



**THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**HUMANITARIAN AID ASSISTANCE IN OLIVE BRANCH AREA: PROBLEMS
AND RESOLUTIONS**

Master's Thesis

Gökdeniz Oflas

Disaster and Humanitarian Aid Management

January 2024



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Prof. Dr. Sutay Yavuz

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DEDICATION

I express my gratitude to Professor Dr. Aslı AKAY, who offered assistance and support throughout my entire master education,

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ÖZET

Suriye iç savaşı, 2011 yılında başladığından bugüne kadar milyonlarca insanı doğrudan etkilemiş, bu kapsamda insani yardım programlarının ihtiyaç sahibi kişilere ulaştırılması hayati bir husus haline gelmiştir. Çok fazla değişkenin ve aktörün olduğu bu gibi kriz ortamlarında, insani yardım programlarının da kırılgan topluluklara ulaştırılması kompleks bir hal almıştır. İnsani yardım sektörünün en önemli bileşenlerinden olan ihtiyaçlar ve kaynaklar birbirleriyle çoğu zaman örtüşmemekte, bu durum da programların istenilen etkiyi gösterememesine sebep olmakta, bunun yanında ikincil etkenlerce programların devamlılığı ve kalitesi akamete uğratılmaktadır. Bu kapsamda çalışma, Afrin bölgesindeki insani yardım programlarının gelecek dönemlerde daha başarılı bir biçimde yürütülmesin katkıda bulunmak amacıyla 2021 yılında hazırlanmaya başlanmış olup, 2 yıllık bir çalışmanın ürünüdür. Planlama aşaması 2021 yılının son aylarında başlamış, saha uygulaması ise 2023 yılı Ekim-Aralık ayları arasında gerçekleştirilmiştir. Saha uygulaması Hatay ve Afrin bölgelerinde gerçekleştirilmiş olup, Afrin’de çalışan STK personelleri, Yerel Meclis ve AFAD görevlileri çalışmaya aktif olarak dahil edilmiştir. Çalışmada, insani yardım programları kapsamında bölgede faaliyet gösteren STK’ların karşılaştıkları çeşitli sorunlar ele alınmış ve aynı zamanda programlar değerlendirilmiştir. Bu noktada mevcut sorunların en az düzeye indirilmesi için neler yapılması gerektiği ifade edilmiştir. Hangi insani yardım türünün daha etkin ve kaliteli, hangisinin ise geliştirilme ve dönüştürülmeye ihtiyacı olduğu da bu çalışmanın en önemli bulguları arasında olmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İnsani Yardım, STK, Suriye, Afrin, Afet Yönetimi

ABSTRACT

The Syrian civil war, which began in 2011, has had a profound and direct impact on millions of people. Delivering humanitarian aid programs in such a complex crisis environment has become a critical challenge. The multifaceted nature of these environments, coupled with various variables and actors, makes it challenging to provide effective assistance to fragile communities. Often, the divergence between needs and available resources hampers the desired impact of aid programs. Additionally, the continuity and quality of programs are susceptible to disruption by secondary factors. In the pursuit of enhancing the effectiveness of future humanitarian aid programs in the Afrin region, this study was initiated in 2021 and evolved over a 2-year period. Planning commenced in the latter part of 2021, with field implementation taking place between October- December 2023, specifically in the Afrin region. Active participation in the study included NGO personnel in Afrin, Local Council representatives, and AFAD officials. The study's focus encompassed the analysis of humanitarian aid programs conducted by NGOs in the region, addressing the various challenges encountered during implementation. Deliberations revolved around the duties and responsibilities of different stakeholders involved in these programs. The most important outcomes of this study were outlined to minimize challenges both in the region and during the execution of humanitarian aid initiatives. Another crucial outcome of the study was the identification of more effective and high-quality types of humanitarian aid, shedding light on areas necessitating development and transformation.

