protection mechanisms lacking for women, sporadic electricity, and a lack of medication for those with chronic illnesses. Livelihood support and mental health assistance were also mentioned as important. Affected community members in Türkiye expressed unmet needs for cash, shelter containers, air conditioning, and winter items.

CHS 2

Was the humanitarian response effective and timely?

Finding 1: *Organisations across all hubs achieved most targets in Phase 1 with only a small number of activities reporting delays.*

In the initial part of Phase 1, DEC member agencies encountered challenges, including resource mobilisation, securing surge support, and initiating procurement. These challenges were compounded by infrastructure damage, staff impact, supply chain disruptions, and chaos in the affected areas. Consequently, plans for the first three months of Phase 1 experienced delays. For this reason, DEC member agencies and local partners implemented considerably more activities in the second half of Phase 1 (months 4–6) than the first half, successfully managing to complete the majority of planned implementation. Representatives of DEC member agencies and local partners in NWS confirmed achieving their Phase 1 targets, in GoS areas, DEC member agencies and local partners met most objectives, and in Türkiye, targets were achieved and, in some cases, exceeded.

Survey findings across the three hubs showed that recipients perceived aid as timely, with 96% of respondents in GoS areas and 94% of those in NWS confirming the promptness of assistance. However, survey results from Türkiye suggested issues in timeliness, with the lower proportion of 77.6% of respondents affirming timely aid receipt, with the possibility that unknown factors contributed to this result.

While aid appeared to have been timely, especially given the circumstances, some delays and bottlenecks were reported. In NWS, certain MPCA activities stalled due to money transfer and agency challenges, delaying cash disbursements, and requiring the exploration of alternative banking solutions. Moreover, 33% of those receiving tents in NWS mentioned delays of up to four months after the initial earthquake. In GoS areas, engineering trainees suggested that the training on building assessment should have occurred before the earthquake crisis. In Türkiye, the majority of those who received MPCA assistance expressed that it was delayed. One challenge for timely cash implementation cited by multiple member agencies relates to the time required to comply with registration and approval procedures for INGOs to engage in operations.

Finding 2: *The Response Review found that the DEC funded response has been largely effective in terms of quality of aid and services, with most respondents rating aid quality as excellent, good, or neutral.*

Regarding the quality of DEC funded assistance, survey respondents' perceptions were mostly positive or neutral. One exception was that 49% of respondents who received hygiene kits in NWS rated the quality as poor. This was attributed to the low quality of materials, inadequate quantities of items, and a lack of relevance to recipients' needs. Among those who received water trucking assistance in GoS areas, 3% of respondents rated the services as 'neutral' and 5% as 'poor', as the water tank was reported to contain dirt and mould.

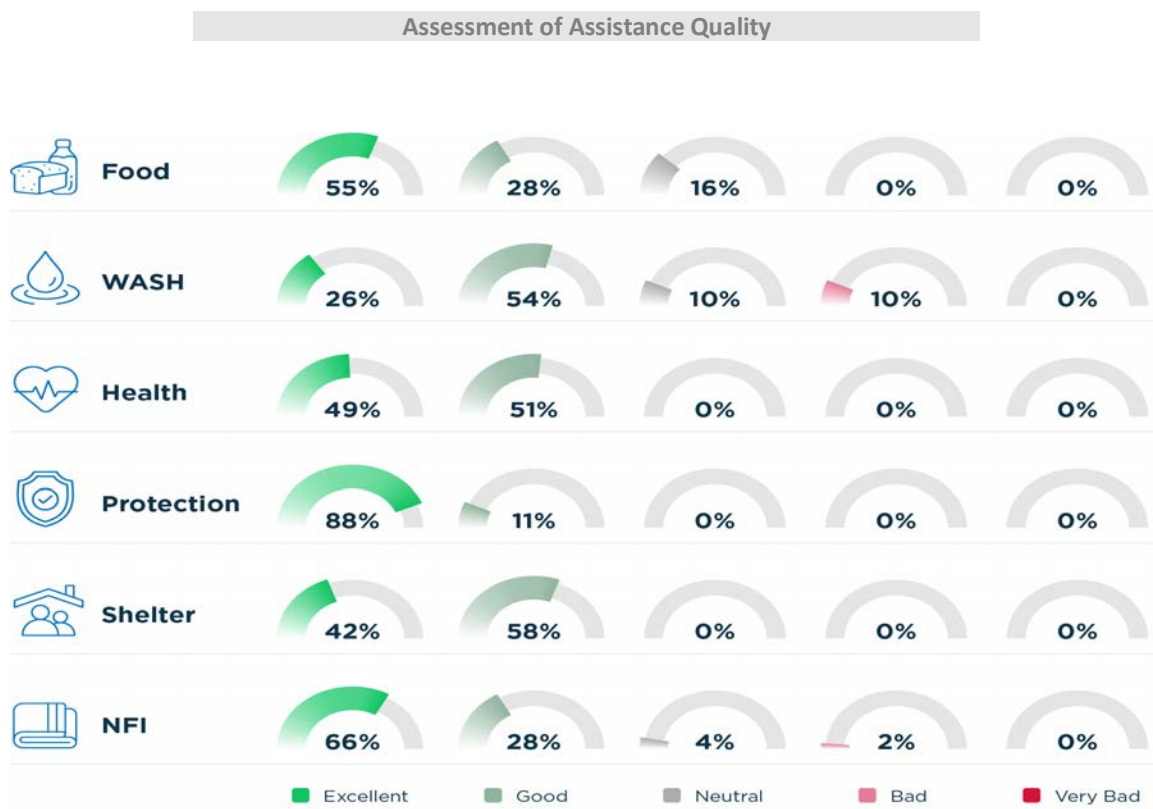
On a more positive note, 100% of NWS respondents rated the quality of the mobile health clinics as 'excellent' and 'good', mainly because they enjoyed the privacy and cleanliness of the facilities. Meanwhile, respondents in both GoS areas and Türkiye strongly approved of food provisions: in GoS areas, 100% of surveyed recipients rated food from the community kitchen as 'excellent' with 75% of recipients surveyed rated food baskets as 'excellent' or 'good' in Türkiye.

DEC member agencies and local partners also shared examples of quality assurance measures through the KII respondents:

- In GoS areas, many organisations adhered to WHO and WFP guidelines or followed their own internal quality standards for distribution of food, medicines, and supplies. A challenge cited was that high-quality food and supplies were not always available in domestic markets.
- The kitchen team in GoS areas underwent thorough health examinations and received the necessary vaccinations to ensure they were fit for duty and could maintain food safety standards.
- In NWS, organisations reported various quality assurance mechanisms, such as conducting regular water quality tests and implementing strict infection control measures, randomly sampling materials to ensure compliance with quality standards, and deploying technical teams for inspecting specific items such as tents.
- In Türkiye, DEC member agencies and local partners reported quality assurance measures as part of their Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning (MEAL) systems, which reinforcing accountability to affected populations.

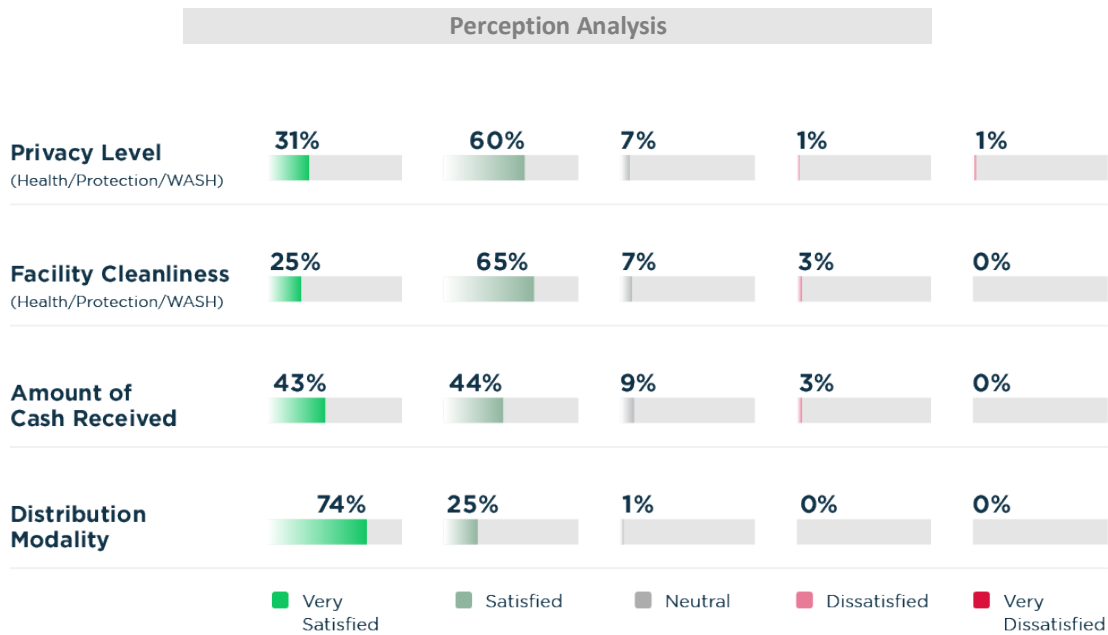
- There were no quality concerns reported by DEC member agencies on health services in Türkiye. This was attributed to rigorous checks and controls enforced by the health directorate, which also verified the qualifications of service providers before granting approvals.
- Other DEC member agencies reported adhering to [Sphere standards](#) for healthcare activities and using the [Washington Group questionnaire to assess PWD](#).

The below diagram represents the affected community’s satisfaction about the quality of some provided services and items across the three hubs (n=536⁷)



⁷ Quality questions were used selectively, focusing only on the pertinent sectors and activities, rather than use for all activities.

The below diagram represents the affected community’s perceptions about provided services across the three hubs (n= 249 for health, protection, and WASH services) (n=218 for cash activities)



Finding 3: Specific sets of key factors separately helped and hindered the timeliness and effectiveness of the response.

