

Joint Education and Child Protection Needs Assessment – North West Syria

Findings Following the Earthquake



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Introduction

On the 6th of February 2023, a magnitude 7.8 Earthquake hit Türkiye, Syria and neighbouring countries. In total, the health cluster reported 4,540 deaths and 10,400 injuries in North West Syria (NWS).¹

During the Autumn of 2022, the Education Cluster and Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CPAoR) for North West Syria (NWS) undertook a Joint Needs Assessment (JNA), supported by the Global Education Cluster's Needs Assessment and Preparedness (NAP) project.

The aim of this annex is to explore the findings of this JNA in the context of the earthquake, using secondary data to explore how the context has changed and interpret how this situation will have affected the initial findings.

Assessments Used

As well as the findings of the JNA, this annex pulls from a range of resources conducted after the earthquake. REACH conducted a *Rapid Needs Assessment*² (RNA), with data collection being ran between the 9th and 11th of February 2023, with a follow up collection in missed communities between the 7th and 9th of March 2023. REACH complemented this rapid needs assessment with an analysis of *Post-Earthquake Market Conditions, Livelihoods Opportunities, and Food Security* brief³. Between the 28th February and 4th March, REACH also conducted an *Earthquake Response Displacement Monitoring*⁴ Assessment to track IDPs and returnees.

This annex also uses information from Assistance Coordination Unit's (ACU's) *Earthquake Situation Update*⁵ report series. ACU used a Key Informant (KI) based data collection with multiple rounds, with information regularly updated during the initial response. This annex also used UNOCHA's situation updates⁶ and flash appeals to support the collation of findings from other sectoral assessments.

Immediate Impact of Earthquake and Displacement

As of 14th of March 1,869 building were completely destroyed by the earthquake whilst 8,731 buildings were partially destroyed.⁷ Residential buildings in this area were strongly affected.⁸ As of 14th of March, UNOCHA reported that more than 108,000 displacements occurred in NWS, although during the same period 17,517 displaced returned to their place of origin.⁹ REACH estimates that 60,000 newly displaced people were residing in newly established displacement

¹ [North West Syria: Situation Report \(14 April 2023\) - UNOCHA](#)

² [Earthquake Response Rapid Needs Assessment: Situation Overview – REACH Initiative \(updated on 30th March 2023\)](#)

³ [Post-Earthquake Market Conditions, Livelihoods Opportunities, and Food Security brief – REACH Initiative \(March 2023\)](#)

⁴ [Earthquake Response Displacement Monitoring - Reach Initiative \(9th March\)](#)

⁵ [Earthquake NWS Situation Report Series – Assistance Coordination Unit \(updated on March 19th\)](#)

⁶ [North West Syria Situation Report – UNOCHA \(March 2023\)](#)

⁷ [North West Syria Situation Report – UNOCHA \(March 2023\)](#)

⁸ [Earthquake Response Rapid Needs Assessment: Situation Overview – REACH Initiative \(updated on 30th March 2023\)](#)

⁹ [North West Syria Situation Report – UNOCHA \(March 2023\)](#)

sites.¹⁰ This is on top of the estimated 2.8 million people already displaced within NWS, as estimated by the shelter cluster and UNHCR.¹¹

According to REACH, 69% of these new IDPs were being hosted by friends or relatives, with 13% residing in functional tents. Pertinently for Education partners, 4% at the time of data collection were residing within educational facilities.¹² As reported by OCHA, at least 20 formal schools were being used to host IDPs following the earthquake by March 14th, over 6 weeks later.¹³

School Infrastructure and Barriers to Education related to the School and Journey to School

The JNA identified key barriers to accessing formal education by surveying the parents and caregivers of Out of School Children (OOSC). The assessment corroborated these findings by surveying KIs within the community. Both findings were aggregated to the community level using rules that can be found in Annex 3.

