



THE  
SURVIVAL  
FUND

# EMERGENCY WINTER HEATING FOR SYRIAN SCHOOL CHILDREN

## EMERGENCY WINTER HEATING FOR SYRIAN SCHOOL CHILDREN

*Impact Report: December 2023*

### OVERVIEW OF EMERGENCY

In its 11th year, Syria's political and socio-economic crisis shows no sign of abating. Over 2.87 million people remain displaced in northwest Syria, escaping violence from regime-controlled areas. 90% of Syrians live below the poverty line.

Last year, as the winter approached, people faced increased hardships and Syrians braced for long, cold winter as fuel crisis bites. The government struggled to pay for fuel imports after the war in Ukraine drove up world energy prices. Anticipated snowstorms, cold weather, strong winds, rain and floods had a serious humanitarian impact on Syrian children.

Over 30% in northwest Syria are school-aged children. Schools have consistently recorded a 30-40% reduction in attendance during the coldest months of the year, typically lasting from mid-December to March. Sickness and absenteeism linked to cold weather were the top causes reported for children missing out on school. Ten children have heartbreakingly died in the past three years due to freezing temperatures and unsafe heating. End of last year, more lives were at risk of dying of cholera, especially in overcrowded camps that lack basic infrastructure and access to clean water.

Northwest Syria had 379 schools that will not operate last winter if they were not supported immediately with winterisation items.

Furthermore, on February 06, 2023, a 7.8 magnitude tremor struck at a depth of 17.9km (11 miles) near the city of Gaziantep in Turkey, creating a massive quake that toppled buildings in Turkey

and Syria as people slept. This earthquake was considered one of the 10th deadliest natural disasters of the century. Over 51,000 people have been killed, hundreds of thousands have been injured, and at least two million have been displaced.

This earthquake has also caused extensive damage to buildings and infrastructure in both countries, with severe damage in northwest Syria. As a result, over 28,429 students and 1,055 teachers in the affected areas missed four weeks of school. It was reported that 323 educational facilities were completely damaged by the earthquake, and needed immediate repairs.

### **WORLD VISION'S RESPONSE: IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS**

World Vision first saw the need in providing winterisation items to schools who were unable to operate during winter. However, with an urgent need to respond to rehabilitating educational facilities and even construction new facilities for students to return to school due to the devastating earthquake, part of this emergency response to address winterisation items were redirected. This allowed for schools to be rehabilitated and constructed in addition to provisions for heating for children to return to a school to continue the learning process despite the harsh winter conditions.



*Students in their newly constructed classroom*

#### **Key activities implemented in Idlib and Aleppo:**

- **34,444 litres of heating fuel** procured and distributed
  - **22 schools** received **19,444 litres** of heating fuel which enabled **17,095 beneficiaries** (16,375 students and 720 schools' personnel) in **274 classrooms** to continue the learning process despite the harsh winter conditions
  - **15,000 litres** of fuel were provided urgently to the civil defense forces in Idlib which used to power vehicles and equipment, allowing them to respond quickly and efficiently to the devastating earthquake to carry out their life-saving work. The fuel was used to operate some of the following: ambulance services, heavy machines and lifting equipment, and generators. It is expected that over 10,000 individuals have benefited from this.
- **7 schools** (159 classrooms) rehabilitated
  - **6,246 individuals** (5,989 students and 257 school personnel) benefitted from the rehabilitation of the schools impacted by the earthquake.
  - After the earthquake, schools' sites were levelled with necessary excavations and rubble was removed. The schools were also cleaned to ensure that anything that could cause harm or threat to the students were removed.

- The rehabilitation and maintenance works that were carried out included re-construction of retaining walls, plumbing maintenance, electricity maintenance and reinstallation, improved the lightning systems in the class rooms, insulation works of the roofs for water-proofing, plastering and painting the schools walls, windows and doors rapair, window nets installation, replacement of damaged furniture like desks, chairs, blackboards, and maintenance of play grounds and school yards.
- **1 school** constructed
  - **418 individuals** (400 students and 18 school personnel) benefitted from the construction of a new school containing 11 classrooms which replaced a school damaged by the earthquake

## **IMPACT STORY:**

### **Rebuilding Dreams: Omar's Journey of Hope in Syria**



*Omar, a young boy from Bozgar, who aspires to become an engineer*

Over the past decade, the Syrian conflict has inflicted untold suffering upon countless individuals, and among its most vulnerable victims are children like Omar. However, in the unassuming town of Bozgar, nestled in northwestern Syria, a transformative initiative spearheaded by World Vision and dedicated partners has illuminated a path of hope.

Omar, a courageous young man hailing from Bozgar, has weathered the brutal tempests of war and a devastating earthquake, both of which disrupted his education. Amidst the chaos, Omar found unwavering support from his parents—his mother, a devoted teacher, and his father, an indefatigable hospital worker. Their unwavering encouragement has fortified Omar's resolve to pursue knowledge, even as his family grapples with immense challenges.

Like numerous schools in the region, Omar's own educational institution did not escape the earthquake's fury, leaving young minds in a state of uncertainty. Upon its eventual reopening, the school served as a haven for displaced students from neighbouring areas who had lost their homes and places of learning. Resources were scarce, classrooms teemed with students, and living conditions were deplorable.

Within the school premises, three cramped metal caravans served as makeshift classrooms, their stifling interiors exacerbating the summer's scorching heat, hindering concentration, and denying reprieve. Omar vividly recalls the day when one of these caravans caught fire, instilling fear and extinguishing the notion of safety.

At this pivotal juncture, World Vision embarked on a mission to reconstruct lives and rekindle dreams. The organization undertook the ambitious task of erecting new, suitable classrooms for Omar's school. This endeavour served as a poignant symbol of resilience emerging from the ashes, rekindling Omar's aspirations of becoming an engineer. His ambition extends beyond personal fulfilment; he also hopes to extend a helping hand to those in need.

In the not-so-distant future, Omar and over 400 of his peers will return to a school where learning is not only attainable but also comfortable. Throughout the duration of the project's implementation, Omar remained in constant contact, sharing his boundless enthusiasm with us. It is worth mentioning that World Vision Syria Response isn't only working towards improving access to education around Syria, it is also provided them with heaters. Unfortunately, many schools in Syria lack proper heating adding another layer of challenges to children who are pursuing their education journey. We took notice of that issue and didn't accept children rebuilding their future in less than suitable conditions. Therefore, more than 6,200 children felt at home after their schools were made warmer during these cold months. After they were distributed, classes felt warmer and children were more energised to study and participate in the class which is World Vision Syria Response's goal, children's welfare.

Omar's journey stands as a testament to the unwavering spirit of Syria's children. Even amidst the darkest of times, they cling tenaciously to the hope of a brighter tomorrow. It serves as a compelling narrative that propels us to redouble our efforts, sparing no endeavour to fulfil the dreams of Syria's children and, by extension, those of children around the world.

## PHOTOS





## **MOVING FORWARD**

Thank you for your generosity and love for children and their families in their time of greatest need. On behalf of beneficiaries affected by the harsh winter in Syria who may never have a chance to thank you personally, we would like to extend our appreciation for your gift of hope and help in this emergency.

To make a difference to children affected by other disasters, please support The Survival Fund. Visit <https://www.worldvision.org.sg/en/the-survival-fund> to learn more.