LEARNING BRIEF

Empowering Communities:

Post-Earthquake Small Business Recovery in Hatay, Turkey

APRIL 2024

Mission Statements

CORE's mission is to empower communities in and beyond crisis. CORE envisions a more equitable world in which underserved communities are prepared and can respond effectively to crisis from within. CORE's Cash and Voucher assistance vision specifically, is to empower communities and meet their needs through timely, effective and efficient assistance. To learn more visit www.coreresponse.org and contact Tenzin Manell, Sr. Advisor, Cash and Markets (tenzin.manell@coreresponse.org).

Yereller ve Siginmacilarla Yardimlasma Dayanisma ve Destekleme Dernegi (YSYD)'s mission is to address displaced people's needs using integrated approaches towards durable solutions. YSYD specializes in Physical Rehabilitation and Therapy, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, Medical Aid, Protection and Case Management, Vocational Training and Job Matching, Voluntary Return and Reintegration, Sponsorship and Third Country Resettlement and Emergency Response. Across these areas of work YSYD addresses the specific needs of marginalized social groups including women, girls, youth and people living with disabilities. YSYD is headquartered in Ankara, with field offices in Adana, Adıyaman, Ankara, Hatay, Giresun, Kahramanmaraş, Karabük, Karaman, Sivas, Malatya through field offices. To learn more visit www.msyd.org and contact Nazli Ayhan Algan, Executive Director (nazliaalgan@ysyd.org).

Acknowledgments

This learning brief was co-authored by Tenzin Manell, Kara Fink and Gersán Vásquez and was made possible by the participants of CORE's response and local partner, YSYD, as well as CORE team members – Gonul Dogru, Merdiye Vatanandiran, Virginia Chu and Debbie Santalesa.

INTRODUCTION AND OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

Turkey after the 7.7 magnitude earthquake.

On February 6, 2023, a 7.7 magnitude earthquake devastated Turkey and Syria which was followed by a second 7.6 magnitude earthquake the very next day, as well as thousands of aftershocks. The Turkish areas of Hatay, Adıyaman, Kahramanmaraş and Malatya were the hardest hit. Immense infrastructure damage—including roads, medical centers, and houses—over 108,000 injured persons, over 50,000 deaths, and displacement of around three million people altogether left communities devastated and in need of humanitarian assistance. Prior to the earthquakes, Turkey was already hosting approximately 3.5 million Syrian refugees[1], many of whom were displaced again. The disaster increased existing tensions between refugees and host communities and exacerbated the ongoing economic crisis.

The economic cost of the earthquake was estimated at $104 billion USD by the According to the Turkish Economic Policy Research Foundation (TEPAV)[2]. This is the equivalent of 4% of Türkiye's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) according to the World Bank[3]. There were devastating effects on the labor market and businesses. It is estimated that the economic activity was reduced by 16 percentage points, representing a loss of 4,351 Turkish Lira [TL] ($230.6 USD) per worker per month according to the International Labor Organization (ILO)[4]. The ILO also estimated that 220,000 businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), were destroyed or partially demolished due to the natural disaster.

Prior to the earthquakes, the country was hosting approximately 3.5 million Syrian refugees, many of whom were displaced again. The disaster increased existing tensions between refugees and host communities and exacerbated the ongoing economic crisis.

[1] https://reporting.unhcr.org/files/2023-06/EU%20-%20Tu%CC%88rkiye.pdf

[2] https://www.bloomberght.com/tepav-6-subat-depremlerinin-maliyeti-104-milyar-dolar-2347078

[3] The World Bank and the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery [GFDRR] (2023). Global Rapid Post-Disaster Damage Estimation (GRADE) Report. Washington D.C.

[4] International Labour Organization (ILO): The effects of the February 2023 earthquake on the labour market in Türkiye.

CORE swiftly responded, mobilizing within a week to assess and address critical needs across the affected region. Cash and Voucher Assistance are CORE's preferred modalities of response, whenever context allows. CORE collaborated with the Turkey Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD), the Ministry of Family and Social Services, and two established local NGOs, YSYD and IHSAN Relief and Development (IHSAN).

CORE self-funded response activities to support displaced Turkish and Syrian refugee communities across multiple provinces, **reaching 1,800 Syrian refugees with vouchers for food, 20,000 Turkish individuals with ready-to-eat meal kits, 22,500 Turkish individuals with hygiene kits, and 3,000 Turkish households in informal settlements with kitchen sets**. **In addition, CORE implemented one of the first early recovery initiatives: 77 small businesses in Hatay Province received business grants totaling $75,000 USD as well as training.**

Prior to the earthquake Hatay Province faced high levels of income inequality with nearly 30% of the rural population lived below the poverty line (Semerci 2013)[5]. As a result of the earthquake, Hatay was the Province with the second greatest impact on its economic activity. Part of the Hassa Municipality's response was to erect prefabricated structures in a designated business park where business owners could restart their livelihoods and restore the local supply chain. With limited resources, the municipality sought a partner who could provide further support to business owners who suffered losses of their storefronts, stock and equipment. CORE supported 77 small businesses, including 58 small businesses from Hassa district who resumed their businesses in the new Hassa business park, and 19 women-owned agribusinesses located in Antakya, Defne, and Samandağ districts in the Hatay Province.