As of March 14th, 640 schools had been reported at least partially damaged by local authorities.¹⁴ According to the RNA of schools currently being carried out by the Education Cluster, 22 (5%) of the 434 schools assessed were fully destroyed and could not be used at all, whilst 89 (21%) were moderately damaged, meaning they were likely to be running at a reduced capacity.¹⁵

During REACH's Rapid Needs Assessment, KIs in 20% of communities (94 communities) answered that educational infrastructure and services were not accessible at all, whilst KIs in 7% of communities (31 communities) responded that these services were only accessible to a few.¹⁶ KIs in a further 7% of communities (30 communities) answered that education services were accessible to half their population. When totalled, KIs in only 44% of communities (202 communities) reported education services were accessible to all populations. KIs in 38% of communities reported that Education facilities were one of the top 3 priority needs for their communities.¹⁷

During the JNA, when asked to identify barriers related to the school or the journey to the school, **distance and lack of transportation was one of the two most reported barriers for every disaggregation of the parents/caregiver respondents across gender, camp and displacement status, and age group.** There were only two exceptions: Out of camp, non-displaced, secondary aged boys and girls.¹⁸

¹⁰ [Urgent post-earthquake needs compound protracted vulnerability in northwest Syria – REACH Initiative \(March 2023\)](#)

¹¹ [Camp Crisis in North West Syria \(January 2023\) - CCCM Cluster and UNHCR](#)

¹² [Earthquake Response Displacement Monitoring - Reach Initiative \(9th March\)](#)

¹³ [North West Syria Situation Report – UNOCHA \(March 2023\)](#)

¹⁴ [North West Syria Situation Report – UNOCHA \(March 2023\)](#)

¹⁵ Education Cluster Rapid Needs Assessment (As yet unpublished)

¹⁶ [Earthquake Response Rapid Needs Assessment: Situation Overview – REACH Initiative \(updated on 30th March 2023\)](#)

¹⁷ [Earthquake Response Rapid Needs Assessment: Situation Overview – REACH Initiative \(updated on 30th March 2023\)](#)

¹⁸ “Formal schools were overcrowded” was in the top two most reported rather than distance and lack of transportation for both aggregations.

Formal schools being overcrowded was also a frequently identified barrier by parent and caregivers related to the school or journey, frequently being the 3rd of 4th most reported barrier.

