



# Mapping of Local Civil Society and Coordination Networks

**IN EARTHQUAKE RELIEF AND  
RECOVERY**

**TÜRKİYE, October 2023**



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With financial support from Support to Life (STL), this mapping exercise and report was prepared by the Local Humanitarian Forum (LHF) between June-October 2023.

## ABBREVIATIONS

**3RP:** Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan

**ABC:** Area Based Coordination

**AFAD:** Disaster and Emergency Management Authority

**CSO:** Civil Society Organization

**CSDP:** Civil Society Disaster Platform

**HCT:** Humanitarian Country Team

**INGO:** International NGO

**LAG:** Localization Advocacy Group

**LCD:** Local Coordination and Development

**LHF:** Local Humanitarian Forum (TIF)

**MHPSS:** Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

**NFI:** Non-food items

**NGO:** Non-governmental Organization

**RCT:** Refugee Council of Türkiye (TMK)

**STL:** Support to Life (Hayata Destek)

**UN:** United Nations

**UN OCHA:** United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

**UNCT+:** UN Country Team Plus

**UNHCR:** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

**WASH:** Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The earthquake disaster that hit Kahramanmaraş and affected 11 provinces on 6 February 2023 devastated the region at a scale never seen before. The humanitarian impact was such that the disaster mobilized the entire country in solidarity with the affected population in the region. Civil society was particularly activated with many civic groups responding in their own capacities, mobilizing their networks and resources. Government, civil society and private sector were extremely responsive in meeting the immediate acute needs. The collaboration between civil society and the private sector was unprecedented, while multinational agencies and international humanitarian actors complemented the earthquake response.

Even though the epicenter of the two deadly earthquakes was Kahramanmaraş, Hatay was the most heavily affected. Given Antakya's popularity for its regional cuisine and its rich religious and cultural heritage, the city gained a lot of attention in terms of aid and support in response to the disaster. The fact that Hatay was the main entry point for Syrians fleeing the war had made it a hub for the humanitarian response to the crisis in Syria. Civil society mobilized for refugee support turned their capacities and resources to support the province most heavily affected on 6 February. Kahramanmaraş, Adiyaman and Malayta as the other most affected provinces became the hub for the relief and recovery effort. Civil society and community groups in the affected provinces as well as those coming in to provide support led the earthquake response over several months.

Civil society activity in Kahramanmaraş, Adiyaman and Malayta was relatively weaker compared to Hatay, which was already a hub for the Syrian refugee response prior to the 6 February disaster. The high proportion of refugees in Hatay had attracted international aid agencies over a decade prior to the earthquake. While institutional donor funding was channeled mostly to Hatay, philanthropy at the national and community level made a relatively greater impact in Kahramanmaraş, Adiyaman and Malatya in meeting the acute humanitarian needs over the initial weeks and months where donor funding was less prominent. The speed and flexibility of philanthropy funding had a huge impact on the success of the earthquake relief effort all over the affected area.

As the initial volunteer support and philanthropy waned, local civil society continued to respond to the enormous needs on the ground using their local resources and networks, also establishing their domestic coordination mechanisms. Some linked up with the international humanitarian community to continue providing assistance over a longer period of time, while others established stronger relations with public authorities. By the end of the year, we see a wide variety of civil society organizations, civic initiatives and local community groups that are active in helping the affected region recover from the severe impact of the earthquake disaster.

When the Flash Appeal was published shortly after the devastation caused by the earthquakes became clear, UN OCHA mobilized its staff to set up a formal coordination mechanism. National NGOs, most of whom were UN partners in relation to the Regional Refugee and

Resilience Plan, had established the Localization Advocacy Group (LAG) in an effort to make visible the strength of civil society in Türkiye. LAG members that became operational in the earthquake relief effort quickly mobilized themselves under the name of Local Humanitarian Forum (LHF). The purpose was to ensure the active participation of local and national NGOs in the OCHA coordination mechanism.

Since its inception in mid-February, LHF has promoted the co-leadership of national NGOs in sector coordination meetings at the strategic, operational and hub level. Through its membership as well as its mapping of local civil society, LHF has introduced local and national NGOs to donors, UN agencies and international NGOs for potential partnerships and advocacy. LHF has been a critical platform for local and national NGOs to make themselves and their capacities visible, advocate for a more inclusive coordination mechanism, access humanitarian funding, and establish quality partnerships.

While working with local and national NGOs, LHF has also supported a hub-based network of community-led actions. Through its representation in all of the four main earthquake hubs, LHF has facilitated the channeling of funding to community groups and local solidarity initiatives mobilized in response to the earthquake. While 48 community projects have been supported, many more will be funded in 2024.

In response to their participation in the OCHA coordination mechanism and the subsequent Area Based Coordination team, LHF members and local actors at the hub level convened to discuss alternative ways for more effective coordination that would be genuinely inclusive of civil society. A contextualized model for locally-led, area-based coordination was developed and named 'Local Coordination and Development Centers' to be operationalized in each of the four hubs. The plan is to develop and fund these LCD centers as a truly locally-led solution to coordination, recovery and development. The Centers will also pilot an alternative pooled fund mechanism in which local civil society and community initiatives will be able to continue creating impact.

For 2024 and beyond, LHF has the plan to strengthen its mission and mandate for the purpose of improving coordination for inclusiveness, better investments in capacities of local organizations, increased funding and better quality partnerships, as well as improved scope and coverage to ensure the interaction of earthquake response with refugee resilience building and social cohesion that has been ongoing in the region. Another expansion of its scope will be for LHF to work on better preparedness for emergencies, risk reduction, and planning for anticipatory action.

LHF is interested in evidence creation and research on the role and complementarity of philanthropy and humanitarian funding for initiating and sustaining locally-led responses at times of crises and for better preparedness. Case studies to demonstrate the impact of strategic and innovative partnerships as well as new ways of funding local organizations will continue to be on LHF's agenda in the upcoming period.

# INTRODUCTION

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On 6 February 2023, two earthquakes with magnitude of 7.8 and 7.5 with epicenter in Kahramanmaraş heavily affected 11 provinces in Southern and Southeastern Türkiye, where almost 14 million people reside including around 2 million Syrian refugees<sup>1</sup>. According to the official statement from the Ministry of Interior, the number of people who lost their lives is 50,783. Of this figure, 7,302 were refugees. Up to 107,000 people were injured. A total of 9.1 million people were affected by the earthquake disaster, with 3 million people being displaced.

In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, civil society organizations, civic initiatives, national NGOs and volunteer groups all over the country came together to provide assistance to the affected areas and address the immediate needs of the earthquake affected communities. Local communities that were themselves affected also formed groups in solidarity to provide support to one another.

A large number of Türkiye-based NGOs were already engaged in the humanitarian system since the outbreak of the Syria crisis as they responded to the humanitarian and protection needs of displaced populations. A large number of refugee-led organizations and their networks have become strong in the region and across the country. These NGOs were the quickest to respond to the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes as this was the same area in which most refugee support programs had been running since 2011. In addition to those that were already operational in the area, a wide variety of new civil society initiatives and groups became acquainted with the UN-led humanitarian system in the aftermath of the devastating Kahramanmaraş earthquakes.

The first civil society disaster coordination and response network to be mobilized in the earthquake affected area was the Afet Platformu/Disaster Platform. With ties going back to the Afete Karşı Sivil Koordinasyon Merkezi/Civil Society Coordination Center that was formed in response to the 1999 Marmara earthquake<sup>2</sup>, Disaster Platform<sup>3</sup> was swift in immediately mobilizing its public and private sector connections and its 24 member NGOs to identify warehouses as collection and distribution hubs for the relief goods that arrived in the earthquake affected areas from day one.

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1 2023 Earthquakes Displacement Overview, IOM

2 A devastating earthquake in the Marmara region of Türkiye killed over 17,000 people in August 1999, causing large scale damage and creating severe humanitarian impact. The response was a turning point for civil society in terms of their systemic engagement in the humanitarian response.

3 In the 10th year anniversary of the 1999 Marmara earthquake, civil society disaster coordination revived itself under the name of Sivil Toplum Afet Platformu (SITAP)/Civil Society Disaster Platform (CSDP), which activated itself around disaster response as well as emergency preparedness. Active until 2016, the focus of the CSDP shifted from disaster preparedness to the refugee crisis as the international humanitarian community expanded to respond to the crisis in Syria, the subsequent influx of displaced communities from Syria, and the needs of Syrian refugees in Türkiye. The Elazığ earthquake in 2020 in Eastern Türkiye was another call for Türkiye-based NGOs to reorganize around disaster response. The new coordination and response network called itself After Platformu/Disaster Platform and since then has been active in response to the 2020 İzmir earthquake, 2021 forest fires in the Mediterranean region, and the 2023 Kahramanmaraş earthquakes.

