



مجلس كنائس الشرق الأوسط
The Middle East Council of Churches

DIAKONIA DEPARTMENT- SERVICE IN DIGNITY

Rescue Syria Update - 18

June 1st 2023



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The Middle East Council of Churches
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Monitoring visit by ACT Secretariat to MECC office in Aleppo

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. MATTHEW 5 : 14-15

A pending dream

According to UNICEF, more than a decade of humanitarian crisis and hostilities has left children in Syria facing one of the most complex emergencies in the world. With the conflict entering its thirteenth year, two-thirds of the population required assistance because of a worsening economic crisis, continued localized hostilities, mass displacement, and devastated public infrastructure. The country now is also grappling with severe human and material damage as a result of catastrophic earthquakes and aftershocks that have left families in urgent need of food, water, shelter, and emergency medical and psychosocial assistance. Around 90% of families in the country live in poverty, while more than 50% are food insecure. Syrians still dream of a day that will bring Syria back to what it was before 2011. They dream of a day that washes away their pain and heals their wounds caused by loss and grief. May a light shine in their lives to heal their hearts that have endured a lot of injustice.

Highlights

As we approach the fourth month since the earthquake disaster struck Syria, the earthquake response in Syria is slowly evolving to focus more on recovery and rehabilitation of damaged shelters, installations and livelihoods, while maintaining social protection of the affected population. All this is happening in an extremely difficult economic situation punctuated by a consistently depreciating local currency, making delivery of interventions challenging.

Moreover, the humanitarian situation after the earthquakes remains critical, while Syria needs almost \$15 billion to recover following the devastating February earthquakes.¹

From February 6 to May 23, 2023, it was organized to move 250 families, 1,200 people, to places other than their places of residence as a result of earthquakes.²

As displaced people return to their homes or shift to new shelters, ensuring access to safe drinking water is critical. This is particularly important given pre-existing waterborne diseases (such as cholera) and the upcoming onset of summer. The earthquake and subsequent aftershocks have caused severe damages to water and sewage infrastructure which has exacerbated the already strained and damaged WASH systems. There is a need to restore the WASH sector functionality to provide the minimum level of services to the population.

The prices of basic foodstuffs are still rising as a result of the rapid collapse of the currency. As the value of one dollar reached 9,000 Syrian pounds, the suffering of Syrians has increased, especially those who have been impacted by the devastating effects of earthquakes at all levels. This made securing a lot of basic needs and foodstuffs almost impossible. Thus, there is an urgent need to support them through various sectors.

Due to the successively high prices of medicines and the unavailability of many of them, there is an urgent requirement for life-saving medicines and medical equipment. As such, ensuring a continued and reliable supply of essential medicines and medical supplies remains crucial.

The affected populations continue to report anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. This emphasizes the importance and increased need for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), as confirmed by data from health centers.³ Furthermore, support is required with funding for additional Psychosocial Counsellors for children to manage the increased needs due to the earthquakes. Additional materials and refreshments are also required to support the diversification of psychosocial support play activities for children in Aleppo, Hama and Latakia. There are also calls to support school meals, tuitions, clothes and stationery given the deteriorating economic situation which is coupled with the devastating effects of the earthquakes.⁴

3.7 million in Syria, need continued humanitarian assistance. The earthquakes have pushed families to the brink and left children homeless and without access to water, education, medical care, and other essential services. Children have experienced unimaginable loss and grief. Many families were already incredibly vulnerable. Children have lost family and loved ones, and seen their homes, schools and communities devastated and their entire lives turned upside down.⁵

[1] UN news, 08 May

[2] SARC, 28 May

[3] WHO.org

[4] Unrwa, 25 May

[5] UN news, 17 May

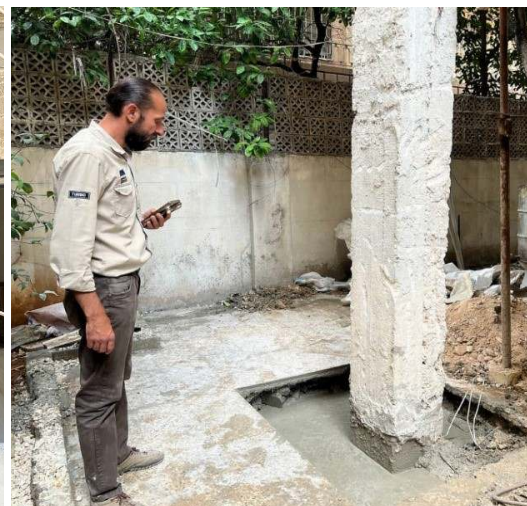
MECC intervention in response to the Earthquake:

- Retrofitting of affected buildings in Aleppo:

MECC has begun the retrofitting of the two selected buildings which will be finished in 30 days from now. Residents are very happy to get back to their rehabilitated apartment and enjoy the safety of living in a stable building and that children can sleep safely. Currently, the assessment of the technical and financial offers of the already studied buildings are taking place. The MECC technical team visited Aleppo on May 30th to continue screening the technical and financial offers of affected buildings and approved 12 buildings after accepting the technical and financial offers .



Number of some buildings that will be retrofitted soon:



Building No 1362 in Villat Sharkieh area



Building No 1369 in Azzizieh area



Building No 1454 Baghdada station



Building No 1733 Villat area



Building No 6662 in Sloulimanieh area



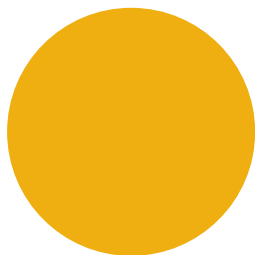
Building No 4587 Old Syriac area



Building No 5262 in Soulimanieh area

- Launching the distribution of cash assistance in Aleppo:

After finalizing the data of selected beneficiaries, MECC has finally launched the cash distribution in Aleppo by adopting a soft and safe distribution modality where beneficiaries can get their cash assistance from the same MECC bank branch in Aleppo. MECC team is monitoring the distribution to ensure that the agreed procedures are executed properly. This is done by a variety of methods such as placing a complain response box inside the bank so beneficiaries can express their satisfactions or comments accordingly. Small number of beneficiaries were selected in the first two days of distribution to examine on site the procedures and the maximum capacity of distribution that can be executed every day. MECC will accelerate the distribution to cover all targets on time.



B says, "My husband and I are employees, and our son is a student at the Faculty of Information Technology. The salary which my husband and I receive is barely enough to cover our daily needs, so it is impossible for us to even think about repairing our house, which has been damaged due to the earthquake. The building we live in has cracks, and in the apartment above us, five pillars have cracked. In our apartment, there are cracks in the beams and columns. Despite all the damage caused by the earthquake, we haven't left the house because rental prices have increased significantly after the earthquake.



Testimonies



M says, "The Middle East Council of Churches provided me with cash assistance as part of their help for those affected by the earthquake. This money will help me buy food that my family needs and I cannot usually afford. I will buy eggs to strengthen my children's immunity. I haven't been able to buy eggs for over four years because of their very high price. The earthquake caused severe damage to my house, and the public safety committees, affiliated to the administrative unit councils, visited us and gave me a warning about the urgent need to repair the house due to the extreme danger. However, I have no means to do so. My house is a two-story ground-floor house, and both floors have severe cracks. I cannot afford to rent a house because my husband is the sole breadwinner for our family of four. He works as a teacher in a public school, and his salary is very low, barely enough to buy some food and medicine. My husband suffers from diabetes and high blood pressure, and my son and daughter suffer from asthma".



F (40 years old): "When the earthquake hit Aleppo, we thought that the house would fall apart, so we fled and took refuge in the street, then to a nearby school that was turned into a shelter for those who left their homes. We stayed there for 15 days and then returned to our house, as the cracks in it are not dangerous. My husband is an employee and he is the only breadwinner of the family, and his salary is not sufficient to cover food expenses, therefore, we are deprived of eating many varieties of food; especially the expensive ones like olive oil, tuna, and mortadella. We eat bread and bulgur almost all the time."

"This food basket will help me save a lot of money so I can use the saving to buy other very important things.

M (59 years old) said, "My left foot was amputated due to a rocket in 2014, when the war was at its peak in Aleppo. I am the only breadwinner of my 6 membered family, and although I am employed, my salary is very low and I can hardly make ends meet. Our financial situation is very bad due to the war, and the marked increase in prices that makes our life difficult.

The food basket which I received from MECC is very important for poor families, as it gives us the opportunity to have basic food items that we cannot afford to buy".



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



9- Video - A New Batch of Aid Heals the Wounds of the Affected People Due the Earthquake in Syria

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