



# Two weeks after the earthquakes: Urgent needs and prolonged vulnerability

Northwest Syria | February 2023

## KEY MESSAGES

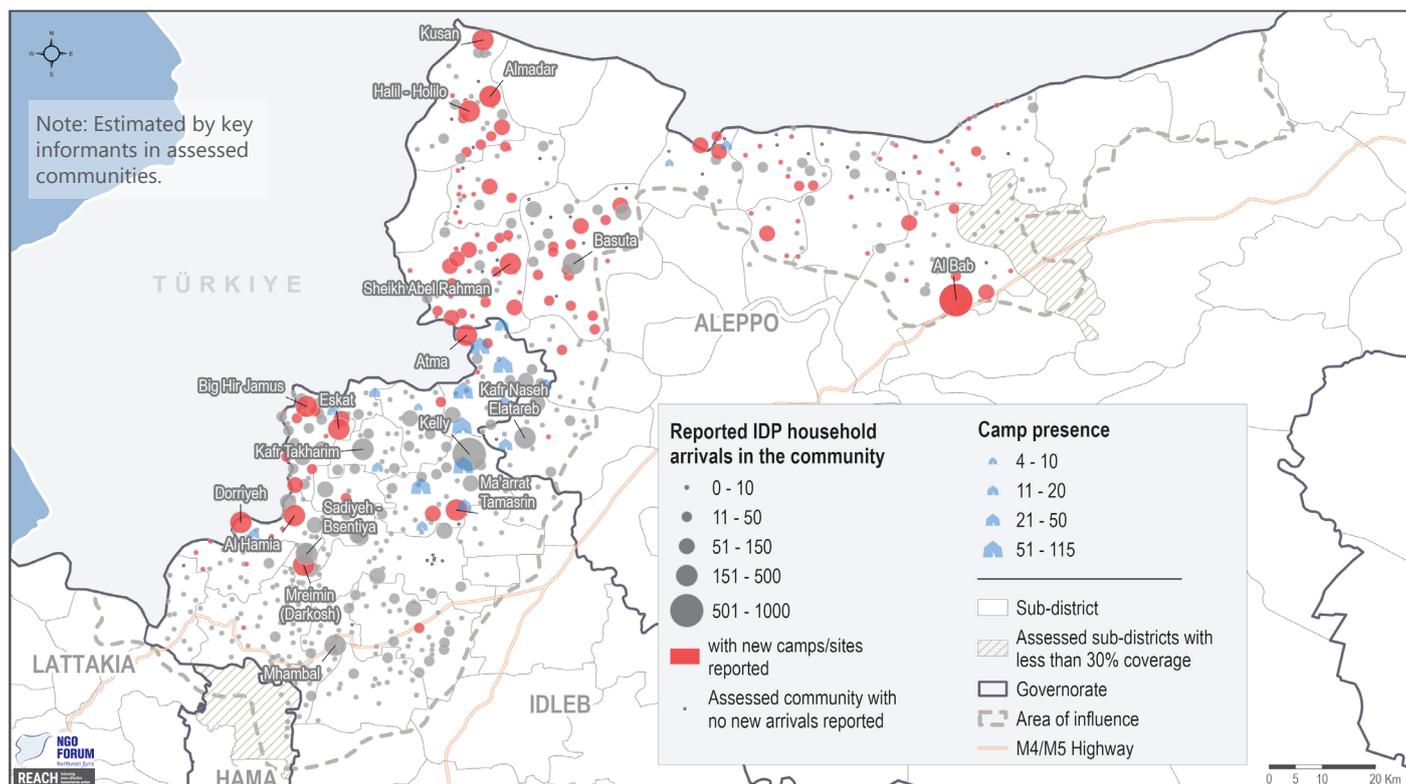
- In northwest Syria, the earthquakes have caused widespread damage, displacement, loss of life, and basic service disruption. REACH data collected 9-11 February indicates that communities in earthquake-affected areas most urgently require **winterization, shelter, and multi-purpose cash support**.
- Based on key market functionality indicators, RNA data indicates that across many earthquake-affected areas, **markets appear to remain resilient for now**. However the situation remains fluid and may evolve given **ongoing access constraints**.
- These findings must be considered in the context of a **highly vulnerable population prior to the disaster**, due to nearly 12 years of conflict, an economic crisis, and an ongoing cholera outbreak.