Disaster Platform warehouses quickly became the civil society hub for the coordination of incoming aid to earthquake-affected provinces, mostly from local businesses, private sector, philanthropic giving, diaspora groups and individual donations, both in-kind and cash. The earthquake also led to the mobilization of an immense number of volunteers from all over the country. The Disaster Platform registered over 40,000 volunteers that came to the earthquake region for search and rescue as well as to provide widespread support to the enormous relief effort.

Following the release of the Flash Appeal by UN OCHA, a group of Türkiye-based NGOs established the Local Humanitarian Forum (LHF) to ensure the access and participation of local and national NGOs in the OCHA-led sector coordination mechanism. As an offshoot of the Localization Advocacy Group<sup>4</sup>, LHF has been coordinating CSOs at the national and hub level in support for their visibility and co-leadership in the UN-led coordination mechanism. LHF has also initiated partnerships between international actors and local organizations, facilitating the access of CSOs to humanitarian funding.

As of October 2023, LHF has 73 members at the national level as well as a wide network of local organizations, civil initiatives and local coordination groups at the hub level. Since its inception in mid-February, LHF has been mapping the great diversity of CSOs and local networks active in the four provinces most affected by the earthquake, namely Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Adıyaman and Malatya. This report is a consolidation of those findings.

LHF has collaborated closely with the OCHA-led coordination mechanism and supported local organizations to gain representative power at the strategic, operational and hub level. Two local networks, namely the LHF and the Refugee Council of Türkiye (RCT/TMK), each had a seat in the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). The HCT was functional until mid-May, when the Flash Appeal came to an end and was not renewed. Local organizations were also represented at the Gaziantep level in the various sectors, in which many took the co-lead position. Local organizations were most visible at the hub level, where they took co-leadership as well as technical advisory roles in the various sectors.

Since February 2023, LHF has held regular meetings with members to promote their active participation and representation in the OCHA sector coordination mechanism. In addition, LHF has been introducing the wide diversity of Türkiye-based civil society organizations with donors, UN agencies and INGOs, with the aim of facilitating access to partnerships and humanitarian funding. Given the diversity of local organizations active in the post-earthquake period, LHF supported the capacity of its members in understanding the humanitarian principles, Core Humanitarian Standard, SPHERE Standards, adult and child safeguarding, trauma-informed interventions, protection mainstreaming as well as safe and inclusive programming based on the Leave No One Behind principle.

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<sup>4</sup> Türkiye-based NGOs have been active during the World Humanitarian Summit, advocating the need for a more locally-led humanitarian response in Türkiye and globally. Since the Summit, local and national organizations involved in humanitarian aid and human rights work have been convening under the name of 'Localization Advocacy Group' (LAG) with the aim of advancing the localization agenda in Türkiye.



Having carried out a learning assessment study<sup>5</sup>, dispersed micro-grants for local assessments and policy recommendations, and organized speed date meetings with international organizations, LHF has played a significant role in promoting the visibility, participation and activism of local civil society in the earthquake relief and recovery process.

In the post-Flash Appeal period, LHF has continued to interact with the UN-led coordination system. With the transition from the HCT to the UNCT+ at the Ankara level and the establishment of the Area Based Coordination (ABC) Team at the Gaziantep level, LHF continues to represent local organizations. Even though LHF and the RCT had been lobbying for area based coordination rather than a sector based coordination approach, the ABC team is still structured around the sectors. In order to demonstrate what a locally-led area based coordination system would look like, LHF members came together in a series of workshops in which they co-designed a local coordination and development model at the hub level. As a complementary locally-led coordination mechanism, the Local Coordination and Development (LCD) Center model is designed to be a focal for UN-led Area Based Coordination system at the hub level.

Together with this model, LHF members are also in the process of designing a locally-managed pooled fund mechanism that will be able to tap into resources coming from institutional donors as well as the private sector, which has been highly active in the earthquake response. Currently, LHF is in the process of seeking funding for both the LCD Centers in the 4 hubs and the national pooled fund mechanism.

This report is the product of a local mapping exercise that has been initiated in the 4 most affected provinces to demonstrate the activity of local organizations, civil initiatives, solidarity groups and local coordination networks that have been active in the earthquake affected region. The mapping exercise, which is continuously updated, aims to demonstrate the scale and outreach of local civil society, and find ways of promoting their impact in response to the earthquake. The similarities and differences as well as commonalities of civil society groups operational in Hatay, Adiyaman, Kahramanmaraş and Malatya are presented here.

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5 Learning Assessment Report, Ezgi Emre, July 2023, commissioned by the Local Humanitarian Forum.



# CIVIL SOCIETY AND LOCAL COORDINATION IN THE EARTHQUAKE AREA

## HATAY

### OVERVIEW

Hatay is the province that was the most severely devastated by the 6 February earthquakes and was shaken for the second time by the Samandağ earthquake on 20 February 2023. As a result of these earthquakes and the many aftershocks, a large number of buildings in Hatay collapsed and became inhabitable. This devastation and destruction caused tens of thousands of households to leave Hatay for Adana, Mersin and Ankara, and other cities<sup>6</sup>. Rural areas in Hatay have also seen heavy internal displacement.

The districts of Hatay most affected by the earthquake were Antakya, Defne and Samandağ. The entire province experienced serious disruptions in public services because of the disaster, with fuel, electricity, water, sewerage, public transport, telephone and internet access not being available for a long time. As of October 2023, public transportation in Hatay is still limited, the electricity and water infrastructure is still being repaired, and there are problems with water supply.

Hatay is the only province where formal tented sites remain, with approximately 12,000 people still living in tents as of the end of October. Efforts by authorities to close informal settlements continue. To this day, debris removal continues in Hatay. Tents set up in front of damaged houses are being dismantled due to demolition works. Likewise, tent settlements in informal shelter areas are dismantled with the decision of public authorities. There is no official decision and process for the accommodation of refugees in container settlements. The lack of decent shelter in the city is ongoing. Public and private health services are unable to meet the needs.



*Istanbul, General Forum Meeting, 18 October, 2023*

<sup>6</sup> 2023 Kahramanmaraş and Hatay Earthquakes Report, March 2023, <https://www.sbb.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2023-Kahramanmaras-and-Hatay-Earthquakes-Report.pdf>

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND LOCAL COORDINATION

Unlike other provinces, Hatay had a strong civil society presence prior to the earthquake. Both national and international NGOs had offices in the city in which nearly half a million Syrians reside. These NGOs had been operational in Hatay for over 10 years, providing humanitarian aid and services to refugees in a variety of sectors. There was a strong network of local and national NGOs and cooperatives in Hatay to help with the relief effort following the influx of Syrian refugees. UN agencies also have a strong imprint in Hatay. Following the war in Syria, UN OCHA had established its coordination hub in Hatay before it moved to Gaziantep. Cross-border NGO coordination was also convened and continued in Hatay for many years before moving to Gaziantep as it became the main coordination hub for the Syria response.

The strong pre-earthquake presence of UN agencies and NGOs in Hatay made it easier for civil society to become activated. Even though many NGOs and UN agencies were themselves heavily affected by the earthquake, they were able to quickly recover and launch their humanitarian operations. This prior engagement made it easier for local and national NGOs in Hatay to be able to participate in the OCHA-led coordination mechanism as well as contribute significantly to post-earthquake relief and recovery efforts.

### Earthquake Solidarity Association

On the day of the earthquake, we came together as a large group of volunteers to help with the rapid yet fair distribution of aid coming into Hatay. We were allocated a large warehouse with the support of a local business. This warehouse served as a crisis coordination center from the early days of the earthquake onwards. In contact with municipalities, clubs, federations and various Alevi associations from all around Türkiye, we became a coordination hub for the earthquake response. Local crisis coordination centers were also set up in Serinyol, Defne and Samandağ. The volunteers in these coordination hubs eventually came together in the form of a large network of volunteers who called themselves Hatay Earthquake Solidarity.

As the Hatay Earthquake Solidarity volunteer network, we helped distribute a broad range of relief goods and medical supplies, identified needs and locations for WASH facilities, ran mobile kitchens, provided food kits, distributed animal feed, ran seedling campaigns, provided school supplies and scholarships, and ensured accurate legal and other critical information was disseminated to thousands of affected people in Hatay. Volunteer doctors, nurses, and psychologists played a crucial role in our response.

Even when the many volunteers who had joined the effort from outside the province started leaving, those left behind felt that the extent of the devastation in Hatay was so large that this volunteer initiative had to be formalized. Now our volunteer movement is officially registered as the Earthquake Solidarity Association. The fact that our volunteers are spread all over the province means we have full access to the situation and needs in all districts of Hatay. Our interventions are designed as local solutions at the neighborhood level.

At Earthquake Solidarity Association, our focus is on women, youth and children. We are expanding our sphere of influence in collaboration with many NGOs and institutions. We work to contribute to gender equality and economic empowerment of women. We work on children's right to education by creating spaces for their psychosocial well-being and put pressure on local government by advocating for the rights of the local population in the reconstruction of their city.