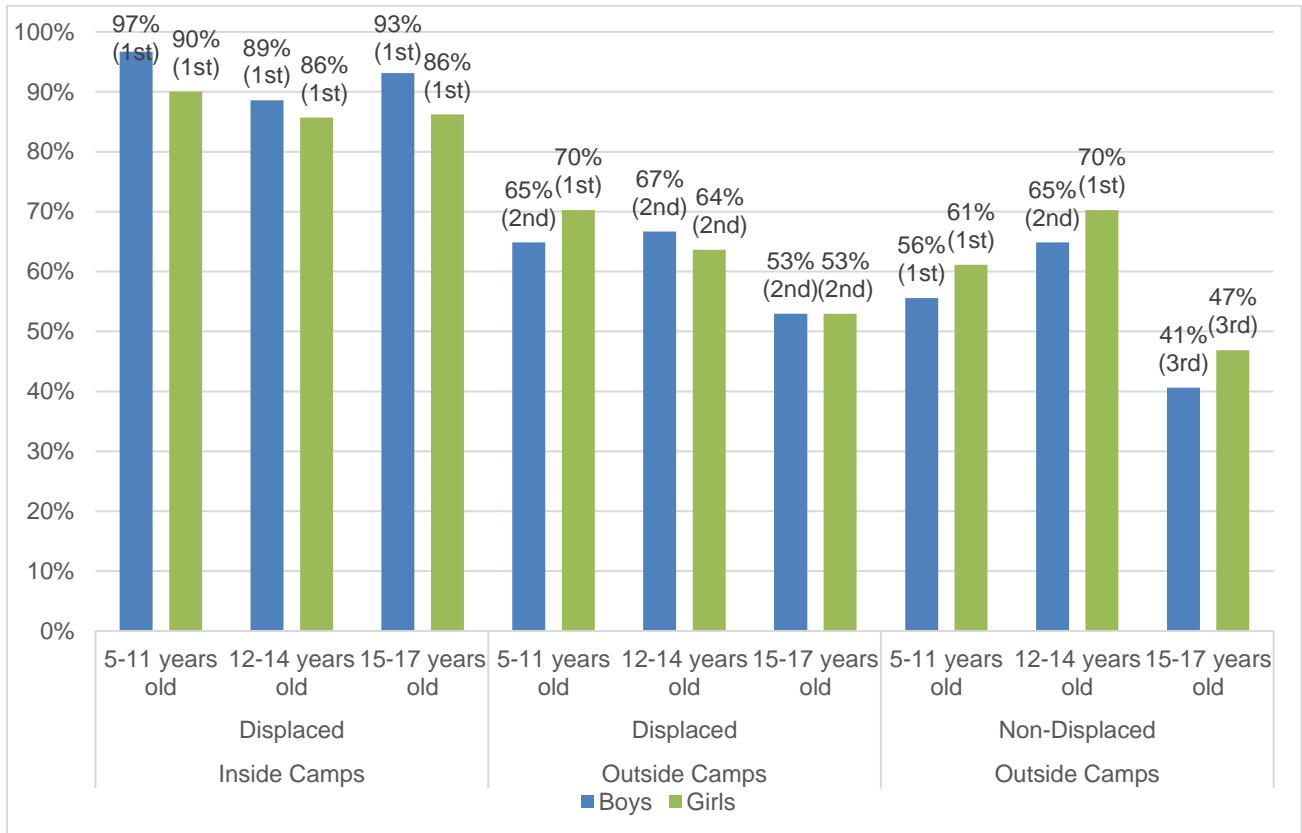


Figure 1: % of assessed communities where one or more parent/caregiver respondent reported that the distance to formal school and lack of transportation was a barrier to accessing formal education and rank of this barrier compared to other reported school/journey barriers.¹⁹

¹⁹ More than one answer could be selected. Ranking based on the number of communities where an option was reported by at least one parent/caregiver.

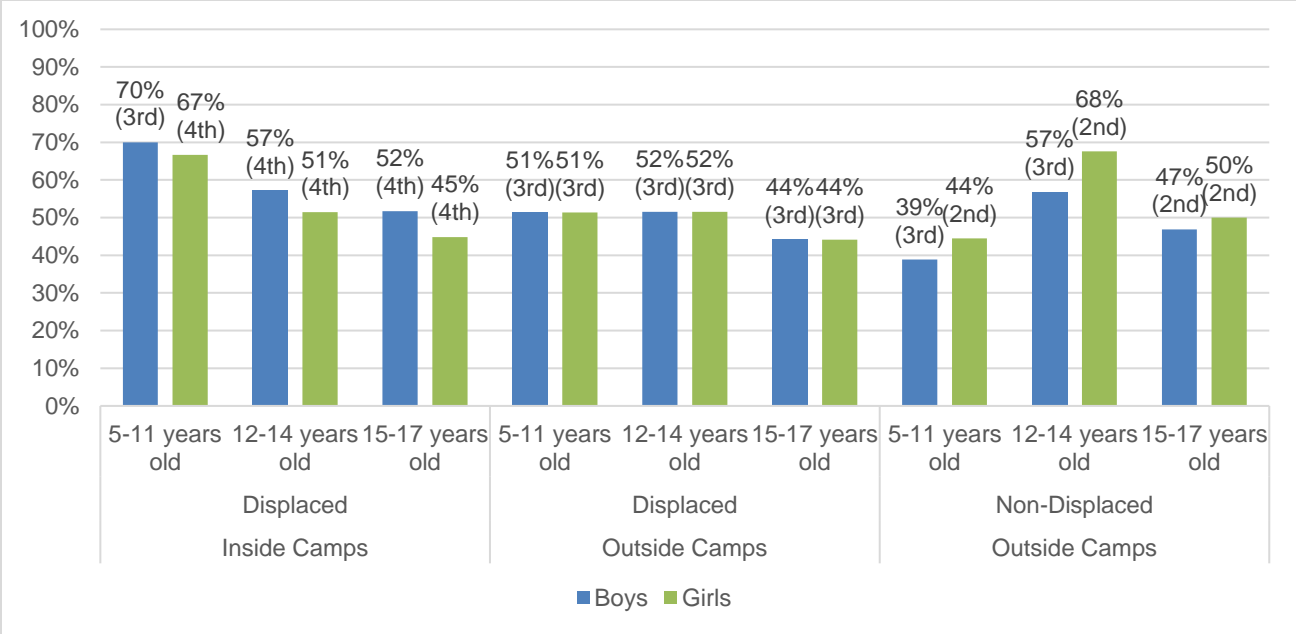


Figure 2: % of communities where one or more parent/caregiver respondent reported that the formal school being overcrowded was a barrier to accessing formal education, and rank of this barrier compared to other school and journey related barriers.²⁰