275,500

people\* - approx. **50,000** households - are estimated to be in need of tents or emergency shelter.

\* Based on average household size of 5.5 people.

Map 1: Estimated number of IDP arrivals between 6 February and time of data collection (9-11 February).



## RAPID NEEDS ASSESSMENT (RNA) KEY FIGURES

# 302,500

people\* - approx. **55,000** households - are estimated to have been displaced, either within or from their community.

# 275,500

people\* - approx. **275,500** households - are estimated to be in need of tents or emergency shelter.

# 484,000

people\* - approx. **88,000** households - are estimated to be in need of mattresses, high thermal blankets, and clothing.

\* Based on average household size of 5.5 people.

## CONTEXT OVERVIEW

Two powerful earthquakes struck south-eastern Türkiye within a span of 12 hours on the 6th of February. The first, with a magnitude of 7.7 and epicentre near the provincial capital of Gaziantep, occurred in the early morning as most people still slept; the second earthquake (7.6 magnitude) followed whilst search and rescue operations were already underway.

Estimates indicate more than [46,000 people have been killed](#), with [more than 4,500 deaths](#) reported in northwest Syria specifically, as of 18 February. The earthquakes have also caused significant destruction, such as collapsed residential buildings and damage to critical infrastructure including gas pipelines. Widespread damage to homes and energy infrastructure is particularly concerning given the [harsh winter conditions](#) currently felt in these areas.

On 20 February, two weeks after the initial disaster, another [earthquake registering 6.4 magnitude struck southeast Turkey](#) near the city of Antakya. This latest quake suggests an ongoing vulnerability to these shocks in the region.

## UNDERSTANDING IMMEDIATE NEEDS IN AFFECTED AREAS

As the humanitarian response continues following the deadly earthquakes two weeks ago, aid actors are starting to build a clearer picture of the situation on the ground. With data coming in from information actors, the response increasingly has a better understanding of which areas have been most impacted, what types of services are disrupted, and what are the most immediate, urgent needs of people in earthquake-affected areas.

To support in these efforts, REACH conducted a Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA) in partnership with the northwest Syria NGO Forum on 9-11 February. Findings from the RNA highlight the widespread needs of communities in affected areas as well as the extent of damage, service disruption, and displacement that has resulted from the earthquake.

Of the 55,000 households estimated to be displaced, **15,000** are reported to be displaced from their community to another, with the other 40,000 households displaced within their pre-earthquake community. The majority of communities with earthquake-displaced households reported that these IDPs are primarily being **hosted for free by friends or relatives**. In communities with IDPs from that community, a sizable minority also reported displaced households **residing in tents or staying in their vehicles**.

For both new IDP arrivals and the pre-earthquake populations in these communities, priority needs are the same: **shelter support, multi-purpose cash, and winterisation support**.

Eighty-five percent of assessed communities (covering about 60% of earthquake-affected areas) are reported to either be directly impacted by the earthquake – damage and/or service disruption – or have received new arrivals of displaced people. Among the directly impacted communities (456 in total), severe disruption to key services has been reported:

- **28%** of communities reported that electricity services were not accessible to anyone in the community; 20% reported the same for health services.
- **15%** of communities reported that water services were not accessible to

anyone, or were accessible to only a few (less than half of the community).

- **Badama, Harim, and Judiye** are the three sub-districts reporting the most severely disrupted access to services.

Significant damage was also reported through the RNA. Generally, subdistricts close to the Turkish border in Greater Idlib and in Afrin district in Northern Aleppo saw higher levels of damage to buildings and infrastructure, on average. Zooming in to the community level, **Jandairis town and Mreimin Afrin** have some of the highest damage scores. Several higher-population communities are also estimated to have moderate-high damage, for example **Al Bab, Tharifa, and Salqin**.

## ZOOM-IN ON MARKET CONDITIONS

Several key market indicators were collected through the RNA, to support ongoing efforts to identify where cash-based programming may be a feasible aid modality. Preliminary analysis from three key indicators suggests that overall, markets in the assessed communities appear to be resilient. It is important to note however that the market situation remains fluid,

and may evolve given ongoing access constraints in NWS.