Although national and local organizations were able to participate in the OCHA coordination system, there were challenges in integrating the great diversity of local organizations in a disaster of this magnitude. The most critical of these challenges was the identification of gaps in the rural areas. The failure of community-based groups and local organizations in the rural areas to join the coordination system resulted in delays in the delivery of services to remote areas.

Although Hatay was not new to humanitarian response, there were nevertheless many civil society organizations and groups activated after the earthquake that were new to emergency response and were therefore unfamiliar with the UN system and its actors. Trying to understand and engage was frustrating and time consuming for many of them, which at one point distanced them from the OCHA-led coordination mechanism. They had a hard time following the complex structure and ways of working of the UN coordination architecture and dealing with the power dynamics. The disorganization and frequency of the coordination meetings made it difficult for smaller organizations to participate and meaningfully engage.

There was also a public coordination mechanism in Hatay established after the earthquake, led by the Governor and AFAD. AFAD and the Turkish Red Crescent played a key role in this post-earthquake coordination. However, due to the limited dialogue and interaction between public authorities and civil society in Türkiye, CSO participation and active engagement in the publically-led post-earthquake coordination was limited also in Hatay.

Despite limited engagement with government coordination mechanisms, CSOs in Hatay have managed to maintain close communication and collaboration with one another. Many civic initiatives and solidarity groups that popped up after the earthquake became engaged in a great diversity of activities to help themselves and affected communities recover from the disaster. Many of them, mobilized by affected people themselves, attracted volunteers and resources to help with the relief and recovery effort

### **Ceviz Autism and the Disaster Autism Network**

Founded in 2015, as Ceviz Autism we have been providing awareness sessions and following up on litigation regarding problems experienced by autistics in Türkiye. The Izmir earthquake in 2020 was our first emergency response in which the special needs of autistic children and youth affected by the disaster were coordinated with local organizations. Given the magnitude and destruction of the 6 February earthquakes, Ceviz Autism initiated the Disaster Autism network in partnership with Alternative Communication, Free Hands Autism Initiative, Hello Spectrum, and Denizli Autism.

As an association established by autistics and their families, we were unable to travel to the earthquake affected areas and so we provided remote support by collaborating with local CSOs in the region. We were told by local groups in the earthquake response that it was difficult for families to leave behind their autistic children to look for humanitarian assistance, so through the Disaster Autism network we worked with local organizations to help them understand the behavior of traumatized autistic people and to ensure that aid was able to reach autistics with special needs.

The network continues its collaborative work to increase the number of local organizations that are sensitive to the special conditions and needs of autistic children and adults. As Ceviz Autism and Disaster Autism we have adopted a rights-based approach to coordination and work with service delivery organizations and human rights defenders. We guide them in understanding the different disability typologies so that the needs of autistics are not underestimated and subject-led activities are carried out within earthquake response and recovery plans

Networks such as Hatay Ortak Meselemiz/Hatay Our Common Cause, Ortak Akıl Antakya/ Shared Wisdom Antakya, Life After Disaster, Sivil Alan Hareket Ağı/Civil Society Action Network bring together a diversity of CSOs and facilitate outreach and coordination of activities and partnerships. Many of these groups and networks have grown rapidly and some have now become registered NGOs. Deprem Dayanışma Derneği/Earthquake Solidarity Association is one of these NGOs that started off as a solidarity movement and is now registered as an association. The organization carries out many activities in the sectors of relief aid, child protection, women’s empowerment, and livelihood support.

LHF, through its hub lead, is in contact with all Hatay-based organizations and networks to support and facilitate their coordination, development, and impact. A communication list of over 60 local organizations and networks is maintained by LHF and data obtained from these CSOs are added to a digital map. Through the LHF, this network of local organizations is the focal point for the UN-led coordination mechanism, previously the OCHA and now the Area Based Coordination (ABC) team. The LHF Hatay hub lead is seen as the source of accurate information regarding local civil society and networks in Hatay and the region.

## KAHRAMANMARAŞ

### OVERVIEW

According to AFAD data, 12,584 people lost their lives in Kahramanmaraş, the epicenter of the earthquake. Heavy damage and collapse occurred in 55,896 buildings across the province. After the earthquake, Kahramanmaraş experienced relatively less displacement compared to other affected provinces, although authorities state that the population of the less affected districts of the province increased tenfold after the earthquake, indicating high levels of internal displacement within the province.

The number of registered Syrians in Kahramanmaraş is 90,664. The ratio of the Syrian population to the local population is 7%. According to the October 2023 data from the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management, there are 980 refugees registered under international protection in Kahramanmaraş. There are a total of 11 informal temporary settlement sites left in the city center and rural areas, the majority of which are inhabited by refugees.

### CIVIL SOCIETY AND LOCAL COORDINATION

Prior to the 6 February earthquakes, Kahramanmaraş was a province where only the Turkish Red Crescent, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and local faith-based CSOs were carrying out aid activities. After the disaster, local charities and faith-based organizations sprouted in the province to scale up their activities and provide assistance to a broader area and group of affected people. Since the first day of the disaster, local faith-based charities have been active in the provision of hot meals and the distribution of basic hygiene and other

non-food items, as well as the coordination of incoming relief aid through their networks. Due to the geographical proximity of Kahramanmaraş to Gaziantep, many national and international NGOs with their operational base in Gaziantep carried out their activities in Kahramanmaraş on a mobile basis. International NGOs have been focusing more on the technical sectors of water, sanitation and hygiene in addition to large scale distribution of non-food items. National organizations have been more operational in the sectors of protection, education, mental health, and psychosocial support.

Establishing an operational base in Gaziantep for many international NGOs resulted in patchy visibility and impact in Kahramanmaraş. Especially in the initial months of the earthquake disaster, the assessment of needs took a long time. By the time relief goods could be delivered to the affected areas, internal processes and bureaucracy had taken a long time, making it difficult to effectively and efficiently meet the diverse and rapidly changing humanitarian needs. The absence of a base in Kahramanmaraş for many aid agencies also seriously disrupted the province-based coordination of the emergency response. Given the agility and connections of local civil society, they were able to mobilize local businesses and communities to produce a hastier and more effective response until international funding kicked in.

Local civilian groups in Kahramanmaraş delivered hot meals to affected communities over a long period of time. They were also able to distribute a great range of NFIs with the in-kind aid and donations they collected domestically. By internally coordinating the distribution of non-food aid provided by private companies, local organizations were able to act faster in the first several months of the earthquake. Some international organizations sought to harness the local knowledge and access of these civil society groups through mostly informal collaborations.

### **KAF Collective**

As KAF Collective we are a civil initiative in Kahramanmaraş, made up of volunteers that are together with the basic belief that as local communities we can create our own localized solutions in response to acute and long-term needs created by the earthquake disaster. Since the first day of the earthquake, we have found solutions to the need to improve temporary shelter conditions and access for people with special needs, hot meals as organized by community members, ensuring safe drinking water, provision of psychological and social well-being activities, support to education and protection, regeneration of income, and the start of reconstruction.

Kahramanmaraş being a diverse society, we have adopted the principle of non-discrimination in our emergency response, mobilizing communities regardless of ethnicity, religion and ideology. We contribute to peaceful co-existence and solidarity by organizing from the grassroots, co-designing as a collective, and carrying out our activities with the participation of affected people. Decisions are taken by and for affected communities. We also have a perspective of linking relief support to longer term recovery and development in Kahramanmaraş province. Through partnerships with NGOs, civil initiatives, and local government, we have been able to reach out to a larger affected area beyond Kahramanmaraş.

As KAF Collective we are proud to be acting together with the local communities and affected groups in decision-making and implementation processes, organizing ourselves at the grassroots level.



In the aftermath of the earthquake disaster, civil society groups and local organizations depended on a large network of volunteers to carry out their work. While supplying the needed human resources in the initial weeks and months of the response, over time volunteer capacity dwindled, making it harder for local organizations to continue their outreach and the effectiveness of their response. Now, nine months into the disaster, there are almost no volunteers left, which means local civil society has lost its strength and leverage.

Although local organizations were able to reach out to a large proportion of the affected population, many people were left with no assistance. The fact that affected communities were familiar with local organizations made them a focal point for the provision of aid. Given the strong communication and internal coordination mechanisms established by local associations and charity groups, timely support was provided to many affected people. However, due to the lack of further financing, many humanitarian needs were left unmet. The relief goods delivered did not meet humanitarian standards, and WASH units such as latrines and showers were established by volunteers, independent of expert knowledge and technical standards.

A synergy can be created between international and national/local organizations to ensure that the response continues to remain locally led. There is a need to transform short-term informal collaborations with local civil society organizations into more formalized partnerships, which is structured through humanitarian funding. By allocating resources and investing in such local partnerships, local civil society will be provided with the resources to improve technical expertise and ensure a principled humanitarian response.

