

More than 1.3 million people have been vaccinated against cholera in north-west Syria since the launch of the vaccination campaign on 7 March, led by WHO and UNICEF. Photo: OCHA/Bilal Al-Hammoud

Key figures in north-west Syria

103,000+

IDPs arrived at communities and last resort sites

10,600+

Partially or fully damaged buildings due to earthquakes

1.3 million+

People vaccinated against cholera

\$30 million

Value of first SCHF Reserve Allocation

Highlights

- More than 103,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) have been recorded in north-west Syria since the first earthquake struck on February 6.
- More than 1.3 million people have been vaccinated against cholera in north-west Syria since the launch of the vaccination campaign, led by WHO and UNICEF, on March 7.
- Multi-purpose cash, amounting to \$6.4 million, has been distributed to 196,614 people living in 81 communities in Idlib and Aleppo in February.
- The Syria Cross-border Humanitarian Fund (SCHF) launched the first phase of its Reserve Allocation on 20 February, valued at least \$30 million, to address life-saving needs.
- After 12 years of conflict, at least 4.1 million people in the north-west are in need of humanitarian aid.

Earthquakes in the context of 12 years of conflict

The earthquakes that struck on 6 February came at a time where Syrian communities are pushed to the brink as the country marks its twelfth year of conflict on 15 March 2023. For many Syrians, this is their twelfth year of living in displacement, marked by hostilities, poverty and an uncertain future. The earthquakes only added to the layers of suffering, damaging homes and critical infrastructures, including health facilities, and killing and injuring more than 13,000 people in the north-west alone.

For 12 years, humanitarian needs have continuously climbed and worsened in its severity. From 2021 to 2022, the number of people in need in north-west Syria has jumped by 20 per cent from 3.4 million to 4.1 million people – out of a population of some 4.5 million. The majority have been women and children. While the number remains at a similar level in 2023, the earthquakes have overstretched communities that have endured conflict for over a decade. Some 1.9 million people today continue to live in camps or self-settled sites in dire conditions, often with limited or no access to health services, clean water or electricity. In the aftermath of the earthquakes, numerous people outside of camps were rendered homeless as more than 10,500 buildings collapsed across the Idlib and northern Aleppo governorates.

From multi-purpose cash to mental health support

The UN and humanitarian partners continue to address on-going needs driven by the protracted nature of the conflict as well as additional needs in the aftermath of the earthquakes. In the face of these challenges, communities in north-west Syria continue to demonstrate humanitarianism, with local reports of people sheltering their neighbors, friends and family members. Markets in the north-west have also shown to be [largely resilient and open](#) post-earthquakes, making cash assistance among the priorities of the humanitarian response.

“Cash distribution is the most important type of aid for me. Our homes have been destroyed and we were left with nothing,” said Ali, a man living in Jandairis – one of the most affected areas in north-west Syria by the earthquakes with more than 1,100 casualties.



Multi-purpose cash was distributed to families affected by the earthquakes in Jandairis as part of an SCHF-funded project implemented by the partner IHR. 13 March 2022. Photo: OCHA/Mustafa Al Maqsous

Ali is one of 400 people who received multi-purpose cash assistance as part of one project funded by the [Syria Cross-border Humanitarian Fund \(SCHF\)](#) and implemented by the partner International Humanitarian Relief (IHR). The project distributed US\$150 to people whose homes have been completely or partially destroyed by

the earthquakes, many of whom are now living in over 100 reception centers across north-west Syria. Overall, in the month of February, 196,614 people living in 81 communities in Idleb and northern Aleppo were reached with multi-purpose cash, amounting to \$6.4 million in total.

Cash assistance is one piece of the cross-border response. Since 2014, at the start of the operation, the UN has sent more than 56,000 trucks loaded with aid to north-west Syria, including more than 800 trucks since the earthquakes. Aid has been provided by seven UN agencies, covering a range of priority needs from monthly food baskets and essential vaccines to shelters. However, humanitarian assistance also extends beyond the provision of physical relief items to funding and assistance in the implementation of critical projects such as education, protection and health services.