- **Item availability:** In assessed communities that reported direct earthquake impact (i.e. damage or service disruption), an increased unavailability of items was not commonly indicated as an issue (reported in only 11% of communities). However, increased item unavailability was more commonly reported in Ariha and Janudiyeh sub-districts, and to an extent in Salqin, Al Bab, and Ar-Ra'ee sub-districts.
- **General market accessibility:** Markets were generally accessible to all or most of the population in directly impacted communities, according to KIs in 79% of communities. Sub-districts where markets were only reported to be accessible to half or less of the community included Janudiyeh, Ma'btali, Raju, and Jandaris.
- **Vendor/shop closure:** In two-thirds of communities, KIs reported that either none or only a few of the vendors had closed shop since the earthquakes. However, a higher proportion of shop/vendor closures was estimated in Darkosh, Harim, Qourqeena, and Suran sub-districts.

**Reported levels of access to key services** (by % of 456 assessed communities reporting direct earthquake impacts)

	Accessible to all	Accessible to most	Accessible to half	Accessible to few	Accessible to none
Water Services	45%	32%	7%	8%	7%
Electricity Services	22%	30%	12%	8%	28%
Health Services	32%	19%	15%	14%	20%
Markets	49%	27%	14%	7%	4%

## REACH RNA METHODOLOGY

The RNA was conducted using a community 'key informant' (KI) methodology, meaning that one KI – a person with particular knowledge or a good understanding of the situation on the ground – was interviewed per community. REACH enumerators based in Idlib and enumerators based in Northern Aleppo conducted interviews, either in-person or remotely, relying on REACH's extensive KI network in NWS. Data was collected from 604 communities across

Greater Idlib and Northern Aleppo between 9-11 February 2023. In sudden onset emergencies, KI data collection methods are often chosen in order to gather basic information about a large area very quickly. However, with a single person responding on behalf of a community, it is important to keep in mind that **all findings and estimated figures are intended to provide an indicative picture of the situation in assessed communities only**. Findings should therefore not be generalised across the population or the region.

## PUTTING THE CRISIS IN CONTEXT

These findings are concerning – not only because they underscore the imminent need for aid to earthquake-affected communities, but also because of the high vulnerability of people residing in northwest Syria prior to the disaster.

For example, a reported lack of access to health and water services in the RNA is particularly troubling given the **ongoing cholera outbreak in the country and generally weakened health infrastructure** due to years of armed conflict. [According to OCHA](#) reporting from 18 January, “over

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2.1 million people in northwest Syria live in the most at-risk subdistricts for developing a cholera outbreak”; as of 14 January the region had recorded 555 lab-confirmed cholera cases and 20 deaths, with more than 37,700 suspected cases reported in both Idlib and Aleppo governorates.

The country has also been facing a **serious economic crisis over the past year, due to currency depreciation and rising prices**. In greater Idlib, this translated to [higher costs for key necessities](#) like food, fuel, and

hygiene items. Additionally, according to our last [humanitarian situation monitoring in December 2022](#), most communities in the greater Idlib area were reporting that access to healthcare remained unaffordable for many and winterisation needs – particularly heating fuel – were already being raised as a top priority for IDPs and host communities coping with rising prices.

In terms of food security, the January round of humanitarian situation monitoring data reiterates an ongoing challenge with accessing sufficient food. Pre-earthquake, most assessed communities reported that **households could not afford essential food items although markets were present**. In addition, the primary challenge

faced when feeding babies and young children under two years in the two months prior to data collection was the high price of suitable foods such as formula.

**As incomes were widely reported to be insufficient to cover the cost of**

**living**, households were employing coping strategies like purchasing food on credit or borrowed money, relying on less preferred or less expensive foods, and using money that would have been allocated to other needs.

**It is therefore crucial for aid actors to keep in mind the pre-earthquake baseline of conditions in northwest Syria that were already alarming, as they use incoming needs data to inform their earthquake response planning.**

## ABOUT REACH

REACH Initiative facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, ACTED and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT).