



**CONNECTING
BUSINESS
INITIATIVE**



CASE STUDY

TÜRKIYE EARTHQUAKES 2023:

**Lessons Learned on Business Engagement
in the Humanitarian Response**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The earthquakes that struck Türkiye and Syria in February 2023 prompted a major humanitarian response led by the Turkish Government and supported by the United Nations and other local actors, including businesses in Türkiye. In this case study, we explore the role of businesses in the Turkish context, including successes and challenges in coordinating between the private sector and humanitarian organizations, with the aim of improving private sector collaboration in future humanitarian responses.

SPECIFICALLY, THIS CASE STUDY AIMS TO:

1. showcase examples of how the local private sector actors helped support the response;
2. highlight good practices as well as challenges experienced in terms of public-private collaboration; and
3. provide recommendations to humanitarian actors on how to improve business engagement in future emergencies.

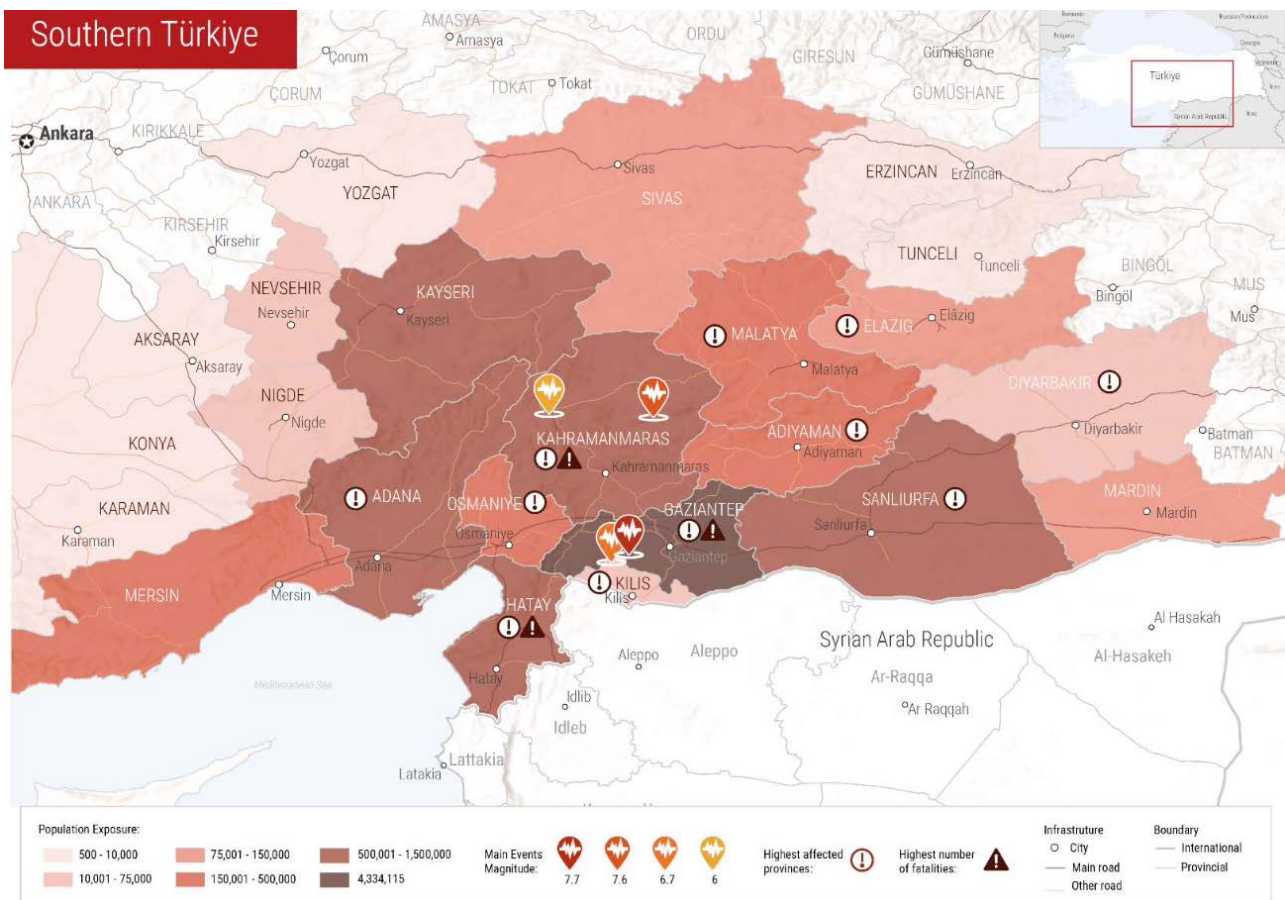
The Türkiye earthquake response revealed key lessons and themes: There is a need for improved coordination among humanitarian entities, governments and the private sector; business is not only a source of funding but a strategic partner that can provide in-kind and skills-based contributions; and data sharing among response actors is extremely important.