The Response Review data indicated several key factors that contributed to timeliness and effectiveness in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. In all three hubs, cooperation and communication between DEC member agencies, local partners, and affected populations were integral to the success of the response. According to DEC respondents and to DEC member agencies operating in Syria, a principal advantage was that DEC member agencies and local partners had a strong presence in affected areas prior to the earthquakes. These organisations had accumulated local knowledge and resources (e.g., volunteer networks), were trusted by community members, and could quickly mobilise in response to the unfolding disaster.

Key informants in Türkiye noted that some forms of communication were exemplary during the response. Communication flowed smoothly between DEC member agencies and local partners, facilitating the rapid design and deployment of activities, in some cases within days of the earthquakes. Moreover, the staff of these organisations spoke local languages and could engage well with affected populations. One DEC member agency transferred Turkish-speaking staff based overseas to affected areas to facilitate linguistically and culturally sensitive implementation.

In addition to identifying the above strengths, the Response Review also identified factors in the three hubs that may have hindered the timeliness and effectiveness of the response:

- Working with Financial Service Providers (FSPs) and managing transfers was a considerable challenge in Syria. Delays in receiving cash assistance occurred due to sanctions, forcing DEC member agencies to seek alternative banking options or divide

amounts into smaller transactions. While access has improved somewhat now due to UN efforts, concerns persist regarding access to some areas.

- In GoS areas, exchange rate fluctuations, inflation, and high regional item prices affected DEC member agencies' budget management, procurement processes, and supplier contracts. Exchange rate variations resulted in both under and overspending, challenging efforts to maintain a balanced budget.
- Some DEC member agency KII respondents reported facing coordination challenges due to remote management, for instance, a respondent from a UK-based DEC member agency noted the impossibility of actively participating in cluster and WG coordination activities in Gaziantep, given their location outside the region.
- DEC member agencies and local partner staff in Türkiye and Syria had been personally affected by the earthquakes. This led to staff shortages in certain cases, putting extra pressure on managers to prioritise the well-being of their own teams while responding to community needs. This situation also strained human resource departments which struggled to find qualified staff within tight timelines.
- In GoS areas, project approvals from local authorities were frequently delayed, resulting in setbacks. Moreover, administrative challenges arose due to missing records/registration data of affected community members in collective centres.
- In Türkiye, there was significant pressure on supply chains in the early months of Phase 1, contributing to delays in procurement processes.
- In Türkiye, DEC member agencies encountered significant challenges attributed to the restricted operational environment within Türkiye. This was particularly evident in the complexities associated with the registration process and the requirements for INGOs. Consequently, the heightened demand placed on local partners led to an overwhelming number of partnership requests.

These factors delayed some DEC member agencies' plans and target achievement during the initial part of Phase 1.

Finding 4: *The Response Review found that functioning monitoring systems were used by the DEC member agencies, and local partners across all three hubs, however, the majority of these systems emphasised outputs over outcomes, which may have obscured the effects of response interventions.*

As in any other large-scale humanitarian effort, monitoring was instrumental in Phase 1 for tracking the progress of activities and verifying results achieved. All DEC member agency respondents, and most local partner respondents in all three hubs reported using a variety of mechanisms for monitoring the delivery of assistance and services, including dedicated MEAL teams. In many cases DEC member agencies reported that local partners took the lead in monitoring activities due to their on-the-ground presence and expertise.

MEAL teams carried out regular site visits for ongoing services and spot-checks for time-bound activities. Teams conducted post-distribution monitoring and satisfaction surveys to gather

feedback, suggestions, and complaints from recipients about services and quality. They also gathered feedback and complaints through a variety of CFRMs, which are explained in more detail in CHS 5. Moreover, local partners reported having regular meetings with DEC member agencies to assess progress and identify challenges and new developments. Reporting structures across DEC member agencies and local partners in different hubs varied, ranging from daily, weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly progress reporting and discussion.

While the Response Review found widespread use of monitoring systems, it also identified challenges in relation to monitoring. In one case, a DEC member agency had to drop its monitoring and evaluation activities in a Turkish camp due to delayed approvals and had to rely on a local partner's monitoring system to conduct checks of financial reports, medical records, and prescription documentation for individual patients. In another case in Türkiye, a local partner did not have a monitoring system in place until later in Phase 1, so its DEC member agency conducted monitoring activities on its behalf in the interim. In NWS and GoS areas, it was reported that contacting aid recipients to obtain feedback on aid was difficult, as many lacked permanent housings and/or did not have registered contact information.

Another challenge was that DEC monitoring system had a strong focus on outputs with little consideration of medium to long-term change (outcomes). A DEC Secretariat KII respondent explained that DEC member agencies are required to report at output level via a DEC tool called the 'Output Table' (OT) in addition to a written narrative. This report was established to monitor the outputs of member organisations⁸ and convert them into key messages for communication purposes, particularly for reporting to donors and supporters as part of fundraising efforts and results and financial accountability. While every output in the table is connected to an outcome, no outcome data is tracked through this report.⁹ A DEC KII respondents stated that a limitation of the output table is that it does not extend its measurement beyond tangible outputs, with a focus on individuals reached, and currently data is not disaggregated by sex, age and disability (SADDD). The Response Review understood from the DEC Secretariat that it is currently exploring system revisions aimed at simplifying and enhancing its calculations of total reach. This includes consolidating output data by sector and incorporating qualitative information to provide a more nuanced perspective of the response. This forms part of a wider system review currently underway to monitor outputs and outcomes more effectively throughout the duration of DEC appeals.

On the same topic, some DEC member agency KII respondents noted that while they usually applied outcome monitoring in Phase 1 responses (outcome harvesting was mentioned by one KII respondent), this approach was not applied in Phase 1 of the TSE response due to a lack of resources and due to the challenges of new partnerships. The Response Review found that some DEC member agencies are currently prioritising outcome measurement in Phase 2, connecting it to longer-term priorities and support. For example, one local partner plans to carry out a comprehensive baseline/endline assessment for their cash programme. Further investigation on

⁸ The OT also serves to document any changes, monitor whether members are meeting stated targets, and triangulate with financial reporting.

⁹ Outside of response progress tracking and reporting, the DEC does conduct some level of outcome measurement through response evaluations and in-depth studies. These sources (for other appeals) were not part of the Response Review, and it remains unclear how this information is used to understand change over time.

this point would be interesting regarding to what extent and why DEC member agencies apply outcome monitoring in first phase responses independently of DEC requirements and templates.

Finding 5: *The early DEC funded response across the three hubs attended to immediate needs with less emphasis on medium-to longer-term needs and priorities.*

As Phase 2 progresses, a focus on the tailoring of aid to the evolving needs of affected populations continues. However, the level of consideration of medium to longer term needs and priorities remains to be seen. Respondents in Türkiye expressed that their needs remain significant. In particular, MHPSS services are in high demand, along with stoves for cooking, and accessible latrines for PWD.

The Response Review findings unequivocally showed that during Phase 1, most DEC member agencies and local partners across the three hubs channelled limited resources into addressing immediate needs in affected populations. This approach, while logical, may have overshadowed longer-term priorities and capacity- strengthening efforts in areas such as livelihood support, agriculture, infrastructure rehabilitation, and education.

Many DEC member agencies expressed that considering longer-term needs was next to impossible during Phase 1. For instance, in GoS areas, needs assessments heavily relied on Operation Room data, significantly influencing the development of operational plans. Furthermore, there was substantial variance in the timeframe for addressing households' urgent needs, which could span from mere days to several weeks or even months. While the immediate focus of addressing urgent needs typically revolved around meeting daily needs, when assistance stopped or ceased, households often had to seek alternative sources of support. As a result, while immediate needs were attended to in the initial days, subsequent needs often went unmet.

To put this into context, Syria has been suffering from over a decade of war and protracted crises and, over time, has not remained a constant priority for international aid. In addition, currently, needs are- higher than at any point in the conflict. According to the latest Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview¹⁰, 15.3 million Syrians need humanitarian assistance, and the Syria Earthquake Flash Appeal is only 52% pledged, while only a third of the \$206m pledged has been obligated to partners and is available for use.

Funding issues in NWS before the earthquake further affected NGO ability to focus beyond the short-term with NGOs grappling to sustain their operations due to fragmented funding and smaller budgets. Funding challenges were later compounded by the lasting repercussions of the Ukrainian war, presenting a multifaceted funding dilemma.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, some KII respondents did identify examples of medium- to long-term effects from Phase 1 efforts. In GoS areas, some local partners rehabilitated shelters, water lines, and infrastructure, physical improvements that support long-term needs. Some organisations in NWS reconstructed drainage networks and provided cash supplements that families used to restore dwellings. In Türkiye, a group of DEC member agencies and local partners mentioned providing health services (e.g., physiotherapy), medical equipment (e.g., assistive

¹⁰ <https://www.unocha.org/syrian-arab-republic>

devices), and health/hygiene education as examples of Phase 1 efforts with beneficial long-term effects.

It is noteworthy to mention that certain DEC member agencies demonstrated an ability to simultaneously address short and medium term needs particularly in NWS. These efforts involved the implementation of Cash for Work (CFW) activities, where workers were hired to conduct debris/waste removal in collaboration with local authorities. Additionally, recovery business grants were provided to support businesses owned by women and PWDs with a specific focus on the recovery of essential food and non-food shops. However, at the time of planning the Response Review, these activities had not yet been reported in the DEC interim report. Consequently, they were not included in the sample for this review.

Despite the effort made, some respondents remain concerned about the oncoming winter. In NWS, members of affected communities reported that assistance, particularly food provisions and MPCA, were helpful in the short-term but did not address longer-term livelihood issues. Several respondents mentioned that MPCA should continue throughout the winter months when survival needs become more pressing. Survey respondents in Türkiye also expressed concerns about the near future, requesting that NFIs be winterized before the onset of harsh weather.

In Syria, an overwhelming message from KI respondents was that the conundrum continues to be how to respond to a crisis within a crisis and the impossibility of separating immediate needs in the aftermath of the earthquake from long-term needs.

