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HER AFTERMATH

THE IMPACT OF THE EARTHQUAKES IN TÜRKİYE:
FOCUS ON PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBI	Cash-Based Interventions
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEDAW Committee	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CEFM	Child, Early and Forced Marriages
COC(s)	Çocuk İzlem Merkezi/Child Observation Center(s)
CSO(s)	Civil Society Organization(s)
EVAWG	Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
KAGIDER	The Women Entrepreneurs Association of Turkey/Türkiye Kadın Girişimciler Derneği
KAMER	Kadın Merkezi Vakfı/ Women Center Foundation
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MIRA	Multi-Sector Initial Rapid Needs Assessment
MoFSS	Ministry of Family and Social Services
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
PSS	Psychosocial Support
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
TERRA	Türkiye Earthquakes Recovery and Reconstruction Assessment
UN	United Nations
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
VAW	Violence against Women
VAWG	Violence against Women and Girls
VPMC(s)	Şiddet Önleme ve İzleme Merkezi/Violence Prevention and Monitoring Center(s)
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

INTRODUCTION

On 6 February 2023, two devastating earthquakes, measuring 7.7 and 7.6 on the Richter Scale, struck the Kahramanmaraş region in Türkiye. In the days after the initial earthquake, thousands of aftershocks followed, including a 7.6-magnitude earthquake that hit Elbistan on 6 February 2023.³ The impact was felt across the southeast region of Türkiye, and a state of emergency was declared in 11 provinces.⁴ The provinces of Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Adıyaman and Gaziantep were reportedly hardest hit. These earthquakes are the largest to hit Türkiye in the last century, and the most significant to strike the country's southeast region in hundreds of years. The region was also affected by heavy floods in early March, with Adıyaman and Şanlıurfa particularly impacted.

Even for an earthquake-prone region, the disaster was unprecedented in its scope and the magnitude of the destruction it caused. Overall, according to the information from the Government of Türkiye, about 15.8 million people in the region, of which half are women and girls, were indirectly or directly affected by the earthquake.⁵ More than 50.000 people in Türkiye had lost their lives and more than 100.000 people were injured. 3.3 million people have been displaced and almost 2 million are being sheltered in tent camps and container settlements. Apartment towers and village houses lie in ruins across a vast territory of 110.000 square kilometers.

Global evidence suggests that crises affect women and girls disproportionately because of pre-existing gender inequality and social norms that impact the articulation of their needs, as well as their access to and the types of services they receive. In post-disaster contexts women and girls are at greater risk of violence, including domestic violence, early and forced marriages, trafficking and exploitation as “situations of crisis exacerbated pre-existing gender inequalities and compound the intersecting forms of discrimination”¹. The global humanitarian community has reached a consensus that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are human rights imperatives and requirements for effective humanitarian action. However, it has also recognized that more efforts are needed to translate gender equality commitments into practice and to ensure these are not optional, but central to all coordinated preparedness and response programmes.

As recognized by the multi-stakeholder global initiative Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies despite increased attention to gender-based violence (GBV) in recent years, “the measures to address GBV are rarely undertaken from the earliest stages of emergencies or get the level of attention of other humanitarian issues, leading to a lack of appropriate resources to effectively respond to the needs of affected populations, particularly women and girls.”² The situation aligns with the insights from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) General Recommendation No. 37 on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, which highlights that women and girls face heightened risks of gender based violence (GBV) during and following disasters, necessitating robust social protection schemes and addressing issues of food insecurity, impunity for gender-based violence, and the lack of safe infrastructure and services.³ It further emphasizes the heightened vulnerabilities faced by women and girls with disabilities, stemming from discrimination, communication barriers, and the inaccessibility of basic services and facilities.

