

RAPID REFLECTION ON THE SCALE-UP OF CASH COORDINATION FOR THE EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE

IN TÜRKIYE, NORTHWEST SYRIA AND SYRIA GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED AREAS

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The February 2023 earthquakes on the Türkiye–Syria border killed over 50,000 people and injured more than 100,000,¹ further exacerbating vulnerabilities and increasing humanitarian needs in an area already affected by a 12-year-long conflict and refugee crisis.² The magnitude of the disaster and the significant use of cash and voucher assistance (CVA) to respond to the needs emphasized the importance of quality cash coordination. Using the Global Cash Advisory Group (CAG) key performance indicators for cash coordination as a guide, Key Aid Consulting, steered by CALP, produced three short papers. These reflect on the extent to which cash coordination was: (1) timely and effective, and (2) inclusive, transparent and accountable in (i) Türkiye, (ii) Northwest Syria, and (iii) Government-controlled areas (GCAs) of Syria. The papers draw from a total of 20 semi-structured key informant interviews, desk review of available literature and three round tables organized in August 2023 with key cash stakeholders.

ACRONYMS

CAG	Cash Advisory Group	ISG	Inter-Sector Group
CBI TWG	Cash-Based Interventions Technical Working Group	MPC	Multi-purpose cash
CVA	Cash and Voucher Assistance	TRC	Turkish Red Crescent
CWG	Cash Working Group	TWG	Technical Working Group
GCAs	Government-controlled areas	WFP	World Food Programme
ICCG	Inter-Cluster Coordination Group		
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies		



¹ UN.org. (2023). 'Türkiye–Syria Earthquake Response'. <https://www.un.org/en/turkiye-syria-earthquake-response>

² Hisham Khan. (2023). 'The Turkey and Syria Earthquake'. Relief Web. <https://reliefweb.int/report/turkiye/turkey-and-syria-earthquake>

01 CASH COORDINATION — IN THE THREE CONTEXTS

NORTHWEST SYRIA

In Northwest Syria, the Cash Working Group (CWG) shared timely and comprehensive guidance on multi-purpose cash (MPC) that has been well adhered to by its members. Beyond MPC, the CWG provided effective support to assessing the feasibility of CVA through engagement with financial service providers and joint market assessments; and engaged largely with the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) and the clusters to support the design and use of CVA. Overall, cash coordination was locally-led and inclusive of national and international organizations, and CWG communication was regular and transparent, which resulted in a high level of accountability overall.

TÜRKIYE

In Türkiye, the pre-existing and well-structured Cash-Based Interventions Technical Working Group (CBI TWG) has effectively provided quality guidance on cash and voucher assistance (CVA), either through sharing externally produced tools or by developing its own. Overall, however, the CBI TWG's coordination pace was rather slow considering the urgency of the emergency faced, and its decision-making power appears to have been limited throughout the earthquake response. This was primarily the result of its secondary role in terms of influence and decision-making authority compared to other prominent actors, notably the Turkish government, the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and the World Food Programme (WFP), all of whom took the lead in the MPC response in Türkiye. This centralization of decision-making also impacted the inclusivity, transparency and accountability of the cash coordination efforts. Because the response was locally coordinated by a handful of organizations, there was limited space for decision-making by other local actors, even though CBI TWG meetings were inclusive and open to all.