In GoS areas, almost all respondents stressed the need for sustainable answers to broader needs rather than for continued earthquake-specific relief. In NWS, this theme resurfaced in KII respondents across the board: for aid to be more responsive, people need well-functioning infrastructure, permanent housing and livelihood, sustainable agriculture and industry, and high-quality education and health care services. Further rehabilitative work is needed, therefore, to bridge the humanitarian–development nexus.

DEC's guidance to distinguish between earthquake-affected and conflict-affected populations, where member agencies were asked to report individuals reached from each group separately was found to be an impractical division by DEC member agencies and local partners as the impact of the earthquakes affected all groups of people, most of whom are also conflict affected. For instance, post-earthquake, waiting times for medical attention increased, impacting not only earthquake-affected individuals but also those affected by the ongoing conflict. Furthermore, the earthquakes disrupted regular programming, necessitating (for most organisations) a lengthy hiatus before resuming activities. From KII respondents it was understood that the reason for this guidance from the DEC was an attempt to demonstrate to the UK public that donations had been primarily used to support the earthquake response, as opposed to the crises created by the conflict.

Finding 6: *At the sector level, host community recipients were more likely to find cash assistance to be insufficient than IDPs.*

The following cash analysis present some trends that emerged across different cash activities in NWS and Türkiye.

Cash Assistance

📍 NWS 📍 TUR



Trend A

38% (n=218) of cash recipients reported cash amounts were not sufficient.

Analysis

Sex Disparity:

A slight disparity was observed, with 47% of men and 42% of women reporting cash value insufficiency possibly due to differing financial responsibilities and spending habits (not verified by the Response Review).

IDPs and Host Communities (n=105):

Host communities (71%) tended to report greater cash insufficiency than IDP communities (25%) suggesting a broad issue within the community.

Refugees and Host Communities:

Turkish populations (60%) tended to report cash insufficiency more often than Syrian refugees (40%), perhaps attributed to economic disparities (not verified by the Response Review).

Household Size:

Larger households (>8 members) were more likely to report cash value insufficiency (31%), underscoring the need to consider family size when determining cash assistance.

Concern for PWDs:

4 PWD who received MPCA reported cash value insufficiency, emphasizing their vulnerability and the need for tailored support.

Reason for Insufficiency:

The main cause was the provided amount not meeting basic needs, indicating the response may require adjustment to align with living costs.

The Response Review findings regarding the cash component in both Türkiye and the NWS regions indicate a common trend. The majority of DEC member agencies in both areas followed the [recommendations of the Cash Working Group](#), providing assistance in the form of \$150 (4,020 Turkish Lira (TL)¹¹, based on the regional SMEB Food Component¹². However, the disbursement methods differed, with some DEC member agencies distributing this amount in one, two, or three instalments. Cash assistance took various forms, including restricted cash for specific purposes like food or health, cash cards that households could use in the local market, and direct cash payments.

¹¹ The TRY-USD exchange rate experiences frequent changes.

¹² 18 items comprise the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB), which represents the minimum, culturally adjusted items required to support a 6-person household for a month.

In Türkiye, recipients of cash cards, which allowed them to purchase essential items in the market, reported that the assistance was insufficient. Meanwhile, in Syria, both cash card recipients and those who received cash money found the amounts provided to be inadequate. This emerging pattern of cash insufficiency was consistent across both regions. Sex disaggregated analysis in both hubs revealed only minor differences between male and female recipients, hinting at potential variations in spending habits and financial management within households.

In the context of host and IDP communities in NWS, host community members often expressed concerns about the insufficiency of cash assistance. They attributed this perception to factors such as multiple displacements, high transportation costs, expensive home repair expenses, and larger family sizes. On the other hand, IDPs cited concerns related to the inadequacy of cash assistance due to accumulated debts, soaring rent prices, and larger family sizes.

When distinguishing between the Turkish and Syrian refugee populations, both groups reported facing cash insufficiency. Turkish individuals cited reasons such as job loss, high living costs, and large families as the primary factors contributing to their perception of insufficiency, while Syrian refugees shared similar concerns.

In the context of PWD in NWS,¹³ six individuals who received MPCA found it inadequate. They reported that high prices and extended needs were the primary reasons for their dissatisfaction.

CHS 3

Did the humanitarian response strengthen local capacities and avoid negative effects?

Finding 1: *Environmental mainstreaming was not a priority in Phase 1; however, the Response Review did capture examples of efforts to minimise negative effects on the environment.*

Environmental mainstreaming during Phase 1 of the TSE response faces certain challenges due to the nature of short-term emergency responses. KII respondents highlighted that one challenge arises from the lack of consistent standards or guidelines among the DEC Secretariat, DEC member agencies, and local partners regarding environmental mainstreaming in emergency responses. To address this issue, the DEC Secretariat has taken proactive steps to coordinate a DEC environment group with participation from DEC member agencies involved in various emergency responses. This group focuses on discussing a range of environmental mainstreaming topics, including climate change adaptation, carbon reduction, waste management, and nature-based solutions. Moreover, the DEC Secretariat has formulated a comprehensive set of guidelines and actively encouraged DEC member agencies to endorse the Environmental Charter and its associated tools. These resources are designed to facilitate and promote environmental considerations within their operations, these included:

- [The Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organisations](#),
- Environment Assessment Tool,
- Thematic Sheet for Environment.

¹³ Cash component was not sampled in GOS, and the collection of data concerning PwD was not undertaken in Türkiye due to operational challenges.

Despite the lack of emphasis on environmental effects in Phase 1, the Response Review found that some organisations took steps to minimise negative effects on the environment.

- In Türkiye, some DEC member agencies and local partners avoided single-use plastics, unnecessary printing and plane flights, reused boxes, and procured items locally. Community kitchens distributed reusable cutlery and those overseeing distribution activities responsibly disposed of trash.
- In GoS areas, some organisations reported adhering to their own or the national environmental standards (these standards were not verified by the Response Review), hired sustainability advisors, and used renewable energy when possible. One DEC member agency reported installing solar panels to provide a clean and sustainable energy source, given the ongoing fuel crisis in the country.
- In NWS, some KII respondents mentioned minimising their use of plastics, implementing cleanliness guidelines, procuring items locally, and in one case, recruiting an environmental expert for an environment risk assessment.
- KII respondents from the DEC confirmed that DEC member agencies had engaged in local procurement and that some simple steps had been taken towards environmental mainstreaming.

KII respondents at the DEC Secretariat mentioned that Phase 2 implementation is incorporating environmental considerations to a greater extent, with a strong focus on agriculture, food security, and environmentally friendly practices such as using organic fertilisers and compost. This approach aligns with broader issues related to land rights and how these interact with water conservation.

Finding 2: *DRR activities in Phase 1 were limited, with operational limitations and registration complexities posing challenges for DRR initiatives. A minor role for DRR in phase 1 highlights the need for a more focused approach in phase 2 implementation to enhance collaboration with local institutions and strengthen DRR efforts.*

In NWS, some DEC member agencies offered emergency response training and community empowerment programmes to cultivate resilience and better prepare people to face adverse events. One DEC member agency prioritised rigorous emergency training for teams to ensure that all staff were well versed in earthquake and disaster response procedures. Another DEC member agency reported offering emergency-response training at a youth empowerment centre in NWS.¹⁴ At this location, young people have been learning about first aid, data collection, post-distribution monitoring, and needs assessment before the earthquake, a good example of possible preparedness activities.

Other DRR efforts have focused on strengthening the built environment. In GoS areas, high standards were maintained during infrastructure projects, with engineers onsite to ensure structures' earthquake resistance in addition to capacity strengthening initiatives such as training

¹⁴ This was not a DEC funded initiative but remains a good example of preparedness activities.

provided to an engineer syndicate. Most DEC member agencies and local partners in Türkiye did not report DRR efforts in Phase 1 except for a case in which a DEC member agency funded its own project to rehabilitate a lab to test soil and materials for earthquake resistance. Overall, most DEC member agencies and local partners stated a lack of time to prioritise DRR in phase 1. An interview with a member of the DEC Secretariat indicated that more concrete examples of DRR may emerge in Phase 2 implementation. This respondent indicated that one DEC member agency had already added a separate outcome in its Phase 2 plan that includes DRR training for humanitarian workers.

There was a noticeable lack of collaboration between INGOs and government institutions in Türkiye on DRR initiatives prior to the earthquake. According to KII respondents, Government institutions believed they were adequately prepared for any disaster which manifested in reduced investment in collaborative efforts. Moreover, the high turnover of staff in government agencies hindered the creation of an enabling environment for joint DRR efforts. However, the unforeseen magnitude of the earthquake has since sparked a newfound willingness for collaboration with government institutions, indicating a positive shift. This shift presents an opportunity for further development in this area.

Secondly, DEC member agencies highlighted restrictions and limitations that impeded INGOs and local partners from focusing on DRR. These limitations were multifaceted, including the constrained operational landscape within Türkiye, marked by the dominant presence of government institutions. Furthermore, INGOs faced the challenge of navigating bureaucratic procedures, particularly concerning the registration process and the requirements for contracting with new partners. Collectively, these constraints contributed to an overall unfavourable environment that hindered the development of strategic DRR plans and initiatives.

Thirdly, DRR was found to be a relatively minor component of phase 1 plans and results. While some DEC member agencies may have achieved DRR-related outcomes, they were not adequately monitored or reported during phase 1. This assessment highlights the need to recalibrate expectations for DRR initiatives in phase 1, emphasising a shift to phase 2 for a more focused approach. Strengthening collaboration with local institutions over time and considering DRR approaches outside of the DEC appeal context should become priorities.

Lastly, phase 1 primarily focused on life-saving and immediate assistance, which is reflected in the responses and activities. Phase 2, on the other hand, demonstrates a forward-thinking approach with plans to vet new partners in Türkiye and expand registration to new areas. This strategic shift underscores a growing emphasis on DRR and organisation-level considerations.