In Türkiye, prior to the earthquakes women and girls in the affected region faced a plethora of challenges, which have now been heightened.⁴ Women and girls face particular challenges in term of access to essential services and vital relief items, to remain safe and to cover their basic needs for appropriate shelter, hygiene and sanitation, healthcare and protection. Although official data on violence against women and girls (VAWG) since the earthquake is not available, organizations active in the humanitarian response including women's civil society organizations (CSOs), have reported an increasing number of incidents of violence and harassment.⁵ Safety concerns have been

1 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (March 2018). General Recommendation No.37 on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, par.2. Available at [Link](#)

2 Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies. Statement issued by Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies in reference to the Beijing+25 Process and Commitments. Available at [Link](#)

3 CEDAW (March 2018). General Recommendation No.37, par.5.

4 UN Women (March 2023). Brief on Earthquakes in Türkiye: Impact and Priorities for Women and Girls. Available at [Link](#)

5 UN Women (May 2023). Her Aftermath: The Impact of the Earthquakes in Türkiye: Perspectives of Civil Society Organizations Working for the Rights of Women and Girls, p.20 Available at [Link](#)



UN Women engages with civil society organizations active in the humanitarian response on the earthquake-affected region
 Photo: UN Women/Nilüfer Baş

raised for women and girls in general, but especially for single women and female-headed households.⁶ At the same time, the earthquake has caused disruption in the provision of services to women who are at risk/exposed to violence. This is due to significant damage to the physical infrastructure of such services such as women's shelters and Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centers (VPMC) as well as since service providers and professionals have been themselves among the affected populations.⁷

Therefore, preventing and responding to violence against women and girls, and ensuring their safety, particularly in temporary settlements, needs to be a key priority for all institutions and organizations providing services and assistance to the affected population. This is not only a key human rights and protection issue, but if not addressed, is a hindrance to achievement of women's empowerment in any area as well as to overall societal development and resilience.

Methodology

The report is based on qualitative data obtained through key informant interviews, semi structured focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews conducted with partners as well as direct observations by UN Women staff during field visits.

The data was collected in the period of 3-27 April 2023 in five of the affected provinces - Kahramanmaraş, Adiyaman, Malatya, Gaziantep and Hatay. Specifically, qualitative data was collected via: (a) key informant interviews, semi structured focus group and group discussions with over 60 women living in both formal and informal temporary settlements (tents and containers) in all 5 provinces aged 18-65 including different minority groups such as Roma; (b) semi-structured interviews and discussions with over 50 service providers working at working at provincial directorates of family and social services, including violence prevention and monitoring centers and social service centers, municipalities, security and disaster response service; (c) lawyers from bar associations; and (d) civil society organizations providing assistance to affected women, including with regards violence prevention and response.⁸

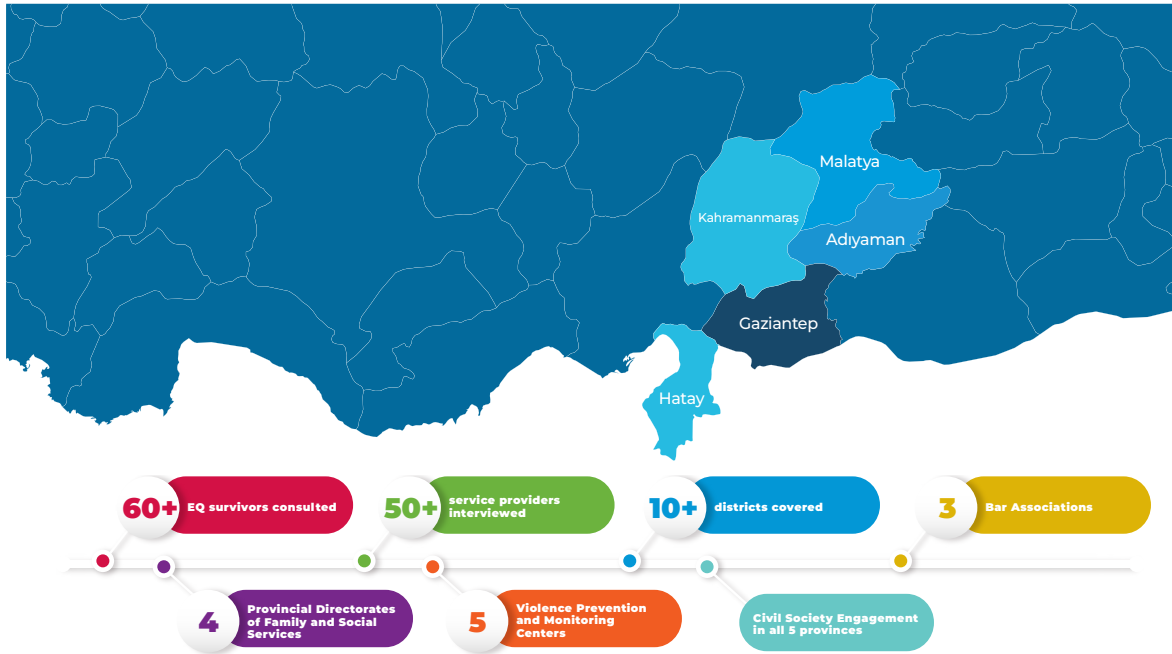
This Report summarizes the main findings that have emerged based on these consultations and proposes recommendations for all stakeholders working in the earthquake humanitarian response and recovery efforts. In addition to the qualitative data, the analysis and recommendations have been informed by statistical data on the position of women and girls in the affected regions prior to the disaster as well other available assessments, including those carried out in the Protection and Gender-Based Violence (sub-)sectors under the UN-coordinated humanitarian response.⁹

