

# Whole of Syria Earthquake Response Situation Report

Reporting period: 20 March – 2 April 2023

This Whole of Syria Situation Report reflects the collective information and operations implemented from WHO's office in the Syrian Arab Republic, and from cross-border operations via WHO's office in Gaziantep, Türkiye.

To support WHO's response efforts, please visit:

[WHO flash appeal: Earthquake response in Türkiye and Whole of Syria](#)

For the latest data/information on the earthquakes, please see:

[Syria Earthquake response](#)

WHO Earthquake Response [Dashboard](#) and [Data Portal](#) for Northwest Syria

[Health Cluster Cholera Response Tracking Dashboard](#)

[Health Cluster for Northwest Syria Mental Health and Psychosocial Support \(MHPSS\) dashboard](#)

## 1. EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

11 200

 INJURED

5900+

 DEATHS

8.8 M

 AFFECTED  
POPULATIONS

326 200+

 DISPLACED

*All figures are estimates, data sources include Syria Ministry of Health, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian affairs (UNOCHA), Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster*

### Priority needs and concerns

- **Medicines and medical equipment:** Ensuring a continued and reliable supply of essential medicines and medical supplies remains crucial for the treatment and management of both communicable and noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). Hospitals in earthquake-affected areas are reporting limited functionality due to a critical need for medical equipment in operation theatres, intensive care units and diagnostics.
- **Medical evacuation:** Despite ongoing negotiations, referrals from Northwest Syria to Türkiye for critically ill oncology and cardiology patients are largely suspended.
- **Mental health services:** Analysis of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services provided in the first month after the earthquakes has shown a significant surge of stress-related disorders, depression, behavioural disorders, medically unexplained complaints, suicidal ideation and other mental, neurological and substance use (MNS) conditions, in comparison with January.
- **Vulnerable populations:** The challenging living conditions following the earthquakes have left the elderly population even more vulnerable, as they require access to essential services such as chronic disease treatment, mental health support, proper nutrition, and hygiene and sanitation supplies. The earthquakes have caused significant damage to elevators and power networks, which has led to difficulties in moving around, particularly for this population.

- **Physical rehabilitation:** Access to rehabilitation services in Northwest Syria is fragmented. Reportedly, in Afrin (a Turkish-controlled area) there is one rehabilitation centre for every 43 000 people. In Jandairis, where 19% of earthquake injuries in Northwest Syria were reported, there is only one for every 104 000. Only five facilities in northern Aleppo Governorate are providing prosthetic services, with no such services reported to be available in Idlib. Funding remains a concern, with three out of 25 facilities lacking the resources required to continue beyond another three months. Rehabilitation services in the rest of Syria are also limited to centres in Aleppo city and Damascus city that serve the whole country, but even those suffer from insufficient specialized health professionals.



WHO and Assistance Coordination Unit testing quality of water in Northwest Syria. ©WHO

### Priority actions

- WHO is leading the health component of a multi-sectoral post-disaster needs assessment known as the Syria Earthquake Rapid Needs Assessment (SERNA) which aims to bring together multiple assessments to estimate the impact – including damage and losses – of the recent series of earthquakes.
- WHO has deployed 18 mobile medical teams (MMTs) to Aleppo (11) and Hama (7) governorates. They provided 8112 outpatient consultations in 90 shelters as well as to affected communities. Additionally, 3763 beneficiaries were reached with risk communication and health education activities.
- In 2023 so far, with WHO support, partners in Northwest Syria have conducted water quality testing at 120 water stations, including 64 cholera-related tests.
- Since the earthquakes, WHO partners have provided over 650 000 people in earthquake affected areas with activities to support mental health – from psychological education to psychiatric care and awareness sessions. WHO continues to expand mental health services, that are now available in over 500 sites.



- WHO supports nine public health care (PHC) facilities as last resort coverage. From 20 March to 2 April they provided 11 000 consultations. Within the Afrin and Northern Aleppo health networks, WHO supports a further 26 PHC facilities.

## Public health concerns

Please see [previous sitreps](#) for more detail on public health concerns.