The earthquakes, followed by at least 14,000 aftershocks, have raised serious concerns over the mental toll on affected communities. Cases of women and children, in particular, suffering from anxiety and panic attacks were reported. At least one million people in north-west Syria are in need of mental health support. In the last two weeks of February, the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Technical Working Group reached 56,000 people in the area with support - a six-fold increase from the first two weeks of the response.



Psychological first-aid and recreational sessions like this one implemented by Shafak Organization and funded by UNHCR have helped Syrian children to cope with the mental toll of the earthquakes. March 2023. Photo: Shafak Organization

The fight against cholera

Among other health priorities, humanitarian partners are continuing to ramp up efforts in the cholera response since the first case was identified in September last year. While more than 55,000 suspected cases have been confirmed in north-west Syria, only 577 have been lab-confirmed as positive. The outbreak has largely been contained with an attack rate of one percent and a fatality rate of 0.04 per cent, as of 11 March.

As of 15 March, 1,367,157 people have been vaccinated against cholera, following the [launch of a vaccination campaign](#) led by WHO and UNICEF on March 7. The campaign targets 1.7 million people aged one year and over living in areas most impacted by the earthquakes and with the highest risk of cholera including Sarmada, Maaret Tamsrin, Dana, and Atmeh districts in Idleb, and the A'zaz district in northern Aleppo.

“We hear a lot about cholera and I hope we will never experience it,” said [Khadija](#), a displaced woman who received a dose of the cholera vaccine. Khadija lives in the Maram camp in the Al-Ma’ara eastern countryside in Idleb which is home to some 660 households. Without a health center on-site, families in the camp depend largely on mobile teams for access to essential healthcare services.

“At the beginning, we were afraid of taking the cholera vaccine,” said Anwar, a displaced man living in the same camp as Khadija, noting that he changed his mind for the “necessary for our health.” He stated that his family members, including his children, have now been vaccinated by mobile health teams.