Keywords: Humanitarian Aid, NGO, Syria, Afrin, Disaster Management

ABBREVIATIONS

AFAD	Disaster and Emergency Management Authority
BNF	Beneficiaries
CaLP	The Cash Learning Platform
CESCR	The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CfW	Cash for Work
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FSA	Free Syrian Army
GAM	Global Acute Malnutrition
GBV	Gender Based Violence
HLP	Housing, Land and Property
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychological Support Services
MONE	Ministry of National Education
MPCA	Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NWS	Northwest Syria
OFDA	Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
PDoMoNE	Provincial Directorate of Ministry of National Education
PKK	Kurdistan Worker Party
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
PYD	Democratic Union Party
RHU	Refugee Housing Unit

SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SHW	State Hydraulic Works
SME	Small and Medium Entrepreneurship
SNHR	The Syria Network for Human Rights
TRNC	Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Program
YPG	People's Protection Units

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1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is introduced to the general picture of the thesis and the methodology of it. The purposes, objectives and the main research questions are introduced by the writer. Besides, the way of data collection and analysis of them are explained in this chapter.

1.1. Background to the Study

In the beginning of the thesis, it's been explained to general information about humanitarian aid activities globally and types of it. Besides, it is given methodological information about this study, briefly. Humanitarian assistance activities have taken on a rising significance in the 21st century due to the unfortunate escalation of conflicts and armed hostilities. Furthermore, the profound impact of climate change has led to a surge in natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, forest fires, and erosion, emphasizing the critical importance and effectiveness of aid efforts. The year 2022 is projected to witness a substantial increase in the number of individuals requiring humanitarian aid and protection. (OCHA,2022) An alarming 274 million people are expected to be in need, which marks a significant rise from the previous year when 235 million individuals sought assistance—this figure being the highest in decades. The United Nations (UN) and its partner organizations have set their sights on providing support to the most vulnerable 183 million people across 63 countries, necessitating a substantial funding of \$41 billion (OCHA, 2021). As mentioned above, humanitarian aid assistance has been fiercely required each year. At this point, the conflicts in Syria started at 2012, which have turned into civil war, is one of the extreme patterns of humanitarian assistance all around the world.

The increased significance of humanitarian aid assistance can be directly attributed to the growing frequency and severity of disasters in the 21st century. Disasters, according to the universal definition, are substantial disruptions that surpass a community's capacity to manage using its own resources. These disasters can arise from a range of sources, including natural, technological, and human-made hazards, as well as various factors that influence a community's exposure and vulnerability (IFRC, 2022).

Natural disasters, in particular, are sudden and catastrophic events occurring in the natural world that often result in extensive damage and significant loss of life. (AFAD, 2014) They encompass events such as earthquakes, floods, avalanches, cold waves, droughts, hurricanes, tsunamis, tornadoes, volcanic activities, wildfires, and others.

While the physical toll, in terms of human casualties, from natural disasters has seen a decrease over recent decades, the economic and social ramifications have risen due to factors like overpopulation and increased financial assets. In most years, the death toll has been under 20,000, and in the past decade, it has often been below 10,000. Even in peak years with high-impact events, the number of fatalities has not exceeded 500,000 since the mid-1960s. According to the EM-DAT disaster database, there were 187 natural hazard-related disasters recorded in 79 different countries. Based on available information, these events resulted in a minimum of 6,347 deaths, affected 50 million people, and caused total damage estimates exceeding 40 billion dollars in the first half of 2022 (CRED, 2022). At this point, it's been beneficial to give a couple of natural disasters' examples to have better understanding of effects of natural disasters and importance of humanitarian aid assistance in 21st centuries.

Haiti, a country already grappling with profound poverty, faced a catastrophic earthquake in 2010. This earthquake, with a formidable magnitude of 7.0, had devastating consequences. Several distressing indicators underscore the magnitude of this earthquake: approximately 3.5 million people were affected, an estimated 220,000 individuals tragically lost their lives, and another 300,000 suffered injuries. The earthquake wrought havoc on the housing infrastructure, with over 188,383 homes sustaining severe damage, and a further 105,000 being completely destroyed. As a result, 1.5 million people found themselves homeless. The earthquake's impact extended beyond residential areas; it also inflicted substantial damage on critical infrastructure. Approximately 60% of government and administrative buildings, 80% of schools in Port-au-Prince, and 60% of schools in the South and North-West Departments were either destroyed or damaged (DEC, 2022). The estimated total value of damage and financial losses from this disaster amounted to a staggering \$7.804 billion, which was nearly equivalent to 100% of Haiti's GDP in 2009 (GFDRR, 2010).