This learning brief focuses specifically on lessons pertaining to CORE's small business recovery support to 58 business owners located in the Hassa business park, which was implemented from May 15 to September 30, 2023, and includes recommendations for scaling in this context.

[5] Semerci A. (2013). A study on income distribution and poverty analysis in Turkey: Example of Hatay province," Journal of Food, Agriculture and Environment, 11(3-4).

METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

This learning brief draws on baseline data from March 2023 and evaluation data from September 2023. The data was collected from program participants by YSYD, key informant interviews from CORE's After-Action Review with CORE Turkey leadership, as well as HQ operations and program staff, including CORE's Senior Advisor for Cash and Markets.

The baseline and endline assessed the effects on business knowledge, income and employment before the start of the program and then again afterwards. The endline also included questions related to the service and delivery of the grants.

The endline was a smaller sample of businesses: 15 out of 58 (26%) in comparison to the baseline. There were some gaps in data collection; not all survey questions were asked at endline regarding the Self-Reliance Index (SRI) and coping mechanism which restricted analysis in these areas. All surveys were administered in Turkish with the baseline administered in person and the endline telephonically.

Data analysis was to be led by YSYD but was covered by CORE which resulted in some inferences. The analysis involved cross-tabulation, statistical assessments, including measures of central tendency, and the revision of atypical data. Various data transformation processes were executed, resulting in the creation of new variables to validate the collected information and cross-reference variables.

YSYD providing orientation to business owners in Hatay on how to prepare business plan.

Despite the described limitations, this brief provides a descriptive approximation of the general outcome results of the program.

PROGRAM DESIGN

CORE coordinates with a number of key stakeholders to carry out community outreach, eligibility assessments and verification of its program participants.

The Cash Working Group's cash feasibility study indicated that cash was feasible. Accordingly, CORE used cash assistance within the three-pronged package of support received by the 58 businesses in the business park: 1) the storefront provided by the municipality, 2) business grant provided by CORE; and 3) training, which was to be provided by the local partner but in the end was provided by the municipality.

ELIGIBILITY, REGISTRATION, VERIFICATION AND SELECTION OF BUSINESSES

Eligibility businesses were those which:

- Existed before the earthquake[6]
- Were officially registered in the Chamber of Craft and Tradesman
- Had damaged shops
- Were located in targeted districts
- Had vulnerable business owners

No specific sectors or types of businesses were prioritized. Prior to registration, two days of program promotion took place during which YSYD contacted small business owners via SMS whose shops had been destroyed, as recorded by the Chamber of Commerce (CoTC)[7]. CORE then collaborated with YSYD, Hassa municipality and the CoTC for the registration process at the business park. Three desks staffed by CORE were open to support applicants to complete registration. Questionnaires included a weighted scoring rubric based on household demographics and composition, shelter, health, protection and livelihoods status, with a selection vulnerability score between 11 to 47 **(see Figure 1)**.

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[6] All but one business continued in the same activity after the earthquake; one program participant who had a business before the earthquake chose to adjust their business plan.

[7] The Chamber of Craft and Tradesmen is the union that all small businesses must register when establishing small businesses.

FIGURE 1 - Scoring Indicators

CRITERION (SCORE)
Single-headed household (3)
Female headed household (5)
Children headed household (5)
Elderly (60+) headed household (5)
location changed because of EQ (4)
Shelter Type: 1. No shelter (5) 2. Makeshift shelter (shack, kiosk, vehicle)/ Shelter not fit for safe habitation (4) 3. Temporarily hosted by friends, family, community/faith group, or emergency shelter (3) 4. Apartment or house, not adequate (2) 5. Apartment or house, adequate (1)
Shelter Status: Destroyed (5) Heavily damaged (4) Moderately damaged (3) Slightly damaged (2) Undamaged (1)
Did you lose any family members in the earthquake? Kids (3) Father/Mother/Sister (2) Relatives/Other (1)

CRITERION (SCORE) cont.
Disability Prevalence (Dynamic): 1. No, no difficulty (0) 2. Yes, some difficulty (1) 3. Yes, a lot of difficulty (3) 4. Cannot do it at all (4)
Elderly people (60+) living alone (5)
More than 1 family live in the same apartment/ house (2)
Pregnant or Breast Feeding (2) (Dynamic)
Children/Age: 0 to 3 (4) (Dynamic)
School Age: 6 - 17 - school age (2) (Dynamic)
Child labor (3) (Dynamic)
No one working (4)
No access to any WASH Facility (3)
Chronic disease (4) (Dynamic)
People losing their livelihood: 0-6 months (2) 7-12 months (3)
HH with expenditure above income (3)
More than 10 people in the house (3)
Lack of regular income (3)

Following registration, CORE cross checked the eligibility of all applicants with the CoTC, which verified vulnerability, registration documents and that applicants' identification documents matched recorded business registration.