Humanitarian financing across the border

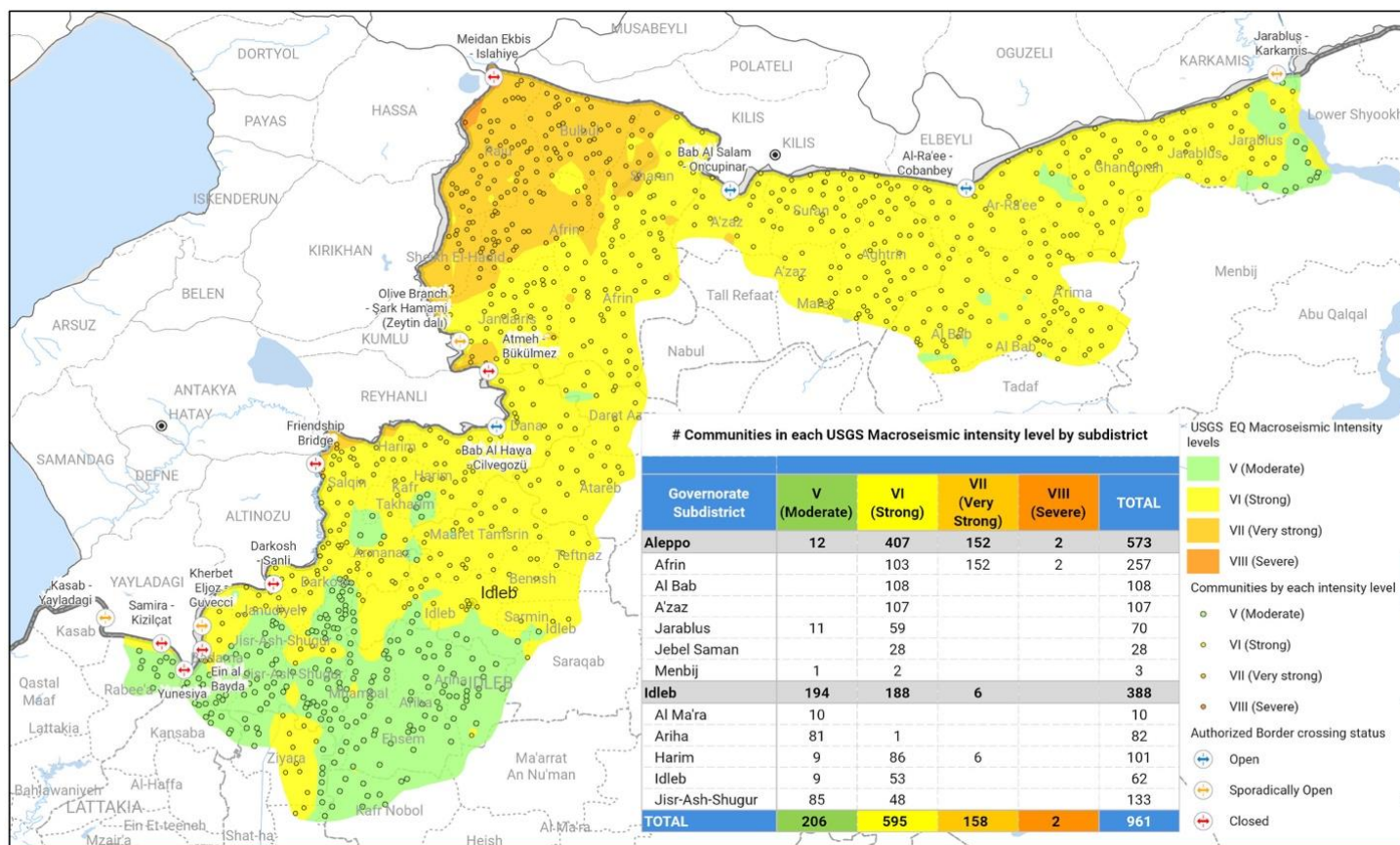
As of 14 March, the UN has conducted 27 cross-border missions so far to north-west Syria, notably for technical assessment purposes. Among them, has been a first-ever visit by OCHA to project sites funded by the SCHF, conducted in-person on 9 March. In 2023, the SCHF continues to be one of the largest country-based pooled funds managed by OCHA. Last year, the fund allocated some US\$141 million, with the support of 14 donors, to fund 113 projects implemented by 57 partners. 61 per cent of the funds were provided to national and Syrian NGOs.



OCHA staff visited projects in camps in Sarmada, Idleb, funded by the SCHF and implemented by local partner ATAA. 9 March 2023. Photo: OCHA/Anastasya Kahala Atassi

In support of the earthquakes response, the SCHF has received pledged, paid and announced contributions valued at \$76.4 million, as of 14 March, thanks to the generous support of Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Korea, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. OCHA is dispersing to more than 40 partners since the launch of the first Reserve Allocation on February 20. Once the first allocations are paid, a second Reserve Allocation will be launched to address mid-and long-term humanitarian needs.

Impact, Needs and Response



Earthquake-affected communities in north-west Syria and border-crossings.

Impact

- **At least 3 million people** affected by the earthquakes are in the Idleb province.
- **More than 4,500 deaths and more than 8,700 injuries** due to the earthquakes have been reported in north-west Syria, as of 13 March, according to the Health cluster.
- **At least 148 cities and towns** in north-west Syria have been affected by the earthquakes. The districts with the **highest number of deaths and injuries**, as of 13 March, are Harim and Afrin. Two-thirds of all injuries were reported in Harim.
- As of 14 March, **1,869 buildings** have been completely destroyed and **8,731 buildings** have been partially destroyed. Some 57 per cent of partial and fully destroyed buildings were reported in Harim and Afrin.