### **Lotus Women's Solidarity and Life Association**

Since 2017 in Izmit we carry out rights-based work, supporting women in realizing their own power and using this power to create transformation at the local level. In response to the Kahramanmaraş earthquake disaster, at Lotus Women we quickly designed a support program with the principle and approach of a women-led local recovery. With the sensitivity of doing no harm, we worked with women in Söğütlü Village of Pazarcık to support them in becoming an integral part of the recovery process by understanding and exercising their power and potential to mobilize their own communities and resources.

As the Lotus Women team we established strong ties with the local community by staying in tents with the affected families and working closely with women in helping them shape an inclusive and dignified relief operation led by the women of the community. Our contribution was the design and implementation of women-led community empowerment workshops. While creating impact for the community as a whole, this approach ensured women's healing and social adaptation to their new conditions and roles in temporary living spaces.

While we created impact with very small budgets, we also acted as a bridge for external resources transferred to the affected area. With the experience gained here, we expanded the work of Lotus Women to other parts of Kahramanmaraş and Adıyaman. Through our earthquake support program, we reached over 4,000 affected people, mostly women, in rural areas.

With a strong belief that cooperation and solidarity is the main ingredient for social transformation, as Lotus Women we want to establish new networks and expand our work with disaster-affected communities. Together with the women in Kahramanmaraş and Adıyaman, we want transfer all these experiences into a new model of a locally-led and women-led disaster response.

## OVERVIEW

According to official data, Adiyaman is the second most heavily affected province in the 6 February earthquake disaster. In relation to its pre-earthquake population, Adiyaman experienced the highest percentage of lives lost and the highest proportional damage to housing stock, with 85%. There are 55 container settlements with more than 30,000 containers in Adiyaman as of the end of October 2023. As of June, the rubble has been cleared with demolition of heavily damaged buildings ongoing.

Of the most affected four provinces, Adiyaman has the fewest number and proportion of Syrian refugees with 3.3%. Adiyaman has seen the relocation of all refugees to a settlement area 40 kilometers outside the city center in Akpınar district, where 1,400 containers have been set up exclusively for the Syrian refugee population<sup>7</sup>.

Prior to the earthquake, Adiyaman had an economy based on agriculture and forestry, focused on domestic consumption and self-sufficiency. Of the four most affected provinces, Adiyaman is the least urbanized. Adiyaman is home to a nomadic Dom community of around 40,000. Muslims and Christians lived together for many centuries in Adiyaman, hence an abundance of religious foundations, madrasahs, mosques and churches. This religion-based activity has led to a strong faith-based response in relation to the earthquake disaster.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND LOCAL COORDINATION

Adiyaman's geographical location and socio-economic challenges have had a negative effect on the proliferation of civil society. This has changed drastically with the earthquake in which civil initiatives and CSOs now play an important role in addressing the challenges and instigating social change.

According to data from the Directorate General for Civil Society Affairs, there are 559 registered associations and 19 registered foundations in the province. Of these, 128 are professional associations, 74 are religious service associations, 69 are sports-related CSOs and 32 are charities for social solidarity. Almost all of these local organizations are focused on social issues at the community level.

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<sup>7</sup> The settlement area in question is the Temporary Accommodation Center where refugees were settled after the Syrian war and which is open to many protection risks.



## Adiyaman Civil Society Solidarity Group

Our need to establish ourselves as the Adiyaman Civil Society Solidarity Group arose from the need for coordination among the diverse groups that were active in the earthquake response. Although many volunteers groups and civil society organizations were intensely operational in Adiyaman starting from the first day of the earthquake response, one month into the disaster, neither a government-led coordination nor a UN-led coordination had been officially initiated.

The main purpose of our group was to understand who is doing what where and how, and to coordinate all relief efforts at the local level. On 8 March, as Adiyaman Civil Society Solidarity Group we organized our first meeting to which 60 people from around 40 entities attended, including OCHA, UN agencies, national and international NGOs, as well as local associations and civil initiatives.

Since then, we organize our weekly coordination meetings every Friday morning, and all local groups, initiatives and organizations consistently participate. We have more than 50 organizations and initiatives in our network. Working groups have been formed to address the various needs in the field. Each working group is led and being run by a different member within the network of the Adiyaman Civil Society Solidarity Group.

Everyone feels a part of Adiyaman Civil Society Solidarity Group and contributes voluntarily. Equal and open communication leads to an equal relationship and a safe space for the participants where everyone's opinion is considered valuable and taken into account in the joint decisions of the group.

Participants not only share what they have done in the field and their successes, they also talk about their practices and failures. Group members actively use this space to solve the challenges they face. The recognition and support they get from their peers is the secret to the success of the group. Adiyaman Civil Society Solidarity Group belongs to all of us, not a single organization leading and controlling the group dynamics and the coordination process.



*Istanbul, General Forum Meeting, 18 October, 2023*

In terms of a focus on rights-based approach to aid, a youth NGO in Kâhta and Gökkuşağı Association are the two CSOs that stand out. Local civil society have access to the entire community but their interventions have been scattered and patchy given their inconsistent access to local financial resources. In the aftermath of the earthquake, it was mostly the national and international NGOs that carried out humanitarian operations in Adiyaman. Even though it came delayed, this assistance played an important role in terms of more consistently meeting the humanitarian needs created by the earthquake.

Some NGOs did not establish an operational base in Adiyaman and worked remotely from Gaziantep or Şanlıurfa, while some set up an office and a warehouse space. Some NGOs chose to carry out mobile activities and others have been conducting one-off distributions and support activities. NGOs without a physical presence and base in Adiyaman have experienced setbacks in understanding the immediate and changing needs in the province and having a full command of the dynamic humanitarian context and the stakeholders on the ground.

While attending coordination meetings convened by public authorities, local civil society organizations were unable to link up to the OCHA-led coordination meetings. This has hindered effective coordination of the emergency response in Adiyaman and has not provided a fruitful environment for the interaction of the diverse stakeholders present in the post-earthquake period.

The OCHA coordination structure took a long time to establish itself in Adiyaman. The OCHA hub lead was not identified till later and the first OCHA general coordination meeting was convened in the first week of March, one month after the devastation. By then, civil society groups, NGOs and even some UN agency representatives had been convening under the leadership of the Adiyaman Civil Society Solidarity Group, which was organized by volunteers and local civil society actors. Till today, Adiyaman Civil Society Solidarity Group is the main coordination body that brings together all CSOs, NGOs and other actors that have an interest in joining the response effort.



## Kahta Assembly for Change (KADIM)

We had just completed the registration of KADIM as an association when the 6 February earthquakes hit Adiyaman and the region. We are a group of prominent locals from the Kahta district of Adiyaman who have come together with the founding vision of reaching out to every individual in the district, irrespective of our political, ideological, religious views and our socio-economic status. As a pluralistic platform of diverse individuals, our strength lies in our close ties with the people of Kahta.

Since we had an established communication network within the district, we were able to quickly mobilize a large group of volunteers to respond to the earthquake hours after it happened. We took an active role in the distribution of food, water, clothes, hygiene kits and diverse relief goods. We coordinated the aid trucks that were coming from all over the country, as well as tapping into resources of our own members and our local businesses. During the earthquake response, as KADIM we coordinated approximately 1,000 volunteers, both local and those coming from outside the earthquake region.

We were also able to quickly mobilize a team of experts for psychological first aid and psychotherapy for children and adults. Establishing the first child-friendly space in the earthquake affected area, we carried out psycho-social support activities for children. In addition to our focus on Kahta, the broad network of KADIM volunteers were able to expand to other affected areas in Adiyaman, reaching to over 150,000 people all over the province.

The most prominent feature of KADIM is that we are a completely local and all-volunteer community. Being able to mobilize resources from supporters and the Kahta community is the main reason for our broad outreach and our impactful response. At KADIM we believe that when we come together in solidarity, we have the potential and capacity to achieve rights-based sustainable benefits for our community and our society.

OCHA's general coordination meetings and sector meetings attracted only international NGOs and national NGOs with strong technical and operational capacities. Many of the local and regional CSOs were new to the humanitarian system so were unable to maneuver within the UN-led coordination structure. Even though initially the LHF promoted and facilitated the participation of local organizations, after some time, participation dropped considerably due to the time that needed to be allocated for these meetings, language barrier limitations as well as the meetings merely being a platform for information sharing rather than coordination, where the information shared would be repeated in more than one coordination meeting.

One critical feedback from the Adiyaman Civil Society Solidarity Group participants was the absence of an equal relationship between international organizations and local organizations. The language barrier and the uneven power dynamics in these coordination meetings discouraged many local organizations from being part of the coordination mechanism. It was only a handful of national NGOs that were able to take co-lead positions in the sector coordination meetings.

On the basis of these shortcomings and the desperate need for a strong coordination at the hub level, Adiyaman Civil Society Solidarity Group quickly became the focal point for local coordination. Acknowledging the need to connect and coordinate the local response with the UN-led coordination structure, international agencies, and public institutions, Adiyaman Civil Society Solidarity Group ensures this link is maintained by conveying issues and cases that need to be carried to and resolved at that level.