An orientation training was provided for business owners who met the eligibility criteria and were verified by the CoTC and local authorities, during which the business plan template was explained.

Applicants completed their business plans over a one-week period and submitted them along with pro forma invoices for the materials to be purchased with the business grant, as articulated within the plans.

BUSINESS GRANTS

Business grants aimed to support business owners to partially cover the financial gap they faced restarting or starting their businesses. The transfer value varied based on the needs of the business, vulnerability scoring, the amounts requested by business owners from CORE in the business plans,and resources available.

The business plans were evaluated by the project committee encompassing CORE and YSYD during which the transfer value for each business was decided.

Business training was provided to all business grant recipients.

- **For those with a vulnerability score of 30 and above**:
  - 50,000 TL for those whose support requests are 200,000 TL or more.
  - 45,000 TL for those whose support requests are between 150,000-200,000 TL.
  - 40,000 TL for those whose support requests are less than 150,000 TL.

- **For those with a vulnerability score of between 20 to 30**:
  - 40,000 TL for those whose support requests are 200,000 TL or more.
  - 38,000 TL for those whose support requests are between 150,000-200,000 TL.
  - 35,000 TL for those whose support requests are less than 150,000 TL.

- **For those with a vulnerability score of less than 20**:
  - 35,000 TL for those whose support requests are 200,000 TL or more.
  - 32,000 TL for those whose support requests are between 150,000-200,000 TL.
  - 30,000 TL for those whose support requests are less than 150,000 TL.

Selected business owners were contacted to sign an MoU outlining the cooperation between the business and YSYD. The average transfer value awarded was $1,250 USD (35,000 TL), with the maximum award capped at $1,750 USD (50,000 TL). The average request was $5,687 USD (159,236 TL) which exceeded 3 times the cap, while the average granted amount was 35% of the average requested funds. This gap underscores the substantial costs and assets required to reestablish businesses. As Figure 2 shows, there is a clear positive correlation among business owners with greater vulnerability levels and the transfer value awarded, indicating a strategic allocation of limited resources to those with greater needs.

Funds were transferred via bank transfer as banking services were functioning and businesses had bank accounts. In addition, relevant laws in Turkey mandate using bank transfer for any amount of humanitarian assistance higher than 7,000 TL.

The business grant was distributed into two equal tranches; the first was unconditional upon enrollment and the second was conditional. The second tranche was distributed following monitoring visits by YSYD two weeks after the disbursement of the first tranche. During these monitoring visits, business owners presented invoices for expenditure of the first tranche on stock and equipment indicated within the business plan. Conditionality was decided upon by CORE Turkey and YSYD, who agreed that it was an important design feature to promote expenditure on business expenses and to mitigate potential dropout.

