



# OPERATIONAL REVIEW

## TÜRKİYE EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE EMERGENCY APPEAL

April 2025

**LIST OF ACRONYMS**

AFAD	Disaster and Emergency Management Authority
CHF	Swiss Franc
DREF	Disaster Response Emergency Fund
EA	Emergency Appeal
EMT	Evaluation Management Team
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GoT	Government of Türkiye
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
NSDOC	National Society Development and Operations Coordination
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OR	Operational Review
PNS	Partner National Societies
RACI	Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed
RCRC	Red Cross Red Crescent
ROE	Regional Office for Europe
USD	United State Dollar
UN	United Nations
TL	Team Leader
TRCS	Turkish Red Crescent Society
ToR	Terms of Reference
WFP	World Food Program

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Operational Review (OR) aims to evaluate the first year of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Network's response to the February 2023 earthquakes in Southeast Türkiye, focusing on key lessons learned in supporting locally led humanitarian action and the auxiliary role of the National Society in large-scale disasters.

The findings will guide future programming in Türkiye and similar global contexts. Commissioned by senior IFRC and Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS) officials, the Review Team comprises a leader and up to two experts, ensuring objectivity. Reporting to an Evaluation Management Team with representatives from IFRC's Regional Office, Geneva HQ, and TRC, the OR has span from July to September 2024.

The review includes a comprehensive desk review, stakeholder mapping, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. The focus of this evaluation is to assess the IFRC Network's response in Türkiye with the following purposes:

1. Evaluate the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the support provided by IFRC to the Turkish Red Crescent relief operation.
2. Evaluate how the IFRC network performed against its Grand Bargain localization commitments.
3. Explore challenges and opportunities related to the Turkish Red Crescent auxiliary role to draw lessons learned for future operations.

## II. BACKGROUND OF THE CRISIS<sup>1</sup>

On 6 February 2023, a 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck at 04:17, followed by 83 aftershocks and a second earthquake of 7.6 magnitude at 13:24, impacting ten provinces in Türkiye and affecting about 13.5 million residents. On the same day, the Ministry of Interior announced the highest-level alarm and requested for international assistance. AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management Authority), part of the same ministry declared the earthquake as a Level 4 and hence within the scope of Türkiye Disaster Response Plan and started the process of damage detection together with the other official organizations. Four days later, on 10 February, President Erdogan announced a state of emergency in the affected 10 provinces for three months and declared seven days of national mourning around the country. On 20 February, a 6.4 magnitude earthquake hit Defne district, followed by a 5.8 magnitude quake in Samandağ district, causing further damage.

In total, 17 provinces have been impacted by the earthquake with an estimated 9.1 million people directly affected according to AFAD. These earthquakes were among the largest and deadliest in Türkiye's history. The early morning timing likely increased casualties. The affected areas were already impacted by the Syrian

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<sup>1</sup> Sources: IFRC operational strategy and the revised emergency appeal #2

civil war since 2011, hosting about 1.8 million Syrian refugees, 47% of all Syrian refugees in Türkiye. The disaster severely damaged infrastructure and livelihoods, with agricultural losses estimated at USD 6.4 billion<sup>2</sup>. This, coupled with the ongoing economic crisis led to economic disruption and internal displacement hindering basic needs.

To respond to the disaster, the Türkiye government and humanitarian actors initially focused on search and rescue and immediate life-saving assistance. However, given the scale of devastation, long-term relief and recovery efforts were clearly necessary. Following a multi-sectorial rapid assessment launched by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) four main areas of severe impact were identified: Shelter, Housing, and Settlements; Food and Livelihoods; Health and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene; and Protection, Gender, and Inclusion.

### **III. THE TRC OPERATION<sup>3</sup>**

During the earthquake response, TRC led mass feeding services under the National Disaster Response Plan and contributed to health services, psychological support, relief item distribution, and shelter assistance. Cash and voucher assistance (CVA) was also utilized to address urgent needs.

In the first six months, TRC provided 416 million meals, clean water, hygiene items, and health services. Additionally, 1.34 million individuals received cash assistance to cover basic needs. These achievements were made possible by TRC's extensive network of 13,000 staff, 300,000 volunteers, and its presence in 520 branches across the country.

TRC leveraged its experience from previous earthquakes and its existing cash-based programs, like the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN<sup>4</sup>), to scale up its operations. Its well-equipped headquarters and operational Emergency Operations Centre enabled TRC to swiftly assess and address ground-level needs.

In response to the disaster, the IFRC launched on 7<sup>th</sup> of February a Federation-wide Emergency Appeal (EA) of 120M CHF (which included an allocation of CHF 2 million from IFRC's Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) aiming to assist 300,000 people. As the scale of the disaster became clearer, the EA was revised twice, with the funding target increasing to CHF 750 million, intended to support mid-to-long-term recovery efforts for 1.25 million people.

IFRC, through its country delegation and regional office, supported TRC by sharing information, coordinating membership, mobilizing resources, and providing technical expertise. The Rapid Response Mechanism was activated, deploying 43 individuals over four months, alongside long-term intervention roles. IFRC also led

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<sup>2</sup> IFRC Emergency Appeal July 2023

<sup>3</sup> Sources: IFRC operational strategy and the revised emergency appeal #2

<sup>4</sup> The Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) Program provides unrestricted, unconditional cash assistance to people living under temporary or international protection in Türkiye to help them meet their basic needs. The ESSN is funded by the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) and implemented through a partnership between the Ministry of Family and Social Services (MoFSS), the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and the Türk Kızılay.

shelter sector coordination at the request of OCHA, sustaining this role for nearly a year to ensure structured guidance and cooperation with the Government of Türkiye.

Collaboration with Turkish authorities, including AFAD and ministries, and strong partnerships with international actors, such as the UN, further enhanced TRC's response capabilities, maximizing efforts to meet the needs of affected populations.

#### **IV. THE EVALUATION TEAM**

The evaluation team consisted of three members:

- Team Leader: Aya Yagan, Technical Director at NSDation Consultancy Services
- Team Member: Anna Cerutti, Program Coordinator Country Cluster Delegation for Poland, Baltic States, Moldova, Romania and Czech Republic at IFRC.
- Associate Researcher: Meryem Esra Varol, Researcher at Turkish Red Crescent Academy

The evaluation team reports to the Evaluation Management Team (EMT), which managed and oversaw the evaluation process at the technical level. The EMT consisted of:

- 1 x focal point from IFRC Geneva HQ (Operations)
- 2 x focal point from IFRC Regional Office for Europe (ROE): Operations and PMER
- 1 x focal point from Turkish Red Crescent Academy

#### **V. THE EVALUATION METHODOLOGY<sup>5</sup>**

The evaluation followed a structured approach to comprehensively address the specific Terms of Reference (ToR) questions, consisting of four key phases: Literature Review, Stakeholder Mapping, In-depth Interviews, and a Group Discussion.

1. **Literature Review:** This phase involved a desk review of various documents from IFRC and TRCS, along with secondary data analysis. Key outputs included:
  - Review of key documents including (Operational Strategy, Sitreps, Operation Updates, Recovery Assessment, End of Deployment reports and other documentation produced as part of the operation)
  - Use of TRC and IFRC primary datasets, including surveys and evaluations from the Kizilay Academy.
  - Creation of an evaluation matrix aligning ToR questions with data collection methods, ensuring systematic coverage.

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<sup>5</sup> The full methodology and ethical standards can be found in the inception report

2. **Stakeholder Mapping:** Stakeholders were identified and categorized into:

- Internal (IFRC, TRC, Partner National Societies),
- External (UN agencies, international organizations, local government),
- Affected Populations (perspectives captured through secondary data and proxy informants).

3. **In-depth Interviews:**

- Interviews were conducted with 54 key stakeholders over a four-week period, including online and in-person interviews in Ankara.
- Stakeholders included 35 internal members (focused on operational capacity), 8 external partners (collaboration and impact), and 11 higher-level interviews (strategic insights).
- Interviews followed a structured guide aligned with ToR questions to ensure consistency and comprehensive data collection.

4. **Group Discussion:** One online validation workshop on September 16, with members of IFRC and TRCS to review and validate preliminary findings.

## VI. LIMITATIONS

1. The review process engaged a wide range of stakeholders at different levels—internal and external—including representatives from IFRC, TRC, UN agencies, local authorities, and PNSs, spanning strategic, management, and operational roles. This diversity enriched the review but also presented challenges in generating consensus across all areas of analysis. Due to the variety of perspectives, experiences, and institutional roles, views sometimes diverged. Where possible, the analysis highlights areas with strong convergence and notes where findings were raised by only a few respondents.
2. The team sought to engage AFAD representatives to gather strategic-level insights. Although AFAD provided valuable inputs, access to certain cross-departmental information was limited. Their perspectives have been incorporated into the report as comprehensively as possible within these constraints.
3. Lack of TRC branches and field-level personnel feedback does not allow to capture these stakeholders' perspectives on internal coordination, decision-making, and capacity-building efforts.
4. Direct engagement with affected populations through data collection was not included in the methodology, as the primary focus of this review is an in-depth assessment of operational capacity, partnership dynamics, and the auxiliary role.

## VII. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### IFRC relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the support provided by IFRC to the Turkish Red Crescent relief operation

The IFRC's support to the TRC during the 2023 earthquake response was instrumental in mobilizing financial, operational, and human resources to address immediate and evolving needs. The response demonstrated notable successes in alignment, agility, and scale, while also highlighting key lessons for optimizing future large-scale operations.

#### Rapid Financial and Operational Mobilization

The IFRC swiftly activated CHF 2 million from the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) within 24 hours, providing an essential financial bridge for TRC's immediate response. The Emergency Appeal (EA), launched on 7 February 2023 and later expanded from CHF 120 million to CHF 750 million<sup>6</sup> Federation-wide, enabled TRC to scale up operations and assist over 1.25 million people. As of May 2024, CHF 151.3<sup>7</sup> million had been mobilized against the Secretariat's CHF 400 million funding requirement<sup>8</sup>.

While early financial support was vital, challenges emerged around forecasting for mass feeding activities and sector-specific earmarking. Initial reporting inconsistencies were addressed through closer collaboration between IFRC and TRC finance teams, deployment of embedded technical support, and strengthened financial management systems—improving donor compliance and reporting standards over time.

#### Surge Deployment and Human Resource Coordination

The mobilization of human resources, through both IFRC surge mechanisms and Secretariat capacities, was instrumental at both strategic and operational levels. Early missions by senior leadership from the IFRC Europe Region, along with the deployment of experienced operations managers, helped set the strategic direction and strengthen operational priorities in close collaboration with TRC. In addition to standard surge deployments, the IFRC also drew on internal Secretariat capacities, mobilizing experienced personnel such as a Program Coordinator from the Poland Cluster, a Membership Coordinator, and senior advisors to the Head of Delegation. These deployments played a pivotal role in strengthening coordination, embedding IFRC

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<sup>6</sup> The EA was revised twice, first on February 16, 2023, and subsequently on June 2, 2023. The first revision of the Emergency Appeal increased the funding requirements from CHF 120 million to CHF 350 million for the Secretariat and CHF 450 million for the Federation-wide effort. Additionally, the targeted population to be assisted was raised to 1.25 million people. The second revision further increased the funding asks, with the IFRC Secretariat's request rising to CHF 400 million and the Federation-wide ask reaching CHF 750 million.

<sup>7</sup> Source: IFRC Operation Update #6.08/07/2024

<sup>8</sup> Whereas the Secretariat contribution to the Federation-Wide EA is known, the amount received by TRC through bilateral contributions is not.

standards, and ensuring that TRC's nationally led response was supported with technical expertise across areas such as accountability, quality assurance, and protection.

At the Ankara level, IFRC and TRC leadership institutionalized coordination through regular internal meetings, including the Directors Group (3DGs), bringing together directors from various TRC departments. These forums were critical in harmonizing approaches, building a shared understanding of IFRC's role, and ensuring operational coherence.

While the pace and complexity of the response naturally presented some challenges—such as the deployment of certain emergency tools that were ultimately not required, and the rotation of surge personnel less familiar with the Turkish context—these were progressively addressed through recalibrated deployments focused on areas where TRC identified clear needs, particularly in logistics, PMER, and finance. This adaptive approach ensured that surge capacities remained responsive and continued to complement TRC's evolving operational priorities.

### **Strategic Humanitarian Diplomacy**

Humanitarian diplomacy played a critical role throughout the response. IFRC actively supported TRC in reinforcing its auxiliary role, leading joint engagement with government authorities, diplomatic missions, and donors to secure political and financial support.

High-level humanitarian diplomacy efforts—including strategic donor visits, media engagement, and advocacy for alignment with Türkiye's nationally led response systems—were instrumental in sustaining international solidarity, safeguarding TRC's leadership position, and promoting localization principles. These efforts strengthened trust among partners, fostered flexible funding arrangements, and ensured that international support remained anchored to national priorities.

### **Membership Coordination**

Coordination between TRC, IFRC Secretariat, and Movement partners was largely effective in supporting TRC's leadership and minimizing the burden of international engagement. The appointment of IFRC as the central interlocutor streamlined communication and facilitated donor engagement, while the deployment of a Membership Coordinator strengthened operational information flows.

Nonetheless, some early challenges—such as parallel communications with donors and difficulties tracking bilateral contributions outside the Emergency Appeal framework—highlighted the need for stronger pre-agreed protocols and a unified communication strategy.

Similarly, the arrival of in-kind donations outside the Mobilization Table revealed gaps in coordination, underlining the importance of strategic donor sensitization on needs-based, timely contributions.

### Leveraging Existing Programs for Cash Assistance

The reallocation of approximately CHF 50M earmarked for cash assistance from the ESSN program to the Earthquakes operation, although extremely important for continuing addressing needs, was characterized by lengthy revision and approval processes. This, both from ECHO, ESSN-donor, and IFRC sides. A more adaptable and streamlined mechanism to manage large-scale financial reallocations in emergencies could enhance the speed and flexibility of future responses.

### Embedding PGI and CEA

During the 2023 earthquake response, TRC and IFRC made important progress in advancing Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) and Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA), despite the challenges of operating at scale. While TRC's strong foundations in gender-sensitive programming and safeguarding provided a solid starting point, PGI was not fully embedded in the early emergency phase due to competing life-saving priorities and the absence of centralized protection leadership. Over time, IFRC's technical support contributed to strengthening TRC's PGI systems, with initiatives such as cash-for-protection and improvements to camp conditions.

On CEA, while TRC rapidly activated multiple feedback channels to engage with affected communities, the unprecedented scale of the disaster and the operational pressures limited the ability to systematically close the feedback loop. The experience underscored the need to further institutionalize PGI and CEA capacities—ensuring they are fully integrated from the outset and adaptable to the demands of large-scale emergencies.

### Performance of the IFRC network against its Grand Bargain localization commitments

The IFRC's support to the TRC during the 2023 earthquake response reflected significant strides toward operationalizing Grand Bargain localization commitments. Built on a foundation of humanitarian diplomacy, long-term trust, and mutual respect, the partnership enabled TRC to lead one of the largest national disaster responses in Türkiye's history, with IFRC playing a strategic support and coordination role.

### Strategic Partnerships

The partnership between IFRC and TRC exemplified the Grand Bargain's commitment to local leadership. Rooted in trust and long-term collaboration through initiatives like the ESSN, this partnership enabled swift resource mobilization and a coordinated earthquake response. Expanding IFRC's engagement beyond TRC's International Department to other operational units deepened mutual understanding and improved internal collaboration. However, the lack of pre-existing cross-departmental familiarity with IFRC's tools initially delayed seamless integration. Institutionalizing joint emergency planning and cross-departmental workshops will ensure stronger alignment in future operations.

## Capacity Strengthening

Capacity strengthening was central to IFRC's localization strategy. Leveraging TRC's existing systems, including the Kızılay card, enabled the rapid scaling of cash assistance programs during the earthquake response. TRC's adaptability, demonstrated by the redirection of ESSN mechanisms to support relief efforts, showcased the success of capacity-building investments.

