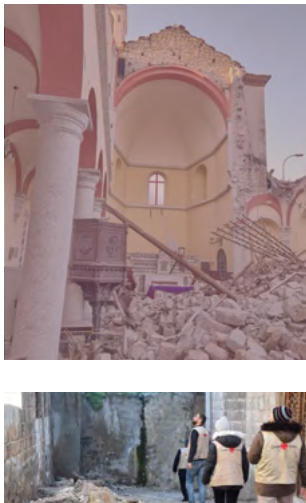


Three years from when the earth shook

A REPORT ON OUR PARTNERS' POST-EARTHQUAKE WORK IN TÜRKIYE AND SYRIA





On February 6, 2023, at 4:17 a.m. local time, a magnitude 7.8 earthquake rocked central and southern Türkiye and northern and western Syria. The quake, whose epicentre was in Türkiye’s Gaziantep province, near the Syrian border, was the second strongest in Turkish history.

It was followed hours later by another of magnitude 7.7 nearby, and more than 30,000 less intense aftershocks¹ over three months.

A devastating calamity

In terming the quakes a “devastating calamity” just two days after they struck², Pope Francis proved prescient. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies reported 53,537 people killed and 107,213 injured in Türkiye; 5,760 people killed and 11,700 injured in Syria; over 3.5 million people displaced in Türkiye; and over 8 million people affected in Syria.³

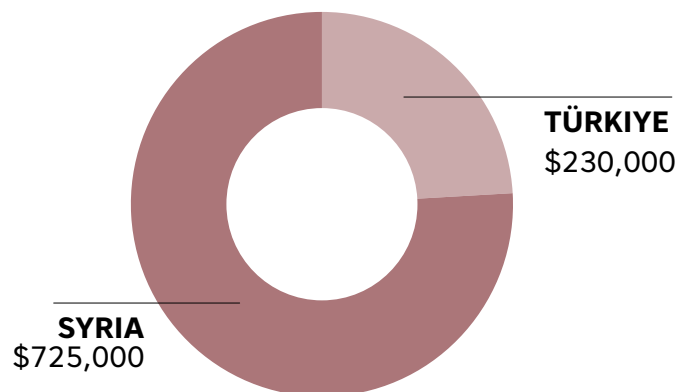
The economic toll, too, was crushing. In early assessments, the World Bank estimated direct physical damages to have been worth US\$34.2 billion in Türkiye⁴ and US\$5.1 billion in Syria⁵, and predicted much higher final recovery costs. Those amounts represented 4 and 10 per cent, respectively, of the Turkish and Syrian economies at the time.

A typically Canadian response

Pope Francis had encouraged “everyone to show solidarity” with the affected people.⁶ Heeding him, Development and Peace — Caritas Canada (DPCC) immediately allocated \$75,000 to support relief efforts and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops called the faithful to give generously to select Catholic charities, including DPCC.⁷

As they habitually do, Canadians responded unstintingly. With a substantial portion of their generous donations qualifying for the federal government’s fund-matching scheme for the Humanitarian Coalition⁸ (that we availed through our membership of Canadian Foodgrains Bank), **we raised a total of \$764,783.**

Adding to this our own budget outlays, **we have provided \$955,000 over three years to projects serving quake-affected populations in Türkiye and Syria,** divided as follows:








TÜRKIYE:

A sustained, holistic response

The earthquakes had struck during an election campaign in which Türkiye's incumbent president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan faced strong challenges. Deployed in supporting his re-election bid which was on particularly shaky ground in the quake-hit regions, the state machinery dragged its heels in pivoting to relief operations.

Meeting basic needs

Fortunately, our partner **Caritas Türkiye** reacted immediately, with our early support helping it render critical emergency aid. Contributions from DPCC and others in the global Caritas Internationalis confederation funded the sustenance and amplification of this initial response. Working with the *Association for Social Development and Aid Mobilization* and the *Social Association for Relief and Development*, Caritas Türkiye **served 26,656 people** in the Iskenderun, Antakya, Adıyaman, Izmir and Istanbul regions by providing:

-  **Cash assistance** to 6,298 people to help them meet basic needs
-  **Clothing vouchers** to 3,480 people
-  **Furniture** to 752 people in 180 households
-  **Tarpaulins** to 4,589 people in 1,051 households
-  **Improved water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities** to 12,814 people
-  **Hygiene awareness training** to 379 people
-  **Training for repairing shelters and WASH facilities** to 52 people
-  **A counselling program** for 86 households, through which 939 people received **protection-related support** and 396 people received **legal advice**
-  **Mobilization and well-being activities and sessions** to 628 people



Caritas Türkiye also built its capacities by renovating a regional office; improving guidelines, tools and procedures; and offering various trainings to 49 of its employees.