6 For more details, please see Joint Multi-Sector Initial Rapid Needs Assessment (MIRA) Report and UN Women Brief on Earthquake in Türkiye: Impacts and Priorities for Women and Girls.

7 According to Türkiye Earthquakes Recovery and Reconstruction Assessment by the Presidency of Strategy and Budgeting (p.114), a total of 11 VPMCs or women's shelters were damaged at different levels in the earthquake zone.

8 The findings and recommendations do not necessarily represent corporate or personal views of the consulted service providers.

9 The UN coordinated humanitarian response, led by OCHA, has been active under following sectors since February 2023: Early Recovery&Debris Removal, Education, Emergency Shelter/NFIs, Food Security&Livelihoods, Health&Nutrition, Logistics&Emergency Telecommunications, Multipurpose Cash&Social Protection, Protection, Temporary Settlement Support, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH). See more information here: [Link](#) The present report and field visits specifically feed from Protection (with Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence sub-Sectors) and Mental Health and PsychosocialSupport (MHPSS) Working Group (under Health Sector).



KEY FINDINGS

1. Women and girls face significant risks of violence due to unsafe and uncertain living conditions.

Across the earthquake affected region, the living arrangements vary greatly, from tents and container cities to damaged buildings. Whilst long-term recovery plans are made, women and girls face acute safety concerns in the short- and medium-term under the current living conditions.

The placement and organization of tent settlements and container cities that were visited during the field visits are most often not considerate of safety factors and the specific needs of women and girls, an observation also shared by service providers active in the provincial protection sector meetings. Most of the visited settlements do not ensure privacy and in many cases there is forced cohabitation with extended family members or strangers. Women who participated in the consultations indicated that this creates increased safety risks for women and girls in particular, including sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse and domestic violence. There are also safety risks related to accessing water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities due to limited lighting, overcrowded facilities, mixed gender facilities, the lack of privacy, poor hygiene conditions, or the far distances to reach facilities. These are exacerbated by the occurrences of loitering and plundering, and has also led women to restrict their mobility significantly in an attempt to stay safe.

There is a very limited number of intact women's shelters for survivors of violence across the earthquake affected region: 11 women's shelters and Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centers were damaged, 8 state-owned buildings were moderately or lightly damaged¹⁰, 1 rental building was severely damaged, and 2 rented buildings were moderately or lightly damaged. Staff working at both civil society and governmental VAWG response services were also directly victimized or impacted by the earthquake on a personal level. There are reports of women living in the same settlement as their perpetrator and those who are unable to leave an abusive relationship due to disruption of protection mechanisms (identification, referral, case management) and hampered implementation of restraining orders.

Women originally from outside of Türkiye, including Syrian, Afghani, Irani and Iraqi women, face particular issues in having a safe place to live. From field observations and discussions with civil society, it was revealed that in some tent/container cities some groups (such as Roma populations, Syrians under temporary protection, persons under international protection or migrants) may be excluded from service and aid provision, including basic facilities and conditions, such as electricity, lighting, and health services.

10 Türkiye Earthquakes Recovery and Reconstruction Assessment (March 2023), p.114. Available at [Link](#)

2. Unmet basic needs, changing household roles, and economic pressures are leading to social tensions and harmful coping mechanisms, putting women and girls in danger.