## Leveraging Existing Resources

TRC's ability to mobilize pre-existing systems and resources enabled an effective scale-up of operations. Activation of frameworks like TRC Disaster Response Plan (KAMP<sup>9</sup>) and Türkiye Disaster Response Plan (Türkiye Afet Müdahale Planı – TAMP<sup>10</sup> in Turkish) allowed TRC to deploy mass feeding and non-food item distribution within hours of the earthquake. Additionally, the integration of cash assistance mechanisms, such as the "Collective Kindness" program, showcased the value of leveraging established infrastructures. However, challenges in scaling cash interventions, including limited internal coordination and data integration, highlighted the need for stronger internal collaboration and preparedness.

## Coordination Mechanisms

Aligned closely with localization principles. IFRC's leadership in the Shelter Cluster, effective multilateral membership coordination, and support to tripartite partnerships (e.g., with WFP) illustrated how international actors can complement rather than override local leadership structures. Nevertheless, early-stage coordination faced internal TRC bottlenecks due to complex organizational structures and differences across departments, highlighting the need for more integrated contingency planning.

## Financing and Flexibility

IFRC's flexible financing mechanisms enabled TRC to address the immense demands of the earthquake response. While the initial Emergency Appeal did not prioritize food distribution, the TRC mandate as per the TAMP and the evolving needs on the ground prompted a significant reallocation of funds, aligning with TRC's priorities in mass feeding. This adaptability demonstrated IFRC's responsiveness; however, the reliance on earmarked funding limited TRC's decision-making autonomy. Advocating for unearmarked contributions and conditional flexibility agreements could enhance financial freedom for the national society.

## TRC's Auxiliary Role and Response to the Earthquake

The TRC, as an auxiliary to public authorities, played a critical role in Türkiye's 2023 earthquake response, operating within the national disaster management framework (TAMP) while upholding its independent humanitarian identity. TRC's clear legal mandate—particularly in leading mass feeding operations—its strong

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<sup>9</sup> <https://yillik.kizilayakademi.org.tr/en/the-power-of-solidarity-in-disaster-management/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.afad.gov.tr/turkiye-afet-mudahale-planı>

relationships with key government ministries, financial independence, and extensive operational experience enabled it to respond rapidly and at scale, despite the unprecedented magnitude of the disaster.

Key enablers included TRC's effective access to national data systems for targeted cash assistance, decentralized branch networks facilitating localized response, and its longstanding humanitarian diplomacy efforts that ensured integration within the government-led response while preserving operational neutrality. TRC's experience from programs such as the ESSN was pivotal in transitioning from immediate mass feeding to more dignified, needs-based cash assistance models as the crisis evolved.

A joint Humanitarian Diplomacy strategy was developed to strengthen TRC's international positioning as a leader in disaster management. TRC and IFRC worked closely with donors, UN agencies, and diplomatic missions to enhance visibility and alignment. IFRC also supported TRC's engagement with government authorities to advance laws on managing international assistance, including proposing a disaster agreement to formalize roles between TRC, the government, and IFRC. These efforts reinforced TRC's auxiliary role and expanded its recognition within the international humanitarian system.

However, several structural challenges emerged. The scale of mass feeding obligations under TAMP, coupled with limited financial guarantees from the government, placed significant strain on TRC's financial resources. This highlights the urgent need to establish stronger financial safeguard mechanisms, including contingency funding and pre-negotiated cost-sharing arrangements with state authorities, to protect TRC's operational and financial sustainability in future crises.

### **Public Communication and Managing Expectations**

Public perception also posed notable risks. Despite fulfilling its legally mandated roles, TRC's high visibility and close proximity to government authorities fuelled inflated public expectations regarding its responsibilities—particularly in sectors like shelter—leading to criticism and reputational pressures. To mitigate such risks, TRC should strengthen proactive public communication during peacetime, clearly articulating its auxiliary role, operational mandates, and humanitarian principles to both the public and state counterparts.

### **Enhancing Coordination with Local Authorities**

Challenges in tracking and coordinating international assistance, stemming from the centralized role of AFAD, also complicated oversight and accountability for PNS support. While efforts are underway to revise Türkiye's disaster management protocols, TRC should continue to advocate for distinct and transparent coordination channels (such as the "Red Channel") to safeguard the effective management of international support in future operations.

In sum, the 2023 earthquake response reaffirmed TRC's essential role within Türkiye's disaster management system. Moving forward, maintaining this leadership position will require reinforcing TRC's humanitarian positioning, strengthening its financial resilience, formalizing sectoral versatility, and ensuring principled alignment between national strategies and humanitarian action.

**VIII.EVALUATION FINDINGS**

**Pillar 1: The Relevance, Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Support Provided by IFRC to the Turkish Red Crescent Relief Operation**

*EQ1: How well did the IFRC support align with the identified needs and priorities of the Turkish Red Crescent in the aftermath of the earthquake?*



**Key Finding:** IFRC's support to TRC as a National Society proved highly responsive, agile, and relevant—demonstrated through the rapid activation of the DREF mechanism, effective humanitarian diplomacy that elevated TRC's positioning within the international community, and timely deployment of surge and management personnel—despite some initial uncertainties around roles and deployment priorities.

**1. Mobilizing resources in support of TRC's priorities**

The IFRC responded swiftly to TRC's initial request for support by launching the Emergency Appeal and activating the Disaster Emergency Fund (DREF) of CHF 2M which was approved on the 6th of February. The DREF acted as a financial bridge, enabling TRC to maintain its locally led operations while starting up a response.

The day following the earthquake, an Emergency Appeal for CHF 120 million was launched by IFRC at the request of TRC, utilizing the available information at that time. The appeal aimed to assist 300,000 people with immediate relief (out of 13.5 million affected people). These funds sought to address needs in shelter, mental health and psychological support (MHPSS), and protection. As the situation evolved, it became evident that the scale of the devastation would require extensive relief and recovery efforts, necessitating significant investment and time to reach as many affected people as possible.

Based on these considerations, the EA, (part of TRC's overall approach, defined by its Response Plan), was revised twice by IFRC, first on February 16, 2023, and subsequently on June 2, 2023. The first revision increased funding requirements from CHF 120 million to CHF 350 million for the Secretariat and CHF 450 million for the Federation-wide effort. Additionally, the targeted population to be assisted was raised to 1.25 million people. The second revision further increased the funding required, with the IFRC Secretariat's request rising to CHF 400 million and the Federation-wide ask reaching CHF 750 million. These revisions aimed to enable TRC to efficiently and effectively respond to both the immediate crisis and the mid-to-long term recovery.

By May 31, 2024<sup>11</sup>, the total funds raised reached CHF 151 million, representing 38% of the revised appeal's total requirement<sup>12</sup>. CHF 111 million had been spent until the latest report<sup>13</sup>. The detailed financial report showed a closing balance of CHF 39,677,211 and an overall appeal coverage of 37.85% (CHF 151,384,116)<sup>14</sup>.

*"The IFRC's financial support was a lifeline for us, not just in mass feeding, but across all areas of our operations."  
A TRC respondent.*

## 2. Joint humanitarian diplomacy and strategic positioning

TRC and IFRC jointly prioritized high-level engagement with government authorities and international partners to reinforce TRC's visibility and clarify its role within Türkiye's disaster response architecture. As part of this effort, IFRC provided targeted advocacy support to strengthen the legal and procedural frameworks governing international assistance. This included promoting a formal disaster agreement between TRC, the Turkish government, and IFRC to streamline cooperation in future emergencies.

A cornerstone of TRC's leadership in the earthquake response was the implementation of a joint humanitarian diplomacy strategy, developed in collaboration with IFRC. This strategy was instrumental in both affirming TRC's operational legitimacy within the national response system and elevating its profile on the international stage. By actively engaging with donors and diplomatic missions, the strategy helped position TRC as a central actor not only in immediate relief efforts but also in long-term disaster management planning. It also underscored TRC's auxiliary mandate and its pivotal role in nationally led humanitarian responses.

The success of this approach was underpinned by several key gains:

- TRC's recognized auxiliary role enabled the swift acceptance of international assistance, while humanitarian diplomacy fostered trust and ensured alignment with national systems.
- The diplomatic relationship ensured that TRC remained at the forefront of the response, consistent with global commitments to localization.
- IFRC's support was clearly positioned as complementary to TRC's leadership, preventing duplication and enhancing coordination within a nationally led response framework.
- IFRC also acted as a critical bridge between TRC and the international community—advocating for sustained support while articulating the needs and operational realities on the ground.
- This engagement enabled multi-donor collaboration and helped secure broader recognition of Türkiye's urgent needs, particularly in critical areas such as shelter, protection, and mental health.

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<sup>11</sup> Whereas the Secretariat contribution to the Federation-Wide EA is known, the amount received by TRC through bilateral contributions is not.

<sup>12</sup> Operation Update #4 30/09/2023

<sup>13</sup> IFRC Operation Update #6 08/07/2024

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

## Mobilizing surge and operational capacity

In response to the scale and urgency of the earthquake, the IFRC activated its global surge mechanism, deploying specialists across key areas such as WASH, shelter, and other sectors to support TRC's initial response. Additionally, IFRC deployed an operational team led by the Head of Emergency Operations (HeOps) to Gaziantep, the main hub for humanitarian coordination.

Beyond the standard surge deployments, the IFRC also drew on internal Secretariat capacities, mobilizing experienced personnel including a Program Coordinator from the Poland Cluster, a Membership Coordinator, and advisors to the Head of Delegation, such as the Head of HDCC and another Head of CCD. These early deployments played a pivotal role in facilitating coordination, integrating IFRC standards, and ensuring that TRC's nationally led response was supported with the necessary technical depth in areas such as accountability, quality assurance, and protection.

At the strategic level, IFRC's Head of Operations worked closely with TRC counterparts to co-develop an initial six-month master plan. This collaboration bridged immediate response needs with longer-term recovery planning, enabling TRC to anchor its operational strategy in both national priorities and globally recognized standards. IFRC's technical support extended into recovery assessments and the shaping of the broader recovery plan—areas where TRC welcomed international expertise to complement its operational strengths.

However, the fast-paced deployment of surge teams also revealed key learning areas. While the intention was to provide rapid support, some roles arrived earlier than needed or before the scope of collaboration had been clearly defined. Several TRC respondents noted that in the early days, there was limited clarity on the precise functions and value-add of some IFRC roles. This was not due to misalignment, but rather the scale and complexity of the disaster, which demanded real-time adaptation and deeper dialogue to define roles and expectations. As one TRC respondent reflected,

*“There was an assumption that we could have coordinated plans immediately, but given the scale of the situation, this wasn't possible. It's crucial to understand where and when to deploy, especially in a large-scale capacity like this”. A TRC respondent.*

Recognizing evolving needs, the IFRC undertook a reassessment of its surge personnel. Some profiles were demobilized, while others—particularly in finance, PMER, and information management—were prioritized to support TRC's mid- and long-term planning. These specialists were placed in proximity to TRC structures, strengthening coordination and reinforcing Federation-wide standards across core operational functions.


At the Ankara level, IFRC and TRC leadership institutionalized coordination through regular internal meetings, including the 3DGs (Directors Group), which brought together directors from various TRC departments. These forums were instrumental in harmonizing approaches, fostering a shared understanding of IFRC's role, and ensuring operational alignment. Over time, this iterative engagement process also contributed to internal capacity-building within TRC, with more departments becoming familiar with IFRC systems, tools, and approaches.

Concurrently, IFRC repurposed existing in-country staff—many of whom had been part of the ESSN program—to support the earthquake response. This move provided immediate continuity and drew on personnel who were already familiar with TRC’s structures and operating environment. As the ESSN phased out, several contracts were extended and responsibilities reassigned, enabling the IFRC to maintain operational momentum while transitioning into a recovery-focused structure.

While early coordination dynamics presented challenges, the collaboration between IFRC and TRC matured into a more cohesive and effective partnership. The initial uncertainties—rooted in the uniqueness of the emergency and the scale-up context—were gradually replaced by mutual understanding and operational synergy. The experience underscored the importance of contextual awareness, phased surge deployment, and adaptive planning in supporting a nationally led response during a complex and large-scale humanitarian crisis. As one TRC respondent reflected,

*"The surge capacity provided by IFRC, particularly in logistics and PMER, enabled us to deliver on our commitments to donors and the affected communities." A TRC respondent.*

EQ2: To what extent did the IFRC's assistance address the most critical and immediate challenges faced by the Turkish Red Crescent during the relief operation?



**Key Finding:** IFRC’s assistance significantly supported TRC in overcoming key challenges during the relief operation, especially in financial management, member and international coordination.

## Management of financial resources

The early activation of financial mechanisms and swift mobilization of relief supplies—including tents, blankets, and heaters—played a critical role in enabling TRC to meet urgent needs during the initial phase of the response. This rapid scale-up aligned with TRC’s immediate operational priorities and was instrumental in stabilizing affected populations. However, the dynamic and complex operating environment—marked by large-scale population displacement and evolving needs—created inherent challenges in forecasting and resource allocation.

In the early stages, TRC faced difficulties in aligning expenditures with sector-specific earmarking, which occasionally led to discrepancies in financial reporting. These challenges were compounded by the speed at which donors released funds and made public commitments, sometimes before detailed operational plans could be finalized. IFRC and TRC had to dedicate significant effort to clarify variances and maintain donor confidence. While many partners demonstrated flexibility in light of the crisis scale, others required more detailed explanations and assurances.

To address these challenges strategically, IFRC embedded a Finance Delegate within TRC to strengthen alignment between forecasts, operational plans, and real-time expenditure tracking. This role, along with enhanced collaboration across Finance, Operations, and PMER teams, significantly improved budget coherence and enabled accurate reporting in line with donor requirements. Over time, these efforts led to greater reporting consistency and transparency—validated by improved donor feedback.

Crucially, IFRC also provided tailored compliance support to navigate the diverse and often complex requirements of individual donors. This included designing bespoke reporting templates, offering technical guidance, and training TRC staff on specific grant conditions. These measures reflect a broader shift toward adaptive financial management and highlight the value of sustained partnership and technical support in crisis contexts.

## 1. Membership coordination

The IFRC played a pivotal role in managing and coordinating the involvement of Partner National Societies (PNS) during the earthquake response. A dedicated Membership Coordination team was established in Ankara to facilitate communication, streamline resource allocation, and ensure alignment with the TRC strategic priorities. Guided by the Principles and Rules for Red Cross and Red Crescent Humanitarian Assistance, the IFRC ensured that all PNS activities were agreed upon by TRC, maintaining respect for the national society's leadership. This coordination was instrumental in managing the influx of financial pledges from PNS and international donors, with the IFRC emphasizing transparency in resource mobilization and working closely with TRC to align funding with operational needs and priorities.

Bilateral support was limited to specific cases, such as the German Red Cross and Korean Red Cross, while contributions from other Movement Partners were channeled through the Federation-Wide Emergency Appeal. These contributions, encompassing in-kind, financial, and human resources, ensured a unified approach that supported TRC's capacity to lead the response. Further details on membership coordination are presented under EQ7.

## 2. Strategic coordination with UN agencies

From the earliest days of the earthquake response, the IFRC and TRC established robust coordination mechanisms with United Nations agencies, ensuring the integration of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement into the broader international humanitarian architecture. The IFRC developed a strong working relationship with the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team and was formally represented on the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) through its Head of Delegation from 20 February 2023. Together, TRC and IFRC actively engaged in inter-sectoral coordination forums led by OCHA, contributing to sectors such as protection, food security, and shelter.

TRC further demonstrated leadership by co-leading technical working groups, including the Cash Technical Working Group, the Food Security Sector, and the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Task Team, reflecting its operational maturity and commitment to inter-agency coherence. In collaboration with OCHA

and REACH, both organizations contributed significantly to the Multi-Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA), from data collection to analysis and dissemination, ensuring evidence-based planning.

Recognizing urgent shelter needs, the IFRC assumed a proactive leadership role in the shelter sector response, even prior to the formal activation of the IASC Scale-Up protocols. The deployment of a senior shelter team—including the Global Shelter Cluster Coordinator, a deputy surge coordinator, and technical experts—enabled swift mobilization of critical resources such as tents, tarpaulins, and blankets. TRC and IFRC’s active participation in sectoral and inter-agency coordination platforms, alongside agencies such as WHO, UNHCR, and UNICEF, not only enhanced operational alignment but also served as a platform for humanitarian diplomacy, ensuring TRC’s national approach was fully recognized and supported within the international system. Further details on coordination are presented under EQ7.