Promoting a common and effective ground for exchange, collaboration, coordination, well-being, capacity sharing and advocacy, more than 50 organizations from the local, regional, national and international level are members of the group as of the end of October 2023. The group also has participants from professional chambers, trade unions and CSO networks. Rights based organizations and networks are mobilized, evidence is collected, and local solutions are found on issues that require advocacy. The group establishes relations, develops collaborations, and organizes consultations with all actors in Adiyaman, including the private sector.

One other important role of the Adiyaman Civil Society Solidarity Group has been to prevent duplication of assistance and services delivered, identify and correct misinformation, as well as fill in information gaps on many critical issues in the disaster area. In its weekly coordination meetings and through its social media channels, the Group also provides an overview of the context, profile, needs and gaps in the province for new actors planning to become active in Adiyaman and the region.

### People of Solidarity

Our story as People of Solidarity started with local youth mobilizing around the warehouse of the Disaster Platform on 7 February in Adiyaman. Volunteers from Adiyaman and the surrounding provinces came together to support the earthquake relief effort that was incoming into Adiyaman from all around the country. As the People of Solidarity we were open to anyone who wanted to be a part of the relief effort in Adiyaman. As local youth we were quickly joined by volunteers from Istanbul and other provinces. With the Disaster Platform pulling out of Adiyaman several months into the earthquake, People of Solidarity managed to keep the warehouse operational with local resources until the end of August 2023.

In addition to being actively involved in the relief effort, as People of Solidarity we collaborated with several NGOs to raise funds and awareness on the needs in Adiyaman and the earthquake region. One such event was the 2023 Istanbul Half Marathon, in cooperation with the Community Volunteers Foundation (TOG), in which we pulled together a large team of runners who called themselves Adiyaman Volunteers. With the highest number of runners and donors, our team collected the highest amount of donations on the Adım Adım platform<sup>8</sup>.

Since the earthquake, People of Solidarity has become a good example as one of the rare youth-led grassroots organizations in Adiyaman. Formed by hundreds of young volunteers, we registered ourselves as People of Solidarity Association on 17 May 2023. In order to work on our institutional structure and governance, we have received capacity support from various funding programs and the Civil Society Development Center.

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8 Adım Adım (Step by Step) is the first civil society initiative established in March 2008 to introduce and popularize the 'charity run' in Türkiye. It helps volunteer runners link up with NGOs for the purpose of supporting a social cause.

## OVERVIEW

Malatya was home to 812,580 people before the earthquake. A significant portion of its population moved to other provinces after the earthquake disaster. As of October 2023, 109,200 people are living in temporary shelters in the city. Malatya is the city with the third highest number of damaged buildings, with around 46,000 buildings expected to be demolished.

The most affected districts of the city are Battalgazi and Yeşilyurt. Malatya received support from other provinces for the emergency response, but the effectiveness of local municipalities was limited. Post-earthquake needs were mainly concentrated in the sectors of protection, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and economic recovery.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND LOCAL COORDINATION

A fewer number of local organizations are active in Malatya compared to other provinces. Prior to 6 February, there was only one national humanitarian aid organization operational in Malatya. Even though there are civil society organizations that specialize in various fields, there was almost no experience in emergency response. This has caused Malatya to lag behind in terms of mobilizing aid, coordinating the response, and identifying the humanitarian needs and gaps in the province. External volunteers through networks such as the Afet Platformu were also limited. Similarly, OCHA coordination after the Flash Appeal took a long time to establish itself. By the time it was established, the 3-month Appeal period was over and OCHA coordination meetings had very little effect in terms of providing an overview of the needs and coordinating assistance provided in the province.

Some CSOs operational in diverse sectors have established communication channels among themselves. Particularly strong in Malatya is a platform of approximately 50 CSOs active in the field of women's rights that communicate via a WhatsApp group. Also active are several CSOs working for the inclusion of people with disabilities into aid programs. They are focused on raising awareness and ensuring those with disabilities have equal access to incoming aid. Even though they are informed of each other's activities, there is no structured coordination mechanism for CSOs working with affected people with disabilities.

In Malatya more than 60 local organizations are members of a local network called the Values Platform, which was established by local volunteer associations. Through this platform, relief goods have been collected through individual donations and distributed to the districts and many neighborhoods affected by the earthquake. The Values Platform emphasize the moral and spiritual contribution that volunteering brings to the young members of the platform. While some members are in favor of accessing funding other than donations from individuals and local businesses, other members have been keen to restrict their funding merely to local and volunteer sources in order to remain independent, flexible and agile.



## Mother Earth Women's Cooperative

Having started our operations in 2020, as Mother Earth Women's Cooperative we are the first women's entrepreneurship model in Malatya. Our initial starting point was commercializing the traditional home-made bread that is unique to Malatya. With this idea, our founding President and seven other women grew the cooperative.

In the aftermath of the earthquake, our work expanded beyond our imagination. Although our offices were destroyed in the earthquake, we set up a production unit in a tent settlement in which 70 women were employed. Using sewing machines recovered from the rubble and scraps of fabric sent from private companies, women made clothing items for children and adults living in tents and containers. Women moved on to make cloth bags and environmentally friendly hand-made products. Our goal is to establish these production units in all 73 container settlements in Malatya and to provide scholarships to girls in line with our vision.

We have established 8 business workshops in which approximately 150 women receive socio-economic support and contribute to the family economy. Our industrial kitchen project employs 50 women and serves Daily meals to the Malatya-based employees of a large company. In another key project, 44 convertible shelters with an innovative design have been constructed minimizing the use of space. They include units for livestock breeding, hydroponics, school mentoring workshops, and sports activities. This project is funded by individual donations.

As Mother Earth Women's Cooperative we have been a pioneer in many localized business initiatives to support the earthquake recovery process. Rather than focusing on in-kind aid distributions, we have been instrumental in rapidly restoring livelihoods for affected communities, helping them to stand back on their feet and contributing to local and sustainable development. Our story represents an inspiring example of an initiative started in an entrepreneurial spirit to vitalize the local economy, now encouraging and promoting women's participation in the workforce

Considering the provinces most heavily affected by the earthquake, Malatya is farthest away in geography from the epicenter of the earthquakes and the hub of the emergency response. This has made Malatya less of a priority for humanitarian activity. Despite solidarity within neighborhoods, mobilization of local groups, and community based relief efforts, which has been supported by local businesses and the private sector, the lack of strong CSOs in the province has also led to Malatya remaining in the background compared to other affected provinces. The difficulty of INGOs in getting government permissions to work in Malatya has also hindered the relief efforts, resulting in less humanitarian attention and response in the province.

Despite the absence of volunteer groups and local civil society representatives in the OCHA-led coordination meetings, over the months, meetings were attended by a higher number of national and international NGOs that started becoming operational in Malatya. As of October 2023, general coordination meetings are held every two weeks with the participation of around dozen NGOs, with sector meetings being conducted in WASH, shelter, MHPSS, and economic empowerment. Initially held in English, coordination meetings were switched to Turkish as of the end of May, after the end of the Flash Appeal.

Considering the fact that basic needs have been met to a large extent compared to the initial months of the emergency, local volunteer associations have reduced their activities accordingly. Local organizations in Malatya have been active mostly in meeting basic needs

through the provision of in-kind assistance, with small amounts of cash support. Almost all CSOs in Malatya are interested in increasing their scope and capacity to reach out a broader portion of the affected population, but unfamiliar with donor funding, they do not know how to access alternative resources. As long as this link to international funding is not made, local organizations will not be able to provide assistance in the recovery phase.

## Disaster Psychology Platform

As a group of volunteer psychologists and academicians, we started supporting search and rescuers, emergency medics, psychologists, social workers, psychological counselors, child development specialists, sociologists and many others working with traumatized individuals in the earthquake affected areas. We facilitated their work by helping them understand the psychology of disaster affected individuals and helping them provide the best services in terms of mental health and psychosocial support.

We eventually connected as experts from 11 affected provinces and we formed the Disaster Psychology Platform as a solidarity initiative among themselves. Upon joining the platform, group members become a participant of weekly meetings and routinely organized events.

We are aware that there are hardly any agencies that provide continuous and routine staff support in a disaster setting. In the midst of a humanitarian crisis, staff support is oftentimes neglected, whereas protecting the well-being of staff, volunteers and teams in a disaster response is as important as the need to deliver relief goods and create impact.

What people understand from mental health and psychosocial support in a disaster setting can be highly sensitive. As a platform of volunteer psychologists, we continue to inform everyone of what disaster psychology is and how it can be best handled. As Disaster Psychology Platform, we advocate for do no harm and ethical principles in psychosocial support.

With the experience of the 6 February earthquakes and the disastrous effect disasters can have on individuals, as a platform we are now preparing to support the first responders in the awaited Istanbul earthquake.