Humanitarian needs

103,000+

IDPs arrived at communities and last resort sites

280,000+

People in need of shelters and NFIs

1 million+

People in need of mental health support

55

Damaged health facilities

- **Priority needs: Shelter and multi-purpose cash support** were cited as the top priority needs, according to a REACH [rapid assessment](#) involving 604 communities.
- **Markets have remained relatively resilient following the earthquakes:** A [Joint Rapid Assessment of Markets](#) has been released by REACH.
 - ✓ Assessed markets across north-west Syria broadly remain open. In the vast majority of assessed communities, vendors reported that either all vendors were operating or only a few shops were closed.
- **Displacement:** The **REACH and CCCM Rapid Earthquake Displacement Assessment** shows the movement and numbers of newly arrived IDPs, returnees, and cross-border movements in communities and last resort sites.
 - ✓ According to the assessment, 103,472 IDPs arrived in communities and preexisting last resort sites since the first earthquake. 47,250 returnees and cross-border movements to communities were recorded since the first earthquake. 57,149 displaced individuals are recorded in 91 newly established last resort sites since the first earthquake.
 - ✓ As of 4 March, the CCCM cluster reported that there are 77 reception and collective centers in north-west Syria, 50 of which were newly established post-earthquakes. According to a preliminary analysis, 62 per cent of the new reception centers have inadequate services and will be prioritized for immediate response.
- **Shelter and NFI needs:** The Shelter/Non-Food Item (SNFI) cluster estimated that 280,000 people in north-west Syria are in immediate need of shelter and NFIs support due to the earthquakes.
 - ✓ The most urgent needs are tents and other temporary shelter units, NFI kits, basic and winter clothing, and heating fuel. Adaptation of collective shelters and minor repairs to damaged buildings are also urgent requirements.
 - ✓ The SNFI cluster reported that there has been a clear increase in prices reported for shelter rehabilitation implementation. This must be taken into account in activity planning and when estimating further funding appeals for the earthquake emergency response.
 - ✓ Challenges in procuring standard quality items in Türkiye or locally in north-west Syria due to the high needs, inflation. The quality of items procured in local markets is reported low and not in line with the minimum cluster recommendations.
 - ✓ Concerns about difficulties to get sandwich panels across the border into north-west Syria.
- **Access to healthcare:** According to the Health cluster 55 health facilities have been damaged, as of 6 March, according to the Health cluster. 15 health facilities have been suspended.
 - ✓ Over 570 cholera cases and 23 deaths were registered in north-west Syria as of 11 March
- **Suspension of cross-border medical referrals is escalating health needs:** Before the quakes, around 30 medical cases used to cross from north-west Syria to Türkiye on average per day. However, this capacity has been affected. Patients in north-west Syria with complications, such as cancer and kidney issues, are left with little to no option for treatment. OCHA and WHO are working on this with the relevant authorities.

- **Mental health:** The current earthquake and its associated losses, and stressors is likely to increase the number of people with mental health conditions and limit access of many people in need to the already scarcely available mental health services in the country and particularly in this part of the country.
 - ✓ In north-west Syria, it is estimated that 994,500 persons have a mental disorder and 229,500 have severe mental disorders. However, only 24 psychologists are available in the area (resulting in a ratio of 200,000 people per psychologist).
- **Education services resumed in the Idlib area on 25 February.**
 - ✓ 20 schools are reportedly being used to host IDPs (1260 households):12 of these schools are in Afrin, Jandairis and Souran, and eight are in Idlib.
- **WASH needs putting people at risk of water-borne diseases:** An overview of the water situation across north-west Syria indicates that several water sources have been affected by the earthquake; some have significant damages, while others have minor damaged or were temporarily suspended. There is a need to increase and maintain WASH services and supplies across cholera hot spot areas.
 - ✓ Reports from cluster partners showed an immediate need to fix and construct at least 35 high elevated and ground level water tanks.
 - ✓ 47 reception centers with a total population of 38,000 IDPs assessed by cluster's field facilitators teams showed an immediate need of water, storage capacity, emergency latrines, solid waste management and hygiene kits.
- **Age, gender, diversity:** Accessibility issues were registered for the disabled and the elderly.
 - ✓ **Gender-based violence (GBV):** 10 out of 93 previously available GBV service points were put out of function due to devastation by the earthquakes. As a result, the capacity to deliver assistance through dignity kits and cash-based interventions has been hampered.