Building on the lessons learned, this publication makes recommendations that focus on enhancing communication and coordination while also facilitating resource tracking and reporting during emergencies. Businesses are encouraged to conduct regular preparedness drills, assess risks and develop crisis management plans. Standardized data collection, mapping of local resources and recognition of companies as trusted sources of information are essential to effective humanitarian responses.

In summary, the Türkiye earthquake response highlighted the critical role of coordinated efforts between the public and private sectors and the power of partnering with businesses as both a source of funding and skills-based contributions. The recommendations presented aim to strengthen future disaster responses and provide valuable insights into fostering resilience and collaboration in the face of complex humanitarian challenges.

THE IMPACT OF THE EARTHQUAKES

On 6 February 2023, Türkiye and Syria were hit by a series of devastating earthquakes. A 7.7-magnitude earthquake struck the south-eastern region of Türkiye, Kahramanmaraş, and a 7.5-magnitude earthquake came a few hours later, followed by more than a thousand aftershocks over the next few days.



The region affected by the earthquakes. Photo: OCHA

[According to the Turkish Ministry of Interior and the United Nations \(UN\) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\)](#), the earthquakes directly impacted over 9.1 million people, causing over 50,700 deaths, the displacement of over 3 million people and the destruction of more than 313,000 buildings. Economically, small businesses – which make up a significant percentage of the Turkish economy – were among the hardest hit.

How did the earthquakes affect the economy?

The Turkish Enterprise and Business Confederation (TÜRKONFED) published an initial [economic impact report](#) analysing the financial impact of the earthquakes on the Turkish economy. While the UN and others carried out damage assessments, this economic impact assessment was unique and was referenced by numerous stakeholders and covered by the global press.

This initial report was based on data from previous earthquakes. It included contextual information on the affected population in the 10 provinces declared disaster areas and a macroeconomic impact analysis that calculated the human, financial and economic loss to the country. For example, the report highlighted that the affected provinces were responsible for more than 20 per cent of Türkiye's agricultural production and 14 per cent of the country's cattle. Gaziantep alone was responsible for a significant proportion of the country's exports, contributing US\$10.5 billion to the economy.

The report also notes that for local businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), all the vulnerabilities and challenges that existed before the earthquakes have been compounded by the effects of the disaster. These may include the need to relocate, loss of staff, changes in consumer behaviour, supply chain disruptions and more. Therefore, without specific policies to support the recovery of local businesses, Türkiye's overall economic recovery will be severely hampered.

TÜRKONFED'S INITIAL ESTIMATES INCLUDED:



193,399

people injured and

72,663

deaths



A total of

\$84.06 billion

in damages, of which

\$70.75 billion

was in housing losses



An estimated

\$10.4 billion

in lost national

income and

\$2.91 billion

in lost working days



OCHA staff brief a group of women and children. Photo: OCHA/Sevim Turkmani

OVERVIEW OF THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO THE EARTHQUAKES

In response to the earthquakes, Türkiye's President Erdoğan declared a state of emergency on 7 February and called for international assistance. This allowed search and rescue teams to be deployed rapidly. The response was led by the Government of Türkiye through the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD). The UN Resident Coordinator, Alvaro Rodriguez, was appointed as the Humanitarian Coordinator, working with relevant organizations (both UN and non-UN) through a Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). The UN agencies present in Türkiye thus shifted their focus from development to humanitarian response, working with humanitarian organizations and the private sector.