As for Syria, a DEC member agency pointed out that the ideal conditions for the success DRR projects in Syria might not be in place. Several crucial components, including recent and comprehensive risk assessments, clear legal and policy frameworks for DRR, early warning systems, resource allocation, and political commitment, are often lacking.

CHS 4

Was the humanitarian response based on communication, participation, and feedback?

Finding 1: *Communication and information sharing between DEC member agencies, local partners and other local stakeholders appeared to be well developed.*

As mentioned under CHS 2 commitment, communication between DEC member agencies and local partners was a noticeable strength in the TSE response. Shortly after the earthquake, organisations across the three hubs relied on well-developed internal and external communication channels to coordinate their efforts with local stakeholder and consult with the affected population. The Response Review found a high level of consultation with affected communities regarding their needs; however, some variation was noted among survey respondents with certain organisations appearing to inquire more frequently over time about needs than others.

Organisations faced several challenges in accessing affected communities in Türkiye. Firstly, their own staff and partner staff were impacted. Secondly, camps to shelter the earthquake affected communities were being established at that time, limiting opportunities to consult with local communities, as these camps were governed by government officials, and organisations needed approvals and, in some cases, registrations to engage with and consult the affected communities or operate within the camps. Even though some DEC member agencies were already present in Türkiye with legal registrations, they still had to meet different registration and operational requirements to respond either in areas that they were not registered in or to work with partners which they had not previously done.

Some DEC member agencies and many local partners in Syria already had a strong presence in affected areas due to the ongoing humanitarian response, allowing them to quickly mobilise and activate communication channels with local communities to respond expeditiously to the crisis. Similarly, key informants in Türkiye observed that communication flowed smoothly between DEC member agencies and local partners throughout Phase 1.

DEC member agencies in the three hubs cited numerous other ways of engaging with local stakeholders and community members and inviting them to participate in the response. In GoS areas, DEC member agencies consulted with community members, local leaders, and local associations to solicit feedback on the response and identify needs and priorities. They also invited local stakeholders to attend their meetings to share their opinions and participate more fully in the response. One DEC member agency mentioned involving suppliers in discussions to ensure that materials would be available as needed. In NWS, DEC member agencies relied heavily on needs assessments and meetings with local authorities, councils, and camp managers to gather feedback on what materials were available and how to design and implement assistance.

Survey findings indicated that in NWS, both DEC member agencies and local partners effectively communicated aid details to most recipients. Approximately 79% of recipients reported being informed about the aid they would receive, explaining they were informed by the organisation staff, as revealed in a questionnaire administered by the organisation, its staff, and local councils.

In GoS areas, a lower proportion of respondents (54%) reported being informed about aid delivery. Those who were informed learned about services through public announcements, invitations, WhatsApp groups, and direct messages. However, this percentage varied depending on the DEC member agency, ranging from 94% informed about the activities of one DEC member agency to only 16% being informed about another.

In Türkiye, 55% of participants reported receiving the expected aid. They primarily received information through WhatsApp groups or directly from organisations’ staff. Those who were unaware of the assistance type, mainly related to WASH and food activities, noted a lack of information about the kit contents and/or service type. These findings suggest that information sharing is more common and active in NWS possibly due to the protracted nature of crises and a well-established professional humanitarian system. In contrast, there appears to be room for improvement in community information sharing in Türkiye and GoS areas.

Finding 2: *Participation of local authorities and communities, in some cases, supported the tailoring of activities to specific needs but this was not even across the board.*

In Türkiye, the response was led by the government and, although DEC member agencies and local partners had to follow official protocols regarding approvals and coordination, the Response Review also revealed examples of some organisations making additional efforts to foster a sense of shared accountability, including involving municipalities throughout project implementation, and inviting municipality representatives and camp administrators to attend their meetings. For example, one DEC member agency established community groups trained in child protection (CP). These groups identified needs within their community related to children, such as children’s need to return to school after the earthquake. In another case, a widows' group was subsequently included in a second round of MPCA distribution based on their identified needs. Another DEC member agency in Türkiye initially provided healthcare services in mobile vans but found them unreliable due to privacy concerns. As a result, they transitioned to using static caravans. A local authority KI respondent in Idlib reported the following:

“We made some suggestions to tell the organisation about how to improve the provision of services, and the organisation is improving these services in every round. In the first round, we distributed one food basket per household, in the second round, we distributed two baskets, and in the third round, we distributed a basket with a box of water. So, in each round, the organisation automatically improved this service. It also took into account some of the opinions we put forward to improve this service.”

CHS 5

Were complaints welcomed and addressed?

Finding 1: *DEC member agencies and local partners established a wide range of feedback and complaints mechanisms.*

As mentioned under CHS 4, DEC member agencies and local partners across the hubs established mechanisms for receiving feedback, suggestions and complaints from local stakeholders and

affected people. In some cases, organisations utilised CFRMs that were already in place from ongoing humanitarian efforts in the region. In other cases, they established new mechanisms. The following are examples of activities implemented by some DEC member agencies and local partners to capture feedback and complaints.

- In NWS, DEC member agencies and local partners reported meeting with local authorities and councils as well as camp managers to solicit feedback on assistance.
- In GoS areas, DEC member agencies and local partners reported meeting with local leaders, mukhtars, and associations to solicit feedback.
- In Türkiye, DEC member agencies and local partners reported meeting with municipalities, camp managers, and community groups and receiving feedback from affected people through email, WhatsApp, hotlines, and complaint boxes.

According to many KII respondents, DEC member agencies and local partners utilised the feedback they received. For example, in response to recipient feedback, distribution centres in GoS areas provided solid versus liquid soap and community kitchens reduced the salt and fat content of food based on community feedback. In NWS, an organisation immediately incorporated recipient feedback by changing the content of food baskets several times. In another case, mobile clinic’s monitoring teams purchased medicines to treat lice after learning of an outbreak in a community.

Finding 2: *Levels of recipient awareness of complaints and response mechanisms varied significantly across the three hubs.*

Survey findings indicated that not all affected people were aware of organisations’ CFRMs:

- In NWS, 89% of those surveyed knew about CFRMs for organisations, but this varied by organisation. Regarding differences by sex, 78% of female respondents were aware of CFRMs versus 94% of males indicating access barriers in sharing information with women.
- In GoS areas, the percentage of awareness of CFRMs ranged from 48% to over 90% depending on the organisation, with no differences between men and women.
- In Türkiye, 48% of respondents knew how to submit complaints, with 56% being female respondents and 44% being male respondents. Among respondents, 41% knew how to submit complaints via WhatsApp, whereas only 3% knew how to submit complaints to staff or via complaint boxes. Only 1% knew about the hotline number. The lower level of awareness of CFRMs in Türkiye compared to Syria may have been due to higher community familiarity with aid assistance in Syria than in Türkiye as a result of the prolonged humanitarian crisis.

DEC member agencies noted that the Turkish population were less familiar with using NGO CFRMs than the Syrian population which could account for the lower levels of awareness found in the Response Review. A further challenge was limited opportunities to create and distribute informative posters within the camp. This limitation was attributed to the processes associated

with registration and approvals, as well as the scarcity of staff fluent in Turkish, which hampered effective communication efforts.

Given the varying levels of awareness of CFRMs among affected people, it is unsurprising that organisations reported receiving few complaints. However, another reason for complaints being rare may have been that people knew about the CFRMs but chose not to use them. As reported in the *Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal Real-Time Response Review*,¹⁵ in most cases, affected people in Ukraine chose not to participate in aid decisions. The report offered the following explanation for this finding: “Many affected people have not had to think deeply about how the important decisions affecting their life are made, let alone trying to influence these decisions.” It could be interesting to further understand if this case applies to TSE affected populations in terms of identifying solutions to low uptake of CFRMs.

While organisations reported receiving few complaints, when they did, the evidence suggests they demonstrated varied levels of responsiveness. In NWS, 13 respondents (3% of those surveyed) reported having submitted formal complaints about a project. Of those, six received a response, while seven had not. Among those receiving a response, four were satisfied, while two were not. In GoS areas, four respondents reported submitting complaints, with one only receiving a satisfactory answer.

CHS 6

Was the humanitarian response coordinated and complementary?

Finding 1: *Coordination and complementarity efforts among DEC member agencies, local partners, and other stakeholders increased in the early days of the response and remained steady throughout Phase 1.*

Response coordination posed an enormous challenge to responders given the scale of the disaster, the number and diversity of stakeholders engaged in assistance, and bottlenecks created by the ongoing conflict in Syria. Given this context, the Response Review found the initial DEC-funded response to be reasonably well coordinated, with the quality of coordination rapidly increasing over a short period.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that coordination challenges persist, primarily attributable to confidentiality issues and sensitivities surrounding certain aspects of the operation. These intricacies can make it challenging to formulate strategic programming decisions and choices, underscoring the need for continuous dialogue in this regard.

In NWS, coordination took place through a variety of mechanisms. Coordination related communication occurred both remotely and face-to-face, through meetings, emails, and other agreed-upon methods of communication. In addition to local councils, communication, and cooperation with the health directorate in NWS, WGs, clusters, and OCHA also enhanced response coordination. Active coordination of MPCA in NWS was arranged through the cash WG, a collaborative effort to streamline aid delivery by efficiently targeting specific areas, preventing

¹⁵ <https://www.dec.org.uk/report/ukraine-humanitarian-appeal-real-time-response-reviews>

multiple organisations from assisting the same beneficiaries. Initially, DEC member agencies faced challenges in defining targeting criteria and reaching a consensus on the cash value for earthquake response, however, through extensive discussions, clarity was ultimately achieved, resulting in the establishment of a standardised amount of \$150 (£119.52)¹⁶.

A number of local partners in NWS reported coordinating efforts with local councils, camp managers, and community committees in targeted areas. Before implementing projects, staff visited local councils to explain their organisation’s intended activities, sign an MOU, and then provided regular progress updates. It appears that organisations’ continuous communication with local authorities and other stakeholders supported activities to be implemented as needed, with minimal delays, overlap, or duplication of effort.