The damage to schools has likely increased the distance to formal schools for several children, with no form of alternative transport being provided. This number is likely to increase even further when considering the newly displaced children amongst the over 100,000 new IDPs identified since the earthquake. In findings from the 2022 IDP Integrated Monitoring Matrix Plus (ISSIM+), there were no education facilities inside 1,213 of the 1,344 assessed IDP sites.²¹ When it came to accessing services inside or near the camp, 42% of assessed households in camps reported they did not have access to primary education facilities whilst 80% reported not having access to secondary education facilities.²² It is likely that these newly displaced children will now also face the distance to school and lack of transportation as a barrier.

Education Opportunity Cost and Child Labour

As identified in the SDR (Annex 1) conducted as part of the JNA, the barriers for children accessing formal education were frequently related to more than simply the infrastructure. The initial cost of sending children to school may be already demanding on a household, with the expenses for fees, transport, and materials being difficult for the household to afford. In the JNA, costs and fees were also in the top two most reported barriers related to the school or journey by parents and caregivers across all gender and camp disaggregations, with the notable exception of two groups (Out of camp, secondary aged girls and out of camp, upper primary aged girls).

As well as the initial costs, the opportunity cost of sending children to formal education is also a big factor in preventing children from attending. Examples of this education opportunity costs may

²⁰ More than one answer could be selected. Ranking based on the number of communities where an option was reported by at least one parent/caregiver.

²¹ [IDP Sites Integrated Monitoring Matrix Plus \(June 2022\) - CCCM Cluster](#)

²² [IDP Sites Integrated Monitoring Matrix Plus \(June 2022\) - CCCM Cluster](#)

be the lost opportunity to support the household by working outside the household or allow parents to earn money with the children covering the domestic labour within the household. This opportunity cost has likely been increased following the economic disruption of the earthquake.

According to REACH, vendors after the earthquake reported market shortages and price increases for key high demand items. For example, the price of shelter and winterisation material nearly doubled.²³ The affordability of basic foods and non-food items (already a challenge within NWS), meant that KIs from most assessed communities reported that households could not afford essential food items, even though markets were present. Finally, in the areas mostly affected by the earthquake, such as Harim, Jandarisi and Sheikh al Hadid sub-districts, KIs reported no availability of basic food items in markets in the weeks after the earthquake.²⁴

These worsening of economic conditions and increase in prices can be a driver for child labour. During the JNA, KIs from all assessed communities, for both disaggregations, reported the presence of child labour, apart from 1 community outside camps where KIs reported that no girls engaged in child labour. This suggests child labour is widespread in NWS.



²³ [Post-Earthquake Market Conditions, Livelihoods Opportunities, and Food Security brief – REACH Initiative \(March 2023\)](#)

²⁴ [Post-Earthquake Market Conditions, Livelihoods Opportunities, and Food Security brief – REACH Initiative \(March 2023\)](#)