Turkish businesses, large and small, immediately mobilized to contribute to the search and rescue efforts and the overall response. The following is an overview of the different players and the role each played, from the UN to the private sector.



South African USAR team member rescue dog Jaru and his trainer in in Hatay, Türkiye. Photo: OCHA

Coordinating the humanitarian response in Türkiye

The UN's response in Türkiye was designed to support the Government-led earthquake response by mobilizing, coordinating and implementing international humanitarian assistance.

As part of the humanitarian response, UN agencies and humanitarian organizations were grouped into "sectors" based on the main focus of their humanitarian services: shelter, health, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), emergency telecommunications, logistics, early recovery, food security, education, camp management and protection. This sectoral approach aimed to strengthen partnerships and increase the predictability and accountability of international humanitarian action by better prioritizing and clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of humanitarian organizations.

Private sector and civil society organizations interested in contributing to the humanitarian response, while capable of acting on their own, were often unsure of where and how to contribute. Without an understanding of what is most needed and where, the risk of waste and duplication increases, and resources may be allocated based on accessibility rather than need.

Working with the private sector to support the humanitarian response

“I have not yet talked to a Turkish executive who was not actively involved in the first weeks of the earthquake response, using their business networks to help in any way they could.”

Louisa Vinton, Resident Representative, United Nations Development Programme Türkiye

One of the greatest challenges in coordinating a humanitarian response involving government, the UN and businesses are differences in language, culture and approach. Because of these fundamental operational differences, the private sector does not naturally fit into UN response mechanisms. A concrete example of how these differences manifest themselves arises when reporting on activities and contributions: a lack of familiarity with and understanding of each other’s vocabulary and systems can prove challenging, compounded by the urgency of taking action to save lives and livelihoods.

For this reason, OCHA established a focal point for private sector engagement in response to the February 2023 earthquakes. They selected a representative from Connecting Business initiative (CBI), a programme run jointly by OCHA and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) whose mandate is to engage with businesses before, during and after emergencies. In this capacity and as part of their ongoing role with CBI, the focal point for private sector engagement worked in close coordination with the CBI in-country partners, TÜRKONFED and Business for Goals (B4G) Platform, as well as other local businesses to facilitate requests and offers of support for the humanitarian response.

The focal point for private sector engagement focused on coordinating and facilitating engagement between the private sector and the UN to leverage each other’s resources and expertise to ensure the most effective and efficient response possible.

“As the private sector focal point, I act as a translator between the private sector and humanitarian agencies. The private sector wants to help, and in a high-middle economy such as Türkiye, we have to recognize the critical role that the private sector, especially the Turkish business community, plays at the coordination table.”



Florian Rhiza Nery, the CBI Network Coordination Specialist deployed as the focal point for private sector engagement for OCHA.

Hatay’s EXPO exhibition space was used to stock and organize much-needed aid by the Disaster Platform (a consortium of NGOs that respond to disasters). Photo: CBI/Florian Rhiza Nery

HOW THE PRIVATE SECTOR MOBILIZED IN RESPONSE TO THE EARTHQUAKES

The earthquakes had a profound impact on the communications infrastructure, disrupting the communication towers used by major providers and causing complete network failure. Although companies worked as quickly as possible to restore communications, access-related issues and the central location of equipment made it difficult to deploy the necessary tools. This led to the decision to incorporate lessons learned into updated operating procedures to contribute to greater systemic resilience from a telecommunications perspective.

While companies of all sizes and from all sectors mobilized in an impressive show of solidarity, the following is a selection of examples of how companies contributed to the response.