VOICES FROM THE FRONTLINES



“I work at our Anadolu Hatay office. I am also one of those who lived through the disaster. That is why being able to contribute to people’s most basic needs through the shelter support we provide is incredibly meaningful to me. The hope and happiness I see on children’s faces when I distribute food and clothing vouchers are very hard to put into words as an earthquake survivor. A single moment like that is enough to make you forget all exhaustion. I sincerely thank Development and Peace — Caritas Canada for making this support possible.”

— **Taner Köybaşı, Field Officer, Caritas Türkiye**



“This time, I was not only on the side providing help, I was also someone who lived through the earthquake. After the disaster, I saw just how severe the challenges were, especially when it came to accessing health care and meeting basic needs. Thanks to the support of Development and Peace — Caritas Canada, we were able to truly reach people on the ground. Feeling that I was able to contribute, even in a small way, to helping them hold on to life became the strongest reason for me to keep working under such difficult conditions.”

— **Mustafa Görür, Social Worker, Caritas Türkiye**

Going beyond basic needs

Because our triple nexus approach requires integrating development and peacebuilding with humanitarian aid⁹, we also sought to address growing democratic deficits by strengthening citizen participation. For this, we worked with the **Community-based Centers for Spatial Justice**, a collective of civil society actors that engages communities, activists, students, academics and journalists in generating knowledge about and promoting more equitable, democratic and sustainable urban and rural spaces.

DPCC's support allowed the Community-based Centers for Spatial Justice to:

- Visit, monitor and document conditions in several settlements where thousands of quake-displaced people are temporarily housed in shipping containers
- Produce an influential and well-received policy report on housing cooperatives as a solidarity-based solution to a housing crisis that the earthquakes exacerbated
- Develop, disseminate and engage decision-makers around a series of transdisciplinary publications on spatial justice organized under editions on housing cooperatives, biodiversity and urban well-being
- Reach over 20,000 people with a public awareness campaign on housing cooperatives that included screening documentary films and sharing videos, infographics, etc. on social media
- Participate in and contribute presentations, insights and analyses to several events and conferences on post-quake rehabilitation organized by or hosted at leading academic institutions including Bahçeşehir University, Istanbul Technical University, Istanbul University, Bilgi University and Columbia University
- Join other civil society organizations in conducting a budget monitoring study to assess metropolitan municipalities' earthquake and disaster response expenditures



SYRIA :

Crisis upon crises

Even on their own, back-to-back quakes of the magnitude of those of February 2023 could strain any country's resilience and resources. In Syria, they occurred after more than a decade of civil war that had already wrought much death and destruction and left most in penury and millions in need of aid.




Relief across sectors

Because the complexity of people's needs in the aftermath of the earthquakes warranted a broad-spectrum response, DPCC co-funded two 14-month **Caritas Syria projects that served 57,542 people** in the Aleppo, central and coastal regions by:

 Providing **multipurpose cash assistance** to 18,240 people

 **Repairing the houses** of 256 families

 **Rehabilitating 21 schools** serving 17,387 students

 Distributing **school supplies** to 13,370 children

 Rendering **medical services** to 1,936 people

The programming also included the provision of psychosocial services, the data on which are still being processed.

A special focus on health



In late 2022, a United Nations assessment had found that 15.3 million Syrians were in dire need of health assistance; over 40 per cent of hospitals and health centres were non-functional or partially functional; cholera outbreaks were widespread; disrupted sanitation services were endangering public health; a fourth of the people had functional limitations, mostly due to injuries; and malnutrition was on the rise among children and pregnant and lactating women.¹⁰ Mere weeks later, the earthquakes had greatly worsened this situation.