### 3. Support with in-kind donations

Although the creation of a Mobilization table, with clear definition of items necessary for relief operations, TRC received important quantities of items from neighboring or close National Societies outside this tool, which posed questions on its validity among TRC Logistic and warehousing teams. Nevertheless, while TRC and IFRC managed to align the majority of these donations with the needs on the ground, there were instances where a lack of coordination led to the late reception of items (ex. heavy winter cloths) or their lack of suitability vis-a-vis changing needs.

Improved strategic communication with IFRC members and donors is essential to sensitize stakeholders on the importance of providing monetary contributions whereas markets are available, as well as of ensuring alignment with IFRC Principles and Rules, with in-kind contributions to ensure their relevance and timeliness.

*“Since the earthquake affected such a large area, the needs were immense. During the acute phase, there was a significant flow of donations both from within the country and from abroad. We are very satisfied with the support provided by IFRC during this period. The support from IFRC was invaluable to us, both during the acute phase and the recovery phase.” TRC respondent.*

EQ3: What measures were implemented by the IFRC to ensure the timely and cost-effective delivery of assistance to the Turkish Red Crescent?



**Key Finding:** IFRC’s early activation of DREF and rapid mobilization of resources, facilitated by strong communication and trust with TRC leadership, overcame initial coordination challenges and enabled effective support during the crisis, leveraging existing capacities like ESSN systems and streamlining financial governance to ensure swift and efficient resource allocation.

### Rapid activation of emergency mechanisms

To ensure the timely and cost-effective delivery of assistance, (ref. EQ1), IFRC swiftly activated the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF), releasing CHF 2 million within 24 hours to enable TRC's immediate response. The Emergency Appeal was launched the following day and scaled up through two revisions to CHF 750 million Federation-wide, aligning resources with TRC's evolving operational needs. Critical surge personnel—including operations, finance, PMER, shelter, and cash experts—were deployed to accelerate delivery and strengthen coordination. A finance delegate embedded within TRC further enhanced budget alignment, expenditure tracking, and donor compliance, supported by integrated coordination between finance, operations, and PMER functions. These measures collectively enabled TRC to maintain a flexible, efficient, and accountable response at scale.

### Leverage of established ESSN infrastructure

The reallocation of resources from the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) program to the "Collective Kindness" initiative exemplified an efficient and innovative response to the earthquake crisis. This tripartite partnership between the IFRC, WFP, and TRC leveraged the ESSN's established cash transfer expertise to provide financial assistance to over 110,033 households for three months<sup>15</sup>. By building on existing relationships with the Ministry of Family and utilizing the ESSN's robust financial management systems, data collection tools, and operational protocols, TRC seamlessly integrated cash assistance into the broader earthquake response. This strategic adaptation allowed for streamlined decision-making, effective resource allocation, and minimized duplication of efforts.

TRC and IFRC strategically redeployed staff from the ESSN program to support the earthquake response, leveraging their specialized expertise in cash programming, assessments, and information management. Key personnel from Finance, PMER, and CEA—already familiar with ESSN systems—were mobilized to reinforce technical functions within the emergency operation. Their experience in monitoring social media trends, conducting market assessments, and tracking housing prices provided valuable data for evidence-based decision-making and effective resource allocation. Leading to strengthened operational quality and minimized delays and onboarding costs.

However, early operational challenges—including unclear targeting, fragmented internal coordination, and government preferences for in-kind aid—exposed gaps in aligning ESSN tools with emergency needs. While IFRC played a critical role in external coordination, capacity support, and strategic advocacy, sustaining effective cash coordination within TRC will require stronger institutional embedding, clearer internal roles, and long-term investment in systems integration between humanitarian CVA and national social protection.

Overall, the repurposing of ESSN resources into the Collective Kindness initiative demonstrated how existing infrastructure and institutional expertise can be rapidly adapted for emergency response. By integrating established systems into the earthquake relief effort, TRC effectively balanced urgency with sustainability—

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<sup>15</sup> Earthquake Response: IFRC, WFP, and TRC Cash Plan presentation

delivering timely, cost-efficient assistance while maintaining the integrity of long-term programming. This approach highlighted TRC's operational agility and innovation, enabling the organization to manage a large-scale influx of support and reach vulnerable populations with meaningful impact, as illustrated in the success example below.

### Success Example: TRC's Collective Kindness Project – Leveraging ESSN for Rapid Response

The **Collective Kindness Project**, launched in response to the February 2023 earthquakes in Türkiye, exemplifies how the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC) effectively leveraged pre-existing systems like the **Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN)** to rapidly mobilize resources and support vulnerable populations. Led by TRC in partnership with IFRC and the UN World Food Programme (WFP), the project provided multipurpose cash assistance to 135,759 households (543,036 individuals) across 11 earthquake-affected provinces, with each household receiving 3,000 TRY over two months to cover basic food and non-food needs.

A critical factor in the project's success was the existing **Funding Framework Agreement (FFA)** that had been established some time before and utilized for other initiatives including **Migration IP**, **COVID IP**, and **ESSN**. The process of establishing a FFA entails several steps before a FFA can be in place. Those include a **Capacity Review and Assessment (CRA)**, which evaluates a National Society's capacity and leads to the creation of a **Performance Framework (PF)** to guide program implementation and funding. In the case of IFRC and TRC, the existing FFA enabled TRC to quickly adapt existing financial frameworks, compliance structures, and reporting mechanisms, highlighting the importance of ensuring that these frameworks are completed with NSs as a preparedness measure.

A second enabling factor was the **ESSN's agreements with financial service providers**, such as Halkbank, which enabled rapid cash transfers through SMS notifications and ATM withdrawals. This infrastructure, already in place, significantly reduced the time required to deploy cash-based assistance, empowering affected families to meet their needs with dignity and supporting economic recovery in the region. The adoption of this approach underscored how pre-existing agreements can enhance response capacity in times of crisis, without needing to undergo lengthy contractual discussions. Furthermore, the use of ESSN resources allowed TRC and IFRC to **minimize financial risk** while ensuring **transparency**.

Given the FFA and TRC's proven capacity to manage substantial funding through previous programs like the ESSN, the IFRC was able to accept a higher level of risk, facilitating the rapid mobilization of funds. **Streamlined financial governance structures**, including direct reporting lines to IFRC's Geneva office, bypassed typical bureaucratic delays and ensured that resources were efficiently allocated. This pre-established framework enabled TRC to act swiftly in mobilizing cash assistance in response to the disaster.

Quality elements of the program were strong including a focus on the most vulnerable groups based on socio-economic and demographic criteria aligned with the Ministry of Family and Social Services (Turkish nationals and registered refugees). It featured robust **Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)** mechanisms, including helplines, complaint and feedback systems (CFM), and continuous community sensitization efforts. The project's **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)** teams closely tracked its impact, consolidating lessons for future cash assistance initiatives.

Sources and definitions:

**CRA (Capacity Review and Assessment):** This is an internal process within the IFRC aimed at assessing the capacity of National Societies.

**PF (Performance Framework):** Following the CRA, a Performance Framework (PF) is often established. This is a structured plan that outlines the expectations, goals, and targets for a National Society, focusing on its programmatic and operational delivery.

**Funding Framework Agreement (FFA):** is the agreement set in place for funding allocation, following the results of the CRA.

**Figures source:** Kindness in Action Collective Kindness Project Phase I Monitoring and Evaluation Final Report September 2023

In addition to the prior ESSN success example, enhanced collaboration between financial offices (Country delegation, regional office and head quarter) streamlined financial governance—featuring direct reporting lines to IFRC’s Geneva office and bypassing the regional office—enabled rapid fund transfers and minimized bureaucratic delays, facilitating faster response times.

Furthermore, IFRC’s elevated risk tolerance, based on TRC’s proven capacity through the ESSN program, allowed for the swift mobilization of significant funding with minimal risk. This was supported by the strong institutional trust and the efficient financial systems already established, ensuring a responsive and effective operation.

In terms of communication, the establishment of information-sharing mechanisms (e.g. comprehensive contact and email lists, weekly coordination meetings, and channelling of requests from PNS to IFRC) ensured that all stakeholders were kept informed and aligned on needs. This, allowed for an overall enhancement of the efficiency of the response, as well as cost-effective allocation of resources to fill-in gaps, both operational and technical, for example, the deployment of personnel solely under IFRC’s surge mechanism, as well as conducting market assessment and developing recovery plans that provided crucial insights and support for the response.

*EQ4: How effectively were resources allocated and utilized by the IFRC in supporting the Turkish Red Crescent, and were there any notable areas of inefficiency that need improvement?*



**Key Finding:** The allocation of financial, operational, and surge resources was timely and critical in supporting TRC’s response, but early challenges in aligning support models and resource reallocation processes with TRC’s operational scale and national systems highlighted the need for more context-specific planning and flexible adaptation in large-scale, nationally-led emergencies.

The allocation of financial, operational, and surge resources, (ref. EQ1,2), was overall timely, relevant, and instrumental in supporting TRC’s earthquake response. However, several important lessons emerged that prompted real-time adaptations and offer valuable insights for future large-scale emergencies.

### Adapting support to the national society’s capacity and context

While the co-location of IFRC and TRC teams in Ankara facilitated strong collaboration, early IFRC interventions did not fully reflect TRC’s broader disaster response systems and operational maturity. Initial proposals—such as the deployment of Emergency Response Units (ERUs)—were more suited to smaller or overstretched National Societies and proved misaligned with TRC’s well-established structures and national coordination

mandate. Several TRC respondents emphasized that ERUs were less suitable for Türkiye's urbanized response environment and outside the National Society's formal mandate under the TAMP framework, particularly in sectors like health and WASH that are primarily led by government ministries.

Conversely, some IFRC respondents viewed the limited activation of IFRC emergency tools as a missed opportunity. They highlighted instances where deploying assets such as health-focused ERUs could have temporarily expanded TRC's mobile clinic capacity and eased pressure on national services. However, the scale and urgency of the earthquake response left little space for detailed joint planning on integrating external emergency assets, and TRC's preference to maintain operational control—anchored in its auxiliary role and mandate—also shaped these decisions.

More broadly, the experience reflected a structural challenge: the application of standardized IFRC surge models to a large, highly capable National Society operating within a nationally led disaster management framework. IFRC rapidly recalibrated its support, adapting surge deployments and operational strategies to better complement TRC's evolving priorities. Nevertheless, the initial experience underscored the need for future operations to prioritize joint needs analysis, context-specific surge planning, and early dialogue on the strategic use of emergency response tools.

### Navigating resource reallocation

Reallocating resources from the ESSN program (ref. EQ3) to the earthquake response introduced additional layers of operational complexity. The process required navigating TRC's hierarchical internal structure, adhering to IFRC financial controls, and securing approvals from donor agencies and government counterparts. These dynamics, while expected given the magnitude of the shift, contributed to delays in reallocating funds and repurposing staff between the two major operations. Importantly, these challenges reflected the unprecedented scale of adjustment required—from a stable, refugee-focused program to a fluid, nationwide emergency operation—and not shortcomings in institutional commitment.

*EQ6: How were existing assets from ongoing large-scale programs utilized in IFRC and TRC structures?*



**Key Finding:** Existing assets were well utilized in IFRC and TRC structures including the ESSN program and CVA systems and experience, with surge capacity a key enabler in scaling the operation to meet needs, however, PGI and CEA could have been more strongly integrated into response coordination.

## 1. Leveraging existing capacities

The effective integration of resources from ongoing large-scale programs, particularly the ESSN program, was a key enabler of both TRC and IFRC's earthquake response. By strategically drawing on existing operational capacities, the response was able to mobilize quickly, maintain continuity, and avoid major disruptions to ongoing humanitarian services.

At the onset of the disaster, TRC reassigned approximately 100 experienced staff from the ESSN program—including personnel from finance, PMER, CEA, and information management—into the earthquake operation (ref. EQ3). This immediate mobilization not only strengthened field operations but also allowed TRC to provide timely, data-driven support to affected populations.

On the IFRC side, existing leadership assets were also leveraged strategically. The Head of Delegation, with strong knowledge of surge mechanisms and prior operational experience in the region, worked closely with the deployed Head of Emergency Operations (HeOps) to structure early support. Senior IFRC personnel—including those with cultural familiarity with Türkiye—were mobilized outside the formal surge system to ensure high-level dialogue with internal and external stakeholders, reinforcing TRC's leadership while accelerating operational decision-making.

However, some challenges emerged. Initial surge deployments were activated under standard Red Emergency protocols before a joint needs analysis was fully conducted. As a result, certain surge personnel initially deployed to field hubs (such as Gaziantep) were later recalled to Ankara, where TRC's operational leadership was centred. Furthermore, frequent rotations of surge staff, often unfamiliar with TRC systems or the Turkish operational context, occasionally disrupted continuity and created communication gaps. Only critical roles such as the HeOps were transitioned systematically to long-term operational managers, ensuring smoother handovers.

## 2. Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) program

In the first days following the earthquake, the TRC activated a small-scale cash response through the distribution of A101 voucher cards, delivering \$25 in purchasing power to approximately 1,000 families. This intervention was made possible by a pre-existing framework agreement with the A101 retail chain and reflected TRC's operational agility. It provided immediate, tangible relief at a time when markets were disrupted, and formal systems were still mobilizing.

While this was an important utilization of TRC's existing cash mechanisms, the scale of the disaster required a significantly more expansive and coordinated response. The earlier example, (ref. EQ3) of repurposing the ESSN infrastructure and the creation of the Collective Kindness initiative served as an illustrative case of innovative and adaptive measures to meet the needs of affected populations. While ultimately successful, the process of scaling up the cash intervention took nearly two months—an outcome shaped by a complex combination of internal coordination challenges and external political constraints.

Several respondents highlighted that one underlying reason for the delay was that cash assistance was not explicitly included in TRC's mandate under the TAMP, which prioritized mass feeding and in-kind assistance rather than CVA as a core emergency modality. This institutional approach meant that CVA activation required ad hoc negotiation and procedural adaptation, rather than following a pre-established protocol.

Prior to the disaster, cash interventions within TRC were managed across multiple departments, each with distinct mandates, tools, and objectives—ranging from multipurpose cash to protection-related assistance and livelihoods support. Following the earthquake, aligning these approaches and reaching internal consensus on which modalities to prioritize or streamline required significant coordination and time, further contributing to the delay. While the IFRC was ready to mobilize financial support, early disbursements were withheld due to the absence of formalized SOPs and internal procedures, which also led to inconsistent messaging and unclear operational roles across TRC implementation teams.

These internal hurdles were compounded by external political dynamics. The ESSN system, though technically advanced, had been developed specifically as a migration-focused social assistance mechanism for Syrian refugees and was not designed to address the acute, widespread needs arising from a natural disaster that affected both refugees and Turkish citizens. At the time of the earthquake, multiple parallel programs were operating—including the German Red Cross card initiative and the ESSN-linked cash mechanisms through the Ministry of Social Services. In order to adapt to a larger scale cash framework, this required weeks for aligning selection criteria, determining eligibility protocols, and negotiating the inclusion of various population groups, particularly Turkish nationals and unregistered migrants, under a common operational model.

Operational challenges also emerged at the implementation level. The lack of formal identification among some affected individuals, particularly those in informal settlements, meant that many of the vulnerable not be able to integrate in the cash response. While TRC later transitioned from physical card distributions (e.g., ESEN cards) to SMS-based cash transfers linked to ID numbers, addressing logistical issues such as forgotten PINs, lost cards, and crowded registration centers, this digital shift could not entirely mitigate the exclusion risks associated with digital literacy and registration requirements.