“From the moment the disaster hit, TÜRKONFED’s Crisis Desk coordinated assistance from every region of Türkiye to the earthquake zone. In this context, we worked hand-in-hand with more than 60,000 members across Türkiye and many other stakeholders. A disaster of such magnitude requires cooperation between and among national and international actors. Therefore, we need to expand inclusive and participatory collaboration for the medium- to long-term recovery process.”



Tens of thousands of people have lost their homes because of the earthquakes. This child is at a reception centre near Aleppo, in north-west Syria. Photo: UNOCHA/Mohanad Zayat

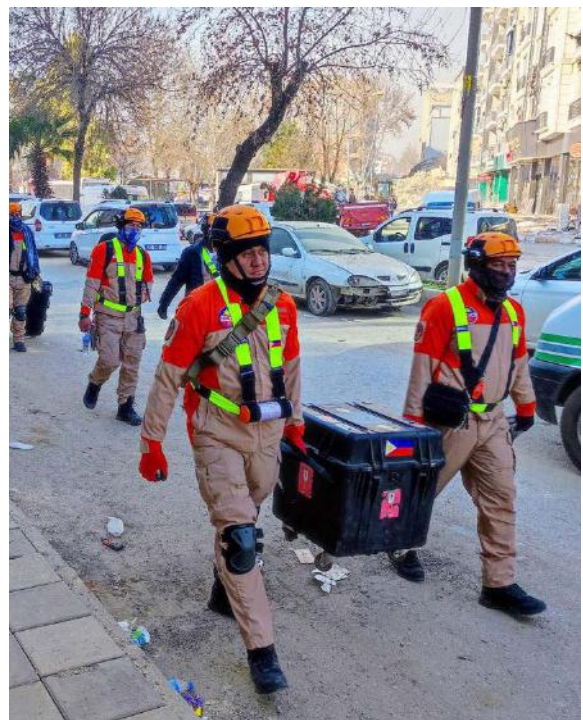
Arda Batu, Secretary General and Board Member of TÜRKONFED

SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS BY THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, SPEARHEADED BY TÜRKONFED AND WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE TURKISH INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS ASSOCIATION TÜSİAD, INCLUDE:

- Checking in with business members from the affected provinces immediately after the earthquakes and setting up a crisis coordination help desk to consolidate offers of in-kind support.
- Some \$11 million in donations, in the form of 243 trucks of food and non-food items, more than 21,000 blankets, 395 shelter containers, more than 1,000 tents and 15,000 beds, four soup kitchens and three mobile kitchens, 100 portable toilets and bathrooms, 53 generators and 1,000 heaters.
- Supporting the UN and humanitarian partners with transportation and accommodation during the first week of the response.
- Recognition of the private sector's contribution in UN situation reports, OCHA's [Türkiye Earthquakes Humanitarian Needs and Response Overview](#) and even in OCHA's financial tracking system.
- TÜRKONFED, together with the Federation of Sectoral Associations, the Habitat Association and the Ahbap Association, set up temporary living centres known as KASABA, housing 1,500 people in 300 containers in three different locations in Samandağ, Hatay. These integrated the requests and feedback of the affected communities and included psychological support and learning centres.

CBi also coordinated offers of support from international companies and business organizations around the world. CBi Member Networks from the Philippines, Indonesia, Mexico and Sri Lanka sent [search and rescue experts](#) and emergency medical teams and technicians through official government missions, as well as donations and medical supplies.

Immediately after the earthquakes, the **American Chamber of Commerce and Industry Türkiye (AmCham Türkiye)**, which has over 115 multinational members, organized a [webinar](#) on the earthquake response with the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation. AmCham Türkiye [coordinated with its members](#) and organized subcommittees focusing on food and agriculture, the digital economy and support for small businesses.



Search and rescue experts from the Philippines, including members from the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF), are on the ground in Türkiye. Photo: PDRF

AMCHAM TÜRKİYE MEMBERS MOBILIZED RESOURCES IN MANY WAYS, SOME EXAMPLES OF WHICH ARE LISTED BELOW.