According to KII respondents, coordination between DEC member agencies and local partners in GoS areas progressed smoothly. Daily updates between local partners and DEC member agencies seemed to optimise coordination with required adaptations being immediately relayed. Organisations also coordinated with relevant ministries and sectoral representatives as well as the ‘operation room’, a government-led forum dedicated to managing the earthquake response. At times, the Operation Room lubricated the wheels of coordination between stakeholders; at other times, it caused delays by requiring lengthy and convoluted approval processes. Other coordination and complementarity challenges in GoS areas were related to shelters and refugee centres, where information was not always timely or available. In one case, several interventions that had been planned at a collective centre in GoS had to be cancelled, as the centre closed one month after the earthquake.

In Türkiye, DEC member agencies and local partners coordinated with a wide array of stakeholders, including local authorities and municipalities, community leaders, camp managers, orphanages, market actors, [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#), [United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund \(UNICEF\)](#), the [Ministry of Health](#), and peer organisations. Communication was rapid and informal at first, becoming more formal after the initial weeks. DEC member agencies and local partners involved in MPCA interventions coordinated with market actors and WGs to conduct assessments to determine the viability of MPCA and ensure complementarity of efforts. An example of successful coordination in Türkiye was a case in a camp where one DEC member agency was providing food assistance but then identified healthcare needs for pregnant women. To address this unmet need, the DEC member agency collaborated with a specialised healthcare organisation to provide baby kits and training for pregnant women.¹⁷

Finding 2: *The Response Review uncovered some cases of overlapping and/or duplicate aid in the DEC funded response areas.*

The Response Review identified a small number of cases of overlapping assistance in the response areas. In NWS, 8% of respondents reported receiving the same aid assistance more than once. Notably, 4% of respondents in Idlib governorate received duplicate MPCA payments of \$150 from

¹⁶ Based on conversion rate on 12 December 2023.
<https://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/convert/?Amount=150&From=USD&To=GBP>.

¹⁷ This example was not part of DEC funded activities.

another organisation (non-DEC funded), corroborated by local council records. Another occurrence was reported in Aleppo governorate, where respondents received NFIs from both a DEC funded member agency and another non-DEC funded organisation.

In Türkiye, 7% of respondents mentioned receiving food assistance from multiple organisations. However, respondents were generally unaware of the specific organisations responsible for this duplicate aid. According to KII respondents with DEC member agencies and local partners, in some cases, similar services implemented in the same locations were not redundant, as they addressed different aspects of a community's needs. Meanwhile, KII respondents with local authorities confirmed that efforts by organisations to avoid overlap had been largely successful, especially in camps. No duplication was reported in GoS areas through this Response Review.

CHS 7

Were humanitarian actors continuously learning and improving?

Finding 1: *DEC member agencies and local partners learned operational lessons through their monitoring activities and ad-hoc information sharing during Phase 1, however formal learning opportunities are so far less evident, particularly involving reflection on what works and does not.*

Most DEC member agencies and local partners had functioning MEAL teams and systems in place for Phase 1. Through their MEAL activities, organisations tracked activity progress and outputs, gathered feedback from recipients and other stakeholders, adapted programmes, and ultimately learned lessons from implementation failures and successes.

While most DEC member agencies did not appear to engage in formal learning opportunities during Phase 1, they did engage in ad-hoc information sharing. A DEC KII respondent noted that informal peer-to-peer exchanges of knowledge were common throughout the affected region, with organisations sharing solutions to operational problems such as how to navigate around sanctions and conduct money transfers in Syria. KII respondents with DEC member agencies confirmed that informal information sharing did take place, mainly in clusters, but also bilaterally. In addition, several London-based DEC member agencies reported participating in an end of phase 1 workshop facilitated by the DEC Secretariat. This workshop involved sharing lessons learnt in presentations and discussions, with the findings expected to feed into Phase 1 report.

Overall, the Response Review found that DEC member agencies and local partners demonstrated commitment to learning through their MEAL systems and informal networking and coordination but that this commitment was not applied specifically to learning between DEC funded DEC member agencies.

CHS 8

Were staff supported to do their job effectively, and were they treated fairly and equitably?

Finding 1: DEC member agencies and local partner staff in NWS and Türkiye reported having received high levels of MHPSS, training, and financial supplements compared to staff in GoS who received less support in general.

The DEC did not issue specific guidelines for DEC member agencies around duty of care. However, they were asked to explain the measures that will be taken and the policies in place in the narrative report, and they were encouraged by the DEC Secretariat to include duty-of-care provisions in their budgets. Many DEC member agencies in the Türkiye and NWS hubs implemented staff welfare provisions to their own and local partner staff from the beginning of Phase 1 with others amending their plans later in Phase 1, recognising the need to include or enhance these provisions, with a small number of DEC member agencies not prioritising staff welfare for local partners during phase 1. One DEC member agency in NWS stated.

“We had a very great moral obligation to help out affected colleagues with moral and material support. This made [the local partner] appreciate us a lot because we were working with them not just as an implementing partner.”

However, as described by a London-based DEC KII respondent, these staff welfare budgets sometimes increased pressure on local staff, who were not always sure how to spend it. In one case, this led to a DEC member agency removing staff welfare lines from local partner budgets and re-allocating them to a strategic fund that was working on how to meaningfully support local partner staff welfare during emergency response.

DEC member agencies that did support their local partners, commonly provided the following types of support through their staff welfare budgets:

- Increased budgets for local partner staff welfare.
- MHPSS to help staff better cope with stress, including recreational activities (unstructured PSS), group counselling, and access to on-call psychologists.
- Adjusted working arrangements including flexible work hours, reasonable schedules with breaks, and extra time off.
- Training on employee safeguarding policies.
- Financial support for staff to secure necessities.
- In a few cases, temporary housing for employees who had lost homes.

According to KII respondents, MHPSS provided to DEC member agency and local partner staff was extremely helpful, easing stress and boosting morale, enabling employees to return to work more quickly and perform considerably better once back on the job. In NWS DEC member agencies were also mindful of employees’ working conditions and provided training and financial support. While these initiatives were not universally implemented by DEC member agencies across all local partners, those who benefited reported positive outcomes. They found that these initiatives facilitated their return to work, enhanced their performance, instilled a sense of accomplishment, and improved living conditions.

DEC member agencies in Türkiye described providing various types of support for their staff and for local partners, including financial assistance and flexible working hours. One DEC member agency in Türkiye adopted a thoughtful approach to supporting its local partners. Recognising that the earthquakes had severely disrupted the lives of local staff, the organisation held a joint workshop to identify the best ways the DEC member agency could provide support to local organisations. The DEC member agency then appointed a spokesperson for each local partner to oversee duty-of-care needs. Levels of MHPSS for staff varied across organisations in Türkiye. Some DEC member agencies offered high levels of MHPSS to staff in both unstructured (e.g., team-building and recreational activities) and structured (e.g., individual/group counselling sessions) forms which helped employees build psychological resilience.

Unfortunately, the Response Review revealed some duty-of-care gaps in Türkiye. Staff welfare benefits were not always available for those working for Türkiye local partners. A local partner KII respondent mentioned that a psychologist came to the office regularly to provide training for community members but did not provide any MHPSS support for local partner staff. Some local partner respondents in Türkiye also reported difficult working conditions with one reporting working outside in intense heat and in areas that lacked ventilation and another describing the physical hardship of working in the camps, citing a lack of fresh air in tents. Additionally, two other local partners respondents reported not receiving financial support.

In GoS areas, the level of employee support varied among organisations and was generally lower compared to other hubs. Some DEC member agencies provided financial support for critical situations, such as staff relocation to other cities, and offered psychological support. However, KII respondents with multiple local partner respondents revealed significant gaps in duty of care. Staff highlighted deficiencies in financial and psychological support, as well as training opportunities. Both DEC member agency and local partner respondents emphasised the need for training in basic humanitarian standards, project management, and comprehensive first aid.

Finding 2: *Generally, local partners received less staff welfare support than DEC member agency staff. This, in combination with a varied application of localisation approaches, represents a duty of care issue and a key area of improvement.*

Discussions with [International Council of Voluntary Agencies \(ICVA\)](#)¹⁸ highlighted that duty of care support has emerged as a significant concern following the earthquake. International organisations have adopted various approaches to address this issue. Notably, there is a discernible difference in the prioritisation of duty of care support between local partners and international organisations. In some instances, international organisations have extended comprehensive support to their staff, including insurance coverage, evacuation plans, financial assistance, and well-being initiatives but not (or not to the same extent) to local partners.

This discrepancy in support raises important questions, particularly in the context of the localization agenda, which emphasises the empowerment of local partners and the cultivation of trust. It underscores the need for increased attention from donors and international organisations

¹⁸ ICVA is a global network of non-governmental organisations whose mission is to make humanitarian action more principled and effective. <https://www.icvanetwork.org/>.

to effectively manage this issue. Ensuring that local partners receive adequate duty of care support should be a central consideration in the broader effort to strengthen local capacities and promote equitable partnerships.

CHS 9

Were resources managed effectively, efficiently, and ethically?

Finding 1: *The Response Review found that DEC member agencies were managing resources effectively and efficiently across the three hubs.*

The discussion of findings under CHS 2 covered issues related to the effective and timely implementation of response activities. As mentioned, DEC member agencies and local partners operating across the three hubs reported high levels of success in executing their Phase 1 plans, suggesting competent management of resources.¹⁹

Finding 2: *Respondents raised some concerns about alleged cases of favouritism, as well as instances of potential bias in aid provision.*

The Response Review found few instances in which some respondents faced difficulties accessing services or assistance provided by DEC member agencies:

- In Türkiye, 4% of respondents mentioned access issues related to DEC assistance, mainly involving long journeys to access health services and MPCA support.
- In the GoS areas, 6% of respondents, especially those in capacity-strengthening activities, faced access problems due to the absence of expected transportation compensation.
- In the NWS region, there were no reported barriers to accessing services or assistance.

When examining the potential individuals who might have missed out on essential items and services offered by DEC member agencies or local partners, the responses varied across different regions.