Eventually, the launch of Collective Kindness marked a significant strategic and conceptual breakthrough. Designed specifically for the earthquake response, it was a powerful example of adaptive humanitarian action. The program drew on TRC's technical infrastructure while incorporating joint advocacy and coordination with IFRC and WFP. The initiative was formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Letter of Agreement, building on years of collaboration and enabling a tri-partite delivery model grounded in shared commitments to accountability, data protection, and responsiveness.

As the response matured, TRC refined its targeting criteria. The initial caseload of approximately 35,000 households was gradually narrowed to 9,000, prioritizing those without formal income or households including persons with disabilities. This shift was informed by field-level social assessments, improved database integration with the Ministry of Family and Social Services, and a strengthened collaboration with IFRC to develop and implement exit strategies. These transitions also marked the evolution of the cash

response toward sector-specific programming, particularly in protection and livelihoods, with a greater emphasis on long-term sustainability and alignment with donor commitments.

The Türkiye earthquake response offers a compelling case study of both the opportunities and limitations of cash programming in large-scale disasters. It showed that even with highly developed digital systems and technical capacity, CVA cannot be effective without institutional clarity, political negotiation, and inclusive design. The experience highlighted the need to plan not just for technical readiness, but for mandate alignment, coordinated funding structures, and flexible decision-making that can adjust to rapidly changing conditions. It also emphasized that cash is not merely a delivery tool, but a strategic modality that reflects how effectively the humanitarian system can adapt to the real and evolving needs of crisis-affected populations.

In the aftermath of the earthquake, the evolution from A101 vouchers to Collective Kindness signified more than just a change in delivery mechanism. It represented a transformation in how CVA is conceptualized and operationalized in Türkiye. The lessons from this response—on readiness, coordination, inclusion, and innovation—are not only critical for TRC and its partners but hold broader relevance for the humanitarian sector as it navigates an increasingly complex global risk environment.

### 3. Protection Gender and Inclusion (PGI)

Across its long-standing programs, TRC had integrated gender-sensitive approaches, psychosocial support services, and safeguarding practices, particularly through the work of its youth and women's branches. These foundations provided an important starting point for advancing PGI objectives. However, the unprecedented scale and urgency of the earthquake response presented challenges in translating these institutional strengths into an immediate, coordinated PGI response across the new emergency architecture.

In the early stages, operational efforts were necessarily focused on urgent life-saving priorities—such as mass feeding, emergency shelter, and basic health services. As a result, PGI considerations, while present in some programmatic areas, were not positioned as a central pillar in the initial response framework. The absence of a dedicated PGI coordination unit and the pace of deployment meant that protection needs could not be systematically prioritized in the early months. Additionally, there was a recognized need for broader training among staff and volunteers to strengthen their capacity to address PGI in disaster contexts.

In the absence of a centralized protection department, PGI was largely advanced through sectoral programming. Notable efforts included expanding psychosocial support (PSS), establishing child-friendly spaces, and promoting staff and volunteer safety through strengthened internal safeguarding policies. TRC's youth and women's divisions played a key role in localizing these efforts and enhancing outreach in communities.

By mid-2023, TRC began formalizing its PGI approach, supported by the IFRC. A dedicated PGI team was established, with early deployment of a PGI expert to strengthen internal capacity and lay the foundation for more structured programming. IFRC's support was key in:

- Advocating for PGI inclusion in the Emergency Appeal and operational strategy;
- Deploying technical focal points from Geneva and the regional office;
- Co-developing a cash-for-protection modality linked to case management systems;
- Supporting camp improvement initiatives, including safe lighting, accessible sanitation, and spaces designed to uphold the dignity and safety of women, children, and other vulnerable groups;
- Providing guidance on safeguarding, inclusive design, and referrals.

These interventions addressed critical protection risks but did not become fully operational until October 2023. While this timeline reflects broader challenges—such as staff shortages and the complexities of operating within a nationally led response—it also underscores the sector-wide difficulty of embedding PGI from the outset of an emergency.

The application of global PGI standards also required context-sensitive adaptation. In Türkiye's sociopolitical landscape, certain topics—such as gender-based violence or the inclusion of sexual and gender minorities—were sensitive and demanded careful navigation. TRC's humanitarian diplomacy played a crucial role in this regard. Through advocacy and alignment with national priorities, TRC successfully integrated PGI commitments into the Emergency Appeal and operational planning in a manner that was both appropriate to the context and practical to implement.

Ultimately, the earthquake response marked a turning point for TRC's PGI practice. The rollout of cash-for-protection, improvements to camp conditions, and reinforcement of safeguarding measures demonstrated meaningful progress under complex circumstances. The experience highlighted the importance of pre-positioned PGI capacity, institutional clarity on roles, and trusted partnerships that can enable constructive engagement on sensitive issues—even during high-pressure emergencies.

This evolution reinforced the need for PGI to move beyond a cross-cutting theme to a core operational priority—anchored in preparedness, embedded in response planning, and tailored to the social and cultural dynamics of the affected context.

#### **4. Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA)**

From the outset of the earthquake response, CEA was embedded as a core component of TRC's strategy, aligned with IFRC's commitment to ensure that affected communities were informed, consulted, and heard. The aim was to enable two-way communication, surface evolving needs, and foster accountability throughout the response.

TRC employed a multi-channel strategy to reach communities, combining digital platforms with direct interaction. Five key communication channels were activated: the TRC 168 call centre, KIZILAYKART website, Facebook page, SMS messaging, and face-to-face community outreach. Immediately after the disaster, more than 150,000 SMS messages were sent to disseminate safety and assistance information. The 168 call centre,

temporarily relocated to Ankara, handled over 79,000 calls, reflecting the scale of community demand for timely and reliable information<sup>16</sup>.

These insights highlighted key concerns such as shelter access, food distribution, and missing persons. In parallel, TRC conducted rumour tracking through social media monitoring and field-based observation—an essential practice for verifying public announcements and addressing misinformation, especially around eligibility and entitlements.

Beyond implementation, IFRC’s technical assistance helped strengthen TRC’s leadership in interagency coordination. TRC actively contributed to working groups on protection and basic needs, collaborated with WHO on health messaging, and provided CEA materials to UN OCHA. Its participation in the AAP Working Group led by UNHCR further reinforced accountability at a system-wide level.

The expansion of CEA systems, including scaled-up perception surveys and advisory committees, also supported the identification and referral of protection concerns to agencies such as UNFPA and national authorities. While TRC’s role was primarily focused on case identification, and visibility over outcomes remained limited, these referral pathways marked an important step toward a more connected and accountable response system.

*EQ7: How effectively did IFRC ensure membership coordination as part of the response? What lessons can be learned for other emergencies of a similar nature?*



**Key Finding:** The collaboration between TRC and IFRC demonstrated a strong alignment of roles, with TRC leading the national response and IFRC complementing its efforts by managing international donor relations, coordinating PNS, and ensuring alignment with TRC’s strategic priorities. While initial delays occurred due to the scale of pledges, the partnership adapted effectively to deliver a streamlined operation.

The Türkiye earthquake response presented a uniquely complex coordination environment, shaped by the TRC strong national leadership and the IFRC coordinating mandate. In this context, membership coordination was not merely an operational task—it was a strategic imperative, balancing localized ownership with international solidarity.

### Strategic engagement and humanitarian diplomacy

The IFRC’s facilitation of high-level donor visits played a pivotal role in reinforcing trust, ensuring transparency, and showcasing the tangible impact of the response. These visits provided donors and partners with the

<sup>16</sup> IFRC operation update #4 30/09/2023

opportunity to engage directly with TRC teams at both field and headquarters levels—offering firsthand insights into operational capacity, evolving priority needs, and the effective use of contributed resources. This visibility was critical in maintaining donor confidence in the multilateral channel and reaffirming the Federation’s coordination value-add within a nationally led response.

Humanitarian diplomacy was actively operationalized not only through these field engagements, but also via bilateral briefings, sustained representation in diplomatic and donor forums, and strategic messaging. Regular statements and high-level visits by the IFRC President and Secretary General, combined with strong media engagement, further elevated the profile of the response. These efforts ensured continued political and financial support while promoting flexible funding arrangements aligned with TRC’s operational plans. Strengthening diplomatic engagement and coordination mechanisms thus played an essential role in sustaining momentum and reinforcing the Movement’s collective presence in one of the largest disaster responses in the region.

### Membership coordination

From the earliest days of the response, coordination was anchored in a shared strategic vision between the IFRC and the TRC. This vision was operationalized through the formation of a joint strategic management cell, composed of senior leadership from both institutions. The cell functioned as a high-level platform for open and trust-based dialogue on sensitive issues—ranging from member pressure and funding expectations to role delineation between coordination and implementation. Its success underscores the fact that effective crisis coordination depends not only on formal mechanisms, but also on strong interpersonal and institutional relationships.

In the immediate aftermath of the earthquakes, over 20 National Societies<sup>17</sup> expressed solidarity and offered support, with most deployments focused on the emergency phase—particularly around Search and Rescue (SAR) operations. However, as the situation evolved and moved toward recovery, many NS teams concluded their missions, resulting in a limited operational presence of PNSs during the broader response phase.

From the outset, the TRC adopted a strategic and context-driven approach to coordination. Recognizing both the scale of the disaster and Türkiye’s considerable national response capacity, TRC encouraged international support to be channelled through multilateral mechanisms, either via the IFRC’s Emergency Appeal (EA) or as direct financial contributions. This approach aimed to streamline operations, minimize duplication, and preserve coherence under a centralized coordination structure led by TRC.

That said, while EA and the DREF mechanism had been utilized in previous emergencies in Türkiye, the scale and scope of the 2023 earthquake response were unprecedented, requiring a fundamentally different level of coordination. In past disasters, TRC’s response was largely supported through bilateral partnerships, meaning that the shift toward a multilateral coordination model in this operation demanded significant adjustment. This transition was further complicated by the urgency and magnitude of the crisis, which left

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<sup>17</sup> IFRC-Sitrep\_no.3\_10\_Feb\_2023 <https://go.ifrc.org/emergencies/6345/reports>

little time for comprehensive dialogue or consensus-building around coordination modalities. As a result, the coordination model evolved over time—initially leaning toward multilateralism but gradually adopting a hybrid approach, combining both multilateral and select bilateral contributions. TRC's strategy reflected a pragmatic balancing act: maintaining overall coherence and centralized leadership, while accommodating the commitment and interest of PNSs seeking to contribute meaningfully to the response.

The IFRC played a central facilitative role in this balance. In close coordination with TRC, the IFRC managed the involvement of PNSs, ensuring their contributions aligned with national priorities. The release of the Operational Intent on 13 February 2023 further reinforced this alignment by clearly articulating IFRC's mandate to lead international coordination across Movement members, UN partnerships, and as convener of the Shelter Cluster. The document emphasized empowered decision-making and rapid mobilization, solidifying the complementarity between IFRC's coordination mandate and TRC's operational leadership.

However, both IFRC and TRC respondents recognized that greater investment in pre-disaster capacity strengthening is essential. In particular, familiarizing National Societies with multilateral frameworks and coordination expectations before a crisis would help ensure smoother collaboration during future large-scale emergencies.

Ultimately, this pragmatic and adaptive coordination model successfully integrated diverse forms of support while remaining anchored to TRC's strategic priorities. The experience offers valuable lessons for the broader Movement: namely, that operational coherence and inclusive engagement are not mutually exclusive. Going forward, investing in mutual understanding, flexible coordination models, and pre-crisis preparedness will be key to ensuring that strong national leadership can coexist with effective and principled international solidarity.

### **Targeted and complementary roles**

In line with the principles of localization and complementarity, the earthquake response in Türkiye showcased a clearly defined division of roles between the TRC and the IFRC. While TRC led the national response, the IFRC assumed a targeted and enabling role, focusing on multilateral coordination, international donor engagement, and ensuring alignment between Partner National Societies (PNSs) and TRC's strategic priorities.

To operationalize this support, the IFRC deployed a Membership Coordinator for a three-month period, supplemented by strong engagement from the IFRC regional office. This coordination capacity helped streamline donor reporting, facilitate effective communication with partners, and manage financial flows from a diverse range of contributors.

The IFRC regional office played a particularly crucial role in handling the influx of funds and pledges from member organizations. However, the volume and speed at which these pledges were made in the early weeks of the emergency response presented significant challenges. Many contributions came with complex and non-standard donor requirements, such as bespoke reporting formats, earmarking conditions, visibility

obligations, and tight timelines. This created a temporary bottleneck as IFRC teams worked to process and formalize pledges in a way that respected both donor expectations and internal compliance mechanisms.

A core challenge emerged from the misalignment between the speed of donor commitments and the Federation's capacity to meet individualized reporting demands, particularly at a time when operational structures were still being scaled up. For example, several donors requested disaggregated financial data by activity or location far earlier than the IFRC's systems were able to provide, leading to delays in fund allocation and reporting. The need to adapt to a variety of non-standard formats also created a parallel reporting burden, straining IFRC's administrative and PMER capacity during a high-pressure period.

To mitigate these risks and maintain accountability, the IFRC leveraged its existing information management infrastructure, notably systems developed under the ESSN program. These platforms enabled real-time, high-quality reporting and were instrumental in providing partners with consistent updates on operations, expenditures, and impact. The Federation-wide reporting system, while not entirely seamless, was a step toward consolidating data and improving transparency across a sprawling and diverse network of contributors.

Beyond technical systems, IFRC adopted a proactive approach to partner engagement. Regular meetings, circulation of strategic documents, and carefully organized field visits were used to manage expectations, clarify TRC's operational boundaries, and redirect partner interests when necessary. A notable example involved a PNS interested in undertaking WASH activities. In alignment with TRC's strategic focus and to avoid duplication, the IFRC redirected the PNS to coordinate with UNICEF, which was already leading in the WASH sector. This ensured coherence, respected TRC's priorities, and demonstrated the effectiveness of IFRC's coordination function.

## Coordinated infrastructure and field-level integration

To translate the strategic clarity between IFRC and TRC into effective day-to-day operations, a coordinated infrastructure was established at both central and field levels. A critical enabler of this approach was the co-location of the IFRC office within TRC's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in Ankara, alongside a mirrored coordination structure in Gaziantep, closer to the operational epicenter of the response.

This physical integration enabled more than proximity—it facilitated daily coordination meetings, seamless information exchange, and immediate joint decision-making. By being embedded within TRC's core response mechanism, the IFRC was well-positioned to maintain a real-time understanding of operational developments, while also ensuring that international partners' support remained aligned with evolving national priorities.

The deployment of seasoned IFRC personnel further strengthened this coordination framework. This included a former National Society representative, whose familiarity with TRC's internal systems and culture enabled smoother collaboration, and the Deputy Head of the Secretariat for Membership Coordination, who played a pivotal role in interfacing with the broader Movement. Their presence fostered trust, helped bridge institutional differences, and ensured consistent interpretation and application of strategic guidance.

A key addition to this structure was the appointment of a liaison officer, who later assumed the role of Strategic Engagement and Partnership Senior Officer. This role was essential in maintaining regular communication with PNSs, addressing partner concerns, and managing expectations across the Movement. The continuity and responsiveness provided by this position contributed to a more agile and member-informed coordination process.

In parallel, some PNSs, contributed by deploying a dedicated Membership Coordination Officer, enhancing the interface between in-country PNSs and the overall coordination structure led by TRC and supported by IFRC. This arrangement helped ensure that even where direct implementation by PNSs was limited, lines of communication, feedback, and influence remained open.

The co-location and integrated coordination model proved critical for harmonizing donor commitments, aligning operational delivery, and avoiding delays associated with fragmented or hierarchical information flows. It also enabled IFRC to act as a credible facilitator—capable of translating TRC’s strategic direction into actionable guidance for external partners and donors at both national and field levels.

## Areas for improvement:

While the Türkiye earthquake response showcased a largely effective and principled coordination model, several systemic and institutional challenges emerged that undermined efficiency and strained collaboration at critical points. These challenges underscore the reality that coordination extends beyond agreed roles—it requires well-aligned systems, synchronized timelines, and mutual readiness across actors.

### a. Information-sharing delays

Despite the co-location of coordination teams and the presence of robust information management systems within the IFRC, TRC was at times slow to share key operational and financial data—most notably in relation to budget execution and underspent funds in specific programs (e.g., voucher assistance). These delays impacted donor reporting obligations, who require timely and detailed financial reconciliation. The issue revealed gaps in joint reporting protocols and the absence of a standardized information-sharing schedule.