- **Waterborne diseases and WASH:** Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services were heavily impacted by the earthquakes and are strained. WASH facilities and infection prevention and control must be improved to reduce and prevent disease spread. Access to safe drinking water remains a concern in emergency shelters, especially in Aleppo and Hama. An ongoing cholera outbreak, together with crowded conditions and inadequate WASH facilities in emergency shelters, mean the risk of cholera cases and deaths remains high.
- **MHPSS:** Analysis of MHPSS services provided in the first month after the earthquakes has shown a significant surge of stress-related disorders, depression, behavioural disorders, medically unexplained complaints, suicidal ideation and other MNS conditions, in comparison with January.
- **Vaccine preventable diseases:** There has been an increase in reported measles cases in Aleppo, further highlighting the need to bolster detection, testing and preventive measures. Immunization and risk communication campaigns are underway to respond to this issue.
- **Rehabilitation:** The earthquake has significantly increased demand for rehabilitation services, which were already strained pre-disaster; 10 485 injuries have been reported, with almost half concentrated in Harim district. Hundreds of cases of amputation and thousands of severe limb injuries are estimated. Health partner facility data suggests that around a third of injuries are in children under the age of 16 years. Long-term rehabilitation must be provided to minimize resultant disability. High rates of displacement have also increased demand for assistive devices for those whose equipment was damaged or left behind.

## 2. SITUATION UPDATE

In addition to the earthquakes and the conflict, over 3000 tents were reportedly damaged by floods and windstorm incidents in March. Many were homes of survivors displaced by the earthquakes. The floods did not impact health facilities, but have raised public health concerns due to fear of water source contamination and waterborne diseases. Damaged roads and disrupted pathways within sites have hindered access to health services for those living in affected areas. Emergency shelters are overcrowded.

The humanitarian situation after the earthquakes remains critical. In many areas of Syria, the main priorities are to promote safe drinking water practices and monitor water quality. Sustaining essential health services through MMTs and strengthening PHC centres to provide services remains of high importance. This includes the provision of mental health services.

Of the 4.5 million people living in Northwest Syria, 2.9 million are internally displaced. Of the 1.9 million living in last resort sites, 80% are women and children and 80 000 are people with disabilities. The risk of gender-based violence (GBV), sexual exploitation and harassment is exacerbated by overcrowding and lack of privacy. The earthquakes forced a further 108 000 people to flee their homes while around 50 000 are still staying in 69 emergency shelters. At least 25 emergency shelters established after the earthquake will remain operational for the medium-term, until more dignified solutions for residents are identified.