# ROLE OF THE LOCAL HUMANITARIAN FORUM

Local Humanitarian Forum (LHF) was established as an offshoot of the Localization Advocacy Group<sup>9</sup>(LAG) in order to ensure the inclusion and active participation of local and national NGOs in the OCHA coordination mechanism that was launched after the announcement of the Flash Appeal ten days following the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes. LHF has enabled and reinforced the presence of local organizations and their networks at the strategic, operational and hub level within the UN-led coordination structures.

Shortly after its establishment, a Coordinator was hired for the Local Humanitarian Forum. The Coordinator, together with the secretariat of the Localization Advocacy Group conducted a field visit to the earthquake affected areas to meet some of the local organizations on the ground and to discuss how to best support their coordination efforts. As a result of this visit, the secretariat was expanded with one LHF representative in each one of the 4 hubs of Adiyaman, Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, and Malatya, as the most heavily affected provinces and where there was the greatest need for coordination.

With the setting up of the OCHA coordination structure, LHF advocated for co-lead positions in 8 sectors to be filled by local organizations. LHF facilitated the membership to identify those that were interested in applying for co-leadership and supported them in their role. Almost all co-lead positions were filled by local counterparts. With the transition to the Area Based Coordination (ABC) system, local organizations continue to fill co-lead positions in sectors that are active under the ABC-led coordination structure.

While this was a success in terms of reinforcing the leadership of civil society in Türkiye and increasing their visibility within the UN-led humanitarian system, it also caused frustrations in terms of the limited opportunities for influence. Over time, the enthusiasm around co-leadership dwindled as participants questioned the effectiveness and the outcome in relation to the time being put into trying to coordinate the relief effort among multiple stakeholders.

Despite the visibility and presence of local organizations at the sector co-lead level, it quickly became apparent that the broad spectrum of local civil society was still invisible and that this diversity would never be fully reflected and integrated into the UN-led coordination mechanism. In order to map out the scale and coverage of local civil society activity in relation to the earthquake response, LHF hub representatives contacted all civil society initiatives in each one of the 4 provinces they were based.

In each province, LHF local representatives continue to be the link between civil society activity at the province level, national and local NGOs engaged in the international humanitarian response, and the international humanitarian community in Türkiye. On behalf of local civil society and the forum membership, LHF representatives participate in UN-led coordination meetings, represent the collective of local organizations in relation to all stakeholders, and ensure the flow of communication between LHF members and the UN-led coordination mechanism.

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9 Localization Advocacy Group (LAG) is a network of local and national organizations aiming to challenge and transform the way the humanitarian system is operationalized in Türkiye. Active since the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, LAG has been advocating for improved partnerships and risk sharing, capacity complementarity, funding, coordination as well as visibility and influence of Türkiye-based organizations and affected communities within the aid system.

Although still a focal point within the UN-led coordination structure, LHF has now shifted its mandate to facilitating a locally-led coordination mechanism, designed and managed by local actors. The concept of the Area Based Coordination<sup>10</sup> was presented to OCHA as an alternative to the sector-based coordination that was established with the Flash Appeal. The name was adopted by the Area Based Coordination Team that replaced the OCHA coordination from August 2023 onwards, however still remains a sector-based coordination mechanism.

LHF has worked with its members and local civil society representatives at the hub level to design a locally-led coordination system contextualized to the internal dynamics of each province. This model, explained below, builds on the local coordination networks that were initiated and led by local civil society and complemented by other local and national stakeholders activated in response to the Kahramanmaraş earthquake disaster.

## COMMUNITY-LED ACTION FOR EARTHQUAKE RELIEF AND RECOVERY

Community initiatives supported through the facilitation of the LHF have demonstrated that small grants can go a long way in terms of sustaining mobilized affected communities and providing them the seed funding to systemically engage in the fair and accountable distribution of relief goods as well as in finding local solutions to their acute needs. In five affected provinces, a total of 48 micro grants were distributed to support 14 community-led initiatives in Hatay, 7 in Kahramanmaraş, 11 in Adiyaman, 15 in Malatya, and one in Osmaniye<sup>11</sup>.

In some affected areas in which there has been relatively weaker civil society mobilization, many of the community interventions were designed and implemented by local cooperatives. The existing community infrastructure and network around local cooperatives has constituted a foundation for earthquake-related action to be initiated by community stakeholders.

While local solidarity groups joined forces to mobilize the needed relief goods and to organize the systemic distribution of incoming aid, many later transitioned to formal groups in order to help recovery beyond the initial acute relief phase. Some community-led projects involved the restoration of social gathering areas for communities to reunite and use for community interaction and healing, while many others focused on the repair and restoration of infrastructure such as water and sanitation facilities in rural areas.

Given the vast scale and acuteness of humanitarian needs immediately after the earthquake

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10 The Area Based Humanitarian Coordination Model has been advocated by the Center for Global Development as an alternative to the UN-led sector based coordination model. Details can be found at: <https://www.cgdev.org/media/inclusive-coordination-building-area-based-humanitarian-coordination-model>

11 The micro-grants for these 48 community-led actions have been channeled through Support to Life (STL). In the upcoming period, STL will continue to mobilize and support community-led initiatives through grants secured from a variety of international partners and donors. Civil Society Development Center and Sivil Düşün, a program of the EU (<https://www.sivildusun.net>) have also provided small scale grants for civil society initiatives in the earthquake area.

disaster, a large number of community projects targeted the provision of relief goods, followed by materials and equipments needed for restoring infrastructure and community relations. Providing psycho-social support and improving the well-being of adversely affected community members has been a cross-cutting impact of all community projects implemented through micro-grants.

One outstanding aspect in all affected provinces where community projects were initiated is that women took an active role in each stage of the community action process. In Kahramanmaraş, 6 out of 7 projects were women-led. Even in mixed community groups, the number of female members often outnumbered those of men, with women showing higher degrees of participation and taking on more responsibility throughout the project. All communities running their own projects were open to suggestions to design and implement their actions in a way that promoted gender equity. For example, a football team that was put together for the mental rehabilitation of affected children and youth in the community was initially formed for boys. In response to feedback from the project team, the football team was opened up to include girls. The reflections of the community on the results were highly positive, as can be seen in the [video published](#) on Support to Life's social media accounts<sup>12</sup>.

One of the community initiatives was implemented by people with disabilities, which is an indication that a variety of communities, also from disadvantaged and marginalized groups, are able to mobilize their constituencies in order to co-design and carry out interventions that serve their specialized needs.

The list of community groups and their projects supported by micro-grants from March to October 2023 is given in the table below:

Location	Project Name	Scope of Activity
Hatay	Yesilpinar Football Team for Children and Youth	Football as a pscho-social activity for children
Hatay	Defne SOS Group WASH Project	Water purification and storage
Hatay	Dünya Evimiz "Our Home Mother Earth"	Food production and distribution
Hatay	Ekodoku (Ecotexture)	Building textile workshops to produce and sell fabric
Hatay	Referral to Protection Services	Referring individuals to education, MHPSS, and protection services
Hatay	Women Produce	Fabric production
Hatay	Butterfly Effect	Craftwork production and marketing
Hatay	Collective Mobile Kitchen	Cooking and selling food in a mobile kitchen

12 For introductory videos on some other projects receiving micro-grant support: [link](#), [link](#), [link](#)

Hatay	Samandag Sports Club Football Team	Football activities for children
Hatay	Clean Touch WASH	Purchase and set-up of laundry machines
Hatay	Life Again Women's Cooperative	Top-up for cooperative production materials
Hatay	Zenginler Workshop	Mobile movie screening as a social support activity
Hatay	Hatay Utopia Group	Mobile physiotherapy provision
Hatay	World Is Our Home Association	Supporting livelihoods of local women through bread making
Kahramanmaraş	Beyoglu Milk Production	Equipment purchase for milk and dairy production by local women
Kahramanmaraş	Science Pioneers	Science workshops for children
Kahramanmaraş	Musolar Solidarity	Building sun protectors at an informal community settlement
Kahramanmaraş	Musolar Renovation	Renovation and repair of a community worship house
Kahramanmaraş	Mutlu Besin Cooperative	Replacing production equipment that were lost in the earthquake
Kahramanmaraş	Tevekkeli Group	Provision of cooling fans in a tent settlement to protect from the heat
Kahramanmaraş	KAF Collective	Construction of a safe play space for children
Osmaniye	Düziçi Cooperative	Replacing damaged equipment for restarting cooperative production
Adıyaman	Incekoz Village Irrigation Project	Repairing of water channel and improving irrigation
Adıyaman	People of Solidarity Support Project	Support for the mobilization and of a local solidarity group
Adıyaman	Çimenke Field Değirmenönü Community Project	Repairing of water channel and improving sanitation infrastructure
Adıyaman	Turuş Village Women's Empowerment Initiative	Capacity development for improvement of social areas
Adıyaman	Kalemkaş Earthquake Solidarity Women's Community Group	Capacity development for collective social work
Adıyaman	Disaster and Women's Studies Social Initiative Project	Equipment supply for psychosocial support activities