### b. Incompatibility of reporting frameworks

Another area involved mismatched reporting expectations. Many donors submitted pledges with unique templates and detailed requirements for financial and programmatic disaggregation. IFRC, however, relied on more generalized Federation-wide reporting formats, which were not always compatible. This created a parallel reporting burden and limited IFRC’s ability to provide the level of granularity and contextual analysis that some donors expected.

### c. Administrative misalignment

A further source of friction was the misalignment between TRC’s rapid operational tempo and IFRC’s more complex administrative processes. While TRC was able to move swiftly on procurement, contracting, and resource deployment, IFRC procedures—particularly around funding disbursement and procurement—were perceived as comparatively slow and overly bureaucratic. These delays contributed to operational bottlenecks and occasionally created frustration within TRC. Although understandable in the context of IFRC’s

global fiduciary responsibilities, this mismatch highlighted opportunities for pre-crisis streamlining of key administrative systems for rapid-onset emergencies.

## I. External coordination

The coordination architecture following the Türkiye earthquake was shaped by the country's strong national disaster management system, led by AFAD, which acted swiftly and decisively in the wake of the disaster. The rapid establishment of container cities to host over 600,000 people within a few months demonstrated the operational effectiveness and readiness of Türkiye's national response plan. Within this context, international engagement had to align with an existing, nationally led system— called for careful adaptation by international actors to the national response architecture.

A key complexity emerged from the presence of well-established coordination structures that had been in place for the protracted Syria crisis, particularly in the southeastern provinces. When the earthquake struck, there was initial uncertainty over whether to adapt these existing coordination platforms or establish a separate response structure specifically for the earthquake. This period of adjustment temporarily affected the clarity of roles and coordination pathways, particularly between the emergency and recovery phases. Despite these initial challenges, collaborative mechanisms gradually evolved. UNDAC-supported coordination hubs played a valuable role in linking municipal and local authorities with humanitarian actors, facilitating better alignment of efforts on the ground.

### Shelter cluster coordination

Within this evolving framework, the IFRC assumed a leadership role for the Shelter Cluster under the IASC Scale-Up protocols and convened its first coordination meeting on 16 February 2023. Strategic coordination was anchored in Ankara, while operational coordination was structured across the most affected provinces— Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Adiyaman, and Malatya—working closely with OCHA's coordination hubs and local authorities.

The Shelter Cluster was supported by a senior IFRC-led coordination team, with personnel from multiple National Societies and agencies such as IOM and CARE. Field-level coordination benefited from partnerships with IOM (in Hatay and Malatya) and IFRC (in Kahramanmaraş and Adiyaman), enabling weekly coordination meetings, gap analysis, and partner alignment. The architecture was further strengthened through technical surge support, including site planners, M&E specialists, and environmental advisors. A Technical Working Group produced guidance on asbestos, fire safety, and disability inclusion, while the Activity Info platform and 3W tools were used to visualize partner activities and gaps, ensuring transparent reporting and alignment with Flash Appeal objectives<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> IFRC operation update #2 21/04/2023

This leadership role allowed the Shelter Cluster to fill an early operational gap and position the Movement as a key actor within the international coordination structure. However, challenges persisted—especially the mismatch between shelter demand and available solutions. Tents, widely distributed in the early phase, proved insufficient for harsh winter conditions, and there were increasing calls from local authorities for containerized housing.

Despite operational and contextual constraints, the Shelter Cluster demonstrated an adaptive and principled coordination approach—respectful of Türkiye’s nationally-led systems, while providing the international community with a structure to align, innovate, and act. This experience reinforced the critical value of flexible, context-aware mechanisms that prioritize partnership with national leadership, while ensuring accountability, technical rigor, and responsiveness in large-scale emergencies.

In December 2023, the coordination of the Shelter Cluster was formally handed over to UNHCR, marking a natural transition as the operation moved toward recovery and long-term shelter solutions. While a few reflections suggested that consolidating leadership with a single agency overseeing both shelter and camp management might have enhanced continuity, the handover was part of a broader effort to sustain response momentum under a unified framework.

### **TRC’s co-leadership in key sectors**

TRC’s recognized capacity and community reach enabled it to co-lead critical sectors such as Food Security, the Cash Technical Working Group, and the Accountability to Affected Populations Task Team. This co-leadership reinforced TRC’s role as a trusted partner in the humanitarian ecosystem, fostering shared ownership of response efforts and leveraging its established market analysis and cash programming expertise. Notably, TRC co-chaired the Cash-Based Interventions (CBI) Technical Working Group alongside UNHCR, supported by the Norwegian Refugee Council’s CashCap initiative, ensuring effective cash coordination.

## Pillar 2: Performance of the IFRC Network Against its Grand Bargain Localization Commitments

*EQ8: What measurable outcomes can be attributed to the IFRC network's efforts in advancing localization in the earthquake response, and how did these outcomes align with the Grand Bargain commitments?*



**Key Finding:** The IFRC has been a significant actor in advancing localization during the earthquake response through its collaboration with TRC. These efforts are aligned with the commitments of the Grand Bargain<sup>2</sup>.

The Grand Bargain's commitments on Localization can be summarized into four inter-related areas/components listed below.<sup>19</sup> For the purpose of this section, these four areas are outlined below with evaluation questions aligned.

- *Partnerships - Remove barriers to partnerships; Incorporate capacity strengthening into partnership agreements*
- *Capacity Strengthening - Invest in institutional capacities; Reinforce not replace*
- *Financing - Channel 25% of humanitarian finance as directly as possible to local actors; More use of pooled funds*
- *Coordination - Support & complement local mechanisms; Involve local actors in international mechanisms*

### I. Partnership

A cornerstone of IFRC's localization efforts was its strategic partnership with TRC, emphasizing TRC's leadership in the national earthquake response. Rooted in long-term trust, humanitarian diplomacy, and mutual respect, this partnership exemplified the Grand Bargain's commitment to empowering local actors and elevating their roles in humanitarian action. Throughout the response, IFRC's humanitarian diplomacy efforts helped reinforce TRC's operational visibility, foster alignment with international partners, and advocate for TRC's auxiliary role within the national disaster framework.

During the earthquake response, IFRC expanded its collaboration beyond TRC's International Department—its traditional counterpart— to engage directly with other operational departments. Although initially

<sup>19</sup> <https://gblocalisation.ifrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Section-2.pdf>

challenging due to limited familiarity with TRC's internal structures beyond the International Department, this broadened engagement progressively deepened mutual understanding of operational procedures, strengthened institutional linkages, and fostered more integrated collaboration. The pre-existing trust and coordination established through programs like the ESSN further enabled a swift and efficient mobilization of resources, demonstrating the strength and strategic value of this localized and diplomatically supported partnership.

## II. Capacity strengthening

Another key effort by IFRC was in capacity strengthening, evidenced by the mobilization of resources and the strategic support offered to TRC in navigating political dynamics and complex operational demands. An important outcome of this capacity strengthening effort was TRC's increased ability to mobilize resources. For example, the collaboration between TRC, IFRC, and the European Union in securing \$1,000,000 for the Ministry of Family to rebuild local infrastructure was a significant measurable outcome of the partnership.

IFRC also invested in strengthening TRC's technical and operational capacity by providing training to leverage existing solutions, such as the Kızılay card system, to expand cash and voucher assistance. Capacity-building efforts further reinforced TRC's leadership in key coordination platforms, notably through co-chairing the Cash-Based Interventions (CBI) Technical Working Group and leading efforts within the Food Security and AAP task teams. Rapid Red Cross Red Crescent (RCRC) induction trainings for spontaneous volunteers, the mainstreaming of PGI, and strengthened safeguarding practices across staff and volunteers enhanced TRC's operational capacity<sup>20</sup>.

## III. Empowered decision making across the structure

On the IFRC side, a strategic leadership cell was established, composed of senior figures such as the Head of Operations, the Head of Delegation, and regional leadership. This cell maintained close coordination with TRC's leadership mainly through the international department, focusing on high-level decisions related to resource allocation, funding prioritization, and operational adjustments. While TRC operated independently in many areas, the strategic cell played a crucial role in advising and supporting the NS, particularly in areas such as cash assistance, PGI, and recovery efforts.

TRC's established capacity and extensive emergency response experience, allowed it to maintain operational autonomy while responding at scale. The ESSN experience meant TRC was well-versed in managing large-scale programs, allowing for quick and decisive action during the earthquake response. This readiness was supported by the IFRC's surge capacity which was integrated into TRC's existing structure. The continuous dialogue and review of the resource allocation (as discussed in prior pillar) between TRC's internal resources

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<sup>20</sup> IFRC revised emergency appeal #2, 02/06/2023

and IFRC's targeted surge support allowed the response to be scaled without overwhelming TRC's existing systems.

#### IV. Coordination

As the government's auxiliary in disaster response, TRC naturally led national coordination efforts. IFRC complemented this leadership by managing the multilateral channel through the Emergency Appeal, coordinating with PNS, and ensuring that international contributions were harmonized with TRC's operational plans. IFRC's management of membership coordination, including the establishment of a Membership Coordination Unit and the deployment of a Membership Coordinator, helped streamline engagement with PNS and support TRC's operational coherence.

At the operational level, IFRC's leadership of the Shelter Cluster under the IASC Scale-Up protocols showcased how international coordination mechanisms could function under national leadership, with TRC co-leading key technical sectors such as Cash Assistance, Food Security, and Accountability to Affected Populations. This division of roles allowed TRC to retain operational leadership while benefiting from international technical expertise where needed.

Tripartite collaborations, such as the partnership between TRC, IFRC, and WFP in scaling up cash assistance and mass feeding operations, further demonstrated how localized and internationally supported models can deliver at scale.

#### V. Financing

The IFRC's support played a pivotal role in enhancing TRC's capacity to address the immense financial and operational demands of the earthquake response, particularly in the area of mass feeding. While the initial IFRC Emergency Appeal did not prioritize food security as a major funding focus, the evolving needs on the ground and TRC's mandate as the lead agency for mass feeding led to a significant shift. As per TRC respondents, the actual allocation of funds received through the Emergency Appeal demonstrated alignment with TRC's priorities, with 26.6% allocated to food security, more than double the initially planned 11%. This reallocation complemented TRC's strategic efforts and underscored the flexibility of IFRC's resource mobilization framework in adapting to emerging needs.

TRC's ability to deliver an extraordinary mass feeding operation—distributing over 361 million hot meals, 346 million loaves of bread, and millions of other food items by May 2023<sup>21</sup>—was supported by IFRC's facilitation of international funding streams. Beyond the direct funding provided through the Emergency Appeal, IFRC's role extended to facilitating critical connections with donors and private sector contributors. This advocacy and networking support enabled TRC to expand its bilateral funding campaigns, leveraging its long-standing credibility and operational capacity to secure additional financial resources.

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<sup>21</sup> IFRC Operation update #3 30/06/2023 [https://www.ifrc.org/appeals?appeal\\_code=MDRTR004](https://www.ifrc.org/appeals?appeal_code=MDRTR004)

The collaboration between IFRC, TRC, and WFP in cash assistance programs further highlighted the strength of financial and operational partnerships. TRC's proven capacity to manage substantial financial flows, as demonstrated through successful partnerships with the European Union and other donors, was reinforced by IFRC's complementary efforts in resource mobilization and donor engagement.

## VI. Accountability and transparency

IFRC implemented a federation-wide monitoring and reporting framework to enhance transparency, accountability, and resource efficiency in the earthquake response. The monitoring and reporting framework centers on data-informed decision-making, enabling TRC and IFRC to leverage reliable data for operational choices.

While the framework provided an important structure for reporting to donors and stakeholders, its implementation faced challenges at the beginning, particularly around data sharing and financial disaggregation, as discussed under EQ7. Nonetheless, progressive adjustments strengthened reporting systems over the course of the operation. Implementation of the framework included several key mechanisms:

- **Situation Reports (SitReps):** Bi-weekly SitReps are prepared and shared across IFRC's Go platform, giving stakeholders—including the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, TRC, and donors—up-to-date insights into the response's progress and needs.
- **Federation-wide Reporting:** In collaboration with TRC's monitoring and reporting team, programmatic indicators and financial data aligned with the earthquake response strategy are consolidated for Federation-wide reporting, ensuring alignment with IFRC's operational objectives and enabling comprehensive oversight.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):** Regular data collection through the M&E system supports TRC's response efforts by measuring progress, identifying areas for improvement, and conducting post-distribution monitoring for cash assistance programs, which is essential for understanding the outcomes of localized assistance.
- **Cross-Sectoral Integration:** The IM team worked with other clusters and sectors (e.g., WASH, PGI, Early Recovery) to standardize data and support joint assessments, such as damage mapping and shelter coverage analytics.
- **Dashboards and DEEP:** The delegation has contributed its taggers and analysts from its existing DEEP deployment to an Earthquake activation by DFS. Secondary Data Review products resulting from this deployment have been consolidated into a dashboard posted on the operations GO page<sup>22</sup>.
- **A MIRA dashboard** has been produced and published on GO with data resulting from IFRC and TRC's role in coordinating the Multisectoral Rapid Needs Assessment together with UNDAC<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> IFRC operation update #2, 21/04/2023

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

*EQ9: Were there any notable challenges or constraints faced by the IFRC in fulfilling its localization commitments, and what strategies could be employed to overcome these challenges in future humanitarian responses?*



**Key Finding:** IFRC made significant strides in advancing its localization approach with TRC; however, challenges related to the high proportion of earmarked funding limited flexibility.

### I. Contextual fit mechanisms

The unfamiliarity of TRC with IFRC emergency tools (ref. E6) led to a perception by TRC respondents of their unsuitability to highly urbanized context and hence their non activation (ex. Base-camp ERU). Moreover, challenges highlighted in the lack of context and language knowledge of surge deployed, led to recommend the creation for TRC of a national pool, which would include personnel of Turkish origin and with Turkish language skills affiliated with the National Society (in-country or overseas) to be deployed in case of emergencies.

### II. Knowledge of TRC structure, operational and financial capacities

IFRC's limited understanding of TRC's overall structure, as well as its operational and financial capacities, constrained the Secretariat's ability to provide optimal support to the National Society. This sometimes led to delays and missed opportunities to effectively leverage TRC's local systems. These challenges primarily stemmed from IFRC's collaboration being focused on a single TRC department during the implementation of the ESSN programme, rather than engaging with the National Society as a whole.

Although this aspect was addressed within the timeframe of the implementation of the operation, along with a restructuring internal to TRC, an enhanced knowledge of National Societies capabilities, especially in peacetime, is essential to ensure that local capacities are leveraged to their fullest extent in case of emergencies.

### III. Recovery phase ops

A recovery assessment was conducted in early April 2023 by TRC with the support of IFRC in the earthquake affected areas. The purpose of this vital study was to understand the context two months after the earthquake and bring an in-depth analysis of how early recovery would have unfolded in the coming months. Based on the findings and evidence from field observation, a recovery plan was developed mid-April 2023 to

inform this transition and align the current priorities with TRC Master Plan with a recovery perspective aiming at restoring resilient communities and individuals<sup>24</sup>.

To promote the Recovery, plan a Recovery and Resilience Conference for Governments, Diplomatic representation and donors was organized by the IFRC Secretariat in Geneva on April 25, 2023, followed by an online conference for the IFRC membership on April 26, 2023. These events, organized together with and in support of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, which was responding to the same disaster, aimed at supporting the two National Society in their recovery endeavors. Although these mobilization efforts, no evidence shows a substantive increase in financial support for long term actions.

As such, although recovery factors were considered from the onset of the response, challenges were reported in sustaining operational efforts in the long run. This, also attributed to financial constraints, including for instance the limitation of utilizing funds only for emergency actions due to their temporary earmarking conditions.