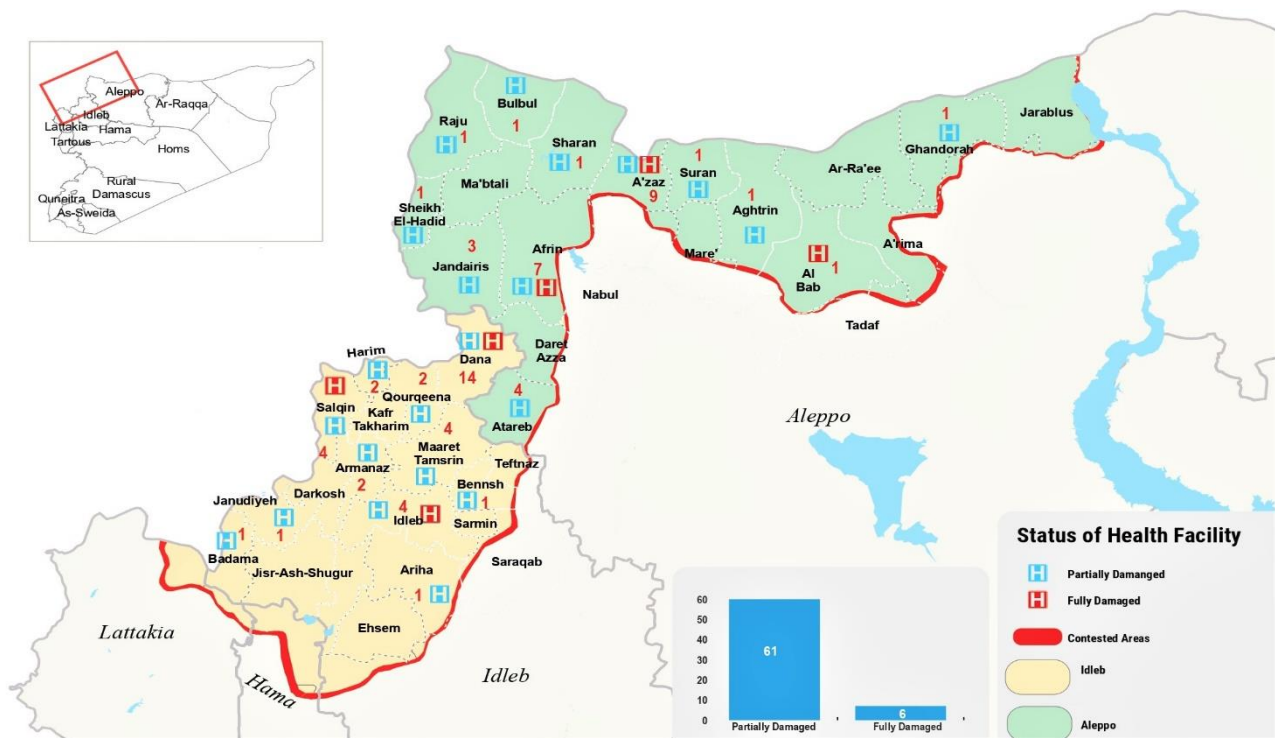


Fig. 1: Status of health facilities in Northwest Syria. ©WHO

WHO recently completed a rapid Health Resources and Services Availability Monitoring System<sup>1</sup> (HeRAMS) assessment in Syria of the damage caused by the earthquakes, as well as the impact on health facility functionality and service availability. In total, 673 health centres and 34 hospitals were assessed across four governorates. Six health centres in Latakia and Tartous suffered significant damage and had to go out of service. There was partial damage to 133 primary health care centres and 18 hospitals in the four governorates affected by the earthquakes. Additionally, 10 other facilities, either public health administrative facilities, training facilities, or warehouses, were affected.

In Northwest Syria, an earlier HeRAMS assessment had found that 67 health facilities were damaged by the earthquakes and aftershocks – of which six were completely destroyed – and over 10 500 buildings have been either partially or completely destroyed.

### 3. ACTIONS TO DATE

WHO's goal is to save lives in the immediate aftermath of the disaster, mitigate longer-term health consequences, and rapidly restore essential health services across all earthquake-affected populations.

#### Leadership and coordination

- The review of the 90-day operational plan for all of Syria is currently being carried and will be extended until the end of the year, with the goal of prioritizing short-term activities that can sustain essential outreach services and improve service availability at the host community level. The overall objective is to facilitate a smooth transition and integration into existing emergency and health programmes.
- Due to the high number of patients from Northwest Syria seeking highly specialized medical care in Hatay, hospitals and specialized centres in the region have become overwhelmed. The Health Cluster, UN OCHA, and Turkish governmental authorities are collaborating to identify hospitals in other Turkish provinces which can provide the necessary care.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.who.int/initiatives/herams>

- The Health Cluster finalized the mapping of mobile clinics and teams deployed to emergency shelters. WHO is coordinating 84 mobile teams and is working with partners to ensure equal coverage of services.
- Since the earthquakes, WHO has coordinated the provision of over 2400 major emergency surgeries and over 11 000 rehabilitation services.

## Health information and planning

### *Surveillance*

- In Aleppo, Hama and Latakia, 381 out of 461 (83%) Early Warning, Alert and Response System (EWARS) reporting sites reported between 26 March and 1 April 2023.
- Forty-one rapid response teams (RRTs) are deployed in Aleppo, Hama, and Latakia to verify and investigate reported alerts. Between 26 March and 1 April, 40 alerts were reported and are under verification or investigation.
- Between 26 March and 1 April (epidemiological week #13), the concerns detected by EWARS with the most notable increases in comparison with epidemiological week 12 were in:
  - Aleppo: influenza-like illness (20% increase), lice (10% decrease)
  - Latakia: lice (17% decrease)
  - Hama: leishmaniasis (60% increase), lice (104% increase).
- In response to a huge increase (422%) in lice cases reported in Latakia in emergency shelters between 12 and 25 March, an active case-finding campaign was conducted by public health teams. WHO supported the active case finding, and also the oversight and monitoring of the activity.
- Confirmed measles cases are being reported from Aleppo, with latest government figures reporting a total of 336 positive measles cases (as of 2 April), of which 28% were reported from Aleppo, and 2% from Hama. Local measles vaccination activities and vitamin A supplementation have been scaled up in areas of reported cases.
- All three EWARN labs are functional in northern Aleppo and Idlib. They administered over 2600 diagnostic tests for measles, hepatitis, cholera, rotavirus and adenovirus. Of 225 sentinel sites, 97% in Northern Aleppo and 96% in Idlib achieved completeness and timeliness of reporting.
- Over 63 000 suspected cholera cases have been reported in Northwest Syria up to 2 April. Seven cholera treatment centres are functional in the area. Most suspected cholera cases were detected in Harim, Idlib Governorate.
- WHO trained 150 health workers on early detection and rapid response to communicable diseases alert and outbreak at emergency shelters in Northwest Syria.