That is why we decided to place special emphasis on health care in the Aleppo region, one of the areas of greatest need identified in the UN assessment. There, DPCC's support allowed **Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Syria** to:

- **Provide 89,213 medical consultations** (general medicine, paediatrics, gynaecology and obstetrics) to 25,541 people
- **Dispense 210,322 medications** through the JRS pharmacy to 24,752 people
- **Refer 80,741 people for specialized services**, including medical, pathological and eye tests
- Reach 1,134 people through **556 group psychosocial support sessions** focussed on enhancing coping mechanisms and resilience
- Offer **individual counselling sessions** to 748 people and **follow-up sessions** to 197 people
- Train **community-based psychological first aid providers**
- **Conduct participatory health promotion sessions** for 914 people
- **Carry out health information campaigns** on heart diseases, breast cancer and cholera that reached over 2,400 people

“I’m happy I didn’t die!”

Salem's* story is but one illustration of how JRS Syria saves and transforms lives.

At just 13, Salem had to become a provider. Pulmonary fibrosis had killed his father, war had impoverished his family, and his mother had to care for his disabled sibling full-time. Then, Salem himself took ill.

He arrived at the JRS Syria clinic in Al Helluk coughing, palpitating and short of breath, his mother fearing he would suffer his father's fate. Mirroring her dread, Salem wailed, “I don't want to die like my father!”

Tests revealed bilateral pneumonia, pleural effusion and renal complications. Salem needed hospital care, but many public hospitals had turned him away because they didn't cater to children, couldn't treat a case as complex as his, or simply weren't functional. Private hospitals were just too unaffordable.

So, thinking outside the box, volunteer paediatrician Dr. Mona Hamashli made the bold decision to treat Salem at home. She implemented a regimen of intramuscular antibiotics, nebulization therapy, pain management and psychological support. Within a few days, Salem began recovering. More importantly, Dr. Hamashli's patient, gentle and respectful care won his trust, calmed his nerves, eased his distress and infused him with hope.

Weeks later, Salem returned to the clinic not as a patient, but as a smiling survivor to say, “I'm happy I didn't die! Thank you all.”

*Name changed to protect privacy



What makes it possible

Our partners could have done little of this lifesaving and life-affirming work without the solidarity of thousands of Canadians who gave openhandedly to help the survivors of the earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria. We thank them from the bottom of our hearts. We also thank the bishops of Canada for appealing to their generosity. For doubling most donations, the Government of Canada, too has our appreciation and gratitude.



“Thanks to the support of people in Canada, we were able to keep three polyclinics running for two years. In a context of funding cuts, the question is: can we continue our mission? JRS Syria is about people caring for their weakest neighbours, but we cannot do it without people abroad also caring for the most vulnerable countries. And unfortunately, Syria is still one of them.”
— Fr. Vincent De Beaucoudrey, Director, JRS Syria



“When I look back at the days after the earthquake, I remember the silence that followed the cries.... In that silence, the support of Development and Peace — Caritas Canada and of many other sister organizations became a gentle but firm voice of hope. It reminded us that we were not alone, that compassion can cross borders and rebuild what seemed lost. Thank you to all your members for their generosity.”
— Fr. Petru Vărgă, Director, Caritas Türkiye

Counting on the enduring solidarity of Canadians, Development and Peace — Caritas Canada will continue supporting its partners' efforts to serve the most marginalized people in Syria and Türkiye as their needs intensify and evolve.



All photos in this report are courtesy of JRS Syria, Caritas Syria, Caritas Türkiye, Caritas Internationalis and/or other Development and Peace — Caritas Canada partners.

Ce bilan est également disponible en français.

References

¹ <https://is.gd/Mkxa2S>

² <https://is.gd/I09LUP>

³ <https://is.gd/xKnYg6>

⁴ <https://is.gd/yWNqAc>

⁵ <https://is.gd/tllbOi>

⁶ <https://is.gd/I09LUP>

⁷ <https://is.gd/WjE7Qq>

⁸ <https://is.gd/Zul0p7>

⁹ <https://is.gd/LgweOL>

¹⁰ <https://is.gd/q9t67P>