Humanitarian response

6.7 million+

Medical supplies distributed to 344 health facilities

1.3 million+

People vaccinated against cholera

607,000+

Cooked meals distributed

\$6.3 million

Value of multi-purpose cash assistance

- **UN cross-border aid operation:** As of 15 March, a total of 826 trucks loaded with aid provided by seven UN agencies (FAO, IOM, UNHCR, UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP, WHO) have so far crossed to north-west Syria since the earthquakes. For more information, [click here](#) to view the cross-border operation dashboard.
 - ✓ The UN resumed its cross-border operation on 9 February following three days of temporary disruption due to damaged roads connecting Gaziantep to the UN Transshipment Hub in Hatay.
 - ✓ As of 14 February, three border-crossing points are opened for UN aid delivery: Bab Al-Hawa, Bab Al-Salam and Al-Ra'ee.
- **Debris removal:** As of 7 of March, eight partners under the Early Recovery and Livelihoods (ERL) cluster have reported debris removal efforts. An estimated 184,120 m² of debris has been removed.
 - ✓ The Early Recovery and SNFI clusters are working on developing the Terms of Reference of a technical working group on debris removal and building assessment. These activities are new to the context in north-west Syria after the earthquakes.
- **Short-term job creation:** 1,400 people have benefitted from short-term work opportunities (emergency employment), reported the ERL cluster. Support was reached mainly in the areas of Idleb, Harim, Dana, Jandairis, and Salqin, including in displacement camps.
- **Rapid protection assessment:** 1,579 key informant interviews were conducted in 259 communities across north-west Syria by 32 Protection cluster partners. Preliminary results showcase a particular lack of specific services targeting youth and the elderly.
- **Multi-sectoral response to reception centers:** The CCCM cluster, in close coordination with OCHA and other clusters, has facilitated the drafting of a multi-sectoral reception center operation checklist to enable a rapid and coordinated response to reception centers. The tool aims to guide cluster members and partners in delivering harmonized assistance.
- **Shelter and Non-Food Item (SNFI):** The SNFI cluster members are responding with emergency shelters and NFIs in affected communities, reception centers, existing camps, and collective centers.
 - ✓ 29 SNFI cluster members have reported completed or ongoing responses.
 - ✓ As of 6 March, more than 59,500 people have been reached with tents. Close to 119,900 people have been reached with the provision of emergency NFIs. Over 11,900 people have been reached with the provision of emergency shelter kits.
 - ✓ An earthquake response strategy has been drafted as a living document and focuses on different response phases, the first one being in line with the Flash Appeal.
 - ✓ The SNFI cluster, in collaboration with RedR UK, has conducted two online training sessions on Shelter Structural Damage Assessments on 24 and 27 February, targeting engineers and technical staff.
- **Food support and cash assistance:** FSL cluster partners are providing emergency response to the food needs of people affected by the earthquakes, including ready-to-eat (RTE) food (which covers the food

needs of a family for one week), cooked meals, emergency cash vouchers and multi-purpose cash (MPC).