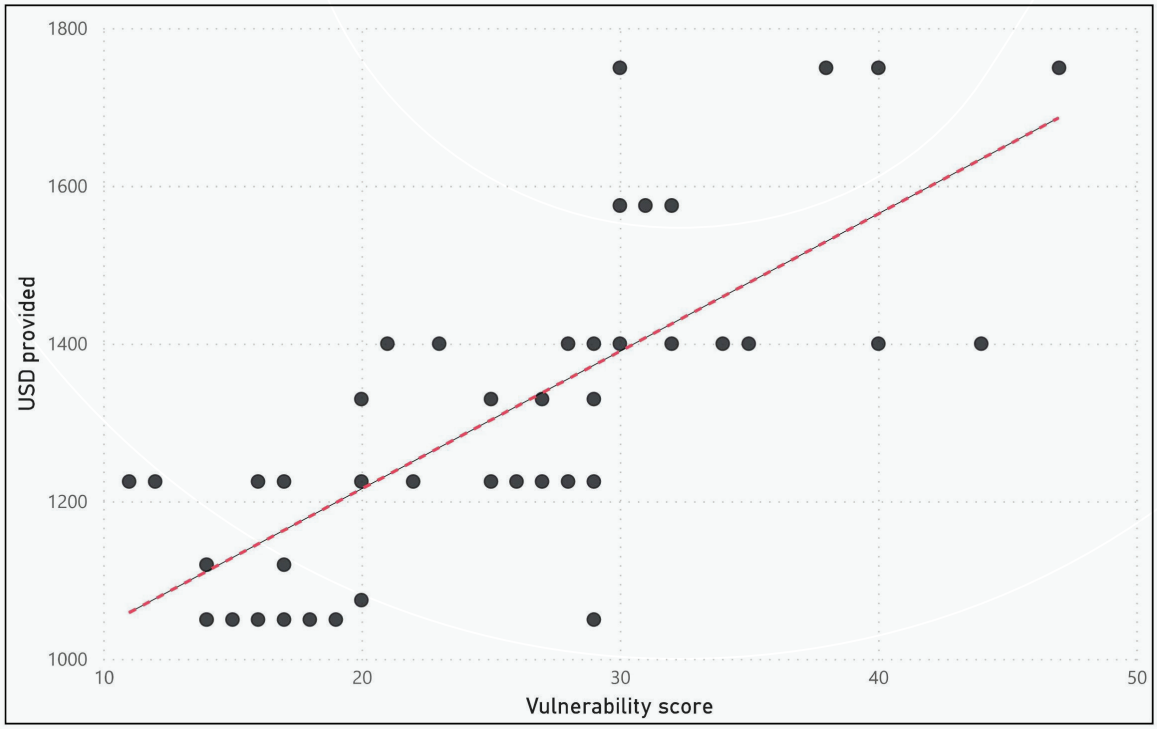
The municipality experienced personnel changes and some construction delays due to issues with supply chains for materials in the earthquake's aftermath which delayed storefront readiness.

Second-hand market receipts or lack thereof presented a challenge to monitoring the use of the first tranche of the business grant and to business owners meeting the conditions for disbursement of the second tranche. The second-hand, informal market was active and provided discounts while formal markets demonstrated greater supply chain disruptions or were more expensive. Thus, in many cases, business owners opted to purchase their stock and equipment second-hand to stretch their funds. In these cases, business owners lacked official documentation of their expenditures. This required CORE and YSYD staff to conduct additional verifications with vendors to substantiate program participants' expenditures which was time consuming, in addition to relying on the official invoices presented. This resulted in several delayed disbursements of the second tranche of the business grant which in turn resulted in less time for business owners to spend down the second tranche.

TRAINING

Training aimed to complement the existing capacity of business owners and strengthen their knowledge and skills to enhance the performance of the businesses. Hassa municipality provided two days of training for businesses in the food and water sectors on hygiene. Across-sectors businesses attended business communication and customer relations management training.

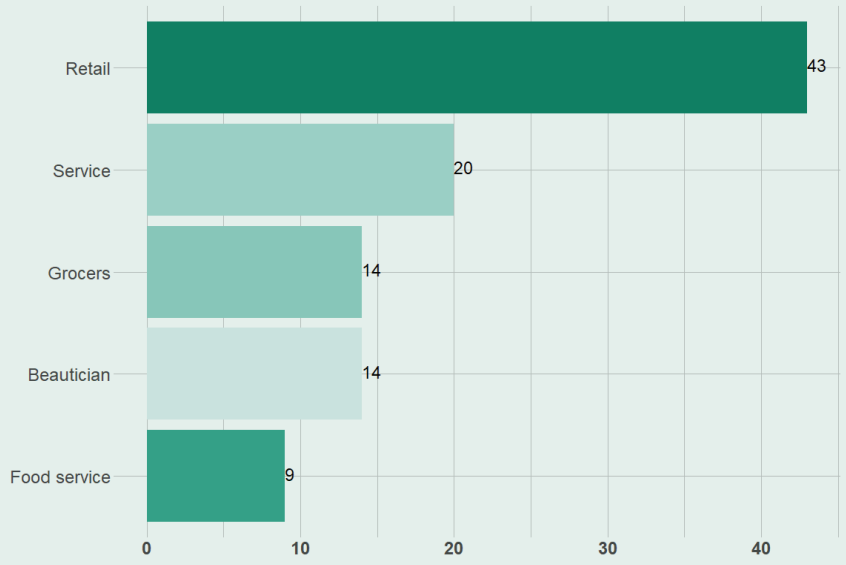
FIGURE 2 - Vulnerability score and grant amount provided in USD



BUSINESS PROFILES

A variety of businesses were selected so as to not oversaturate the market, mitigate price distortions, and to support diverse demand-driven businesses. The selected businesses were categorized into five distinct groups which are listed here from highest to lowest representation: Retail (including market and clothing), Service (encompassing electronic repair and sign-maker) Grocers (including butcher, greengrocers and grocery market), Beautician (encompassing hairdresser and barber), and Food service (including cafe and restaurant).