Global evidence shows that rapid fluctuations in household and community dynamics, and income opportunities can lead to harmful coping mechanisms, such as increased domestic violence and community level violence.¹¹ Reports from CSOs working in the field also indicate that this is the case in the earthquake affected region and as traditional family structures have been altered, there are significant changes in roles and responsibilities within households.

The changing family dynamics and household roles in the rural areas of the affected provinces, which have experienced a significant increase in population after the earthquake due to migration from the center, have further exacerbated the challenges and risks. The population of families within the same household has increased, leading to overcrowded living conditions and intensifying issues such as domestic violence and tension in these districts. Additionally, some anecdotal accounts from the field are indicating that substance abuse by men and boys is on the rise. All of these changes and new dynamics, along with unmet basic needs, add to pressure and tension within households, which is negatively impacting women and girls.

There are also reports of increasing inter-household and community level tensions, especially between different minority groups and host communities. There are daily security incidents in some temporary settlements, including formal shelters, that have included hate speech and violence targeting Syrians, Kurdish, Roma, Dom and Abdal communities.¹² Accounts from local protection actors also suggest that there may be disproportionalities in access to services (especially to basic needs) among different groups of affected people, which also increase the risk of social tension and insecurities further restricting women's mobility.



A mother and her daughter navigate the container city in the aftermath of the earthquake. *Photo: UN Women / Sena Şar*

¹¹ CEDAW (July 2017). General recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19 (1992), par.14. Available at [Link](#)

¹² For instance please see: The Meeting Minutes of the Protection Sector Hatay Provincial Coordination Group, 14 April 2023. Available at [Link](#)

Due to the mass disruptions caused by the earthquakes and the significantly increased unpaid care and domestic responsibilities women and adolescent girls in the earthquake-affected areas shoulder an increased care and domestic labor workload, adding pressure to an already high baseline¹³, leading to physical and mental exhaustion and creating an environment prone to different forms of violence. At the same time, many men (even more than women)¹⁴, including those that have been sole earners in the household have lost their jobs and income. Some household members find themselves with new physical impairments and trauma, and many families have been split up or merged with extended family (among many other shifts).

Women's labor force participation rate in the affected region prior to the earthquakes was already lower than the overall rate in Türkiye.¹⁵ 78,7% of the women working in agriculture sector in the affected provinces such as Diyarbakır, Gaziantep, Adıyaman, Kilis, Malatya, Elazığ were unpaid family workers¹⁶. Women's engagement in seasonal agriculture work and the disruption caused to their workplaces and livelihoods by the earthquake further contribute to their burden. Women's employment and women entrepreneurship¹⁷ are expected to decrease. While access to livelihoods is problematic for both men and women, possible exclusion of women from the labor market during recovery is expected,¹⁸ unless measures are taken to address the specific barriers women face in accessing and remaining in decent jobs.¹⁹ Limited access to employment and entrepreneurship makes women more prone to economic and psychological violence, or exploitative work, while at the same time, decreasing their opportunities to leave the cycle of violence, due to financial concerns.²⁰

3. Child, early and forced marriages are an increasing risk for girl children and adolescents.

Prior to the earthquakes the rate of early and child marriage was significantly higher than the national average in several earthquake affected provinces²¹. Accounts from women and local CSOs indicate that the earthquakes and aftermath is being used to justify child, early and forced marriages (CEFM) by families, especially as a result of increasing multi-dimensional poverty, schools not being fully operational and many barriers to accessing education. Parents have also expressed reluctance to send their children to school as they are scared for their safety, especially in the case of further earthquakes. Some accounts from the field indicate that children in rural areas and villages are particularly vulnerable to CEFM, due to pervasive social norms and the lack of infrastructure for education. CEFM has also been more common among Syrian refugee groups and Roma population who face a wide variety of socio-economic barriers.