*EQ 10: How did TRC's localized structure mobilize during the initial response? What challenges did the TRC face in doing so? How did TRC deliver on its specific responsibilities in the national disaster management plan? How did disaster law affect the response operation?*



**Key Finding:** TRC demonstrated exceptional agility and operational capacity during the earthquake response, leveraging its pre-existing networks, government partnerships, and logistical systems to meet immediate needs effectively, despite facing challenges in coordination, resource management, and public perception.

### Rapid capacity for mass feeding

One of TRC's standout responsibilities under the TAMP was its mandate to provide mass feeding during disasters. TRC's rapid response in this area was a testament to its preparedness. Within approximately an hour of the earthquake, TRC had mobilized its first community kitchen, demonstrating its logistical strength and quick activation capabilities. Over the course of the response, according to a TRC respondent, TRC was responsible for coordinating efforts with over 700 implementing bodies to meet the urgent food needs of disaster survivors.

To manage long-term operation implementation, TRC established a dedicated Project Management Office (PMO), comprehensive of operational and support services personnel. This new structure ensured sustainability and continuity, allowing TRC to manage both immediate response and long-term recovery efforts while adhering to international standards.

<sup>24</sup> IFRC, Operation Update #6, 8 July 2024. [MDRTR004ou6.pdf](#)

## Volunteer engagement

The disaster sparked an overwhelming influx of volunteers, both affiliated with TRC and spontaneous recruits. This vast volunteer force became a cornerstone of the initial response, supporting operations across affected regions. However, managing such a large and diverse volunteer pool presented significant challenges. TRC faced issues of coordination, logistical support, and volunteer well-being, including concerns about potential exploitation. These challenges highlighted the need for more robust volunteer management systems in future large-scale emergencies. Further analysis is provided under EQ11.

## Utilizing existing programs and systems

TRC capitalized on its existing operational frameworks, such as the ESSN, to enhance its response capabilities. Resources and expertise from the ESSN program were redirected to support relief efforts, including cash-based interventions and data-driven targeting mechanisms. This strategic use of ongoing programs enabled TRC to scale its operations efficiently without creating parallel structures.

## Close government collaboration

TRC's strong, pre-established collaboration with the Turkish government, particularly through the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD), was a key enabler of its response. This relationship facilitated the rapid allocation of national resources and ensured that TRC's efforts were well-coordinated with broader government-led initiatives. The synergy between TRC and government authorities allowed for streamlined decision-making and resource deployment during the critical early phase of the response.

## Challenges faced by TRC

### Coordination and decision-making challenges

While the "Kızılay Afet Müdahale Planı" (KAMP) effectively activated TRC's response mechanisms, differing perspectives emerged regarding the organization's coordination and communication with stakeholders external to the incident command structure. This included IFRC delegation personnel, whose limited understanding of TRC's systems posed challenges during the emergency. Some TRC respondents expressed confidence in the Incident Command System (ICS) communication processes. However, others noted that the organization's size and complexity naturally led to coordination challenges, particularly in a high-stakes emergency context.

TRC's centralized decision-making structure, reflective of Turkish organizational culture, was effective for regular programming but revealed limitations during disaster response. Many decisions were escalated to senior leadership, creating bottlenecks and delays that hindered intermediate and lower levels from proceeding with their work. While this centralized approach is functional in routine operations, emergencies demand rapid and flexible decision-making. The challenges encountered underscore the need for TRC to adopt a more delegated approach during crises to enhance efficiency and responsiveness.

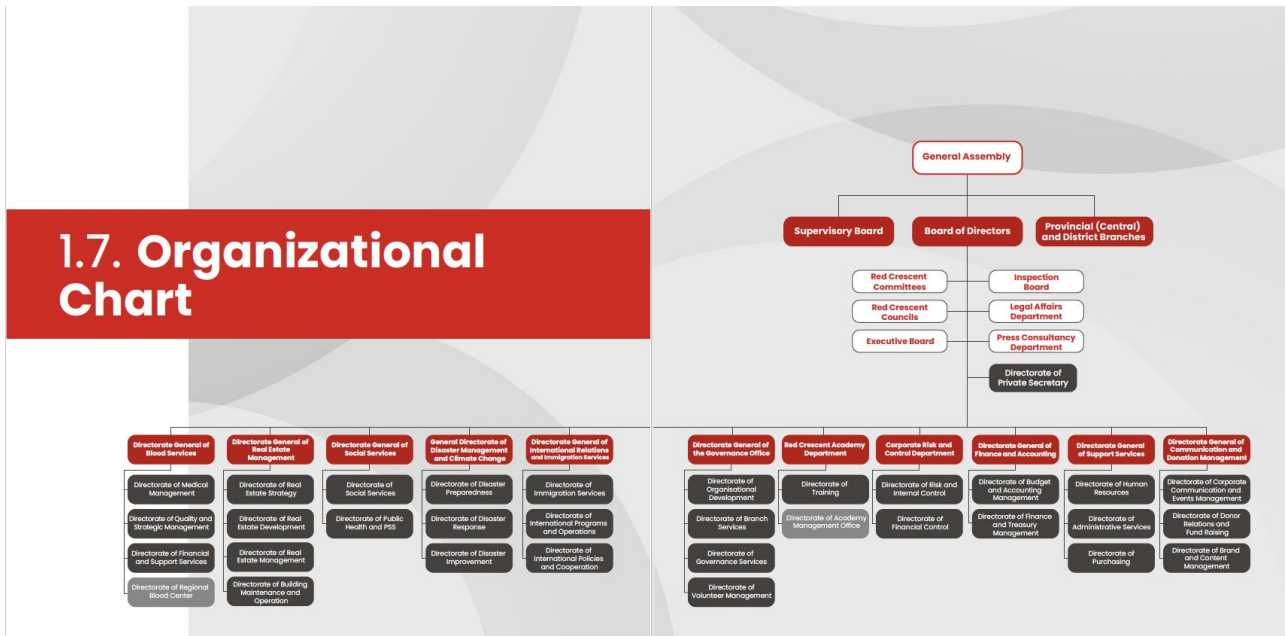


Figure 1 Turkish Red Crescent Society Organizational Chart as of 31.12.2023. Source: TRC annual report 2023

**Resources management**

The scale of the earthquake response placed considerable pressure on TRC’s logistical and operational systems, demanding the rapid management of large-scale donations, personnel, and supply chains across multiple provinces. While TRC’s established capacities enabled an immediate and robust response, the unprecedented scale exposed challenges in scaling resource planning, logistics, and human resource management. For instance, as staff were reassigned to meet operational needs, some transitioned into new roles without sufficient onboarding, creating initial gaps in role clarity.

Moreover, TRC’s disaster response model, originally designed for short-term emergency management, faced strain during the shift toward longer-term recovery efforts. As noted by TRC respondents, the return of personnel to their original roles after the acute phase created gaps in sustained capacity. TRC responded by establishing a dedicated disaster recovery management mechanism and recruiting personnel specifically for recovery operations. Although this strengthened long-term focus, the transition period highlighted the need for early planning for recovery structures to minimize operational discontinuity.

**Logistical resources challenges**

TRC’s logistical infrastructure, built through decades of experience in disaster management and migration programs, was a major asset in the early stages of the earthquake response. TRC’s warehouses were stocked with emergency supplies, including tents, hygiene kits, and equipment for mass feeding, allowing for a swift activation of its response plan. Supplies were quickly distributed to multiple provinces, showcasing the efficiency of TRC’s logistical network.

However, the magnitude of the disaster severely stretched TRC's logistical capacity. Damaged infrastructure, such as blocked roads and communication breakdowns, made it difficult to transport supplies, particularly to more remote and hard-to-reach areas. This led to delays in the delivery of essential supplies.

### Public perception challenges

TRC's response efforts became more complex due to public controversy surrounding miscommunication about its tent production and distribution practices. Operating within its usual business model, TRC continued to produce and distribute tents, but this was misinterpreted by the public as the sale of humanitarian assistance. This misunderstanding significantly impacted public trust, posing challenges in maintaining donor and community support during a critical phase of the response. These pressures required TRC to balance addressing the immediate needs of the emergency while managing public concerns and safeguarding its long-term reputation.

*EQ11: What circumstances are enabling for local action at scale, and what are detrimental? Are there any learnings from TRC's preparedness and localized response that can be utilized in preparedness work globally? How did TRC utilize its branch and volunteer network? What existing preparedness tools and systems were in place and how did they work?*



**Key Finding:** TRC's localized structure allowed for a rapid and organized response to the earthquake, successfully mobilizing resources and personnel through the activation of KAMP, the establishment of a dedicated recovery mechanism, and leveraging of international partnerships to meet evolving needs.

## I. Enablers and hindrances to local action at scale

The TRC's effective response to the earthquake was facilitated by several key factors. Learning that could be applied in other contexts is highlighted in bold.

### i) Factors facilitating TRC's local response at scale

- **Extensive experience and operational capacity:** One of the primary enablers of TRC's effective local response was its vast experience in managing large-scale humanitarian operations. As highlighted by the IFRC, TRC's continuous involvement in both localized and large-scale programs—most notably the ESSN for refugees—ensured that the organization maintained a high level of operational capacity, even during non-emergency periods. Unlike other national societies, which often experience capacity lags between crises, TRC's day-to-day operations kept them in a state of readiness. This sustained

capacity, especially in cash-based interventions, was a significant asset during the earthquake response, allowing TRC to adapt quickly and scale up its operations.

- **TRC's preparedness tools and systems:** TRC's preparedness tools and systems, including the KAMP and the TAMP, played a critical role in the immediate response to the earthquake. Both protocols were promptly activated, enabling TRC to deploy mass feeding operations and distribute non-food items (NFIs) within the first 48 to 72 hours of the disaster. Pre-positioned resources, such as emergency supplies and equipment, allowed TRC to execute contingency measures effectively, ensuring that the organization could respond swiftly in the critical early phase of the crisis.
- **Pre-established government relationships:** TRC's role as the government's auxiliary in disaster management, formalized under the TAMP enabled TRC to target vulnerable populations effectively, leveraging governmental data to quickly identify individuals affected by the earthquake, particularly those with deceased family members or damaged homes. The ability to repurpose funds from the ESSN, with approval from donors like ECHO, further demonstrated the effectiveness of this collaboration. This close coordination ensured that TRC's actions were aligned with national priorities.
- **Pre-existing infrastructure and branch networks:** TRC's extensive network of branches and community centres in the affected regions, already experienced from cross-border operations supporting Syrian refugees, enabled the rapid reassignment of staff, mobilization of volunteers, and deployment of pre-positioned resources—ensuring that essential services, such as mass feeding, were operational within hours of the disaster. The community centers in these areas further enhanced TRC's response, including by providing specialized services such as Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS). The opportunity to leverage on long-term programs infrastructures, as well as on trained personnel, allowed for a sensible reduction in response times and for an improvement in the quality of services delivered during the disaster.
- **Integration of cash assistance mechanisms:** TRC's experience with cash programming, honed through the ESSN, was a major advantage in the earthquake response. Capitalization of systems and experience from the ESSN program allowed TRC to quickly implement a new platform, "Collective Kindness," in collaboration with WFP and IFRC, to provide cash payments to earthquake-affected individuals (ref. EQ3). This capacity to deliver cash assistance not only addressed immediate needs at scale but also provided affected populations with the flexibility to purchase essential items based on their unique circumstances, a critical factor in improving recovery outcomes.
- **IFRC support:** One of the most significant enablers of local action at scale during the earthquake response was the IFRC's financial, human resource, multi-sectorial approach and coordination support provided by TRC. IFRC directly enhanced TRC to fulfill its mandate in terms of delivery of mass feeding programs in time of emergency. This is reflected in the Operational Strategy, published on 21 February 2023, where out of CHF 350.000 as overall IFRC Secretariat funding requirements, Livelihood and food security worths CHF 57.506.000 (16.43% of which 5.60% for livelihood and

10.83% for food<sup>25</sup>. This amount increased to CHF 79.720.000 (19.93% of which 7,36% for livelihood and 12.57% for food, equal to CHF 10,020,804) with the publication of the Revised Operational Strategy on 9 June 2023, which also increased from CHF 350.000 to 400.000 the overall IFRC-Secretariat funding requirements.

Beyond enhancing TRC mass feeding activities, IFRC supported allowed TRC to implement a multi-sectorial response based on a combination of pre-existing capacities (ex. MPC) and elements to strengthen and integrated into the response operation (ex. PGI).

Additionally, in terms of human resources, IFRC's deployment of key personnel, particularly in logistics and finance, was instrumental in supplementing TRC's workforce, relieving operational pressures, and allowing TRC to focus on strategic priorities. Furthermore, IFRC's coordination of international contributions streamlined TRC's operations by preventing it from being overwhelmed by multiple bilateral offers and enabling TRC to concentrate on its primary mandate. The IFRC's targeted support in finance, human resources, and coordination was key to enabling TRC to respond at scale, empowering TRC to focus on its core operational responsibilities.

## ii) Challenges impeding local action at scale

- **Mandate vs. expectations:** One of the most challenges that TRC faced was the gap between its official mandate and public expectations. As TRC is primarily responsible for mass feeding under the TAMP, the public and government expected<sup>26</sup> it to handle broader aspects of the response, such as shelter. This led to tensions, particularly during an episode of misunderstanding where TRC was criticized for its tent sales as part of its business development activities. The confusion between TRC's defined role and the public's perception of its responsibilities temporarily affected its ability to respond smoothly at the local level.
- **Internal coordination:** While the KAMP system effectively triggered emergency response mechanisms, TRC's large size and semi-independent departmental structure created early coordination challenges. Before the earthquake, IFRC primarily engaged with TRC's International Department—its main partner in managing the ESSN and other internationally funded programs—leaving other departments less familiar with multilateral disaster coordination.

Bringing these departments into the joint response proved difficult, delaying decision-making and affecting operational agility. IFRC also initially struggled to navigate TRC's internal structures beyond the International Department. Differences in departmental mandates further complicated efforts—for instance, distinct approaches between International and Social Services departments in cash programming strategies, targeting, and tools.

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<sup>25</sup> IFRC, Revised Operational Strategy, 9 June 2023. [MDRTR004os2 \(1\).pdf](#)

<sup>26</sup> Government expectation on TRC engagement on shelter related matters was a combination of public authorities being uninformed about of the TRC's responsibilities under TAMP and their expectations, regardless a general awareness, based on TRC actions in the shelter sector in other emergencies.

In the immediate aftermath, mass feeding took priority over cash-based interventions due to market and banking disruptions. However, early testing, such as voucher pilots, paved the way for a planned transition to cash support as market conditions stabilized, including the opening of container bazaars and mobile shops. This experience highlights the importance of stronger cross-departmental integration, preparedness planning, and adaptable coordination frameworks within large National Societies to meet complex operational demands.

- **Challenges in volunteer management and coordination:** Volunteers, particularly local ones with knowledge of affected regions, played a life-saving role in the immediate aftermath of the disaster. Their familiarity with the local context, combined with necessary skills or specific task assignments, was instrumental in the response. Over time, a more systematic approach was adopted to deploy volunteers based on ground needs, including the mobilization of specialized personnel such as doctors, nurses, engineers, and chefs, not necessarily from the affected areas.

While most respondents acknowledged the critical impact of volunteers in disaster response, feedback on the functionality of the volunteer deployment system was mixed. On the one hand, tools like the application webpage by sector and the coordination desk were praised for preventing system overload. On the other hand, a lack of strategy in deploying volunteers was reported, particularly as volunteer numbers exceeded TRC's capacity to adequately support them. Challenges included insufficient accommodation, transportation, and equipment, as well as inadequate briefings on safety and security measures for operating in disaster zones with collapsed buildings. This disparity in feedback partly reflects differences in perceptions between TRC headquarters and its branches regarding volunteer management and deployment.

Additionally, while it is unlikely that all volunteers engaged in the response were previously registered in the TRC database, no information was shared about spontaneous volunteers and the associated risks, such as their limited knowledge of Red Cross/Red Crescent principles and safeguarding measures.

The influx of volunteers from other regions also overwhelmed available housing, leading to deployment delays. A more centralized approach to volunteer management, with clear communication channels between branches and headquarters, could have mitigated these issues.