FIGURE 3 - Type of business in percentages



Business owners ranged from 21 to 67 years old; the average age was 40. 78% of business owners were male while the remaining 22% were female; one of the women was pregnant. The average household size was 3 people; together with their family members this totaled 214 individuals supported through the intervention. The majority of the cohort (78%) did not have any chronic diseases. For those who did suffer from a chronic disease, diabetes (10%) was reported as the most common illness. The Washington Group questions on disability[8] were asked and few business owners reported such difficulties. 5% experience difficulty with vision and 3.5% experience difficulty with both self-care and walking.

Business owners reported their household applying a diverse range of coping strategies to adapt to the reduction in income following the earthquake. The most frequent coping strategy reported was spending down savings (48%), followed by eating different foods than usual (40%), moving the household to another location (36%), borrowing money from non-relatives to meet basic needs (28%), and reduced education expenses (22%)[9] .

[8] https://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/question-sets/wg-short-set-on-functioning-wg-ss/

[9] Other strategies included: buying food on credit (14%) selling household assets (10%), reducing spending on healthcare (8%), selling valuable assets (5%), reducing spending on tuition and keeping children out of school (3%), and engaging children in income generation (2%).

FINDINGS

Findings are as follows drawing on baseline and endline analysis:

SATISFACTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The majority— of endline respondents (86%) reported being very satisfied or satisfied with the assistance received. High satisfaction was also reported related to the information received and treatment from program staff (100%). No respondents reported being asked for any demand or compensation to receive assistance.

The majority of endline respondents (93%) reported complete access to a feedback channel to provide a suggestion or lodge a complaint; one respondent (7%) said they did not really have access. 79% preferred a combination of different feedback mechanisms compared to a single channel (21%), such as leaflets, flyers and SMS. 92% of respondents felt their views were completely taken into account; one respondent (7%) said their views were mostly taken into account.

BUSINESS GRANT SUPPORT

At endline, respondents universally valued the business grant as useful and had no problems spending the grant. 64% reported the business grant was very useful, while 36% reported it as useful. 8% reported having some difficulty collecting the grant but did not elaborate on their response. Respondents reported a range of how long it took to receive the second disbursement with the majority (67%) receiving the grant in 2-4 weeks, 27% in 4-6 weeks and 7% in less than 2 weeks. These delays were related to recipients fulfilling the conditions of documentation on their expenditures with the first tranche of the grant. No negative impacts of the grant were shared when asked. The self-reported positive impacts included purchasing items for re-establishing their business (100%), improving their living conditions because they were able to resume their livelihoods (87%), and purchasing food of better quality due to increased income (15%). Comparing the baseline and endline data, all expenditures were business inputs including stock and equipment which aligned with the intended expenditures in the initial business plans.

Haydar, a father and coffee shop owner, used cash assistance from CORE and YSYD to restock his shop after it was destroyed in the earthquake.

TRAINING

Attendees improved knowledge as a result of the training delivered, with a 16-21 percentage points increase in scores based on a pre- and post-test comparison. The enhanced knowledge acquired through these sessions serves as fundamental building blocks for driving business recovery.

CORE staff speaks to Nesrin, who received cash assistance to replace equipment for her textile business.

Despite the described limitations, this brief provides a descriptive approximation of the general outcome results of the program.

INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT

At baseline, business owners reported a decrease in income and loss of employment following the earthquake. In 2022, prior to the earthquake, 69% of business owners had a monthly income of $430 USD; 58% reported an income of 0-$212 USD in the month after the earthquake. Business owners sampled for the endline saw stabilized income following receipt and use of the business grant. Given the short duration of the project and the extent of recovery needs, only a levelling off income can be reported, however, this is still a positive outcome. Primary sources of income at endline included trading/business (80%), food crop production and agriculture training/business (7%), food aid and other sources of income (7%).

At baseline, 52% of respondents had at least one member of their household who was a worker/employee (n=30). Only one respondent (2%) reported a worker/employee under 18 years of age. Nonetheless, most respondents (57%) described the income-generating activities of their household as temporary/irregular/seasonal, while 29% described regular part-time including self-employment. 14% shared they had no employment.

At endline, the unemployment rate among members of respondents' households dropped 53 percentage points, from 67% at intake to 14% at program end. Most of the work done by household members was classified by the respondent as temporary or irregular.

COPING

At endline, respondents reported a diverse range of coping strategies to adapt to their reduction in income. The most frequent one was spending savings (48%), followed by eating different foods than usual (40%), and moving the entire household to another location for safety (36%). Respondents shared they needed help to pay for food (79%), housing and utilities (60%), education (24%) and health (24%) expenditures within the past three months.