13 Turkish Statistical Institute (2014-2015). Time Use Survey. Available at [Link](#)

14 International Labour Organization (March 2023). The effects of the February 2023 earthquake on the labour market in Türkiye, p.1. Available at [Link](#)

15 Turkish Statistical Institute (2021). Labour Force Statistics. Available at [Link](#)

16 Turkish Statistical Institute (2022). Women in Statistics Report. Available at [Link](#)

17 KAGIDER, UN Women. Women Entrepreneurs in the Earthquake Region Needs Analysis. Available at [Link](#)

18 International Labour Organization (March 2023). The effects of the February 2023 earthquake on the labour market in Türkiye, p. 5. Available at [Link](#)

19 (For example, cash for work). International Labour Organization (March 2023). The effects of the February 2023 earthquake on the labour market in Türkiye, p.6. Available at [Link](#)

20 As discussed in the protection sector, GBV sub-sector and hub meetings in the field.

21 Whereas the national average for marriages before 18 is 3.9 %, it is 21.1 % in Central Asia Anatolia with 2 earthquake-affected provinces (Elazığ and Malatya), 18.8 % in Southeast Anatolia with 5 earthquake-affected provinces (Adıyaman, Diyarbakır, Gaziantep, Kilis and Şanlıurfa) and 14.6 % in the Mediterranean with 4 earthquake affected provinces (Adana, Hatay, Kahramanmaraş and Osmaniye). Turkish Statistical Institute (2022). Türkiye Family Structure Survey. Available at [Link](#)



Women and girls in the earthquake zones are living in tents. *Photo Credit: Nilüfer Baş / UN Women*

4. Power dynamics between duty-bearers and rights-holders increase risks of sexual exploitation and abuse.

There are reports from the field that indicate that women are more at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA)²², especially due to their limited access to livelihood opportunities and predominant presence of male staff in humanitarian response as service providers (including from both law enforcement, public and non-governmental humanitarian actors). Service providers have observed that there is a lot of unsupervised interactions between young women/ adolescent girls and humanitarian workers, including service providers from different institutions and organizations that are in the field to provide services and guarantee the safety/security of the affected population. According to some local accounts, there are significant risks of sexual exploitation and abuse of power between men operating in several settlements and young women and girls living there, even though specific cases have not been verified. Cases of SEA rarely come to light but are often widespread during a humanitarian crisis.²³

22 Per Secretary General's Bulletin on Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13, 9 October 2003), "the term 'sexual exploitation' means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. Similarly, the term 'sexual abuse' means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

"Trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. Similarly, the term 'sexual abuse' means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions."

23 "Underreporting of allegations implicating personnel from other United Nations entities and non-United Nations personnel working with implementing partners is a continuing concern" according to the Report of the Secretary General titled "Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse" (14 February 2019, A/73/744). According to the latest available data from IASC PSEA, only 51.5% of PSEA Task Force worldwide have reported that they received allegations in 2021 Available at [Link](#)



Women waiting in line within the container city to access essential supplies. Photo: UN Women / Sena Şar

5. There are barriers in reporting cases of violence, interacting with law enforcement, seeking legal support, and receiving comprehensive case management services. On the other hand, good practices exist and need to be scaled up.

Prior to the earthquakes the affected region had a relatively low rate of reporting domestic violence to authorities and a high level of acceptance in cases of violence, as per official statistics.²⁴ This is partially due to more traditional and gendered family roles, low trust in prospects after reporting and in some cases language barriers. At the same time criminal courts in five of the affected provinces (Adana, Diyarbakır, Gaziantep, Malatya and Şanlıurfa) had higher proportions of sexual assault, sexual harassment and child sexual abuse cases, compared to other nearby provinces.²⁵ Despite the lack of VAWG prevalence data post-earthquake, wide-spread accounts received from field monitoring by UN Women and partners indicate that VAWG is on the rise. However, reporting mechanisms and the capacities of law enforcement and judicial bodies have been severely impeded.

Capacity limitations of law enforcement bodies in how they respond to incidents of VAWG was an issue prior to the earthquake and there is a perception among women that VAWG is a lesser priority after the earthquake due to many competing priorities particularly for basic needs. Accounts from women demonstrate that their concerns of violence are not being taken seriously and an overall sense of de-prioritization by law enforcement and shelter city administrations has been noted by visited CSOs.

In some of the affected provinces, community-based protection networks and referral systems are not very active and there are significant gaps in the availability of service providers such as police offices, health care professionals and bar associations. MoFSS's formal social services in settlement areas have been severely disrupted, impeding service provision, case management mechanisms and referral activities.

