Observations from Earthquake Region, Turkey 17 Feb 2023

Dates of field visit: 12-16 February 2023

Areas visited: Adana, Antakya, Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş, Osmaniye, Kirikhan, Nurdağı, Islahiye, Turkoglu

Purpose of visit: Basic rapid assessment of essential needs and delivering essential items

Purpose of the report: The situation varies in each location and evolves daily in regards to needs and activities. This report aims to provide first hand observations to organizations and individuals who want to provide support.

Adana and **Gaziantep**, are the largest cities in the region that city centers are least affected. Around 20 buildings collapsed in each but majority of the population left the cities, staying in summer residences closeby. Life is slowly normalizing, shops started opening. Still natural gas cuts in some locations. The damage and casualties are low in the centers but both cities are close to severely affected regions. Some survivors moved to those cities, staying in tents. Frontliners and volunteers use both cities as hub and for R&R. Hotels are open but mostly booked. Hospitals in both cities are overloaded with patients being transferred from more affected districts.

Kahramanmaras: City center is the most severely affected, search and rescue efforts continue, support seems better organized compared to Antakya. No shops, hotels or restaurants are open. Gas stations around the city opening. Very limited portable toilets. Frontliners set up their own tents, some stay in cars.

Antakya: Almost all city center is destroyed. Every single street in the center has collapsed buildings, search and rescue efforts continue, coordination is chaotic. No shops, hotels or restaurants are open. Water, electricity and gas infrastructure are damaged. Gas stations around the city opening. Very limited portable toilets. Frontliners set up their own tents, some stay in cars.

Main needs in both cities:

Multisectoral assistance needed with priority focus on people to survive the winter. Rapid delivery of support and resumption of essential services are key priorities.

-WASH: Portable toilets, latrines and water supply

-Logistics/distribution of goods: Supplies arrive in city centers from all over Turkey with trucks but distribution to districts and villages is problematic. Vehicles and motorcycle deliveries are needed. A good practice is to set up supermarket type facilities where people would have cards with allocated credit to get food and non food items that would be a sustainable solution for distribution.

-Hygiene items: sanitary pads, adult diapers, baby diapers, tooth brush and tooth paste, soap, wet wipes

-Food: Hot meals are distributed in most locations, dry food, ready meals, milk and baby formula are needed. Food for people with special dietary needs (gluten free and diabetic) Kitchen equipment for cooking is needed as well.

-Clothing: underwear for both adults and children, water proof winter boots, winter jackets, blankets

-Heating: portable heaters, small gas tanks, big gas tanks, wood

-Cash assistance: Government provide rent assistance, further sustainable cash assistance is needed

-Shelter: Tents, portable prefabricated houses

-Communications: Phone lines and internet service is still poor especially in Antakya. More power banks and charging stations are needed

-Health care: Health care facility needs: Portable Ultrasound machine, Transfer Stretcher, Vital monitors, Blood pressure monitors, Stethoscope, Infant Incubators, Glucometers and test strips, Nebulizers

Emergency medical technicians and field hospitals provide the support. Primary health care services need to be improved in cities and districts, secondary level care patients are mostly transferred to neighboring cities. Mobile clinics needed for primary health care. Sexual and reproductive care, trauma rehabilitation services are needed. Infection prevention measures are disrupted due to impaired hygiene. Many scabies and diarrhea cases reported, risk of communicable diseases. Kits and consumables for specimen collection and diagnosis of water-borne diseases, respiratory diseases, skin infections. Rehabilitation of damaged health care facilities and ensuring the water, heating, power infrastructures.

-Medicine: Field pharmacies provide medicine with Turkish identity numbers for prescribed medication. Fewer and cough medicine, vitamins, supplements, pain killers, blood thinners needed.

-Mental health and psychosocial support: Turkish Red Crescent and Ministry of Family Affairs Psychosocial support officers work widely in cities and some districts focusing on assessing basic needs, psychological first aid and children activities. More specialized psychological and psychiatric support needed. Mapping of services is the most urgent need for referrals. Mobile teams needed with vehicles for villages. Staff care for first responders, health care workers, volunteers needed.

-Protection and education: Vulnerable populations need to be reached and provided support directly. Although the support mechanisms established through websites by filling forms, many of them do not know how to use internet or no access to phone/internet. Child and women friendly spaces, temporary learning spaces are needed, schools remain closed. Missing and kidnapped children reported, Ministry of Family Affairs is the main authority leading child protection concerns. Children toys and storybooks are needed.

Important to coordinate the distribution of goods with national authorities and NGO's, to not to create parallel systems and to reach people in need. more specific needs assessments are being published daily.

Villages need more support as they are remote and support is focused on districts and cities.

Further reading/additional resources:

See AFAD's Web page – Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency- lead government agency for the Earthquake Response

See UN Flash Appeal here, with detailed needs by sector published on 16 February 2023.

See Mental health and psychosocial support briefing kit here (by MHPSS.net and IASC MHPSS Reference Group)

See all situation reports updated daily here

Information for individuals who want to volunteer in the region: Help is needed in all levels. Many opportunities published in social media, better to arrange in advance. Very few organizations provide accommodation. Better to go by car and with tent, sleeping bags. Weather drops to minus celcius in most locations, no shower, extremely limited toilets, should prepare for difficult physical conditions and prepare psychologically for emotionally charged, distressed environment.

Information for individuals who want to volunteer remotely: Turkish/Arabic speaking volunteers could help linking the people in need with organizations. Mapping of services for different sectors, contact numbers of agencies, donors are widely available on social media but mostly people pass the information to each other. Important to be in touch directly with people in need and link them with support. E.g. you see on twitter someone asks for medicine, find the medicine from available information, provide the people in need's information to the organization and inform the people. Many people are still in shock or do not have access to internet or do not know how to use it.

For more information on specific areas of support, you can reach out to me on whatsapp +90 535 735 24 98.

Selma Şevkli, Emergency mental health and psychosocial support consultant