SELF-RELIANCE

Due to gaps in data collection at baseline only 4 out of the 12 Self-reliance domains were captured. At endline, all 12 were captured but for a small cohort. Thus, the baseline and endline were generally not comparable. Self-reliance scores for the associated domains at endline are detailed in Table X. Domains are scored from lowest (1) to highest (5). While food and shelter/utilities emerged as the top two expressed basic needs, participants surveyed at endline responded with high self-reliance in these categories. Overall, self-reliance scores were high in social capital (4.4), food (4.3), and safety (3.9). The package of support to business owners was transformative in some outcome areas, while in others, moderate positive changes were observed. This finding highlights the importance of a more comprehensive program model of further financial assistance and longer-duration.

Households surveyed at endline were in general able to access most of their basic needs as compared to the baseline as a result of their investment of the business grants received. Conversely, saving, employment and debt are the domains with the lowest scores.

FIGURE 4 - ENDLINE SCORING OF THE SELF-RELIANCE INDEX BY CATEGORY

Scored domains	Score	Purpose of domain	Outcome based on endline data
Social and financial capital **(n=14)**	4.4	To determine the financial networks available to the household and the networks and relationships available to the household.	Most respondents reported adequate social and financial capital. The majority (79%, n=11) reported seeking advice from other household members, while reciprocally providing advice to them. A minority (14%, n=2) acknowledged being sought out for advice by household members but not seeking advice themselves, while few (7%, n=1) reported neither seeking nor providing advice within their household.

Food (n=14)	4.3	To determine whether the household is eating sufficiently.	Eating consumption across surveyed households was generally adequate. All respondents described their household's food intake for the previous day as being able to eat 2-3 full meals.
Safety (n=13)	3.9	To determine whether the household's perception of safety impedes the pursuit of opportunities.	Most respondents expressed a sense of overall safety, with 54% (n=7), saying they felt safe enough to pursue all social, economic and educational opportunities. 39% (n=5) felt safe enough to pursue some opportunities. Only 7% (n=1) did not feel safe enough to pursue any opportunities.
Education (n=14)	3.4	To determine whether school-aged children are in school.	The majority of respondents (71%, n=10) had school-aged children. Among these households, 90% (n=9) had all school-aged children enrolled in school at endline while 10% (n=1) had some children attending school.
Housing (n=14)	3.3	To determine the household's type of housing and its adequacy (size and quality).	The housing situation was predominately less than adequate for respondents but did not appear to be a financial burden. Most respondents 57% (n=9) reported not having any issues paying rent in the last 3 months. One respondent (7%) was unable to pay their rent once during the past 3 months (7%) and one respondent was unable to pay their rent 2-3 times in the past 3 months (7%). 29% of respondents (n=4) said the question was not applicable. 40% of respondents' households were living in an apartment or house that they deemed of sufficient quality, while 36% were living in a temporary shelter, 15% were staying in an apartment or house that they deemed of insufficient quality, and 9% were occupying a makeshift shelter or living in other circumstances that were not suitable for safe living.
Healthcare (n=14)	3.3	To determine whether the household is able to access the health care it needs.	Overall, households surveyed at endline had fairly good access to healthcare. The majority (57%, n=8) received all the necessary healthcare, while 21% (n=3) did not receive all of the necessary healthcare. One respondent (7%) received some of the necessary health care, and 2 respondents (14%) did not need health care at all.
Assistance (n=14)	2.9	To determine whether the household relies on assistance to cover any basic needs.	Most respondents (67%, n=10) reported relying on some source of external assistance, with the most selected categories for which they needed assistance being food (n=7), utilities/housing (n=3), and healthcare (n=2).

Financial resources (n=14)	2.9	To determine sources for covering household's basic needs.	The top four sources for covering basic needs within the last 3 months were borrowing money (29%; n=4), selling assets (21%, n=3), money/in kind contributions given by friends or relatives (21%, n=3), and assistance from work (7%, n=1).
Health status (n=14)	2.8	To determine the presence of a health condition (mental or physical) that might negatively impact the household's ability to become self-reliant.	The majority of respondents (86%, n=12) did not have a family member with a condition that interferes with income-generating activities. One respondent (7%) did have an adult with a health condition that interfered with adult employment and one other respondent (7%) had dependent(s) that have health conditions that interfered with adult employment.
Debt (n=14)	2.4	To determine whether the household has incurred debt to cover any basic needs.	All respondents reported some source of debt; common categories were utilities (67%; n=10), food (33%; n=5), and healthcare (33%; n=3).
Employment (n=13)	2.1	To determine whether the household is engaged in income-generating activities.	The majority - (57%, n=8) of respondents said that their household had been engaged in temporary, irregular employment in the last 3 months, with 29% (n=4) stating regular part-time and 14% (n=2) stating no employment.
Savings (n=14)	1.4	To determine whether the household has any current savings.	The majority of respondents (86%, n=12) did not have a source of savings or sellable assets while one respondent (7%) had savings but not enough to cover one month's expenses. One respondent (7%) did have savings enough to cover one month's expenses.