²⁴ Turkish Statistical Institute (2021). Labour Force Statistics. Available at [Link](#)

²⁵ Ministry of Justice, Directorate General of Judicial Record and Statistics (2021). Judicial Statistics, p. 158-159

Most women and girls do not have access to information on where to turn for support. Additionally, information has not been made available in all languages necessary to reach all groups among the affected population, for example in Farsi, Arabic, Kurdish and Zaza. Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse information has not been available or seen during the field observations conducted. Accounts from women illustrate that they have very limited or no information on available emergency hotlines. Even when reports have been made and women have accessed services, there is a significant challenge to follow up cases when perpetrators and survivors are displaced and moving between different settlements.

Despite the widespread reports of mental ill-health especially among women and girls who are at risk of violence, there are still significant reservations among the affected population to seek psychosocial support (PSS). Accounts from the field describe these as inconsistent, often perceived as aid distributions, and remain at psychological first-aid level in service provision. At the same time many stakeholders emphasize the need for quiet and private spaces, where women in need of support can raise their concerns, discuss how to cope with their situation and safely talk about the risks they are facing.

One emerging challenge has been that legal support and victim services directorates, including judicial interview rooms, are not fully operational since the earthquakes in February. In some provinces, there have been incidents where victim statements have been referred to Child Observation Centers (Çocuk İzlem Merkezi, COC) for adult survivors of VAW. As COCs are by law, specific for child victims of sexual crimes, and they are a one-stop-center for medical examination and statements, these face a high risk of becoming severely overcrowded. On the other hand, in some provinces COCs were also damaged which resulted in a gap for service provision for child survivors of sexual crimes. Overall damage and transition to courthouses, law offices and bar associations have also created a gap in the accessibility of the justice system.



A glimpse into the daily life of a woman in the container city in Hatay. Photo: UN Women / Sena Şar

On the other hand, the extremely hard work undertaken by professionals engaged in VAWG response, who are victims of the earthquake themselves, and who continued to work under highly traumatizing circumstances, should be recognized and commended. Many service providers, both those from the affected region and those deployed from other parts of the country (especially health professionals who have been at the forefront of the response from the very beginning) have worked tirelessly to provide uninterrupted services in highly difficult and unprecedented context. They need support to cope with reported burnout and secondary trauma that they are experiencing due to the very high workload and daily interaction with earthquake survivors. Some good practices implemented by public service providers have been observed in the field, such as:



UN Women distributing dignity kits filled with essential items tailored to meet the needs of women and girls. Photo: UN Women / İlkin Eskipehlivan

- “Ask to expert” practice, which brings less experienced professionals and senior officials together to enable a learning environment for civil servants who work at or are mobilized to the disaster area from other duty stations on a rotational basis;
- Staff care initiatives endorsed by MoFSS for public officials who continue to work in the field of VAWG and who had been victimized by the disaster themselves;
- In formal settlements, in order to better reach out to adolescent girls to enhance their well-being and to engage them in awareness raising activities, some service providers have resorted to using box games and conducting privacy and consent (“saying no”) trainings for adolescents.
- MoFSS accreditation for PSS activities of CSOs were accelerated, allowing increased PSS service provision in the field also undertaken by CSO, complementing the public services.

6. Women and girl survivors of violence, or those at risk of violence, especially persons with specific needs may deprioritize access to protection services in favor of accessing basic needs, including shelter, food and sanitation.

The consultations with governmental and non-governmental service providers also illustrate that concerns of violence are also not prioritized by women during this period where in the aftermath of such crises violence is common and may become acute.²⁶ Accounts from interviews and discussions with survivors, service providers and civil society organizations have demonstrated that due to the prioritization of basic needs that are still in need of being met, women and girl survivors of violence, or those at risk of violence, especially persons with specific needs may deprioritize reporting and access to protection services. At the same time many consulted stakeholders describe a general reluctance and limited legal awareness from the local population to seek legal aid for cases of VAWG and emphasize the importance of having field-based lawyers who can act in more culturally sensitive and accessible ways. Women originally from outside Türkiye, especially Syrian women under temporary protection, face particular challenges to report incidents of VAWG, as they are scared of this interfering with their asylum processes, do not have the financial means to cover associated fees, often do not have basic legal literacy of their rights and may face language barriers.