Adiyaman	Koçalı Village Association Project	Drinking water filtering and water tank construction
Adiyaman	Adiyaman Assyrian Church Project	Equipment for remediation of community and congregation space
Adiyaman	Adiyaman Rıza Tanriverdi Cem House Community Project	Repairing and improvement of community assembly area
Adiyaman	Kuyucak Village Humanitarian Aid Project	Repair and equipment purchase for meeting area and guesthouse
Adiyaman	'My Body Belongs to Me' Project by Turkish Association of Social Workers	Child safeguarding through psychodrama
Malatya	Günedoğlu Umut Eli Community Village Assembly Project	Renovation and repair of village guesthouse building
Malatya	'Keep It Alive by Weaving' Project	Equipment for weaving course and psychosocial support activity
Malatya	Kızılhisar Village Assembly Project	Renovation of village guesthouse for social events and gatherings
Malatya	Zeynep Ana Women's Cooperative for Mother and Child Education	Psychosocial support activities for mothers and their children
Malatya	Bicir Village Soup Kitchen Development Project	Renovation of kitchen area for developing it into an assembly area
Malatya	Örenli Women's Drinking Water Project	Filtration for drinking water
Malatya	Orenli Women's Easier Life Society	Installing soup kitchen and oven construction
Malatya	İlisuluk, Kızılhisar, Sultanlı Districts Chlorination Project	Installing water chlorination devices for sanitation and network water
Malatya	EBESEM Sports Activities Project	Materials for psychosocial support and sports activities
Malatya	Mother Earth Women's Cooperative Health Cabinet Project	Health cabin for the community's health and medical needs
Malatya	Kuluncak Women's Community Project	Equipment and materials for psychosocial support and training courses
Malatya	Banazi Sports Activities Project	Psychosocial support, physical education, and sports activities
Malatya	Konak Mukhtars Solidarity Group	Renovation and development of assembly area

Malatya	Horata Collective Solidarity Group	Baby breastfeeding room construction
Malatya	Çormu, Bicir, Sofular Neighborhoods Chlorination Project	Purchasing and installing water chlorination devices
Hatay	Hatay Bul Mobile Application Project	A mobile application for the new locations of institutions and shops in Hatay after the earthquake
Hatay	Mara Handicraft Group	Ateliers for women's events
Hatay	Samandag Sports Club Football Team	Football activities for children – Second Round
Hatay	Tandoori Group	Construction of tandoor for distribution free bread to earthquake affected people
Hatay	Kirkyama Women's Solidarity Sewing Workshop Project	Sewing and activity workshop for earthquake-affected women
Kahramanmaraş	Kuyumcular Environment Renovation Project	Environmental renovation and refurbishment of the communal guest house in the village
Kahramanmaraş	Kuyumcular Roof Repair Project	Repairing the roof of the communal guest house in the village
Kahramanmaraş	The Power of Play Play Workshop Project	Game activities for primary school level students
Kahramanmaraş	Tekir Kardelen Group Women's Community Centre Project	Women-led social centre and gathering space project
Kahramanmaraş	Sahne Maraş Theatre Activities Project	Theatre performances for social activities in temporary accommodation areas
Kahramanmaraş	Beyoglu Gathering Place Project	Repair and renovation of the village hall which is in common use in the village
Kahramanmaraş	Özbek Solidarity Project Guest House Project	Purchasing the damaged equipment of the village guest house after the earthquake.
Hatay	New Hope New Life Library Project	Construction of a container library for students in temporary shelter area.



Hatay	Altinozu Tandoor Project	Construction of tandoor for distribution free bread to earthquake affected people
Hatay	Atlas Physiotherapy Group Project	Purchase of equipment for physiotherapy treatments for people in need of physiotherapy after the earthquake in Hatay Antakya
Hatay	Station People Group Project	Establishing a volunteer organisation to serve hot soup to the primary schools, providing food distribution materials
Hatay	Solidarity Bridge Project	Sewing, livelihood and activity workshop for earthquake-affected women
Hatay	Sutasi Education Centre Heater Project	Purchase of heater for container education centre
Hatay	Tandoori Growing Project	Development of tandoor for distribution free bread to earthquake affected People. Second round of Tandoori Group
Hatay	Utopia Hatay Physical Therapy and Psychosocial Project	Purchase of materials for people with disabilities after the earthquake in Hatay who need physiotherapy and psychosocial support
Hatay	Yesilpinar Sports Initiative Project	Development of pscho-social activities for children
Hatay	Defne Life Library Project	construction of container library and social area
Kahramanmaraş	Beyoglu Sewing Studio	Construction of a container sewing atelier for women
Kahramanmaraş	Çakallıçullu Soup Kitchen Project	Purchase for the complete supply of the missing materials for the village soup kitchen
Kahramanmaraş	Eğlen Youth Group Project	purchase of materials for condolence / guest house repair
Kahramanmaraş	Eğlen Group Repair Project	Repair for condolence / guest house repair
Kahramanmaraş	Emiroglu Bertiz Container Brenda Project	Purchase of materials for the winter conditions of containers
Kahramanmaraş	Fight Against Air Pollution Group Project	Awareness raising and information activities against air pollution after the earthquake



Kahramanmaraş	Kadioğlu Farm Group Roof Repair Project	Village guest house roof repair
Kahramanmaraş	Vartolar Village Exterior Repair Project	Purchase of services and materials for the exterior repair of the village guest house
Kahramanmaraş	Vartolar Village Condolence House Interior Repair Project	Purchase of services and materials for the interior repair of the village guest house
Kahramanmaraş	Kadıncık Village Heater Project	Heaters for containers in the informal container area
Kahramanmaraş	Çakallıçullu Social House Front Roof Construction Project	Village guest house roof repair
Kahramanmaraş	Karaçay Social Facility Roof Repair Project	Village guest house roof repair
Kahramanmaraş	Kalekaya Equipment Project	Purchase of materials for condolence / guest house repair
Hatay	Hatay Open Warehouse Art for All Project	A project to promote theatre activities of a group of women of affected by the earthquake
Hatay	Loving Tails Animal Care Project	Purchase of products for food and vaccination care for animals in need of care after the earthquake
Hatay	We Are Together Soup Kitchen Project	Purchase of materials for the construction of container soup kitchen
Hatay	Support and Transformation Project	Construction of space for education and psychosocial work for children
Kahramanmaraş	Tahtalidedeler Equipment Project	Purchase of materials for condolence / guest house repair
Kahramanmaraş	Tahtalidedeler Repair Project	Repair of the roof for condolence / guest house
Kahramanmaraş	Osmandede Village Equipment Project	Purchase of materials for condolence / guest house repair
Kahramanmaraş	Osmandede Village Roof Project	Repair of the roof for condolence / guest house
Kahramanmaraş	Şekeroba Equipment Project	Purchase of materials for condolence / guest house repair
Kahramanmaraş	Cinema Drama Project	Purchase of materials for theatre activities for social activities of people in the container area

Adiyaman	Child Friends Children's Area Project	Purchase of services and materials for the transformation of a part of the village mansion into a child-friendly area
Adiyaman	Gunesli Village Community Project	Purchase of materials for condolence / guest house repair
Adiyaman	Hand in Hand with Women Project	Purchase of materials for women's sewing atelier
Adiyaman	Narlı Kuyu Families Temporary Shelter Facility Project	Procurement of services and materials for temporary shelter infrastructure
Adiyaman	Syriac Kadim Women's Community Project	Repair and re-purchase of items in the church that became unusable after the earthquake

In addition to community-led projects listed above, LHF also channeled funding to support rights-based organizations to carry out monitoring and reporting activities to help the humanitarian community better understand the needs and gaps in the earthquake-affected area. Through localized research, the aim was to provide contextual and local input to the relief, recovery and development efforts in the affected area. As a result of the selection process, micro-grants were awarded to Afghan Refugees Solidarity Association (ARSA) for a report titled 'Understanding the Needs of Afghan Refugees affected by the Earthquake' and to Village Schools Exchange Network (KODA) for research on the situation of education in rural areas affected by the earthquake. The Adiyaman Branch of the Social Workers Association of Türkiye was awarded a grant to implement the "My Body Belongs to Me" project, a project aimed at raising awareness among children, and finally, Dünya Evimiz International Solidarity Association was supported to implement a project on women's participation in livelihood activities after the earthquake.

## LOCALLY-LED COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Throughout the Flash Appeal and the subsequent Area Based Coordination period, local organizations have experienced and voiced the challenges of trying to take part in UN-led coordination mechanisms in the post-earthquake relief and recovery phase. The challenges of engaging in UN-led coordination meetings in a meaningful way has been expressed by LHF members and local organizations on the ground.