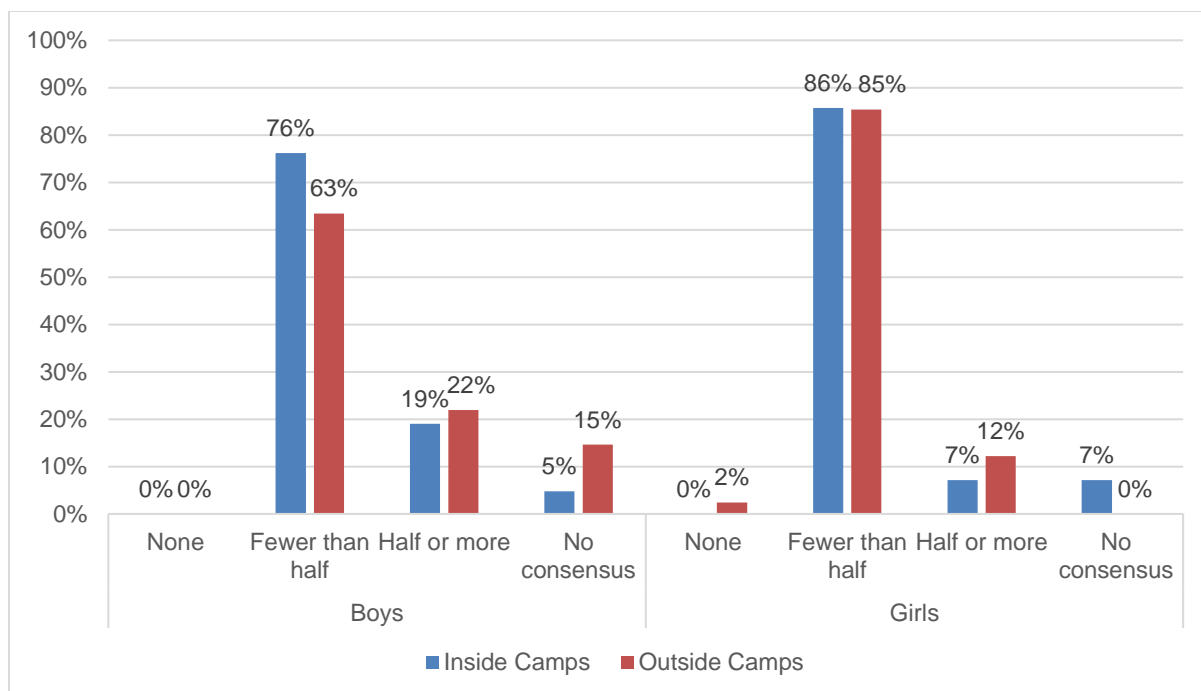


Figure 3: % of assessed communities by estimated proportion of boys and girls engaging in child labour, as estimated by KIs.

In the above graph from the JNA, the most interesting column is the “half or more” column, where KIs have voted that half or more children from this category within the community are working, acting as a proxy for assessed communities where child labour is more common. It was more likely for KIs to report that half or more of boys would be working than half or more of girls. However, girls might be more commonly engaged in other types of labour (inside the house), and girls' labour might therefore be less visible and/or under-reported.

	5-11 years old		12-14 years old		15-17 years old	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Contribute to household income	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Contribute to the care of other family members	69%	81%	86%	88%	63%	63%
Earn to cover the cost of going back to school	33%	31%	26%	19%	22%	15%
Earn to cover the cost of their siblings' schooling	43%	45%	62%	57%	44%	41%
Gain experience and skills	67%	38%	67%	40%	61%	32%
Pay for the bride price / bring money to their marriage	7%	5%	10%	7%	24%	10%
School is not perceived as useful and prefer spending time in these activities	64%	62%	50%	55%	34%	46%
Support self/be economically independent	38%	26%	36%	26%	41%	27%

Figure 4: % of assessed communities by reason for boys and girls to engage in child labour, as identified by one or more parent/caregiver respondent.

The reasons for child labour, as identified by the parents/caregivers of OOSC, were similar for both boys and girls. The desire to contribute to household income and care for household members suggests that child labour is a coping mechanism, an action to lessen the hardship faced by households, rather than a positive choice taken by the child or household.