- In Türkiye, 23% of respondents identified pregnant women as the primary group that might have missed awareness sessions due to their circumstances. Others mentioned relatives, friends, newly displaced individuals who arrived after distribution events, and the elderly as groups who may have missed out on MPCA assistance. Some individuals, while benefiting from latrine rehabilitation, expressed concerns that their neighbours were in need but not included in the assistance. Only one respondent described a situation of general humanitarian programming in a camp in which long-term residents received containers for shelter while those with refugee status received tents.
- In Syria, specifically in the NWS and GoS areas, 9% of respondents in each region cited their neighbours, relatives, widows, newly displaced individuals, and the elderly as

¹⁹ See detailed findings under CHS 2.

groups that might have missed out on protection, MPCA, and water supply services. Also, in GoS, few respondents reported that some activities targeted only those living in collective centres, causing others to feel excluded.

Additionally, the survey explored whether respondents encountered favouritism or discrimination when accessing services or receiving assistance.

- In Türkiye, 3% of respondents, including 2 Turkish citizens and 5 Syrian and Uzbekistan refugees, with a sex distribution of 5 females and 2 males, reported experiencing favouritism. Some respondents pointed to the prioritisation of relatives, while others did not provide clear reasons for the perceived discrimination. This challenge was exacerbated by DEC member agencies encountering significant difficulties in accessing refugee data, due to national Data Protection Law.
- In the NWS, 2% of respondents, all males, including 2 hosts and 7 IDPs, reported facing favouritism. Reasons cited included concerns about providing assistance to those who might not deserve it, as well as concerns about certain parties receiving a disproportionate share of assistance, especially with regard to water supply and MPCA services.
- In the GoS area, only one respondent shared their experience of favouritism through the prioritisation of known individuals during distribution events.

Finding 3: *The DEC approach to resource management across Türkiye and Syria could potentially cause tension between itself and DEC member agencies.*

Across multiple key informant interviews, the issue of the DEC funding allocation between Türkiye and Syria (30:70) was mentioned. KII respondents communicated that they are under the impression that the DEC Secretariat is encouraging DEC member agencies to increase their funding allocation in Türkiye and reduce it in Syria. Respondents were not clear on the reason behind this and gave varied suggestions including greater UK-based fundraising efforts for Türkiye than for Syria due to better media access, public expectations in the UK of where the majority of DEC funds should be spent (i.e., in Türkiye), and access difficulties in Syria due to political barriers.

The DEC Secretariat KI respondents noted that this is a sensitive issue that could have potentially been avoided by establishing clear criteria to inform the funding allocations. They confirmed that a system is in place at the DEC for determining funding allocation but that this system is used for dividing up funds between member agencies but not countries. This situation may have been specific to this appeal due to the complex nature of both contexts but represents a worthwhile topic of investigation for the DEC internally.

A key difference among KII respondents emerged in their views on the respective levels of need in Türkiye and Syria, with some DEC member agency KII respondents stating a higher level of need in Syria and others (mostly from the DEC Secretariat) emphasising that most of the destruction and death from the earthquake had been in Türkiye. Furthermore, some DEC Secretariat KI respondents commented that most DEC member agencies are committed to investing more in

Syria than Türkiye based on their capacity, presence, and perceived levels of need, and levels of national/institutional capacity for response in either country.

Grand Bargain Commitments

Finding 1: *The TSE Phase 1 response was localised to a certain extent across the three hubs, mostly in terms of co-creation in design and implementation, capacity strengthening, and flexibility in leading and adapting.*

The Response Review found evidence that, across the hubs (although to differing extents), DEC member agencies supported and empowered local partners, with parties on both sides noting the smoothness of collaboration. DEC member agencies provided local organisations with various forms of support, including technical assistance and capacity strengthening in the areas of project management, strategy, fair distribution methods, and communication. When it came to implementation, most DEC member agencies handed the local partners the reins, honouring their local expertise and knowledge, with some examples of DEC member agencies making specific efforts to co-design response activities with local partners.

DEC member agencies employed varied partnership and localisation strategies. Some already had long-standing partnerships forged during their continuous involvement in the recent crisis response in both Syria and Türkiye. Other DEC member agencies established new partnerships. Partner diversification varied among DEC member agencies, with some collaborating with a single partner and others engaging with up to seven. In turn, localisation approaches varied depending on the longevity of partnerships. Those DEC member agencies with pre-established partnerships could respond more swiftly, leveraging local knowledge and trust, allowing partners to lead or significantly influence operations. In contrast, DEC member agencies forging new partnerships had to set up due diligence processes for new local partners, causing some implementation delays.

It was noted by DEC member agencies that numerous local partners with strong capabilities and a solid presence were receiving high demand for partnership collaboration from INGOs. This high demand placed added pressure on local NGOs, creating a significant challenge as they worked to strike a balance between the growing requests for partnerships, the mobilization of their resources to address the crisis, and the expansion of their partnership capacity.

In NWS during what one respondent referred to as “co-creation of the response”, DEC member agencies helped local organisations design Phase 1, transferring knowledge, and providing capacity strengthening and technical support to the design process. Generally, DEC member agency KII respondents recognised that in terms of emergency response experience in Syria, local partners were better positioned to implement with more years of experience and a better understanding of the lay of the land and communities’ needs. Thus, in many cases, local partners had the authority to determine activity implementation details, such as the location and operating hours of water pumping stations, which were tailored to the community's size and preference.

Some DEC member agencies in NWS implemented DEC-funded projects with local partners who also worked with other DEC member agencies. These DEC member agencies reported high levels of coordination and unification in their work methods with partners. For example, one DEC

member agency established a specialised partnership department to manage communications and capacity strengthening activities across all partners. In contrast, other DEC member agency KII respondents noted that when they reached out to other DEC member agencies operating through the same local partners, they received the response that the DEC member agencies were not interested in coordinating efforts, as these DEC member agencies' agreements with the local partners were short-term only.

In GoS areas, DEC member agencies localised their approach by working closely with local organisations and community members, engaging in capacity strengthening and sharing standards and management experience. According to local partner respondents, this knowledge transfer greatly helped local organisations develop their ability to provide emergency response services. It was also mentioned that technical assistance and capacity strengthening support from DEC member agencies were the most helpful.

In Türkiye, DEC member agencies strove to establish balanced partnerships with local organisations, offering technical support and capacity strengthening, as in the other hubs. As in Syria, some DEC member agencies and local organisations in Türkiye jointly designed projects with local partners, allowing the local partners to take the lead in field operations. Many organisations participating in the Response Review noted that their partnerships had proceeded well.

Finding 2: *The Response Review found that local partners in NWS and Türkiye experienced higher participation in decision-making, while there was more variation in GoS areas.*

In NWS, most local partners reported being engaged in the response and confirmed their ability to influence programmatic decisions. Many expressed that partnering with the DEC member agencies contributed to their organisational growth. One local partner spoke highly about how the long relationship with their DEC member agency enabled them to make tangible change in the community through investing in community-based projects such as youth empowerment. They emphasised that this enduring partnership had enhanced their credibility and trust within the areas where they operate.

Other partners prized their relationship with the DEC member agency, emphasising their flexibility and empowering approach. In one case, the local partner decided which additional health activities would be added to the last two months of Phase 1 based on budget savings.

In GoS areas, all local partners unanimously emphasised that the primary benefit derived from their collaboration with DEC member agencies was the financial support. One partner specifically highlighted that this financial support significantly empowered them to engage in larger-scale activities, addressing more extensive and pressing needs within the community. Another partner commended the rapid availability of funding, enabling them to respond promptly to earthquake-related crises. Another partner underscored the collaborative relationship's role in promoting sustainability and elevating the profile of the local partners as active and influential organisations within the humanitarian sector.

In Türkiye, several local partners highlighted aspects of their collaboration with DEC member agency that increased their ownership of their role in the response. Specifically, they pointed out the flexibility in coordination, significant participation in decision-making processes, and the swift

allocation of funds, all of which enabled them to respond promptly to emerging needs. Additionally, they noted the valuable opportunity to gain operational experience and foster important relationships through this partnership. Another partner emphasised the significance of building a shared vision with their DEC member agency, particularly in the areas of community infrastructure and resilience. This shared vision contributed to the strengthening of their partnership and facilitated the effective implementation of projects on the ground.

When exploring the extent to which local authorities in NWS were able to influence the response ²⁰, respondents expressed mixed sentiments. While almost all local authorities acknowledged their role in communicating community needs, opinions on the extent of their involvement differed. One camp manager who was interviewed expressed strong satisfaction with his working relationships with organisations, highlighting his pivotal role in community engagement. Another local authority KI respondent said there was harmony with the DEC-funded local partner organisation. The authority representative elaborated, stating that:

“Many of the proposals were not only approved but also integrated with our input. We actively participated in decision-making processes concerning the project, and this was substantiated by the organisation's implementation of some of our suggested improvements.”

However, other local authorities felt less included in the response, stating that they did not participate in quality checks, monitoring activities, or direct implementation. Occasionally, they joined implementation for supervisory purposes, but they lacked decision-making authority in the process.

Additionally, it was noted that national authority KII respondents made minimal or no mention of capacity- strengthening or networking efforts. Two local authority KII respondents specifically reported that proposals and complaints they had submitted to organisations had been ignored. It is worth noting that it is not clear whether these proposals were submitted to DEC-funded DEC member agencies.

In Türkiye, an interviewed community representative expressed a sense of detachment, stating that he was unable to participate or have any influence on the assistance processes. He indicated that he lacked essential information regarding the programme and had no influence on decision making.

Finding 3: During Phase 1, no joint efforts across DEC-funded organisations were reported, however there is potential to address this in Phase 2 implementation.