²⁶ CEDAW (March 2018). General Recommendation No.37, par.56

7. CSOs play a key role in adequately preventing and responding to violence against women and girls, and need support to overcome various challenges they face.

Women's civil society organizations have been actively responding to the needs of women and girls affected by the earthquakes since the early days of the disaster, yet they face a wide variety of challenges in operating, including in the area of VAWG. (Read more in the first iteration of UN Women "Her aftermath" series focused on the perspectives of CSOs)²⁷ Not only were many of the physical spaces of field-based women's CSOs ruined by the earthquakes, but the pressure to respond to the high workload has also taken its toll on staff. Therefore, case identification and referrals by CSOs are mostly conducted for high-risk cases, and even those are undertaken with limited capacity which may hinder risk management and mitigation for lower risk cases and compromise the quality of comprehensive services provided to the high-risk ones. Moreover, CSOs report that they face challenges to access and work in formal settlements, which limits their presence there and thus the ability to serve large population of women and girls in need. Where CSOs have been able to work in formal settlements, their work has proven to be very valuable particularly in the form of women-only spaces/safe spaces that provide increased opportunities for women to overcome reluctance in reporting, self-disclose VAWG incidents and risks, and access information, referrals and/or services. Overall, lack of sustained and adequate funding remains an overarching challenge, which has affected the ability of CSOs to scale their work, and to be able to respond to needs in more remote and difficult to access locations. In cases where this was possible CSOs' activities in remote, rural and informal areas allow enhanced identification and service delivery to earthquake victims.

The consultations confirmed the key role of CSOs working on women's rights, fostering women's leadership and women's economic empowerment. For example, CSOs with a strong community-based protection background have mobilized women's committees and women community leaders in settlement areas, allowing women's inputs to be reflected to the design of WASH facilities in shelters. CSOs which provide health services, mental and sexual and reproductive health services in particular, form a unique space for identifying women's protection concerns and referrals. Mobile psychologists and psychiatrists' role (particularly the latter's ability to prescribe medicine) is also very useful for holistic response services.

On the other hand, women-led organizations show very limited participation to humanitarian coordination structures. Particularly protection coordination structures, which are based on pre-existing and strong systems of refugee response in the region, have aligned their areas of responsibility to the results of the earthquake. While this is very useful in maintaining multi-stakeholder response and provincial level coordination provides a fruitful ground for collaboration and referrals, it is difficult for new actors to get acquainted to structures and tools which were established in the region for refugee response. A good practice addressing this gap is Kadın Merkezi Vakfı/Women's Center Foundation (KAMER), a women-led organization which co-chairs the Gender-Based Violence sub-sector at regional Gaziantep level.



27 UN Women (May 2023). Her Aftermath- The impact of the earthquakes in Türkiye: Perspectives of civil society organizations working for the rights of women and girls Available at [Link](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations are made for all stakeholders involved in the humanitarian response and recovery efforts to ensure prevention, risk mitigation and response to violence against women and girls.

PREVENTION AND RISK MITIGATION

- Ensure that the basic needs of women and girls, in all their diversity, are met equitably and are considered across all sectors in a gender-responsive manner. As a prerequisite for this, it is essential to collect sex and age disaggregated data across sectors and across all planning, reporting and monitoring tools utilized in the response and to make needed adjustments in programming based on the results of gender responsive assessments and monitoring.
- In the provision of shelter, ensure safe living arrangements for women and girls that respects their privacy and dignity. Ensure that safety considerations are incorporated during planning, design and construction of new temporary settlements, based on consultations with women and girls, women's civil society organizations and gender experts. Consider prioritizing VAWG experience or risks in relocation from informal to formal settlements, form a rights-based and survivor-centered approach.
- In the provision of WASH facilities, ensure they are segregated by sex, not overcrowded, have adequate hygiene conditions and lighting, and are not too far from places where women and girls reside.
- In the provision of early recovery, livelihoods initiatives and cash-based interventions (CBI), ensure women's economic empowerment, to mitigate risks of violence. These initiatives should be considerate of local sources of income such as prominent agricultural and industrial practices in the impacted provinces, responding to women's occupational skills and labour dynamics such as on-site or remote work, centered on the principle of "Build Back Better" and "Leaving No one Behind" and reconstructing and building capacity, without disrupting protection services.
- Mainstream gender and protection across humanitarian (sub-)sectors and working groups, with the following prioritized areas of responsibility: health, temporary settlement and shelter, CBI, food security and logistics and education.
- Support localized community-based solutions working with multiple stakeholders, including men and boys, and community leaders, in violence prevention initiatives.
- Work with women leaders, committees and/or similar structures within temporary settlements, to include women and girls in all phases of programming and response, tailored for changing needs.
- Ensure that information on zero tolerance to violence against women and on available reporting mechanisms, services and legal advice are widely available in an accessible way across temporary settlements. This includes ensuring information in a variety of languages, and easily visibly and accessible to women in all their diversity, in both public and private spaces.