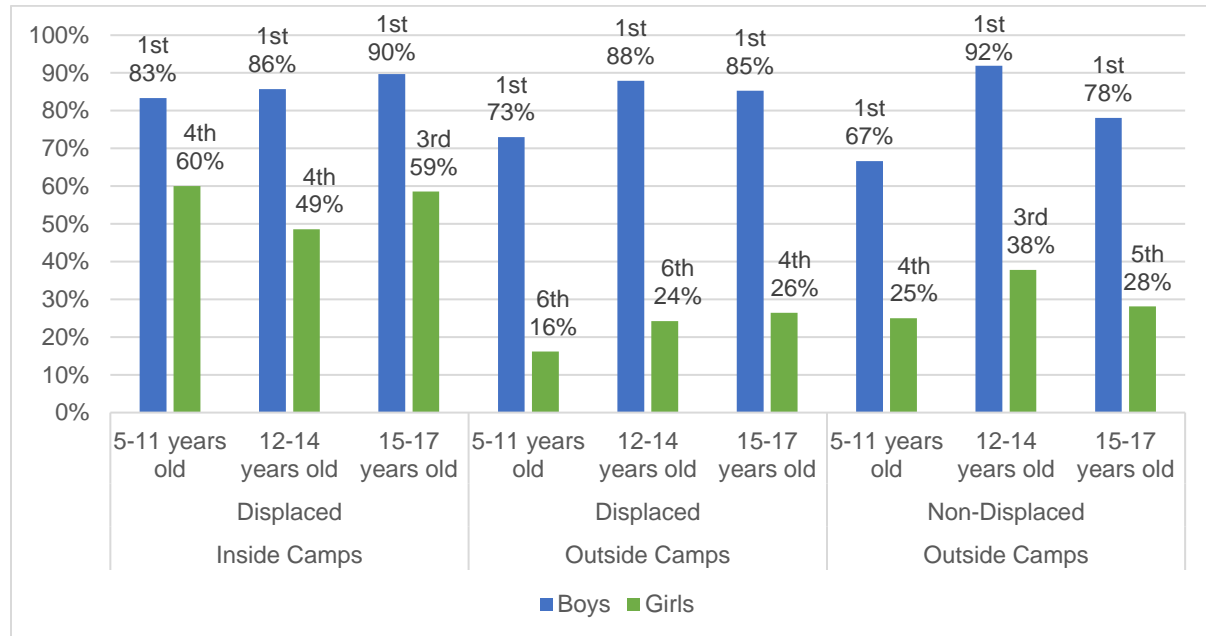


Figure 3: % of assessed communities where one or more parent/caregiver respondent reported that the child working outside the home was a barrier to accessing formal education and rank of this barrier compared to other home barriers.²⁵

Across every displacement and camp status, and across every age group, the most identified barrier to accessing formal education related to the home or household for boys was working outside the home. For girls, the most common barrier related to the home or household was frequently working within the home or on the farm, which is also influenced by deteriorating economic circumstances (as well as social and cultural beliefs). Working within the household may be due to the household's inability to afford to send the girl to school or may be due to the need to take care of young members of the household and also contribute to providing an income. Deteriorating economic conditions following the earthquake may have increased the prevalence of child labour, which will likely have the secondary effect of preventing boys and girls from accessing formal education.

The earthquake may not only have increased the prevalence of child labour, but increased the number of children involved in hazardous forms of labour. During the JNA, one parent/caregiver from 88% of communities and 69% of communities respectively reported boys and girls having participated in trash collection. During the REACH RNA, KIs from 43% of communities reported the need for assistance to clean up debris/rubble created by the earthquake. During the JNA, at least one KI from 50% of assessed communities inside camps identified that it is common for

²⁵ More than one answer could be selected. Ranking based on the number of communities where an option was reported by at least one parent/caregiver.

boys to participate in labour that exposes them to dust, fumes or gas, and at least one KI from 38% of assessed communities inside camps identified it was common for boys to participate in labour that includes carrying heavy loads. Further research should be undertaken on the role of children in clearing up the earthquake and whether they continue to engage with hazardous labour as a result of the earthquake.

Protection and Vulnerability

The earthquake, along with the ensuing displacement and instability, is likely to have worsened the risks of protection for children and increased their vulnerability to protection incidents. The earthquake reportedly injured at least 1,248 boys between the ages of 5-14 years old and 948 girls of the same age.²⁶ At least 1,032 boys aged 15-24 years old and 818 girls of the same age were injured, with a proportion of these likely to be under the age of 18 years old.²⁷

Alongside the direct increase of dangers and injuries, the instability and damage of the earthquake also likely increased the risk of child protection incidents. In REACH's RNA, KIs from 18% of communities reported there was a lack of physical safety due to infrastructure damage. In the JNA, at least one KI from 55% of assessed communities inside camps and 37% of assessed communities outside camps reported that unsafe infrastructure within the community was a protection risk boys may face, with very similar proportions of communities reporting the same for girls.²⁸ Other figures to note from REACH's RNA was the reported increase in theft and robberies in 6% of communities.

According to UNOCHA, consultations with GBV experts indicated a 29% increase in incidence in GBV, with specific risks present where the population had increased due to the earthquake.²⁹ During the JNA, at least KI in 63% of assessed communities outside camps and 55% of assessed communities inside camps identified gender-based or sexual violence/abuse as a type of risk girls may face in their community. When explored further using the findings for parents and caregivers, these respondents were most likely to report that displaced girls inside camps may face sexual or gender-based violence in their community.