- ✓ Through its Emergency Response Tracker, 47 FSL partners reported distributing a total of 125,456 Ready to Eat Rations of dry food (sufficient for a family of five for one week). Over the last week, 16,735 people have been reached through RTEs and HEB distribution.
 - ✓ 73,438 received Cash for Food, out of them 70,298 were reached over the last month.
 - ✓ 12 partners distributed one-off emergency food baskets to 84,463 affected people who have access to cooking facilities. (79,218 over the last month)
 - ✓ 26 partners distributed from the beginning of the response a total of 607,779 cooked meals, and 9,975 were distributed last week. 100 per cent of the cooked meals were reported as a one-off distribution.
 - ✓ 23 partners distributed supplementary food, mainly bread support (free or subsidized bread), reaching over 18,000 people in the last week, 100 per cent of them with a one-off distribution.
- **Multi-purpose cash support:** Multi-purpose cash, amounting to \$6.4 million, has been distributed to 196,614 people living in 81 communities in Idlib and Aleppo in February.
 - **Health:** A 90-day response strategy was developed by Health cluster partners. The plan includes preparedness for outbreaks and continuity of essential services and early recovery.
 - ✓ 115 mobile clinics are operational in seven districts, the majority of which are in Jandairis, Dana, Harim and Maaret Tamsrin, and are considered sufficient to cover post-earthquake needs.
 - ✓ 93 per cent of health facilities are reporting and are functional.
 - ✓ More than 6.7 million medical supplies have been distributed by Health cluster partners to 344 health facilities, as of 5 March.
 - ✓ **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)** services, as reported to WHO, were provided in 145 health, social, shelter and educational facilities in Aleppo and Idlib. The services cover nine districts: Afrin, Al Bab, Ariha, Azaz, Harim, Idlib, Jarablus, Jebel Samaan, Jisr Al shogour. More than 56,000 people have been reached with these services, ranging from direct clinical care to psychotherapy.
 - **Nutrition:** The Nutrition cluster has conducted early identification and treatment as well as preventive activities and has an operational presence in 237 communities in 32 sub-districts in north-west Syria. As of 6 March, 107,113 children (under five years old), and pregnant and lactating women, were reached with assistance provided by the cluster.
 - ✓ Over 71,000 children (aged 6-59 months) were screened for malnutrition.
 - ✓ Over 35,800 pregnant and lactating women were screened for malnutrition.
 - ✓ Over 31,000 caregivers were reached with Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) counseling.
 - ✓ Over 3,000 children, and pregnant and lactating women, were reached with high-energy biscuits.
 - **Education:** To date, 77,662 children across both the Aleppo and Idlib governorates were reached with activities allowing them to continue learning despite the crisis.
 - ✓ 14,600 children have been reached with teaching and learning materials.
 - ✓ 48,962 children were reached with non-formal education activities.
 - **WASH:** The WASH cluster is continuing to provide desludging and water trucking support and is developing an emergency response plan.
 - ✓ 30 partners are responding and/or conducting assessments.
 - ✓ As of March 7, over 87,000 IDPs were reached with at least one WASH service or supply in 250 camps and 80 reception centers. Plans are in place to reach additional 81,000 IDPs in 97 camps and 69 reception centers.
 - ✓ Field Facilitators are carrying out inspections of collective and reception centers in addition to checking water quality across locations in response to cholera prevention and response measures.

- **PSEAH Hotline:** The PSEAH Hotline, managed by IOM with support from UNICEF and other partners, continues to be operational.
- **Funding:** The UN and humanitarian partners are calling for US\$397.6 million in a [Flash Appeal](#) for Syria launched on 14 February. As of 15 March, 64.4 per cent of the Appeal has been funded.
 - ✓ **The Syria Cross-border Humanitarian Fund (SCHF)** has received generous pledged contributions from donors, including towards the earthquake response. The pledged, paid and announced contributions to the SCHF are worth some \$76.4 million as of 15 March.
 - ✓ On 20 February, the SCHF launched the first phase of its Reserve Allocation, valued at least \$30 million, to respond to the immediate needs of affected communities. Once the first allocations are paid, a second allocation will be launched to address mid-and long-term responses.

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To contribute to the Syria Cross-border Humanitarian Fund (SCHF), please [click here](#).

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