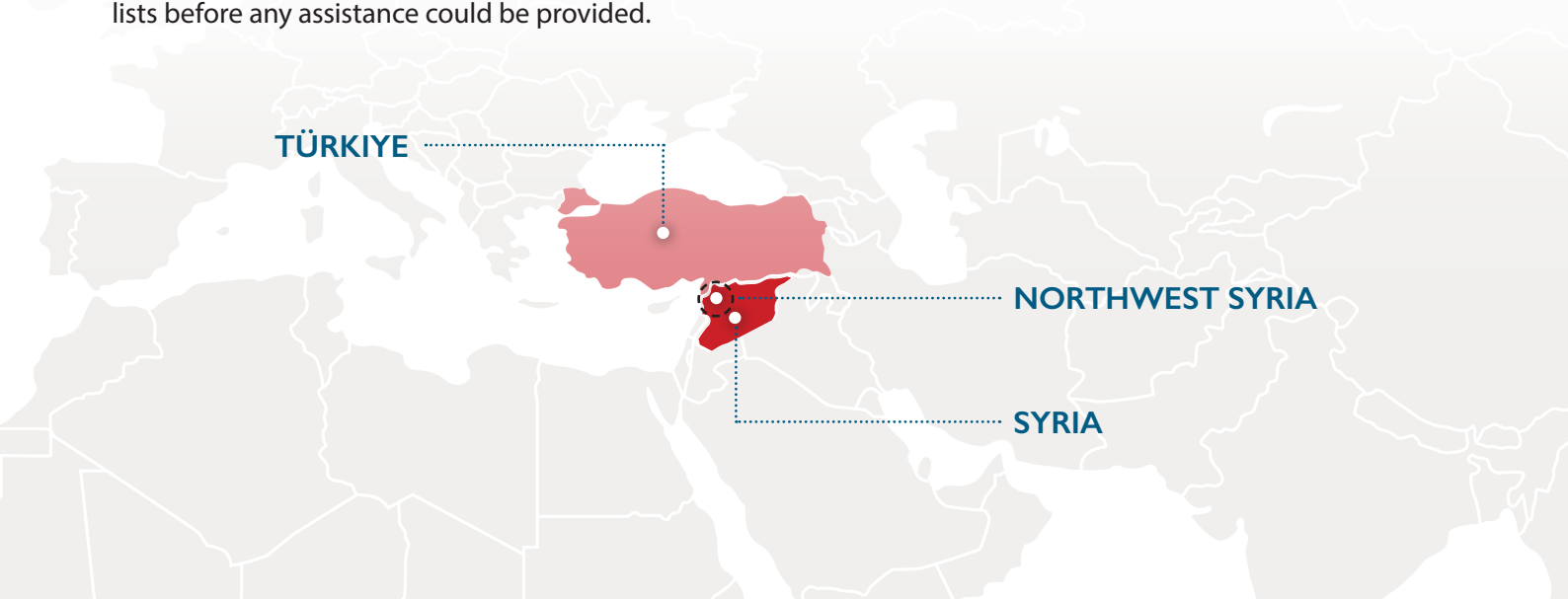
GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED AREAS OF SYRIA

In the government-controlled areas (GCAs) of Syria, the CWG was perceived as being highly inclusive, but transparency and accountability remained weak. Cash coordination in the earthquake response was also rather ineffective and untimely, despite increased resources dedicated to cash coordination in the aftermath of the earthquake. The CWG faced challenges in issuing and finalizing guidance, steering deduplication and finding the space to support sectoral CVA. These challenges mostly stem from the limited willingness of some CWG members to coordinate, the lack of leadership at Inter-Sector Group (ISG)-level to make decisions related to cash coordination, and unique contextual factors such as the April directive of the Central Bank that imposed stringent conditions on the delivery of CVA, authorities having to approve humanitarian organizations' potential recipients' lists before any assistance could be provided.

TÜRKIYE

NORTHWEST SYRIA

SYRIA



O2 IMPLICATIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES

These findings carry significant implications for cash coordination beyond these response areas. The effective cash coordination observed in Northwest Syria serves as a rare example of local leadership success. This highlights the potential for increased allocation of resources to national organizations, both for coordination and programme implementation, aligning with global, policy-level commitments to localization.

The review of post-earthquake cash coordination in Türkiye prompts a broader reflection of the role of humanitarian actors, particularly CWGs, in situations where government actors are actively engaged and fulfilling their leadership responsibilities.

Finally, while not particularly novel, the findings from the GCAs of Syria act as a valuable reminder that trust and willingness to coordinate plays a pivotal role in the success of cash coordination efforts.

Specific recommendations for each area of operation are included in the short papers, and as mentioned earlier, these recommendations may have implications that extend beyond the scope of this response.