²⁶ [Earthquake NWS Situation Report Series – Assistance Coordination Unit \(updated on March 19th\)](#)

²⁷ [Earthquake NWS Situation Report Series – Assistance Coordination Unit \(updated on March 19th\)](#)

²⁸ [Earthquake Response Rapid Needs Assessment: Situation Overview – REACH Initiative \(updated on 30th March 2023\)](#)

²⁹ [North West Syria Situation Report – UNOCHA \(March 2023\)](#)

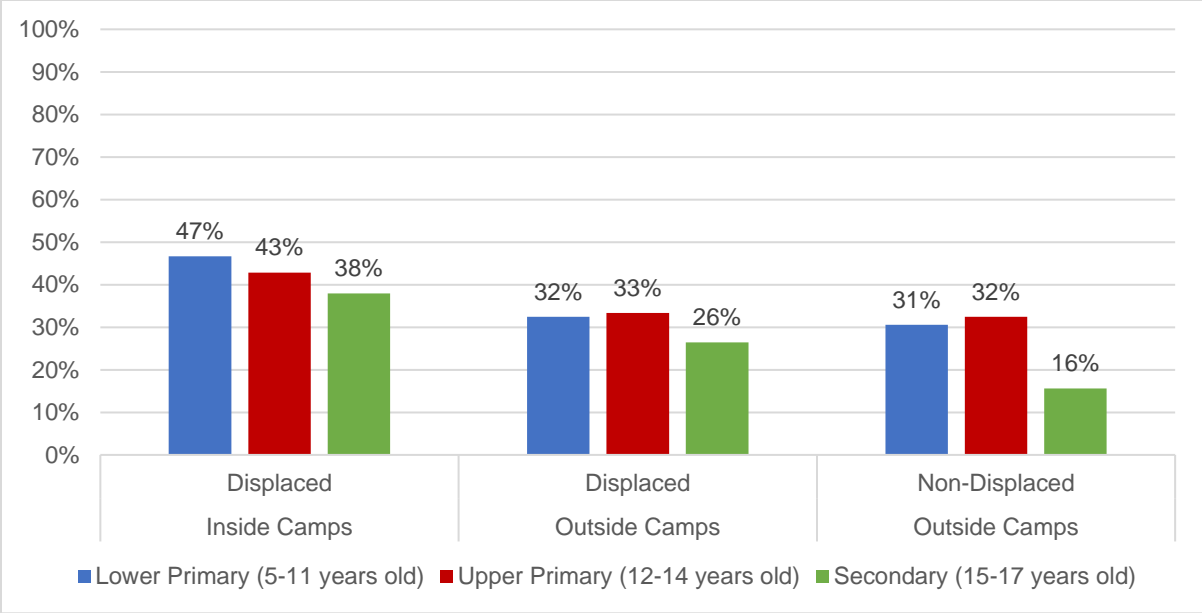


Figure 4: % of assessed communities where one or more parent caregiver has identified gender-based or sexual violence/abuse as a protection issue for girls.

Further data should be collected on unaccompanied and separated children, child marriage and other significant child protection risks to understand the extent of the earthquake’s negative effects on these phenomena.

Conclusion

Whilst this Annex is unable to draw conclusive findings on the impact of the earthquake on education and child protection needs within NWS, interpretations of findings from rapid assessments and the joint needs assessment suggest a decline in the conditions for households and children. As explored in the initial findings of the JNA, barriers to accessing education do not only lie solely within the infrastructure of formal education in NWS, although issues such as overcrowding, damage and distance between schools do play a significant role. The economic situation of NWS often means households need to send their children to work in order to provide for their basic needs. The earthquake may have not only worsened education infrastructure but increased household reliance on harmful coping mechanisms such as child labour, deepening barriers to education for households.



This assessment was conducted as part of a Global Education Cluster and Child Protection Area of Responsibility (GCPAoR) project funded by the Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs (BHA) to strengthen joint needs assessments. The project aims to improve the availability of data and evidence to support strategic planning, response, and preparedness at country level for both education in emergencies and child protection actors. This is critical as EiE interventions contribute to protection outcomes by providing access to lifesaving services through schools and learning spaces (school feeding, nutrition, health, mental health and psychosocial services). The classroom is also an important space to convey life-saving messages, raise awareness and promote behavioural changes and offer a space to identify protection needs and mitigate risks.



To learn more about the project visit:
<https://www.educationcluster.net/eiecpneedsassessments>