



مجلس كنائس الشرق الأوسط
The Middle East Council of Churches

DIAKONIA DEPARTMENT- SERVICE IN DIGNITY

Rescue Syria Update - 17

May 27th 2023



MECC monitoring team with Lattakia distribution team

"They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated;
they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations." Isaiah 61:4

Restoring hope and resiliency...

During our second monitoring visits to the areas affected by the earthquake in Syria, we enjoyed the green valleys, flowers, and trees on our way to the coastal region as our visits took place in spring season. We arrived to Lattakia to meet with the relief committee to discuss the updated situation of affected people and their emerging needs in post- earthquake period and to visit the first MECC distribution activity that took place in the premises of St Andrew church of Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in Lattakia. During the discussion with the relief committee, we learned that many students in grade 9&12 are in need of financial support to cover their tuition fees to private education institutes to be able to pass the ministry exam and to continue their education in following grades and at the university. To meet such a need, MECC will proceed in supporting vulnerable affected students with financial aid in order to ease their economic burdens and to bring hope and resilience to their parents.

We resumed our monitoring journey to Aleppo where we shared the Armenian Evangelical church the inauguration of its new premises in Aleppo. Later, we got acquainted with the updated situation of the building retrofitting activity of affected buildings that MECC committed to support to safeguard safe accommodation to many inhabitants in Aleppo. The fruit of hard work that was invested by many appointed engineers to assess to date 1360 buildings and select 61 buildings in need to be retrofitted, saw the light by signing the first contract to begin working in two buildings and to review the tendering of another 12 ready buildings soon.

Although the economic challenges are still affecting the majority of Syrian people, we felt and touched that the tendency and perseverance to face such daily challenges in courage and hope, is rooted with strong faith and that they recognize the light of God's love in their lives. This experience was indeed a lesson learned for all of us. We came back from such journey with renewed faith that God is leading our ways and our duty is to reckon His guidance through constant relations with Him through prayers and service to others.



**Inauguration festival of the new premises of Armenian Evangelical Church in Aleppo
with presence of Hungary Help delegation and MECC monitoring team**

Highlights

It has been three months since the earthquakes struck Syria and Türkiye on 6 February 2023, causing thousands of casualties and destruction in both countries. The earthquake and subsequent aftershocks resulted in at least 6,000 deaths and injuries to more than 11,200 people in Syria, as well as damage or destruction of at least 34,000 buildings.¹ Nearly 3 million children affected by the earthquake are in need of lifesaving assistance.²

Across Syria, about 8,8M people have been affected by the earthquake, and the Shelter Cluster estimates that approximately 5,3 M people are in need of shelter and non-food items (NFIs), with 10,000 households having lost their homes, and 45,000 households unable to return to their damaged houses.

Overall, 170 sub-districts in 43 districts in ten governorates have been impacted by the earthquakes. The most affected areas include Aleppo Governorate where 4,2M people have been affected to varying degrees and Idlib Governorate where almost 3M people suffered the same fate.³ Earthquake-affected IDPs in northern Syria who are temporarily sheltering at displacement sites, face limited access to basic services, while 265,000 people remain in need of shelter support.

The number of collective displacement sites for internally displaced persons (IDPs) has decreased since the earthquakes. Nevertheless, an estimated 205 collective sites across Syria continue to shelter earthquake-displaced individuals since mid-April. Large number of them faced severe gaps in access to basic services, including food and safe drinking water. Approximately 70 additional collective shelters across northwest Syria—hosting an estimated 50,000 individuals—faced moderate service gaps.

Half of Syria's population faces hunger as conflict passes its 12-year milestone and earthquakes deepen economic woes; 12.1 million people are currently food insecure and a further 2.9 million are at risk of sliding into hunger. Meanwhile, recent data show that malnutrition is on the rise, with stunting and maternal malnutrition rates reaching levels never seen before. The February 6 earthquakes came as food prices in Syria were already soaring. The selection of standard food items to track food inflation has almost doubled in price in 12 months and is 13 times more expensive than three years ago. The upwards trajectory is expected to continue.⁴

The Minimum Expenditure Basket for a household of five members reached SYP 1,348,451 (USD 298) in March 2023, marking an eighth consecutive monthly increase. The average price for the standard food basket in Syria increased 75 percent between March 2022 and 2023 and it has increased by as much as 91 percent in some governorates due to the heightened cost and shortage of energy, the depreciation of the Syrian pound, the economic crisis in neighboring Lebanon, and the aftermath of the February earthquakes. The aftermath of the February earthquakes is expected to continue affecting the cost of food and other essential items, particularly in the worst-affected governorates of Aleppo, Hamah, Idlib, Latakia, and Tartus, according to WFP.

To mitigate potential or growing food insecurity among the most vulnerable populations in Syria, it is critical that humanitarian actors continue to provide emergency in-kind food assistance, cash-based transfers and food vouchers to populations across Syria.⁵

[1] USAID, Syria - Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #5, 05 May

[2] UNICEF Syria Humanitarian Situation Report No. 9 (Earthquake), 2 May 2023

[3] Shelter cluster.org

[4] WFP.org

[5] WFP Syria Market Price Watch Bulletin, 05 May

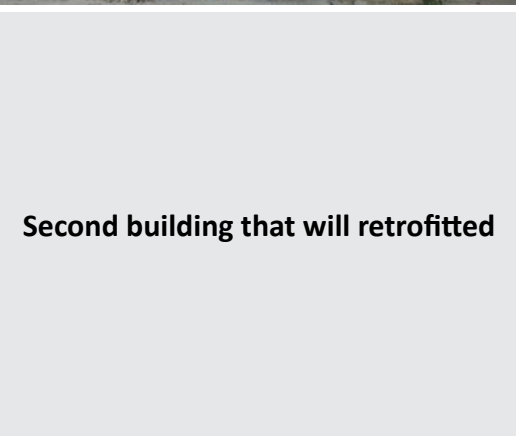
MECC intervention in response to the Earthquake:

- Retrofitting of affected buildings in Aleppo:

MECC has assessed 1360 buildings to date. Out of 1360 buildings there are 15 buildings with high damage that require evacuation of inhabitants, 1151 buildings that have minor damage inside apartment without any damage of building structures, 192 buildings with moderate damage that require technical retrofitting studies to be safe. Under MECC action plan to intervene in 40 buildings that require retrofitting with different degrees, 14 buildings have been already studied and edited by the engineering syndicate and included in tendering process. During the recent monitoring visit of MECC team to Aleppo, the technical engineering team has opened the technical and financial offers of three buildings and signed the contract of the two first buildings. The evaluation of tendering is going on and MECC will soon sign contracts for additional ready buildings.



First building that will retrofitted



Second building that will retrofitted

- Assessment of apartments:

MECC checked 3910 apartments and 257 shops. Out of those assessed apartments, there are 184 apartments that require technical rehabilitation, 2931 have minor damage and 795 are safe. As for shops, 80 shops need rehabilitation, 40 shops need minor repair and 137 have no damage.

- Distribution of lifesaving items:

MECC launched its first distribution in Lattakia last week. 745 food and hygiene kits were distributed to different affected families. Distribution in other places in the coastal area is being prepared to take place in the coming week.



Testimonies



Raed (51 years old) from Lattakia, said: “Although I am employed, I receive a low income. I am the breadwinner of my family consisting of four members. I still remember that day when the earthquake hit our city, it was a hideous day, we ran out of the house into the street and after a few hours, we went back to our house. I cannot afford to cover the expenses of rent, so I still live in my house even though it has many cracks because of the earthquake. The prices of food and all basic goods are doubling every day. With every price increase, our poverty and deprivation have increased. The kits that I received from MECC included a variety of food and hygiene items which I cannot buy. These kits can meet our needs for about a month and will help me save money which will be used to cover expenses other than food. We still need cash and health assistance”.



Mounir (78 years old) from Lattakia said: “We are simple and poor people. We may have food today but do not know if we will be able to buy food tomorrow, so this kit saved us money and provided us with a variety of very nutritional food items. The hygiene kit that MECC gave us too is very useful, I usually buy shampoo, soap, and washing powder from stores that sell these materials by the kilo so I can buy the amount I want. Often the quality of these products is not very good, but it is sufficient for the purpose. The prices of these products are very high and constantly fluctuating and I cannot always afford them, especially since I am a retired employee and the pension which I receive is very low. I want to thank warmly all those who contributed to delivering this aid... I wish you can also receive medical assistance as well”.



Shadi (35 years old) lives with his family in Lattakia, said: “I am the breadwinner of my family consisting of four members. I am an employee but my salary is barely sufficient to cover the expenses of my family’s basic needs, so I returned back to my house after the earthquake even though it had many cracks. War has left us empty-handed and after the earthquake, we got poorer. MECC gave us a food basket and a hygiene kit, both are very useful as I am facing a huge difficulty in securing food basics. The kit included a variety of very nutritional food items such as beans, cheese, and most importantly tuna cans and olive oil that are in addition to my children’s favorite meal, mortadella which I cannot buy. I usually buy the cheapest types of soap, shampoo, washing powder for clothes and dishes, which are usually sold in excess by the kilo. I only buy the equivalent of three thousand pounds, so the quantity is very small and not as good as the kit I received. The kit will be sufficient for a whole month. We still need tuition fees assistance as well.”

Video Reports :

click on picture to access the videos



1- Syria Is in Distress Due to the Earthquake that Hit It
Video - Safir Salim Describes the Situation in the Salesian Church in Aleppo



2- Moments of Terror Following the Earthquake that Struck Syria
Video - Georges Batikha Survives the Disaster and Highlights the Urgent Needs



3- Searching for Hope Following the Earthquake that Hit Syria
Video - Rogina Makhoul Describes the Fear of the Afflicted Families and Children



4- An Interview with His Eminence Ephraim Maaloui, Greek Orthodox Metropolitan of Aleppo, Alexandretta and Dependencies, after the Earthquake that Struck Syria



5- A New Baby Born in Earthquake Rubble
Mohamad Bitar Explains the Difficult Situations He Passed Through with His Family



6- In Seconds... Everything Changed
Manal Bitar Reports the First Moments of Terror



6 - Interview with His Eminence Archbishop Mor Boutros Kassis Following the Earthquake that Shook the North of the Antiochian Levant



7 - Syria is Still Crying Out in Pain After the Earthquake that Struck the North of the Antiochian Levant A Survivor Reports the Bitter Situations She Passed Through Following the Disaster



8- Video - Following the Earthquake that Shook the North of the Antiochian Levant Survivors in Syria Remember the Most Difficult Moments

Photo Albums :

click on picture to access the albums



Album 1- The Scenes of Destructions in Syria
In Some Photos Taken by MECC



Album 2- Difficult Humanitarian Conditions in Syria
New Photos Shows the Massive Disaster



Album 3- Photos from the Heart of the Tragedy in Syria



Album 4- Photos Showing the Bitter Humanitarian Situations in Syria