Moreover, the psychological toll on volunteers was significant, as many had personal connections to the disaster, either through family members or their own experiences of loss. This emotional strain impacted their ability to perform effectively over extended periods. While TRC provided psychosocial support and volunteers were covered under the IFRC insurance scheme<sup>27</sup>, the scale of the emotional burden required additional mechanisms to ensure volunteers' well-being and sustained engagement throughout the response.

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<sup>27</sup> IFRC revised operation strategy, 07/06/2023

*EQ12: How were the lessons learned from the previous responses to crisis utilized to ensure the challenges are addressed/resolved?*



**Key Finding:** TRC successfully utilized lessons learned from previous disasters to its 2023 earthquake response, notably in logistics, preparedness, volunteer management, and government coordination, with some gaps in application revealed by the scale of the earthquake.

- TRC effectively leveraged lessons learned from previous emergencies—particularly the 1999 Marmara earthquake, the Van and Elazığ earthquakes, and the Syrian crisis—to strengthen its response to the 2023 earthquake. Past experience in logistics, preparedness, coordination, and volunteer management played a critical role in enabling TRC to respond rapidly and at scale. In addition, the operation benefited from broader operational learnings drawn from major international earthquake responses, including those in Nepal and Haiti, offering valuable insights into asset recovery, winterization for remote communities, responding in areas affected by complex crises, and delivering integrated recovery models<sup>28</sup>. However, despite these advances, the unprecedented magnitude and complexity of the 2023 earthquake also exposed operational gaps that earlier learnings alone could not fully address.
- **Stockpiling and preparedness:** One of the most notable lessons from the 1999 Marmara earthquake was the importance of stockpiling and logistical preparedness. Post-1999, TRC invested heavily in building warehouses and enhancing procurement systems to ensure the availability of essential supplies. These investments allowed TRC to mobilize resources more quickly during the 2023 earthquake, enabling the immediate dispatch of food, shelter, and hygiene kits to the affected areas. This proactive approach to stockpiling improved TRC's capacity for rapid response, ensuring that resources were on hand when the disaster struck.
- **Decentralized logistics and community centres:** Learning from the 1999 disaster, TRC established decentralized logistics centers across 23 locations in Türkiye. These centers played a pivotal role in speeding up aid distribution and preventing bottlenecks. In addition, TRC's community service centers, which were developed in response to the Syrian refugee crisis, served as vital hubs for the provision of psychosocial support, protection services, and livelihood programs during the 2023 earthquake. These centers ensured that local communities continued to receive support, especially in the most affected areas, leveraging TRC's existing infrastructure to provide essential services at a community level.
- **Experience in field management:** TRC's experience from dealing with smaller disasters, such as the Van and Elazığ earthquakes, equipped its teams with the necessary skills to manage the logistics of

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<sup>28</sup> IFRC operation strategy, 21/02/2023

large-scale disaster responses. Teams were familiar with setting up mass feeding operations and coordinating with local authorities, enabling TRC to provide food and other necessities to survivors quickly and efficiently. The application of these lessons enabled more effective field management and allowed TRC to stabilize operations more rapidly.

- **Volunteer coordination and motivation:** TRC refined its volunteer coordination approach by integrating lessons learned from previous crises. According to TRC respondents, past experiences underscored the critical importance of volunteer motivation and effective management. One respondent noted that TRC implemented daily evaluations to assess volunteers' needs and ensure they felt valued, fostering a strong sense of morale and commitment across its workforce. Despite these efforts (ref. EQ11), the scale of the disaster, combined with the system's limitations in managing the large number of volunteers, placed significant psychological pressure on them, revealing a need for enhanced support mechanisms. These measures are essential to safeguard volunteer well-being and ensure their sustained engagement throughout the response.
- **Technological and logistical challenges:** While TRC learned from past disasters the importance of having robust technical and logistical tools, the 2023 earthquake highlighted ongoing challenges, such as internet restrictions that disrupted data entry and communication flows. Although TRC had implemented improvements from earlier disasters, these technological gaps exposed the need for further advancements in data management and communication systems, ensuring uninterrupted operations in future crises.
- **Operational independence and coordination with the government:** TRC's auxiliary role to the Turkish government was a double-edged sword. On one hand, it facilitated swift mobilization and close coordination with national authorities, which was crucial for mass feeding and other relief efforts. On the other hand, past lessons about maintaining operational independence were applied, particularly when TRC managed to navigate government resistance in the migration context to implement livelihood programs. Balancing collaboration with government priorities while maintaining operational autonomy was key to ensuring that TRC could pursue flexible responses to evolving needs.
- **Organizational and management adjustments:** Although TRC had been restructuring its disaster response mechanisms in the years leading up to the 2023 earthquake, the scale of the disaster revealed the need for further strengthening and refinement. A new disaster response regulation was in development but had not yet been fully implemented at the time of the earthquake. This ongoing restructuring effort shows that TRC is learning from past experiences and making incremental improvements to its disaster management system, though full realization of these changes is still in progress.

### Pillar 3: Auxiliary Role of the National Society

The auxiliary role of a National Society is to support its public authorities by supplementing or substituting for public humanitarian services, while acting in conformity with the Fundamental Principles, in particular neutrality and independence<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>30</sup>This support varies based on the country's civil society landscape, associated risks, legal framework, and the National Society's expertise and mandate.

#### Türkiye Disaster Response Plan (TAMP)

Launched in 2015 by AFAD, TAMP aims to increase the efficiency and quality of the response and coordinate strategic planning against all types of disasters that may occur in Türkiye. This plan ensures that operational risks are minimized during disasters through its integrated planning approach and modular structure, which coordinates public institutions, the private sector, non-governmental assembly and persons at the time of responding to disasters and emergencies. These institutions are included in classified service groups and coordination units where the basic principles of the institutions are determined along with the roles, duties and responsibilities. Accordingly, there are 28 service groups created according to the nature of the services carried out in the intervention.

Source: TRC situation report III, 07/03/2023

According to AFAD respondents, Türkiye's disaster response is coordinated under the TAMP, which assigns specific roles to ministries, public institutions, and non-governmental organizations, with AFAD serving as the primary coordinating body. TAMP outlines responsibilities for 25 disaster groups, with AFAD leading seven, including information management, communication, search and rescue, accommodation, and finance.



Within TAMP, the TRC has a defined role, primarily leading mass feeding operations during all disaster levels. As the designated lead agency for nutrition, TRC coordinates and delivers food services to affected populations nationwide, working closely with AFAD, municipalities, and other civil and military institutions.

<sup>29</sup> IFRC guide to strengthening the auxiliary role.  
[https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/20210201\\_AuxiliaryRole\\_ONLINE\\_NEW.pdf](https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/20210201_AuxiliaryRole_ONLINE_NEW.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> IFRC Briefing Paper: Demonstrating Auxiliary Role – Lessons from Türkiye and Lithuania

Additionally, TRC supports various other sectors, including telecommunications, health, transportation, shelter, psychosocial support, in-kind assistance, cash donations, and coordination of international support.

*EQ13: What were the pre-requisites that not only enabled, but empowered the NS to play their auxiliary role in the context of the earthquake response?*

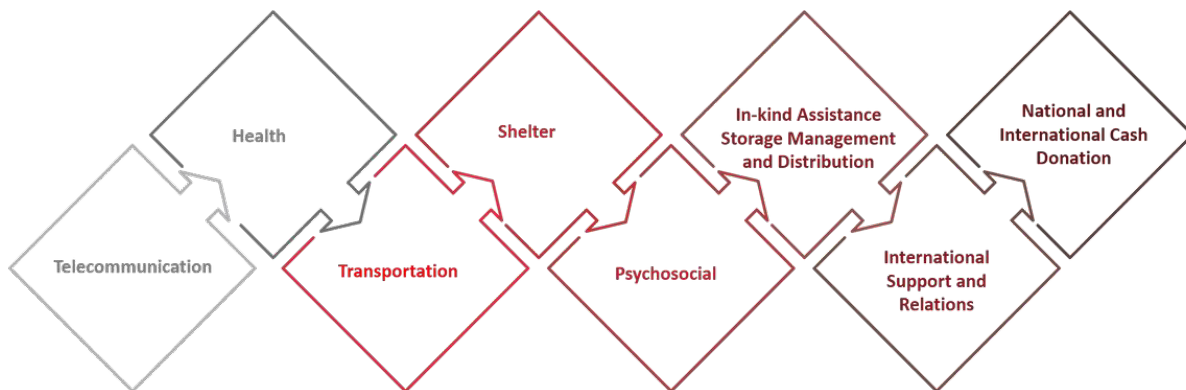


**Key Finding:** TRC's ability to effectively fulfil its auxiliary role during the earthquake response was driven by four core enablers: a clear role definition and legal frameworks, strong government relationships, operational autonomy, and extensive experience in large-scale operations.

### I. Key enablers to fulfilling TRC's auxiliary role

Across the operational review, four core enablers were identified:

1. **Clear role definition and legal frameworks:** As referenced in prior sections, TRC's role in disaster response, particularly under the TAMP, was clearly outlined, with its primary responsibility being the lead agency for mass feeding. This enabled rapid action without confusion or delays, ensuring the efficient mobilization of resources in coordination with governmental bodies like AFAD.



2. **Strong relationships with government:** TRC's long-standing relationships with various ministries, including the Ministry of Family and Social Services and the Ministry of Interior, played a crucial role in enabling a coordinated response. Over years of collaboration in emergency and social programming, particularly during the Syrian refugee crisis, TRC had built a foundation of trust and operational fluidity with government bodies. This history of cooperation allowed TRC to access essential data quickly, navigate bureaucratic processes, and mobilize critical resources, such as the cash assistance programs for earthquake-affected households. These relationships, fostered in peacetime, proved invaluable during the crisis, allowing TRC to seamlessly integrate into the national response.

- 3. Financial independence:** TRC's financial independence from government funding allowed it to maintain a degree of operational autonomy, enabling quick decision-making and resource management without bureaucratic delays. This independence is supported by its revenue-generating activities. Major income sources are Red Crescent assets and revenue-generating activities, and donations.

This autonomy also enhanced TRC's capacity to run large-scale mass feeding operations and provide other essential services, while maintaining trust with both the public and the government. TRC's ability to raise funds bilaterally and through emergency appeals allowed the organization to address immediate needs promptly, without depending on slower government disbursements, which could have otherwise limited the speed and effectiveness of the response.

- 4. Experience in managing large-scale operations:** TRC's extensive experience in managing large-scale humanitarian operations, including their role in the ESSN program and contributing to international conflict and natural based disasters response efforts, provided a solid foundation for managing the earthquake response. Their familiarity with running complex operations, especially cash-based interventions, empowered TRC to quickly plan, adapt and implement effective solutions for both food and cash assistance programs. This operational experience ensured that TRC was able to scale its response to meet the immense demands of the earthquake-affected regions.

*EQ14: How well did existing laws and key agreements with the authorities facilitate effective and efficient response, nationally and locally?*



**Key Finding:** TRC's strong relationships with local authorities and crisis coordination centers enhanced TRC's ability to manage resources effectively, with some issues in field-level coordination and misalignment between public expectations.

## I. Coordination and integration with local administrations

Coordination with AFAD at the national level and strong relationships with local authorities facilitated access to resources like logistical support and spaces for relief operations.

TRC's local branches, having built strong ties with authorities over years, played a crucial role in navigating bureaucratic challenges and meeting local needs quickly. However, some local authorities had varying interpretations of TRC's mandate and capacity under TAMP, leading to occasional hesitations and discussions with local governors in certain areas. However, these issues were swiftly addressed, as TRC's branches effectively leveraged their strong relationships to clarify roles and resolve misunderstandings.

Moreover, access to up-to-date information on needs and operations through engagement with local crisis coordination centers significantly improved TRC's ability to manage information flow, enhancing its overall response capabilities and enabling the timely allocation of resources.

## II. Use of government data for targeting vulnerable populations

A key factor in the effectiveness of the response was TRC's ability to accurately target and prioritize vulnerable populations through cash assistance programs. Initially, TRC had access to a well-established dataset for refugee populations through the ESSN project. However, to expand assistance to affected Turkish citizens, additional data was required, which TRC sourced from national databases.

Through a collaborative approach, TRC worked with the Ministry of Family and Social Services and AFAD to establish legal agreements that fully complied with data protection laws. This cooperation enabled TRC to integrate relevant data on Turkish citizens impacted by the earthquake, ensuring that the eligibility criteria aligned with the project's objectives while respecting all legal requirements. TRC combined this dataset with post-earthquake damage assessments to reach those in immediate need of cash assistance. This process underscored the strength of TRC's relationships with national partners and its commitment to data protection.

## III. Coordination and adaptability in the response mechanisms

Two UN respondents noted that while AFAD's response mechanisms were effective overall, certain aspects posed integration challenges for international partners. One respondent highlighted that AFAD's systems could sometimes limit adaptability to the rapidly changing needs of a large-scale, unpredictable disaster. Coordination between TRC and AFAD remained strong at the national level; however, alignment occasionally wavered at the field level. Variability in the collaboration of AFAD's provincial teams, including frequent leadership changes—particularly in Hatay—sometimes contributed to inconsistent directives and temporary confusion on the ground.

## IV. Role for supporting sectors in the TAMP

While TRC actively supports multiple sectors during disaster responses, its engagement is shaped by national priorities, evolving needs on the ground, and coordination with government ministries and international partners. While TRC has well-established operational capacities in areas such as shelter and health, these roles are not formally mandated under TAMP in the same way as mass feeding. This can sometimes lead to coordination challenges, particularly when roles and responsibilities across sectors are not formally defined.

As noted by TRC and IFRC respondents, decisions regarding the formalization or expansion of TRC's sectoral roles remain entirely within the purview of TRC and national authorities. However, promoting TRC's ability to deliver multi-sectoral responses—anchored in assessed needs and aligned with humanitarian principles—could further enhance its leadership role in national disaster management. Strengthening sectoral coordination frameworks, where appropriate, would allow TRC to leverage its full operational capacity, respond more holistically to affected communities, and reinforce its strategic positioning as a leading humanitarian actor in Türkiye.

*EQ15: What were the major challenges faced by the National Society in fulfilling this role during the 2023 Earthquake?*



**Key Finding:** Several challenges were faced by TRC including financial strain, a lack of predefined limits of disaster response, public expectations beyond TRC's core mandate, and political pressures that complicated its ability to maintain full operational independence.

## I. Financial strain due to large-scale commitments

A majority of IFRC and TRC leadership respondents cited financial strain as a significant challenge for TRC during the earthquake response due to the scale and duration of its commitments as the lead agency for mass feeding under TAMP. While some government support was provided, the bulk of the financial burden rested on TRC, placing its resources under severe strain. The lack of predefined limits in TAMP meant that TRC was expected to serve the entire affected population without clear boundaries, further intensifying this strain.

TRC leadership respondents highlighted that, as an auxiliary body, TRC does not receive direct funding from the state budget and relies instead on revenue from its assets, income-generating activities, blood transfusion services, and public donations. While the government has, on occasion, reimbursed TRC for food-related costs during past emergencies—under financial SOPs that allow for such reimbursements—the unprecedented scale and scope of this disaster has introduced uncertainty around the extent and sustainability of government financial support. In response, TRC is currently engaging with government authorities to revise the TAMP, seeking a more explicit commitment to cost coverage. This is aimed at safeguarding TRC's financial stability by ensuring predictable domestic funding, complemented by international support and public donations.

## II. Managing public perception, government expectations, and humanitarian positioning

During the earthquake response, TRC's strong national presence and close alignment with TAMP significantly enhanced its operational reach. However, this proximity also presented challenges in public perception and positioning. Many members of the public—and at times government counterparts—expected TRC to assume broader responsibilities, particularly in areas like shelter, beyond its formal mandate under TAMP. This misunderstanding was fueled by TRC's historical visibility in disaster response and its auxiliary status, leading to inflated expectations about its role.

At times, TRC's close collaboration with public authorities blurred the distinction between an independent humanitarian actor and a perceived extension of the state. Public controversies, such as misunderstandings

around tent provision, further complicated TRC's ability to manage expectations and maintain public trust, despite adhering to its assigned responsibilities.