PARTICIPANTS VOICES ON PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

When asked about ways to improve the program, respondents mentioned increasing the transfer value of the business grants, expanding the ways of supporting businesses to recover, and speeding up the distribution process (in reference to implementation delays regarding construction of the business park, as well as an extended monitoring period regarding second-hand purchase verifications).

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Bestami is a tailor and small business owner who received cash assistance after the earthquake devastated his family and livelihood.

Programmatic

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP

Lessons: Working with the local government brought both strengths and challenges to implementation. Local government and chamber of commerce participation were essential in vetting participants, including determining which businesses were the most affected by the earthquake and could do the most with the funds CORE distributed. Delays were encountered in the face of municipality staff turnover and late delivery of the containers to the business park.

Recommendations: Establish robust partnerships with local governments from the outset. This proactive engagement not only streamlines implementation but aligns with local regulations, addresses community needs, reaches those most in need, and mitigates duplication of efforts and strategy revisions mid-implementation. Stay abreast of potential government personnel changes to reduce implementation issues as much as possible.

REGISTRATION, TARGETING AND INCLUSION

Lessons: The registration process worked well, but an online application would have saved time. CORE had intended on an inclusive approach to supporting small business owners in their recovery, enabling participation and access of the most marginalized, including women, youth, older persons and people living with disabilities. However, the municipality pre-determined the targeting approach and was not flexible despite advocacy from CORE. CORE focused on gender responsive livelihoods through a parallel project – supporting women-owned greenhouses outside of the business park, improving their businesses and market linkages (not covered in this learning brief).

Recommendations: Continue advocacy with the municipality to support diverse business owners to access recovery support. Use an online application widely announced via multiple communication channels to expand the pool of applicants. This can also support entrepreneurs from marginalized groups (women, youth, older persons and people living with disabilities) to be better aware of the program and apply. Developing a tutorial graphic and video on the application process step-by-step can also help applicants include all materials to streamline the selection process for staff.

MODALITY OF ASSISTANCE

Lessons: Cash assistance was feasible and appropriate.

Recommendations: Cash assistance enabled business owners to cover the costs of a variety of inputs, according to their preferences and prioritization, maximizing their dignity and the multiplier effect in the local economy.

DELIVERY MECHANISM

Lessons: Bank transfers were the appropriate delivery mechanism for this context, including for the transfer value. Bank transfers were well-received by recipients and easy for CORE to manage from an operational standpoint, with the benefit of the bank's reconciliation reports.

Recommendations: It is important to consider all feasible delivery mechanisms. In Turkey where the banking system is functioning, bank transfers can be used at scale.

TRANSFER VALUE, FREQUENCY AND DURATION

Lessons: The vulnerability scoring and funding requirements for businesses varied significantly, with certain businesses needing more funds than the cap established by CORE vis-a-vis its resources. Delays in some disbursement of the second tranche of the business grant occurred while recipients fulfilled the conditionality. Due to fluctuating exchange rates during this time, the purchasing power of business owners decreased for the second tranche of their business grant.

Recommendations: Further verification of the appropriate transfer value at intake for each business plan is advisable; however, this can be limited by the level of physical destruction and challenges for accurate market observations. More time between disbursements will assist business owners to fully spend the first tranche (which was a conditionality for the second tranche). Adjusting the proportion of the first and second tranche is advisable. Instead of 50:50 ratio, consider a greater proportion (e.g. 70:30) for the first tranche in situations where there is a risk of inflation. Pairing multi-purpose cash assistance to meet basic consumption needs with the business grants would be more supportive of the most vulnerable business owners, some of whom were struggling to meet their basic needs. A longer program duration (e.g. 12-18 months) would allow for contingency time accounting for potential operational delays due to infrastructure damage and reduced capacity of stakeholders and markets as well as longer-term and more holistic support to participants.

TRAINING

Lessons: CORE's local partner was not able to implement the training as planned, so CORE pivoted to the municipality's menu of training, which was limited. Established business owners were less interested in the training offered because they felt they were already familiar with the foundational topics..

Recommendations: Enhance the training component of the program model through a more diverse training menu and extended duration, including technical training specific to the business sector and strategies to mitigate the impact of supply chain disruptions, and with certifications.

CONDITIONALITY

Lessons: Conditionality presented barriers for some business owners who would be able to spend their business grant further by procuring their necessary inputs from secondhand markets, however, in doing so they would not be able to meet the invoice requirements to fulfill the program's conditionality.

Recommendations: In order to make sure that business owners can stretch their funds further, adjust the documentation requirements to be more flexible including informal receipts from second-hand market purchases, while ensuring good record keeping of expenditures.

ADDITIONS TO THE PROGRAM MODEL

Lessons: While the support provided was appropriate for the majority of business owners, additional components of the program model over a longer duration may enhance outcomes.