- **Borusan Cat**, a distributor of Caterpillar machinery, deployed response teams and provided construction equipment and machinery for use in the earthquake zone in coordination with the Turkish Construction Equipment Distributors' and Manufacturers' Association (İmder).
- **Coca-Cola İçecek** shipped over 140 truckloads of bottled water and beverages to meet immediate needs, and donated \$1.7 million to the Turkish Red Crescent Society and NGOs.
- **Estée Lauder Companies (ELC)** rolled out a multifaceted approach to support employees, children, and women in the affected regions. This included donations to UNICEF Türkiye and other organizations as well as a double match donation campaign, and in-kind donations for cleaning and hygiene, among others.
- **MSD Animal Health** worked with the Türkiye Veterinary Association to provide scholarships to students from the affected provinces and made donations to the association, as did Global Merck and the American Veterinary Medical Association.
- **PepsiCo** provided shelter and immediate needs to its employees in the affected areas. The company and its foundation also donated more than \$1.3 million of aid to local nonprofit partners for essential supplies both in Türkiye and Syria. PepsiCo is also working on long-term projects to support the recovery of the region.
- **Procter & Gamble Türkiye** sent mobile toilet and baby care kits, mobilized laundry trucks and provided detergents to support the mobile laundry trucks dispatched by Arçelik, a Turkish multinational household appliances manufacturer.



South African USAR team search for survivors of the earthquake, in Hatay, Türkiye. Photo: OCHA

In addition, during the earthquake response, **Uluslararası Nakliyeciler Derneği (UND)**, an international transportation association, **set up a crisis desk and website to match urgent needs with available vehicles and drivers** for the government response. UND's Chair and Deputy Chair also directly assisted AFAD staff in transporting resources for other organizations several times a week.

The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB) was also instrumental in organizing the private sector.

These are just a few examples of how companies and private sector networks contributed to the humanitarian response and are by no means a complete representation of how the business community stepped up to support Türkiye in its time of need.

Challenges associated with private sector engagement in the humanitarian response

THE CHALLENGES FACED BY COMPANIES INVOLVED IN THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO THE EARTHQUAKES CAN BE GROUPED INTO THREE BROAD CATEGORIES:

1.

Differences in language, culture and operational approach between the public and private sectors make it difficult to coordinate different players in emergency situations.

2.

Business is traditionally seen as a source of funding, but it has as much, if not more, to offer in terms of skills and in-kind contributions, requiring more of a partnership approach. However, it takes time and trust to establish ways of working together that go beyond the exchange of financial resources.

3.

Information-sharing does not always come naturally across sectors, and yet it has an impact on the effective allocation and distribution of resources, as well as on transparency and accountability. For example, businesses often have a unique understanding of and access to the communities in which they operate. In addition, tracking both financial and in-kind contributions is essential for transparency and accountability.

Capturing and reporting private sector contributions

In the aftermath of the earthquakes, the private sector mobilized significant resources, exceeding the UN's fundraising capacity. For example, the UN Flash Appeal sought \$1 billion but fell short, while the "Türkiye One Heart" fundraising campaign on 15 February 2023 attracted pledges equivalent to \$6 billion. However, the allocation of these resources was often unclear due to coordination challenges between sectors and reporting difficulties.

In humanitarian response, the UN uses the 3W reporting system as a key coordination tool. This mechanism allows humanitarian sectors and clusters to develop a clear understanding of **who** is doing **what** and **where** during a crisis. However, for this approach to be integrated and successful, partners must effectively capture and report on private sector contributions in a way that aligns seamlessly with the UN's reporting methodology.

Private sector organizations often use unique reporting approaches. To promote a fuller understanding of their contributions, it would be very valuable for them to become familiar with the 3W reporting requirements. This also requires an understanding of how to translate both financial and in-kind contributions into reporting mechanisms.

With this in mind, CBI developed the [Türkiye Earthquakes Private Sector Donations Tracker Dashboard](#). While data collection has proven challenging, the dashboard continues to evolve and provide additional transparency and accountability.