Operating within the nationally determined response strategy, TRC focused on priorities such as mass feeding and consolidated shelter solutions in organized camps, aligned with government decisions. While some humanitarian actors perceived gaps—particularly for displaced populations outside formal settlements—TRC's role reflected adherence to national operational strategies rather than independent advocacy for alternative approaches.

Despite these constraints, TRC demonstrated strategic leadership by progressively transitioning from mass feeding to a more dignified, needs-based cash assistance model, leveraging its experience from programs like the ESSN. This shift, although initially divergent from broader expectations for uniform assistance, strengthened TRC's ability to address needs effectively and reinforced humanitarian principles within the national framework.

Moving forward, strengthening public communication around TRC's auxiliary role, operational boundaries, and humanitarian principles will be essential. Clearer articulation of TRC's mandate can safeguard its independent humanitarian identity, manage expectations, and ensure effective partnerships during future large-scale emergencies.

*"In a highly polarized context, the NS did very well in preserving themselves as independent as possible in the operation. But, at the same time, the NS showed stronger coordination with Government and authorities. No rules bridged, able to influence as independent humanitarian and step back of what could have had negative impact. They did what they had to do."* An IFRC respondent.

### III. Receiving, coordinating and tracking international assistance

Some IFRC and TRC respondents noted that one of the challenges during the earthquake response was coordinating international assistance, largely due to AFAD's central role as the primary recipient of aid. As the main coordinating authority, AFAD's position limited the ability of other organizations, including IFRC, to maintain comprehensive oversight of contributions from various PNSs, complicating the overall tracking and management of aid resources.

The scale and urgency of the disaster created significant complexities in tracking these contributions, as the sheer volume of in-kind donations, financial support, and technical assistance flowed rapidly into the response system. This difficulty in tracking donations and resources at such a large scale not only slowed down some aspects of the response but also risked duplication of efforts and gaps in resource allocation.

*EQ16: What were the lessons learned for future emergencies, not just for TRC in its auxiliary role, but also for other National Societies when building such a role into their preparedness efforts?*



**Key Finding:** Several key lessons emerged from TRC's response to the 2023 earthquake that can inform future preparedness efforts.

## Clarification of roles and public communication

One lesson shared by the majority of key respondents is the need for clearer communication of TRC's auxiliary role, both to the public and within the government. The misunderstandings about TRC's responsibilities, particularly in sectors like shelter, highlighted the importance of managing expectations before a crisis occurs. Going forward, TRC should engage in proactive public outreach during peacetime to ensure that its role in emergencies, particularly its primary focus on mass feeding, is well understood.

### I. Building financial safeguards to prevent overextension

The financial strain TRC experienced during the 2023 earthquake response, particularly due to its prolonged mass feeding operations, highlights the need for protective measures to prevent overextension. While TRC has an exemplary model of income generation through its investment companies, which could serve as a successful model for other National Societies, there is a need to strengthen financial safeguard measures for large-scale emergencies. Establishing contingency funds or clearer cost-sharing agreements with the government would be essential to protect TRC's financial stability during future crises, ensuring it can maintain operational capacity without risking long-term financial health. This includes establishing clear exit strategies for large-scale operations, such as cash and mass feeding programs, to ensure that TRC can scale down its commitments, when necessary.

### II. Expanding TRC's role and future strategies

TRC's close ties with the government allowed it to fulfill its mandate effectively in mass feeding during the earthquake response, but there was a missed opportunity for such a well-established and experienced NS to expand its interventions in key sectors like shelter and protection. Despite having strong logistical and technical capacity in shelter and health, TRC could have further enhanced its impact by revising its role in emergencies under the TAMP and collaborating more extensively with experienced international actors or PNS to strengthen its protection role and mainstream protection into its operations.

As per TRC management respondent, ongoing discussions between TRC and the government are already addressing this challenge, with TRC considering a broader shelter strategy that goes beyond simply distributing tents or receiving international support. The aim is to establish a comprehensive shelter approach that can include not only tents but also WASH facilities and other essential services, ensuring that

TRC can effectively support shelter operations in future emergencies. This shift would also allow TRC to channel international assistance into other sectors while maintaining a clear focus on its core responsibilities.

### III. Refining the relationship between national and local authorities

The 2023 earthquake response highlighted opportunities to strengthen coordination between the TRC and local authorities, especially at the municipal level, where occasional friction was observed despite TRC's strong national relationships. According to AFAD representatives, they are committed to ongoing collaboration with TRC to enhance joint preparedness efforts, including increasing search and rescue capacity, expanding disaster response warehousing, and strengthening personnel presence in disaster-prone regions. Establishing structured agreements between TRC's local branches and municipal authorities could clarify roles and responsibilities during crises, reducing operational delays. Additionally, conducting joint preparedness exercises with both TRC and local government entities could enhance nationwide readiness and streamline coordination across all levels of government.

Furthermore, in relation to the tracking of international assistance mentioned earlier, a TRC respondent reported that revisions to Türkiye's TAMP are currently under consideration. These revisions aim to maintain distinct channels for financial aid, in-kind donations, and human resources. The "Red Channel," coordinated by TRC, will remain a separate and dedicated pathway to ensure proper coordination of international support. Regular updates to the TAMP will further strengthen collaboration and enhance the effectiveness of future responses by providing clearer guidelines and improved coordination mechanisms.

## IX. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### IFRC relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the support provided by IFRC to the Turkish Red Crescent relief operation

#### Effectiveness and efficiency of IFRC support

The IFRC's allocation of financial, human, and material resources was carefully tailored to support TRC's in the earthquake response. By providing timely financial support, such as with the rapid allocation of a 2M DREF as part of the Emergency Appeal launched on the same day of the disaster, deploying skilled personnel, and assisting in the management of material and financial resources, the IFRC played a key role in ensuring that TRC could lead an effective, coordinated, and sustainable response to the disaster. This partnership not only contributed to address the immediate needs of the operation, but also to the long-term capacity and resilience of the Turkish Red Crescent.

The findings highlighted that financial coordination—especially aligning donor reporting requirements with internal systems—was a challenge. The urgent influx of pledges, coupled with non-standard donor demands, created bottlenecks that delayed fund allocation and strained administrative capacity.

While the management of in-kind resources was a key element of IFRC's support to TRC, findings revealed challenges related to in-kind donations from neighboring or close National Societies outside the Mobilization

Table addressing these challenges through better coordination, clearer communication, and proactive engagement with internal and external stakeholders will be essential to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of future disaster response efforts.

#### Recommendation

- **To IFRC:** formalize regular pre-crisis consultations with major donors (e.g., ECHO, USAID, FCDO) to agree on flexible funding principles and emergency reporting expectations before a crisis occurs — setting collective rules of engagement for future operations.
- **To IFRC:** pre-design a financial management toolkit (containing adaptable templates, donor compliance checklists, and rapid disbursement protocols) ready to deploy within 24–48 hours of an emergency. This would give TRC and IFRC immediate operational finance alignment.
- **To IFRC and TRC:** strengthen donor awareness of the importance of needs-driven in-kind donations or flexible funding during emergencies, with an emphasis on promoting the Mobilization Table as the sole authoritative tool for defining and coordinating material assistance needs.

#### Tailored approaches to working with national societies in emergencies

Given TRC's vast capacity and longstanding presence as a National Society, both in Türkiye and internationally, the role of the IFRC network in this response rightly focused on coordination rather than direct operations. TRC took the lead in this operation, while IFRC adhered to its mandate by coordinating the international components, including Membership Coordination and engagement with the UN and international partners. All efforts were directed in support of TRC and the Government of Türkiye, with IFRC also assuming the critical role of Shelter Coordination. Lessons can be learned from this tailored arrangement for future responses to avoid the tendency towards a standard approach to supporting NS by IFRC Secretariat and PNS.

#### Recommendations (Applicable to other emergency operations)

- **To IFRC:** utilize, expand and promote existing IFRC-Secretariat tools and to adopt tailored approaches to complement existing resources in case of emergencies. Comprehensive country profiles would be a good base to refrain from the adoption of standardized approaches (ex. full scale surge deployments regardless of the county when the disaster occurred) and adherence of defined mandate.
- **To IFRC:** establish a streamlined decision-making mechanism that prioritizes deployments based on clearly identified gaps such as rapid joint needs assessments before activating large-scale surge deployments to ensuring timely and contextually appropriate support.

#### Strengthening membership coordination

The findings showed that while membership coordination under the IFRC framework was largely effective, there were initial challenges in aligning PNS with multilateral coordination structures. Many PNS were more accustomed to bilateral modalities, and adapting to a centralized, Federation-wide approach required additional time and dialogue during the emergency—at a moment when speed and clarity were critical.

#### Recommendation (Applicable to other emergency operations)

- **To IFRC:** expand investment in pre-crisis orientation sessions for Partner National Societies on IFRC's multilateral coordination frameworks, roles, and operational protocols.

### Enhancing IFRC–TRC collaboration

The collaboration between IFRC and TRC serves as a strong example of how IFRC supports national leadership. In this case, it was reported that mutual trust and long-standing cooperation, including through the implementation of the ESSN project, was the basis for swift decision making in terms of collaboration to respond to the disaster.

While the ESSN project significantly strengthened operational capacities, some limitations were noted regarding familiarity among TRC departments—beyond the International Relations team leading ESSN—with IFRC's global emergency response tools and mechanisms. This created some challenges in fully realizing the potential of IFRC support during the earthquake response, particularly as engagement expanded across multiple TRC departments, requiring swift adaptation and scaling of systems, tools, and programs. Similarly, it was observed that IFRC's initial understanding of TRC's broader capacities and programs outside of its international department was limited, highlighting opportunities for deeper mutual familiarization in future operations.

The organization of coordination meetings both at strategic (Directors General meetings) and operational, including with the participation of IFRC enable TRC to make informed decision making and to IFRC and TRC to make, joint decisions which strengthened their partnership.

### **Recommendations (Operation specific)**

- **To IFRC and TRC:** enhance and institutionalize cross-departmental engagement within TRC to familiarize with programmes, systems and tools.
- **To IFRC and TRC:** enhance cross-departmental engagement with IFRC to familiarize with its mandate, systems and tools.
- **To IFRC and TRC:** promote/extend the participation of IFRC in the draft/revision of contingency plans and SoP, drills and simulation, to improve IFRC knowledge on TRC tools and capacities in emergency response operations.
- **To IFRC and TRC:** develop SoP covering all aspects related to the management of emergency operations (ex. coordination, communication, tools etc.) between TRC and IFRC to ensure smooth implementation of response actions.
- **To IFRC and TRC:** institutionalize collaborative processes, fostering continuous communication through Director General meetings.

### Expanding PGI and CEA integration

The findings highlighted the critical role of PGI and CEA in ensuring that humanitarian operations are responsive, inclusive, and accountable from the outset. While TRC and IFRC strengthened PGI and CEA systems during the response, these elements were not fully embedded in the initial phases due to the focus on life-saving priorities and limited pre-positioned capacity. The experience reinforced the need for PGI and

CEA expertise, tools, and structures to be pre-positioned and systematically integrated into surge planning and early operational strategies.

#### Recommendations (Operation specific)

- **To IFRC and TRC:** institutionalize mandatory local context sessions during onboarding, ensuring new personnel receive tailored briefings on diversity, equity, inclusion, protection, and community engagement, delivered by local experts to strengthen culturally informed and humanitarian-standard operations.
- **To TRC:** TRC is encouraged to further strengthen PGI and CEA mechanisms as integral components of its emergency response system, ensuring they are adaptable for large-scale emergencies and systematically embedded within the KAMP framework. This could include appointing focal points, integrating emergency reporting tools, integrating of PGI and CEA in emergency response simulation exercises, and ensuring early activation at the onset of a response.
- **To TRC:** institutionalize regular training for local staff and volunteers on PGI and CEA during emergencies, ensuring comprehensive understanding of feedback management, referral pathways, and effective closing of the feedback loop.
- **To TRC:** while TRC has existing safeguarding mechanisms, further strengthening is needed to align with international standards while remaining sensitive to local norms. It is recommended that TRC enhance these mechanisms to ensure consistent protection across all response levels, creating a safe environment for vulnerable groups—including women, children, and marginalized communities—to report concerns and access support.

### Performance of the IFRC network against its Grand Bargain localization commitments

#### Increasing flexible funding streams

While IFRC successfully mobilized significant resources to support TRC's earthquake response, a large proportion of the funding was earmarked for specific sectors or activities. This restricted flexibility in allocating resources based on real-time operational needs and priorities identified by TRC. The imbalance between earmarked and unearmarked funding created constraints in fully supporting a locally led and adaptive response, limiting TRC's autonomy in decision-making and prioritization during a highly dynamic and complex emergency environment.

#### Recommendations (Applicable to other emergency operations)

- **To IFRC:** Advocate for increased unearmarked funding and promote 'conditional flexibility' agreements with donors—allowing pre-approved flexible funding mechanisms to be activated during specific phases of an emergency. Demonstrating how unrestricted contributions are recognized through enhanced visibility, accountability, and tailored reporting could further incentivize donor support and strengthen the flexibility and responsiveness of local actors like TRC.

### Institutionalizing volunteer management systems

During the earthquake response, TRC's ability to rapidly mobilize thousands of volunteers was critical to reaching affected communities. However, the scale and urgency of the disaster exposed gaps in volunteer management systems, particularly in registering, coordinating, and supporting a large influx of both affiliated and spontaneous volunteers. Challenges included limited logistical support, uneven deployment strategies, gaps in safeguarding, and the psychological strain on volunteers, many of whom were themselves impacted by the disaster. These issues underscored the need for scalable, pre-established volunteer management systems that can be activated immediately during large-scale emergencies.

#### Recommendations (Operation specific)

- **To TRC:** establish pre-crisis volunteer surge management protocols, including digital registration platforms, rapid vetting processes, and flexible deployment frameworks that can absorb both affiliated and spontaneous volunteers during emergencies.
- **To TRC:** develop and integrate standardized safeguarding and code of conduct training for all volunteers, with rapid orientation packages ready for immediate use in large-scale responses.
- **To TRC:** expand its psychosocial support mechanisms to ensure volunteers can cope with the emotional toll of disaster response including pre-deployment briefings, access to mental health services during assignments, and mandatory post-deployment debriefings. Digital tools, such as the Gonulluol.org platform, should be upgraded to manage large-scale volunteer deployments more effectively.

## Auxiliary role

### Promoting financial stability and safeguards

While TRC's financial independence from government funding allowed for operational flexibility, the financial strain of the large-scale mass feeding operations highlighted vulnerabilities in long-term sustainability. The absence of contingency funds and clear cost-sharing agreements with the government increased the risk of overextension.

#### Recommendation (Operation specific)

- **To TRC:** establish financial safeguards such as contingency funds and formalized cost-sharing agreements with the government to maintain financial stability during large-scale crises. Developing clear exit strategies for major operations like mass feeding will help prevent long-term financial strain.

### Enhancing coordination with local authorities

TRC's coordination with national government agencies was strong, but inconsistencies in field-level coordination with local authorities created operational challenges. In addition to difficulties tracking international assistance and contributions of PNSs.

**Recommendations (Operation specific)**

- **To TRC:** strengthen joint emergency preparedness protocols with local authorities through structured agreements and joint preparedness exercises. This will improve operational clarity and efficiency at the local level during future crises, minimizing delays and misunderstandings.
- **To TRC:** advocate for clear coordination pathways for international assistance within Türkiye's disaster management framework, ensuring that TRC's "Red Channel" remains distinct and capable of managing bilateral and multilateral contributions effectively.

**Strengthening public communication and perception management**

Miscommunication about TRC's auxiliary role, particularly regarding its responsibilities in shelter provision, led to public misunderstandings and reputational challenges. TRC's historical role in small-scale shelter responses contributed to unrealistic public expectations during the earthquake.

**Recommendation (Operation specific)**

- **To TRC:** engage in proactive public outreach in peacetime and during operations to clarify its auxiliary role and ways of working to manage expectations, particularly regarding its responsibilities in emergencies. This will help mitigate misunderstandings and protect its reputation in future responses.