While exploring initiatives regarding joint efforts across DEC, DEC member agencies and local partners, the Response Review found that there were no reported instances of joint efforts during Phase 1. KII respondents clarified that coordination across DEC member agencies mostly took place at the London level and was limited at the country-level. In GoS areas, coordination limitations were reported, perhaps due to contextual sensitivity and/or confidentiality issues. In Türkiye, it was noted that local partners were not aware which other local organisations had

²⁰ It is not fully clear whether this finding is attributable to the DEC funded response or the wider humanitarian effort.

received DEC funding. Other UK-based DEC member agency respondents shared that there is substantial room for improvement in this regard, as enhanced coordination could streamline response efforts and yield more favourable learning outcomes. At a minimum, there is a need for more frequent data sharing, with local partners being adequately informed and integrated into the DEC consortium's activities.

The DEC Secretariat emphasised the importance of reviewing partnerships in appeals more broadly and establishing criteria for what constitutes a strong partnership. The DEC Secretariat recognized the need for a shared definition of best practices in partnerships within the organisation. Consequently, they announced that this would be a project undertaken in the coming year under the DEC.

Cross-Cutting Issues

(Gender equality, Environment, Safeguarding and Do no harm)

Finding 1: *The Response Review found evidence across the three hubs that DEC member agencies and local partners made efforts to ensure a do no harm approach, particularly to fair aid distribution without discrimination based on sex, age, or disability status.*

Across the hubs, DEC member agencies and local partners deployed a range of strategies to include all groups of people in humanitarian assistance. Examples of such strategies are:

- Protection advisors supported the planning of activities and the implementation of protection mainstreaming.
- In some cases, data collection efforts included demographic information such as sex, age, and disability status so that aid could be tailored to meet these groups' needs.
- Close coordination with local authorities, community groups and camp committees maximised the possibility that assistance would be provided equitably.
- MEAL processes facilitated activities reaching groups equally and without barriers.

The general consensus of the Response Review KII respondents and perception survey participants across the three hubs were that aid distribution was mainly fair and inclusive. There is some evidence to suggest that strategies to include diverse groups in the response were successful, however, other findings suggest that certain groups may have faced greater barriers to accessing aid than others. From perception survey data, 9% of respondents, mostly PWD and older people, reported facing barriers to access some services. Additionally, in Türkiye, 3% of survey respondents reported that not all ethnic groups were treated in the same manner. However, the Response Review lacks specific evidence regarding whether and to what extent this finding pertains to DEC assistance.

An issue that surfaced related to 'do no harm' in humanitarian contexts was related to privacy and data protection of aid recipients. In GoS, some KII respondents noted the government was insisting on access to lists of recipients for cash distributions before granting approvals. This resulted in some DEC member agencies putting MPCA interventions on hold.

Finding 2: While the Response Review did not find gender-based differences in access to assistance, evidence surfaced regarding gender-based differences in aid awareness and participation.

As mentioned above, KII respondents did not report any evidence of gender-based differences in aid distribution. However, some instances of gender-based differences in participation in aid activities, as well as awareness of aid distribution schedules and CFRMs, were identified.

In Türkiye, a DEC member agency KII respondent reported that men did not participate in childcare classes due to stigma:

“There was a kind of stigma for the man if he participated in helping the woman or even coming to the centre and receiving awareness sessions or lessons.”

In NWS, men (91%) were more likely than women (65%) to be informed about receiving aid, and 96% of men versus 82% of women were aware of CFRMs. In GoS areas, men were again more informed about receiving aid than women (78% versus 36%), and no difference between sexes appeared for awareness of CFRMs. In Türkiye, 48% of respondents knew how to submit complaints, with 44% of female respondents and 56% of male respondents. These findings suggest less engagement with females across all hubs.

Contrastingly, regarding consultations on needs, findings revealed that females were consulted about their needs more than males across the three hubs, with 62% female and 40% male in GoS, 48% female and 42% male in NWS, and 38% female and 33% male in Türkiye.

Finding 3: While attempts have clearly been made by DEC member agencies and local partners in all three hubs to include PWD in services, some gaps were identified.

Evidence regarding inclusivity for PWD was mixed. Through the Response Review it is clear that efforts have been made to prioritise the needs of PWD, but there is room for improvement, 98% of survey respondents across the hubs did not perceive any barriers to receiving assistance and 72% of survey respondents across the hubs perceived that assistance had been adapted for PWD, but the 2% of respondents who reported facing barriers also reported having disabilities.

By hub, in Türkiye, 43% of respondents noted that the provided assistance did not cater to the needs of PWD, specifically pointing out issues with latrines and, in some cases, Hygiene kits. A comparable latrine-related issue arose in the NWS, where 14% of respondents mentioned the inadequacy of services in health, protection, and water supply. Similarly, in the GoS area, 43% of respondents felt that services were not adapted to their needs, highlighting water tracking issues due to central distribution and a lack of consideration for PWD in hygiene kits, including the absence of diapers.

According to KII respondents with DEC member agencies and local partners across the hubs, organisations made numerous efforts to address the unique needs of PWD. Some examples of these efforts were as follows:

- In some cases, DEC member agencies relied on data collected in previous humanitarian efforts in the same locations to identify families with PWD and used this data to tailor aid/plan services.
- PWD were placed on lower floors in collective shelters to facilitate ease of movement.
- DEC member agencies conducted door-to-door consultations and distributions to ensure that people with low levels of mobility were not missed.
- PWD could authorise another person to collect their assistance on their behalf.
- PWD were served first during distribution activities, lowering their waiting times.
- Ramps and handles were installed in camps and some latrines were accessible for PWD.
- Protection services were at times provided in PWD's homes.
- Many distribution points were accessible for PWD, including those with vision disorders and movement restrictions.
- Mobile health clinics moved around population dense areas as well as the outskirts, facilitating access for PWD.
- One DEC member agency reported prioritising the inclusion of PWD by using the Washington Group questions during the registration process.
- Another DEC member agency provided disability-sensitive toilets and showers with indoor and outdoor lighting and hot water.

Recipients also noted instances of aid not being adapted for PWD. These included the following:

- Some latrines were not PWD accessible.
- At some distribution activities, PWD were not served first and had to wait in queues.

In discussion with ICVA²¹ respondents highlighted that the Operational Peer Review (OPR) for the TSE response found no focus or reliable evidence of how PWD needs are identified and addressed.

²¹ <https://www.icvanetwork.org/resource/icva-action-areas-for-earthquake-response-in-turkiye-and-syria-2023/>

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion 1

A high level of adaptability is a key strength of phase 1 of the DEC funded TSE response generated by several factors including DEC flexibility on project amendments, DEC member agency empowerment of local partners, continuous assessment and monitoring cycles, and strong community engagement.

The Response Review findings highlight that from the response management side, prompt release of funds, flexibility in adapting plans and strategies, and a good working relationship between DEC member agencies and the DEC Secretariat contributed to response adaptability and therefore effectiveness. Adaptability was further supported through DEC member agencies (mostly) positive localisation approaches, supporting local partners to directly influence response design and take the lead in implementation. The level of adaptability was supported by DEC member agency and local partner investment in ongoing needs assessment, continuous monitoring, and community engagement, although levels of effectiveness in these areas varied across organisations.

Recommendation 1.1 - For DEC member agencies & local partners

- Member agencies can work to refine their project management approaches to bring increased focus on monitoring and responding the (changing) vulnerability. In combination with recommendation 2.3 on improving targeting of vulnerable people, ensure that strengthened systems, processes, and tools for identification of the changing needs of vulnerable people over time feed directly into project management decision making points. In practice this might involve establishing a routine for analysing collected data to identify trends and changes in vulnerability and need, including regular reviews and discussions with project teams, and encouraging project managers to use real-time data on changing needs to adjust project activities.

Recommendation 1.2 - For the DEC Secretariat

- Continue enabling flexibility of member agency projects and encourage a stronger focus on monitoring of vulnerability through group reflection, in-depth investigation into how vulnerability changes over time in a fast-onset response, and revision of the output table to include vulnerable groups and levels of disaggregation.

Conclusion 2

Although efforts were made to provide relevant assistance to those most affected, the lack of an effective approach to the assessment of need resulted in cases of duplicated assessment activities, reduced implementation timeliness, and assessment fatigue, as well as a multitude of general needs data that, generally, did not allow for the identification of vulnerable people's specific needs.

The Response Review recognises the commendable efforts made by DEC member agencies to provide relevant assistance and accurate targeting in challenging operational circumstances

characterised by widescale infrastructure damage and direct impact on staff. However, it is notable that a significant proportion of DEC member agencies and local partners conducted their own quantitative needs assessments using standard tools that identified general, high-level needs. This approach led to a proliferation of generalised needs assessments, contributing to assessment fatigue among the earthquake-affected population already grappling with the crisis. Some DEC member agencies & local partners took the more strategic approach of utilising multi-sector needs assessment data and reports already collected and shared by initiatives such as [the \(DEEP Platform\)](#). This had several benefits, such as in some cases, it allowed some DEC member agencies to start implementation sooner, while in others to invest the time they would have spent on general needs assessment on conducting targeted needs assessments for vulnerable groups.

Recommendation 2.1 - For the DEC Secretariat

- Establish a standardised protocol for effectively utilising secondary assessment data in emergency response situations. This protocol may involve guiding DEC member agencies toward reputable agencies experienced in Multi-Sector Needs Assessments (MSNA) and Rapid Needs Assessments (RNA), such as REACH and OCHA.

Recommendation 2.2 - For the DEC Secretariat

- Facilitate a learning review workshop identifying strengths and weaknesses in DEC member agency capacities and approaches to the early identification of the needs of the most vulnerable and the use of rapid gender analysis and qualitative methodologies in fast-onset emergency response.

Recommendation 2.3 - For DEC member agencies & local partners

- Individually review and make improvements to levels of capacity and preparedness to conduct targeted needs assessments at the start of a fast-onset emergency focused on specific vulnerable groups. Consider the need for particular skills and capacities for the collection and analysis of qualitative data to ensure unique needs are adequately identified and to gain a meaningful understanding of the different realities of diverse groups.

Recommendation 2.4 - For DEC member agencies & local partners

- Enhance collaboration with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and volunteer networks to broaden outreach and improve the ability to gain deeper insights into the evolving needs and ensure access to the most vulnerable groups affected by the crisis.