### *Health service information*

- WHO identified 41 hospitals with surgical capabilities in Northwest Syria, with the aim of assisting emergency medical teams. Of these, 19 are general hospitals while 22 are specialized hospitals.
- For efficient planning, WHO developed an interactive dashboard presenting [physical rehabilitation health indicators results from January 2022 to February 2023](#).
- To support a coordinated response on rehabilitation, WHO developed a [dashboard presenting available rehab services and gaps](#). The dashboard shows that there are only 28 rehabilitation centres in 31 communities in Northwest Syria.

## Health operations and technical expertise

### *Health care*

- As part of sustaining essential health services, WHO has delivered medication and supplies to cover more than 182 000 treatments to 10 health facilities and 5 implementing partners in affected areas in Syria. These supplies include different types of interagency emergency health kits (IEHK), medical and patient monitoring devices, essential medicines for noncommunicable disease and use in primary health care.



WHO-supported mobile teams providing healthcare in Latakia @WHO

- WHO currently has 18 MMTs deployed in Aleppo (11) and Hama (7) governorates. They provided 8112 outpatient consultations in 90 shelters as well as to affected communities. Additionally, 3763 beneficiaries were reached with risk communication and health education activities and 846 beneficiaries were reached with awareness sessions on gender-based violence.
- A total of 6876 consultations for integrated management of childhood illness were given by 43 national mobile teams at targeted shelters in Aleppo, Latakia, Hama and Idlib; 1 case was referred to hospital.
- Four TB centres operate in Northwest Syria, receiving technical support and medicines from WHO. They diagnose an average of 10 new cases per week, the majority at the centre in Idlib.
- In order to enable all four TB centres to provide testing, on 21-23 March WHO trained lab technicians in the use of alternative diagnostic testing systems, after the original system became unusable due to the earthquakes.
- From 20 March to 2 April, 11 partners have provided rehabilitation services across 25 health facilities in Northwest Syria.
- WHO coordinated the mobilization of 84 mobile clinics and mobile teams to address health care needs in emergency shelters. Within the Health Cluster, the technical working group for PHC ensured that all emergency shelters had a system of onward referral for more specialized health care services.
- WHO supports nine PHC facilities as last resort coverage. From 20 March to 2 April they provided 11 000 consultations. Within the Afrin and Northern Aleppo health networks, WHO supports a further 26 PHC facilities.
- WHO operationally supports four hospitals in Northwest Syria. Between 20 March and 2 April they provided 4500 outpatient consultations and 550 inpatient treatments.





A rehab expert caring for Ali, aged 12, whose leg was injured during the earthquakes. ©WHO/Khalil Ashawi

### *Vaccines and immunizations*

- In response to the increase in reported measles cases in Syria, vaccination teams are being deployed to vaccinate children in affected neighborhoods. A localized vaccination campaign is planned, complemented with risk communication and awareness-raising interventions to enhance vaccination uptake and ensure higher coverage.

### *WASH*

- During the reporting period, WHO-supported WASH monitoring teams conducted water testing in 13 emergency shelters in Aleppo, collecting 115 samples, of which 9% were found to be contaminated by bacteria. Water samples were also collected at community level. Of 72 samples, 2.7% were contaminated. In response, WHO distributed 1900 water purification tablets to the affected population.
- Additionally, 35 samples were collected in Hama, of which 12 (35%) were contaminated, mainly those collected from the water tanks in shelters. Chlorine tablets (10 000) have been delivered by the Syrian Directorate of Health to shelters with contaminated water tanks.
- In 2023 so far, with WHO support, partners in Northwest Syria have conducted water quality testing at 120 water stations, including 64 cholera-related tests.

### *MHPSS*

- WHO continues to support the operation of 114 deployed MHPSS teams and provide psychotropic medication in Aleppo, Hama, Latakia, Tartous, and rural Idlib. MHPSS outreach teams have collectively provided over 600 000 mental health consultations since the start of the response.
- With WHO support, a plan to roll out and expand mental health services was developed and shared with national counterparts for endorsement. Leveraging the earthquake response and critical need for mental health services, an inter-ministerial committee under MOH leadership was established to coordinate the MHPSS response for earthquake-affected areas and beyond.

- WHO has conducted training to increase awareness of mental health issues among the press community and to ‘Do no harm’, particularly in crisis situations. Moreover, the training aimed to encourage the media to promote mental health services to the general population.
- In Northwest Syria, MHPSS services have expanded to reach 381 sites since the onset of the earthquakes, including 84 camps and 26 emergency shelters. During the reporting period, WHO partners reached almost 41 000 individuals with psychosocial first aid sessions and provided over 4300 patients with psychiatric outpatient and inpatient care. Since the onset of the earthquakes, over 55 000 people have participated in mental health group awareness sessions organized by WHO partners.