**Expat leadership in coordination meetings:** Almost all sector meetings at all levels have been led by an expat of a UN agency, which was particularly the case with the entry of OCHA in Türkiye following the Flash Appeal. Having arrived in country after the earthquake and with limited, if any, knowledge of the context, sector leads and hub leads were not able to establish contact and communication with local and national civil society organizations. Even

efforts on the part of LHF to engage with the OCHA team yielded limited and patchy results. The OCHA coordination machinery was too rigid to connect with local organizations, despite their key role in the coordinated distribution of incoming relief aid as well as their potential to mobilize community stakeholders for a concerted relief and recovery effort.

**Ambiguity around co-leadership of local organizations:** LHF has mobilized, promoted and advocated for the engagement of local and national NGOs as co-leads in sector meetings, as a result of which many have been able to assert themselves as co-leads. However, the ambiguity around how local and national NGOs were identified as co-leads, what roles they have taken, and what impact they have had on the entirety of the coordination effort has been unclear and uneven across levels and sectors. This has not resulted in an empowered and influential role for local organizations within the UN-led coordination system.

**Language barrier and challenges to meaningful participation:** Overcoming the language barrier is important, especially for the participation of local associations, volunteer groups and representatives of affected communities. The shift of some UN-led coordination meetings from English to Turkish facilitated the more effective participation and engagement of local organizations. Local organizations are already working in coordination at the hub level. Any effort to systematize the locally-initiated coordination mechanisms will strongly boost the timely identification of needs and gaps, help prevent duplications, and promote the effective use of resources, both human and financial.

**Assessment and reporting of humanitarian needs:** The inability of the international humanitarian community to pull civil society organizations into the process of identifying and reporting on humanitarian needs has been one of the major shortfalls of the post-earthquake coordination. Had UN agencies been able to engage the great diversity of CSOs active in the earthquake response, a more contextualized and in-depth assessment could have been conducted. Assessments, reporting and coordination carried out local civil society was seen by many UN lead agencies as a 'parallel structure' and was discouraged, rather than trying to include them into the shaping of post-earthquake response policy and programs.

**Communication and collaboration with government authorities:** A truly effective coordination needs to include the full range of local actors, from civil society groups to public authorities. In Türkiye, international humanitarian and development agencies have not been able to establish a systemic relationship with public authorities. Failure to link up with local civil society as well as with the relevant government offices is another shortcoming of an effective coordination in humanitarian crises in Türkiye.

Based on these experiences, local organizations have tended to organize internally and convene their own coordination mechanisms at the hub level. As a result, a locally-led coordination model has been conceptualized by members of the LHF. This model, named as 'Local Coordination and Development Centers', was developed over two workshops convened by LHF secretariat in which the challenges and solutions to coordination were discussed among a diversity of local organizations and networks. The model was designed in a way to provide a physical space for local organizations and networks in each hub to convene and collaborate with the various stakeholders, thus strengthening the visibility, action, and voice of local organizations in the earthquake response.

To be established in Hatay, Adıyaman, Kahramanmaraş and Malatya, 'Local Coordination

and Development (LCD) Centers' are planned to act as coordination and action hubs for local actors in each province. The main purpose of LCD Centers is to transform and develop civil society ideas into recovery interventions and development programs through local expertise, exchange and collaboration, while securing a space for improved coordination among the many actors on the ground.

Consisting of physical spaces where available, LCD Centers will be a convening space for all shades of civil society, local government, public authorities, private sector actors, and international actors to come together for coordination and collaboration. In addition to coordination, the LCD Centers will serve as a meeting point, design and learning hub, and workspace providing open access to trainings, mentoring support, expert matching, exchange and ideation workshops, donor meetings, and any other kind of activity required and requested by the hub members. Local organizations will use these hubs to invest in their capacities and expand their outreach through local focal points within districts and neighborhoods. They will also be able to develop advocacy products as a collective.

Designed and led by local organizations and networks, LCD Centers will serve to secure local leadership, local coordination, local decision making, local action and local advocacy. Being a process led by local actors, the design and management of the LCD Centers will enhance the institutional, operational and governance capacities of local responders and affected communities, local civil society organizations, and local CSO coalitions, pulling in the diversity of civil society including women-led and refugee-led organizations. Focusing on coordination and action for earthquake recovery, LCD Centers will also help achieve the triple nexus, linking humanitarian response to development and peace work.

By design, the LCD Centers will base their activities on all pillars of localization:

- *Local leadership*
- *Coordination and complementarity with all stakeholders*
- *Quality and strategic partnerships*
- *Participation of affected communities for leaving no one behind*
- *Access to improved quantity and quality funding through a locally-led pool fund*
- *Capacity exchange and investments, both organizational and technical*
- *Policy influence and advocacy*

LCD Centers will contribute to overcome the challenges faced by the UN-led, sector-based coordination mechanisms. By adopting a multi-sector approach, recovery and development efforts in all sectors will be coordinated at the hub level under the roof of the Local Coordination and Development Centers. Presenting an alternative, area-based coordination model, the LCD Centers will be able to communicate with the UN-led coordination mechanism, thus expanding the scope and outreach of earthquake and 3RP<sup>13</sup> coordination efforts in the affected area. As such, the LCD Centers will create meaningful and equal partnership opportunities for local and national NGOs in their engagement with INGOs, UN agencies, donors, and other stakeholders.

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<sup>13</sup> 3RP (Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan) is an integrated humanitarian and development plan in response to the Syria crisis, covering the countries hosting Syrian refugees.



An innovation of these local coordination and development hubs will be to host a locally-led pool fund mechanism. Such a mechanism will ensure that more funds are channeled to local organizations, a peer-to-peer learning and mentorship environment is fostered, and the base is expanded for a larger number of local organizations to partner with international agencies and donors. These LCD Centers will also prepare the ground for forming of consortia among local organizations to apply for grants as a stronger collective with broadened outreach.

By raising funds for the set-up and operation of these local coordination and development hubs, LHF plans to continue strengthening CSOs, piloting alternative coordination and funding mechanisms, and advocating for fairer distribution of resources to affected communities. This will eventually lead to a more effective, efficient and accountable use of humanitarian and development funding in Türkiye.

## WAY FORWARD

During the initial 8 months of its operation, LHF played a facilitating role for local and national NGOs in coordination, capacity, adocacy, partnerships, and access to financing. The LHF has contributed to coordination among civil society organizations, their participation in the UN-led coordination mechanism, their advocacy on humanitarian needs and gaps, their partnerships within the humanitarian system, and the strengthening of their relations with donors and the public authorities.



*Antalya, Good Practices at Local Level Advisory Board Meeting, 30 October, 2023*

For 2024 and beyond, the LHF has the plan to strengthen its mission and mandate in the action areas below:

**Coordination:** Having mapped civil society activity and local networks at the hub level, LHF will continue facilitating the hub-specific conceptualization and design of coordination mechanisms under the leadership of local organizations and fundraise for the establishment of these locally-led coordination structures at the province level.

During the initial weeks and months following the earthquake, before the institutional donor funding kicked in, philanthropy at the national and community level was remarkable in meeting the acute humanitarian needs. The speed and flexibility of philanthropy funding had a huge impact on the success of the earthquake relief effort. The complementarity and the better coordination between philanthropy resources and institutional donor funding is an area that LHF is interested in exploring for evidence creation and research.

**Capacity investment:** In order to ensure that no one is left behind among the earthquake affected population, LHF will continue to support the capacity and sustainability of local organizations working with a variety of risk groups. Striving to strengthen the outreach and quality of the response shaped by local organizations, local coordination and development centers will be used as hubs for peer learning, exchange, and networking.

LHF will also be investing in its own capacity to create an evidence-base for locally-led response and a stronger ability to better mobilize local civil society in the face of humanitarian crises as well as engage in discussions on local preparedness for emergencies, risk reduction and planning for anticipatory action, thus expanding the scope of civil society in relation to disaster risk management.

**Partnerships and Funding:** Continuously monitoring and updating its map of local CSO activity and coordination networks in the earthquake affected area at the hub level, LHF will continue to create opportunities for local organizations to link up with domestic and international funding agencies as well as partnerships for the expansion of earthquake recovery. Promoting consortia of local organizations and establishing an innovative funding channel in the form of a locally-led pool fund will continue to be the mandate of the LHF. Case studies to demonstrate the impact of strategic and innovative partnerships as well as new ways of funding local organizations will continue to be on LHF's agenda in the upcoming period.

**Scope and Coverage:** Similar to the mapping exercise conducted in the four provinces most heavily affected by the earthquake, LHF is interested in tracking local civil society activity in other parts of the region where humanitarian, development and peace programming is ongoing. Given the current revision of the 3RP, LHF could support in mapping out the diversity of local civil society activity in other provinces so that to facilitate the engagement of local organizations in refugee resilience building and social cohesion. Although some refugee-led organizations are members, LHF would be able to easily expand its membership and coverage to engage a broader scope and diversity of local actors engaged in refugee support and social cohesion.



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