LESSONS LEARNED FOR IMPROVED PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT IN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

In September 2023, CBI, the UNDP in Türkiye, the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office (RCO) in Türkiye, TÜRKONFED and B4G organized [a workshop funded by the United States Agency for International Development \(USAID\)](#) to begin answering questions about lessons learned and how to improve business engagement in disaster management for future crises.



Private sector partners have donated millions of dollars in in-kind donations, including tents, portable toilets and mobile kitchens. Photo: TÜRKONFED

FOUR MAIN THEMES WERE HIGHLIGHTED:

1.

Improving coordination between the humanitarian community, governments and the private sector

2.

The critical role of business in disaster preparedness

3.

Collecting and sharing data among response actors, including the private sector

4.

Working together to build back better during recovery and reconstruction efforts in the affected regions

Disaster preparedness was deemed relevant because when organizations – including, but not limited to, businesses – have contingency and emergency plans in place, the impact of a crisis is reduced, whether by mitigating the loss of lives and assets or allowing services to continue or resume more rapidly.

Furthermore, implementing disaster preparedness and response coherently and effectively paves the way for an earlier, more robust recovery. For example, identifying, understanding, and addressing the actual needs of the affected people can make response and recovery efforts more effective, thus avoiding duplication and guaranteeing quality of aid provided. This can enable local businesses and the communities in which they operate to recover more quickly and more robustly, promoting greater societal resilience overall.

Building on this exchange, the following section contains some practical recommendations to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of responses.



For governments and humanitarian organizations:

- **Integrating private sector coordination, establishing pre-disaster agreements and creating communication mechanisms** that are aligned with the relevant government contingency and response plans would improve communication, resource tracking and resource allocation during an emergency. This includes proposing that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (the highest-level humanitarian coordination platform within the UN system) integrate private sector engagement as a cross-cutting theme and that the Humanitarian Country Teams/UN Country Teams include private sector representatives from the very beginning.
- **Understand that many local businesses and business leaders are a trusted source of information about and with affected communities** during crises and are fluent in the local language. Such data and analytics can enable organizations to develop resilience strategies, issue timely warnings, improve response efforts and address solutions collaboratively.



To improve private sector coordination during response operations:

- **Map where local private sector resources are located and how to access them most effectively**, which could be incorporated into local or national disaster response or contingency plans for greater efficiency.
- **Establish a standardized approach to data collection**, involving all relevant actors to better understand where resources are most needed during a response and who is doing what to avoid waste and duplication. This improved data collection can then promote greater visibility of private sector activities and contributions, ensuring that recognition and credit are given where they are due and fostering greater transparency and accountability.



For businesses to enhance preparedness measures:

- **Businesses should regularly conduct drills, assess potential risks, and ensure that their emergency management and continuity plans are updated.** These initiatives might include identifying seismic hazard zones and evacuation routes, ensuring that critical infrastructure is able to withstand the effects of major earthquakes, establishing and maintaining relationships with local government and practising crisis communication strategies with employees. Businesses may also want to consider whether resources and crisis management teams should be centralized or decentralized, particularly with regard to disaster resilience.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: IMPROVING BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

This case study of the Türkiye earthquakes provides lessons for shaping the landscape of future disaster management. Central to this narrative is an emphasis on collaboration, as the experiences shared throughout the study underscore the importance of coordination and recognize the key role of the business community in a more effective and efficient response.

As the earthquake response efforts shift to a continued focus on recovery, CBI and its partners remain committed to supporting and enhancing private sector engagement in disaster management, not only in Türkiye but worldwide. The case study's findings and recommendations provide a road map to resilience, offering tangible solutions to the complex challenges of humanitarian response and recovery.

If you are interested in contributing to these ongoing efforts, or have valuable data on business contributions to the Türkiye earthquake response and recovery, we invite you to contact us via email at connectingbusiness@un.org.

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If you have any data to share for the private sector contributions tracker – about in-kind or financial donations, or both – you can fill out the form available at the following link:

1) Click here: <http://bit.ly/ps-tur>

OR

2) Scan the QR code



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