WHO-supported mobile teams providing healthcare in Latakia @WHO

### Nutrition

- During the reporting period, 35 MMTs screened a total of 7021 children under 5 years in emergency shelters in Aleppo, Latakia, Hama and southern Idlib for malnutrition. They detected 76 cases of global acute malnutrition (GAM), and subsequently referred them for treatment, noting a 50% increase in cases reported from the previous week.
- At health centres, the nutrition surveillance programme screened 11 763 children under 5 years in Aleppo, Latakia, Hama and southern Idlib; 284 GAM cases were detected and referred for treatment and 26 cases of severe acute malnutrition (SAM) with complications were admitted to stabilization centers.
- MMTs and nutrition surveillance centres reached over 6900 mothers to provide counselling on infant and young child feeding.



### Risk communication and social mobilization

- In Northwest Syria, WHO partners reached 180 000 people through face to face awareness sessions conducted by 805 community health workers (CHWs) and social mobilizers between 20 March and 2 April. Awareness sessions focused on MHPSS and communicable diseases (especially cholera, measles, scabies, and COVID-19). Since the onset of the earthquakes, 300 000 people have been reached by awareness sessions.
- WHO risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) partners conducted awareness and referral activities in 33 sub-districts in earthquake-affected areas in Northwest Syria during the reporting period. They referred 2418 people to health facilities for reproductive and child health, internal medicine and malnutrition care. Since the onset of the earthquakes, RCCE partners have made over 7000 referrals, including for over 1100 suspected cholera cases.
- WHO is working closely with national counterparts in Syria to develop RCCE messages and guidance for community health workers (CHWs) to address reported increase of lice and scabies in overcrowded shelters.
- WHO continues to conduct weekly social listening to detect emerging issues, needs and concerns coming from online digital platforms, including social media, mass media and online search platforms. There is a reduction in public commentary and interest in the earthquake overall from the online Syrian population, as may be expected 2 months after the initial event. However, there is still interest in measles and cholera, presenting a good opportunity to further implement RCCE interventions.



WHO supported mobile teams raising awareness of cholera and general health promotion

### Supplies and logistics

- Between 20 March and 2 April, medical supplies valued at US\$ 74 000 and weighing 5.8 metric tonnes were delivered to 10 health facilities in Tartous and 5 NGO implementing partners in Aleppo.
- Between 20 March and 2 April, four WHO trucks containing WHO-procured medical supplies for the response crossed the border to Northwest Syria, providing over 142 000 treatments.
- Since 6 February, WHO has delivered over 350 metric tonnes of medicines, medical supplies, and equipment, valued at over US\$ 3 million and accounting for over 946 000 treatment courses (388 000 beneficiaries), to Aleppo, Latakia, Tartous, Hama and Homs. Since 6 February, WHO has delivered 36 trucks cross-border from Türkiye to Northwest Syria, containing emergency supplies and medicines worth US\$ 3.9 million, with a weight of 310 metric tonnes. These supplies are sufficient for over 4.9 million treatments and 35 200 trauma cases.
- Since 6 February, four charter flights containing medical supplies worth over US\$ 7.5 million and weighing 96 tonnes have arrived in Türkiye for dispatch to Northwest Syria.
- Since 6 February, WHO has distributed medicines, medical supplies and equipment to support 298 hospitals and healthcare facilities and provided three million treatment courses in this region.

### Resource mobilization

- The WHO Flash Appeal estimated that the immediate response for the Whole of Syria in the first three months following the earthquakes would require US\$ 33.7 million.
- In response, WHO's Contingency Fund for Emergencies provided a loan of US\$ 11.3 million.

- The UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), the US Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), the Government of the State of Kuwait and Novo Nordisk Foundation have together provided over US\$ 15 million.
- Further funding is pledged by King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre and the UN Central Emergency Response Fund, to a total of US\$ 10.7 million.

## 4. KEY NEXT STEPS

WHO is focused on the following priorities:

- The review and extension until the end of the year of the WHO 90-day operational plan;
- The launch on 8 April of a measles and polio vaccination campaign targeting over 800 000 children under the coordination of the Syria Immunization Group with vaccines provided by GAVI and UNICEF;
- A further small-scale vaccination campaign is planned in high-risk areas that have reported unvaccinated measles cases. It will be complemented with risk communication and awareness-raising interventions. A second reactive vaccination campaign (one-dose strategy) targeting 1.1 million people in eight sub-districts and emergency shelters in Northwest Syria is scheduled to begin in May;
- Development of a procurement plan to provide TB centres with sufficient Truenat diagnostic tests for 2023.