

Following the major earthquakes in February 2023 in Türkiye, Action Against Hunger and Support to Life committed to addressing the immediate emergency needs and fostering socioeconomic recovery in the most affected regions. Our extensive experience in humanitarian assistance, personal empowerment, and livelihood restoration has been instrumental in this endeavor.

Such catastrophic events cause damage that extends beyond human losses; they destroy vital infrastructure, incapacitate skilled workers, and disrupt individuals' ability to work or pursue education. These factors critically impact the recovery capacity of disaster-affected communities. That's why Action Against Hunger and Support to Life have continued their efforts beyond the initial emergency phase, underscoring the importance of this study.

This assessment on socioeconomic recovery examines the impact on both host and displaced populations in six provinces: Adana, Adıyaman, Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Malatya, and Mersin. The earthquakes dramatically changed the lives of thousands of families in Southern Türkiye, including their ability to work, resulting in a 23.6% decline in the formal workforce, and over 50% reductions in the hardest-hit provinces. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) faced operational challenges due to structural damages and equipment losses. Besides the substantial economic decline, the region faces a critical shortage of skilled labor necessary for recovery and reconstruction, highlighting the importance of vocational training in areas like upholstery, construction, and electrical work.

Moreover, the earthquake significantly altered migration patterns, with rural areas in Adana experiencing an influx of migrants. In Adıyaman, Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, and Malatya, the migration of skilled workers exacerbated labor shortages. These migration dynamics also affected social cohesion, posing challenges in integrating displaced populations into local communities.

Additionally, the motivation to participate in the labor market post-earthquake is heavily influenced by factors such as trauma and social safety net programs. Low-income individuals often perceive employment projects as financial risks due to reliance on social assistance. Gender dynamics also play a role, with women facing barriers from traditional gender roles and familial expectations.

The harsh living conditions in camps and high informal labor rates add another layer of complexity, particularly for vulnerable groups like women or Syrian refugees. High transportation costs and rising rents exacerbated these issues. Women face additional barriers, including fear of harassment and economic constraints, impacting their ability to seek employment.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Guided by principles of turning adversity into opportunity, building back better, and prioritizing inclusive recovery, this assessment identifies areas for intervention and provides recommendations to support long-term and inclusive recovery:

Local Economy Revitalization: To reduce dependence on low-value agricultural products, it is crucial to support economic diversification. This includes promoting local and regional food systems, supporting small-scale farmers, and improving infrastructure. Aligning education and skills development interventions with post-disaster needs, such as enhancing training programs in construction and infrastructure repair, can allow everyone to contribute to the recovery inclusively. Encouraging local consumption can stimulate economic activity and support local businesses.

Capacity Building: Strengthening the workforce in reconstruction sectors like furniture upholstery and construction is vital. Capacity building should extend to digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and market adaptation. Short-term, context-specific training programs, particularly in rural areas, can help bridge skills gaps. Focusing on soft skills, particularly social skills such as empathy and communication, can enhance social cohesion and facilitate the integration of host and displaced communities through joint training.

Understanding Target Groups' Circumstances: Recognizing the unique challenges of affected populations, especially those in temporary settlements, is key to promoting inclusivity. Integrating psychological support into livelihoods programming and providing clear information about employment initiatives can help. Adopting a phased approach to transitioning from social assistance to employment and addressing cultural dynamics with awareness campaigns are important elements to promote equality.

Localization and Partnership: Leveraging local knowledge to tailor interventions to cultural and socioeconomic contexts can enhance the effectiveness of recovery interventions. Strengthening partnerships with the private sector and public agencies can help achieve this target. Supporting local businesses and entrepreneurship through financial assistance, technical support, and training can further promote sustainable development.