Recommendations: Expanding the program model to include the following will enhance outcomes:

-Multipurpose cash assistance to ensure basic needs are met

-Coaching and additional types of training (e.g. technical training specific to business sector)

-Support for certification

-Mentorship and peer-to-peer networking and sharing events, to enhance financial and social capital

-Childcare

-Referrals, including for health, shelter, protection and financial services including savings and credit

YSYD staff providing orientation on how to prepare a business plan.

CORE and YSYD supported Osman, who owns an advertising business in Hatay, with cash assistance.

Operational

REGISTRATION

Lessons: Registration is a requirement for organizations to work in Turkey, though INGOs can provide funds through sub-grants to Turkish NGOs (as CORE did). CORE operated under a temporary registration waiver and then worked with a lawyer to obtain registration in Turkey so it would be eligible for additional funding to support its business grant program and other potential CVA projects. Without this registration, CORE was unable to compete for this funding and ensure its programming was sustainable.

Recommendations: When starting operations in a new country where an organization does not have registration, ensure there is sufficient funding and organizational commitment to continue operations through the entire registration process.

SPEED

Lessons: CORE was one of the first organizations to implement small business recovery programming. Many other organizations delayed early recovery programming. This built awareness of and rapport for CORE and its implementing partners.

Recommendations: Ensure harmonization of response and early recovery programming to support self-reliance and to leverage reputation and stakeholder relationships.

MONITORING & ACCOUNTABILITY

Lessons: There was not a dedicated local MEAL staff from the start of the project which delayed the implementation of a MEAL plan. There were delays in baseline, monitoring and endline data collection and analysis. Some intended areas of inquiry were not addressed in data collection, which may have been if partners had received more training on using the data collection tools.

Recommendations: Ensure that partnership capacity assessments, capacity building plans, and staffing plans for transition teams sync. Ensure a local MEAL expert is involved in the set-up of monitoring and evaluation processes from the start of the program. If a partner does not have sufficient MEAL expertise, then ensure capacity building.

STAFF ROLES & CORE AND PARTNER CAPACITY

Lessons: CORE's initial response team included staff with CVA and livelihoods experience who supported the design of the intervention. However, the initial response team was replaced by a smaller, local team, whose roles focused primarily on sub-grants administration as CORE's partner began implementing the program. Because CORE's local partner needed more backstopping than anticipated in the development of program tools it would have been helpful for CORE to hire a local CVA and livelihoods technical lead as part of the transition team. Partner capacity and team bandwidth issues contributed to a two-week delay in the start of implementation.

Recommendations: Ensure that partnership capacity assessments, capacity building plans, and staffing plans for transition teams' sync. It is critical to ensure the program lead during the implementation phase, whether CORE or partner staff, has direct experience and/or training in CVA best practice, in addition to the support from HQ-based CVA and livelihoods staff. Even when implementation falls under the partner's scope of work it is key to have a CVA lead with prior livelihoods experience on the team to streamlines operations and support local capacity building before implementation starts and in real time including on existing best practice programming tools and transfer value to businesses according to their needs.

SUPPORTING LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Lessons: CORE complemented the local municipality by focusing on assistance to business owners within the marketplace, while the municipality focused on the marketplace itself. Backstopping authorities to cover gaps worked well.

Recommendations: Provide support to the business owners in the marketplace and with the construction of the marketplace to expedite businesses resuming to extend local authorities' capacity. Enhance the visibility of local authorities within coordination mechanisms to extend their network of collaborators and resources.

CORE and YSYD oriented business grant applicants to the business plan template.

CONCLUSION

In the aftermath of multiple earthquakes and associated infrastructure damage and displacement, businesses that received recovery support from CORE reported positive outcomes, if not always substantial gains in all domains of the Self-Reliance Index. Longer-term support in tandem with additional activities and services within the program model would have complemented the gains achieved to further support business owners, their households and local markets.

Thoughtful consideration of design features, including the modality and transfer value, were crucial for optimizing limited assistance among many business owners in need and supporting the most vulnerable. It is important going forward to ensure that transfer values address the needs of businesses of varying sizes. This may mean supporting a smaller cohort of businesses with larger grants so that investment can take them farther in their recovery and towards self-reliance. Bank transfers were an effective delivery mechanism and expenditure of grants received showed alignment between the recovery needs of businesses as articulated in their business plans and the use of the grants.

Establishing strong partnerships with local actors from the program's inception, particularly with local authorities, emerged as a pivotal factor. This was key in streamlining implementation, vetting businesses to ensure those most affected are supported, and ensuring compliance with local guidelines. Backstopping the MEAL capacity of local partners is key to ensuring comprehensive data collection to inform outcomes and lessons learned.