Two girls walk through the aftermath of the earthquake in Islahiye, Gaziantep one of the hardest-hit regions. Photo: UN Women / Nilüfer Baş



A woman walks with her child through the container city in Hatay. Photo: UN Women / Sena Şar

- Provide women with information on their legal rights in relation to housing, land and property rights as well as with respect different forms of violence and humanitarian law.
- Ensure that women frontliners and service providers are recruited in/mobilized to the field in government institutions and non-governmental organizations to support gender-responsive service provision.
- Prioritize education and social support mechanisms for adolescent girls to prevent child, early and forced marriages and other forms of violence against girls.

RESPONSE

- Provide comprehensive and holistic services to women and girls who are survivors or at risk to violence. This includes providing:
- PSS in safe and private spaces, including at informal settlements where formal service provision capacities are limited;
- Legal services, including an approach from social service-legal nexus for comprehensive response and referral services;
- Health care services, including sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services; Dedicated shelters for VAWG survivors; and,
- Support to CSOs for their increased presence and targeted complementary services for women and girls in temporary settlements.

- Evaluate and provide guidance on the effective implementation of protective and preventive measures regulated in Law No:6284 to Protect Family and Prevent Violence against Women for victims and persons at risk of violence, in line with the new field dynamics in the post-earthquake context.
- Reinstate and reconsider pre-existing protection modalities' implementation in post-earthquake context, with an emphasis on preventive and supportive measures for perpetrators (such as anger management, substance abuse treatment etc.) regulated in Law No:6284 to Protect Family and Prevent Violence against Women.
- Enhance technical capacities of EVAWG service providers across sectors on comprehensive VAW response and prevention, GEWE, PSEA and self-care and recovery. This includes, how to appropriately engage with survivors and at-risk women and girls, PSEA and PSS, as well as case management mechanisms, with men and boy engagement and staff self-care components where relevant. This would be most appropriate for: law enforcement, including police, gendarmerie, soldiers; the administrators of settlement communities and VAWG focal points of social service centers.
- Advocate and collaborate with authorities at the central and provincial levels for increased formal social service provision and case management to respond to VAWG in temporary settlement areas.
- Re-establish and update hotlines for women and girls to access advice and information, with most up-to date information. Ensure that communities are aware of these hotlines and can access them.
- Provide CSOs working on prevention and response to VAWG with adequate resources to be able to complement the service provision from authorities, for example in areas such as legal information and referrals for VAWG incidents, including CEFM.
- Strengthen the links between women-led organizations and humanitarian coordination structures at hub and regional Gaziantep level, through measures such as mapping women-led organizations active in the earthquake impacted region, ensuring regular flow of information including on funding opportunities, enabling their participation in local coordination structures and others.



UN Women facilitating group discussions with the women living in tent cities in Kahramanmaraş. Photo: UN Women / Nilüfer Baş



Women sharing the challenges they have and their needs during the group discussions. *Photo: UN Women / Nilüfer Baş*

Overall, it is recommended to capture, document, disseminate, replicate and scale up good practices that exist in the area of preventing and combating VAWG in the post-earthquake context. Some of these have been captured in this report but a broader inquiry into good practices is needed in order to ensure they do not remain isolated or small scale.

For more information about efforts to end violence against women and girls in Türkiye, and how you can support, please get in touch with evaw.türkiye@unwomen.org. For more information on how UN Women is responding to the earthquakes' devastating impacts on women and girls, please visit the [website](#).

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