Conclusion 3

Although outputs were tracked through the DEC funded TSE phase 1 response with minimal issues, a key gap is the lack of consideration of measurement of change over time.

Outcome reporting is not a requirement of the DEC although DEC member agencies are asked to design outcomes as part of their fund applications. Some DEC member agencies were of the

opinion that outcome monitoring is not realistic during the first six months of a humanitarian response due to time constraints and the short-term nature of interventions. However, others recognised the lack of outcome monitoring in this DEC funded appeal as a gap. Given the context of the TSE response, a protracted crisis that bridges the humanitarian and development nexus, outcome monitoring seems particularly relevant in terms of understanding medium to long term effects of interventions and their link to aid effectiveness. Outcome monitoring is also strongly linked to the humanitarian commitment to accountability to affected populations where there is now increased scrutiny on how outputs lead to change and how that develops, or not, over time. The DEC is currently working on adapting the way the DEC Accountability Framework (DECAF) responds to the issues raised in this recommendation.

Recommendation 3.1 - For the DEC Secretariat

- Facilitate a reflection across member agencies on outcome monitoring in humanitarian response including current DEC member agency approaches, good practice examples, and practical ways to integrate it into humanitarian MEAL systems. Consider how to further support an increased focus on outcome monitoring in phase two and future appeals.

Recommendation 3.2 - For DEC member agencies & local partners

- Reflect on organisational standards and practices for measuring the effects of humanitarian response with a focus on outcome monitoring. Consider how to apply this in phase two.

Conclusion 4

Efforts to maximise community engagement by DEC member agencies have progressed but face ongoing challenges, particularly in Türkiye and GoS, highlighting the need for continued improvements in fostering meaningful participation and addressing community concerns.

While DEC member agencies and their local partners made efforts to facilitate participation and communication with affected people, limitations in the utilisation of available feedback mechanisms and meaningful participation persist. The Response Review indicates that despite the establishment of CFRMs by DEC member agencies and their local partners, these systems are often underutilised by the affected population. This issue appears to be more prevalent in Türkiye and GoS, whereas communities in NWS have become more familiar with community engagement practices over time. However, a broader challenge is the lack of a sense of connection of affected people with the response. There is a need for concerted efforts to encourage community members at various levels to share their views and concerns, and for organisations to allocate sufficient resources to effectively manage, address, and respond to complaints.

Recommendation 4.1 - For DEC member agencies & local partners

- Identify trusted community leaders, such as teachers, mukhtars, religious figures, or other respected individuals, in specific areas and collaborate with community groups elected or endorsed by the local community to serve as gatekeepers for information sharing and communication. These leaders and groups can act as strong links between organisations

and community members, facilitating trust-building, active participation, and effective communication throughout the response.

Recommendation 4.2 - For DEC member agencies & local partners

- Ensure that feedback mechanisms are user-friendly, easily accessible for all (including in terms of language), and culturally appropriate. Simplify the process for community members to provide feedback or make complaints by assessing preferred communication modes of individual communities and tailoring CFRMs accordingly. Make clear separation between CFRMs and mechanisms for serious complaints (i.e. sexual exploitation and abuse) at all levels (NGO, partner, community etc).

Recommendation 4.3 - For DEC member agencies & local partners

- Review the allocation of resources and staffing for CFRMs and ensure that it is sufficient to manage CFRMs effectively. This includes dedicated staffing for CFRM management and quality checks, the capacity to analyse and respond to feedback in a timely manner, and a focus on following up with CFRM users to ensure proper closure of cases.

Conclusion 5

Phase 1 of the DEC funded TSE response has seen the meeting of immediate needs to a commendable level. This, however, does not reduce the importance of prioritisation of medium to long term priorities to reduce the limits of aid impact and effectiveness, particularly for a ‘crisis within a crisis.’

The prevailing sentiment across the three hubs is that Phase 1 of the response had overwhelmingly positive effects on communities with minimal negative effects. However, many respondents highlighted that Phase 1 focused on delivering short-term aid rather than on providing long-term solutions. In Phase 2, DEC member agencies should start to address medium and longer-term needs while continuing to meet short-term needs, for example for continued MPCA and the winterisation of items. A sustainable approach is required, encompassing infrastructure, livelihoods, education, and healthcare services, bridging the humanitarian-development gap.

Recommendation 5.1 - For DEC member agencies & local partner

- Continue with Phase 2 implementation, working together through co-creation to enhance the focus on medium and longer-term initiatives and activities with consideration of those highlighted by respondents in this Response Review.

Recommendation 5.2 - For DEC member agencies & local partners

- Engage and empower affected communities in the development and implementation of medium to long-term recovery initiatives. Encourage participatory planning processes where community members actively contribute to identifying their own needs and priorities. This can include:

- Community-Led Projects: Support and fund community-led projects that address specific medium to long-term needs identified by the affected population, such as rebuilding infrastructure, livelihood support, or psychosocial services.
- Capacity Strengthening: Provide training and capacity- strengthening programmes to equip community members with the skills and knowledge needed to take charge of their recovery efforts effectively.
- Local Resource Mobilisation: Facilitate community initiatives for resource mobilisation, enabling communities to take ownership of their recovery by leveraging local resources and assets.

Conclusion 6

While phase 1 of the response prioritised emergency relief, phase 2 must place a stronger emphasis on DRR to enhance resilience and sustainability of affected communities, with the view towards improving the effectiveness and sustainability of humanitarian efforts in the region.

DRR efforts have encompassed diverse strategies, from emergency response training and community empowerment programmes to bolstering the built environment for earthquake resistance. While some initiatives have demonstrated a forward-looking approach, the majority of Phase 1 efforts lacked emphasis on DRR, with prospects for more substantial developments in Phase 2. The discussion also revealed a notable shift towards collaboration between INGOs and government institutions in Türkiye, despite some limitations, indicating an opportunity for further development. In Syria, challenges related to risk assessments, legal frameworks, early warning systems, resource allocation, and political commitment have been noted as potential impediments to successful DRR projects.

Recommendation 6.1 - For the DEC Secretariat

- DRR efforts should be continuous and not confined to isolated appeals or responses. It is recommended for the DEC Secretariat to focus on collaboratively developing long-term DRR strategies and initiatives with DEC member agencies that extend beyond individual appeals.

Recommendation 6.2 - For DEC member agencies, and local partners

- As part of phase 2 implementation, incorporate regular training and public awareness campaigns as part of preparedness activities. These activities should develop and implement community-based DRR and target local communities in high-risk areas, with a focus on imparting knowledge about earthquake preparedness, evacuation protocols, and fundamental first-aid skills.

Recommendation 6.3 - For the DEC Secretariat & DEC member agencies

- As part of phase 2 implementation, consider the implementation of routine earthquake drills and simulation exercises with national society agencies such as AFAD, SARC, and Task

Forces involving DEC members, local partners, and local communities to practise emergency response procedures.

Recommendation 6.4 - For DEC member agencies

- In line with recommendations from the DEC funded Ukraine Response Review, conduct joint contingency planning, risk assessments at hub level, ensuring that these complement existing planning and procedures of individual DEC member agencies.

Conclusion 7

The localisation approaches of some DEC member agencies demonstrated strong commitment to local partners and ‘walking the talk’ of the [Grand Bargain](#). However, this was not applied across the board leaving significant space for other DEC member agencies to rethink their commitment and approaches to meaningful localisation.

Overall, the Response Review captured a strong commitment to local partner ownership and influence over DEC-funded projects. It is clear from the findings that the partnerships where local partners are empowered to lead and own their part of the response contributed strongly to response strengths in terms of adaptability, communication, and effectiveness. However, some DEC member agencies’ partnership approaches were less strategic in terms of localisation priorities, mostly in the case of rapidly formed new partnerships with low commitment. These kinds of partnerships present a potential concern for duty-of-care priorities and could prompt questions, such as, whether DEC member agencies without existing partnerships had the capacity to respond.

Although the current structure of the DEC does not allow for local organisations to qualify as DEC member agencies, the lack of prioritisation of direct funding to local and national actors (including women-led organisations) across the wider response remains a question, particularly with the range of well-established, experienced local organisations operating in this region. SNGOs should continue advocating for their inclusion in humanitarian coordination structures, partnerships, and funding allocation mechanisms while demonstrating their capacity and accountability. This collaborative effort can help shift the humanitarian paradigm towards greater localization, enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of aid efforts in Syria.

The DEC noted that it is launching a collaboration initiative that will go live during Phase 2 implementation with the aim of incentivising agencies to collaborate in addressing global commitments to quality, accountability, localisation, and other aid implementation issues. As well as a partnership health check study that is ongoing.

Recommendation 7.1 - For local partners

- Through established local NGO forums, where possible, continue investing in advocacy to further the application of localisation priorities by DEC member agencies and donors for the TSE response (and beyond). Individually, have open discussions with DEC member agencies and donors on areas in need of organisational development support, stronger,

more direct connections to funds, and increasing representation in key decision-making forums.

Recommendation 7.2 - For the DEC Secretariat and donors

- Increase the level of engagement with local NGO priorities and take concerted action based on advocacy from local NGO forums and networks in terms of localised funding instruments and mechanisms. Modify overheads for local NGOs as equal to that of INGOs to enable organisational sustainability.

Recommendation 7.3 - For DEC member agencies

- Advocate for a conducive regulatory environment in each hub to empower local NGOs, remove bureaucratic barriers, and promote their engagement in decision-making processes.

Recommendation 7.4 - For DEC member agencies

- Review organisational approaches to partnership to reflect on to what extent and how they contribute to localisation priorities. Specifically reflect on localisation as pertains to local authorities and civil society organisations in terms of enabling their increased participation and decision-making in response interventions.

Recommendation 7.5 - For DEC member agencies

- Consider establishing a pool of pre-vetted local partner organisations in key geographies relevant to the DEC member agency. Establish a long-term organisational development plan for these partners to ensure rapid and high-capacity humanitarian response.