The Kashmir Earthquake of 2005, which struck the border region between Pakistan and India, was a catastrophic event that had far-reaching consequences. While both countries were impacted, Pakistan bore the brunt of the devastation. The human toll in Pakistan was staggering, with 87,350 lives lost and nearly 38,000 individuals sustaining injuries. (EERI, 2006) In India, the figures were 946 deaths and 4,386 injuries. The earthquake resulted in the near-complete destruction and damage of approximately 450,000 homes, leaving around 2.8 million people without shelter. (Peiris, 2005) The financial effects of this disaster were significant. The direct losses to public and private assets in Pakistan amounted to \$2.3 billion. When factoring in the costs associated with relief, recovery, and reconstruction efforts, the overall estimated cost

reached \$5.2 billion. To put this into perspective, this total cost was roughly equivalent to 4% of Pakistan's GDP in 2006 (ADB-WB, 2005).

Technological disasters constitute a distinct category of disasters, characterized by their origin in human errors in technology control or technological system malfunctions. Often classified as man-made disasters, these events have identifiable causes and can exert particularly severe impacts on communities (Goldsteen and Schorr, 1982).

What sets technological disasters apart is their inherent unpredictability. They can occur suddenly and unexpectedly, which differentiates them from many natural disasters. Additionally, in the aftermath of technological disasters, community members often focus on litigation and assigning blame, potentially diverting attention and resources from cleanup and recovery efforts (Arata, Picou, Johnson, McNally, 2004).

Furthermore, the press plays a notable role in exacerbating the challenges associated with technological disasters. Extensive media coverage can be constant, creating a continuous stream of information that contributes to elevated stress levels in affected communities (Morris, Grattan, Mayer, Blackburn, 2013). This continuous news coverage can intensify the sense of crisis and anxiety experienced by those impacted by technological disasters.

The Chernobyl Accident in Ukraine, which took place on April 26, 1986, stands as one of the most significant technological disasters in history. During a low-power test, it spiraled out of control, resulting in an explosion and fire that devastated the reactor building and released substantial amounts of radiation into the atmosphere. This catastrophic event was exacerbated by the disregard for safety measures, leading to the overheating of uranium fuel within the reactor and its subsequent breach of protective barriers (IAEA, 2022).

The Chernobyl disaster had far-reaching effects on human beings and the environment. Recognized as the most severe incident in the history of the nuclear power industry, UN agencies, along with representatives from Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus (the countries most affected by the accident), conducted a comprehensive review of its health, environmental, and socio-economic consequences two decades later (Chernobyl Forum, 2006).

One of the most prominent health impacts was a significant increase in the incidence of various types of cancer in the affected area immediately after the accident. Notably, childhood thyroid cancer, caused by the fallout of radioactive iodine, emerged as a primary health consequence. By 2002, over 400 cases of thyroid cancer had been diagnosed in this group, with a substantial portion of these cases attributable to radioiodine exposure (Chernobyl Forum, 2006).

Furthermore, the psychological effects on the affected population were substantial, compounded by inadequate communication regarding radiation effects and the social disruption and economic challenges that followed the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Chernobyl Forum, 2006).

In addition to the Chernobyl disaster, it's essential to acknowledge the devastating technological disaster that occurred in Türkiye, known as the Soma Mine Disaster. On May 13, 2014, 301 miners tragically lost their lives in a mine collapse. The Soma Disaster ranks as the 25th largest mining disaster in the world in terms of the number of lives lost in the past 1,375 years (Çelik, 2020).

As previously mentioned, it's essential to distinguish between technological disasters, which often result from human negligence, and man-made disasters, which are fundamentally different because they are intentionally brought about by humans for reasons such as political, religious conflicts, wars, internal strife, or a failure to fulfill responsibilities. This paper is dedicated to the exploration of man-made disasters, which are distinct from technological disasters. In the 21st century, there have been several significant man-made disasters that are crucial for comprehending their characteristics. Two noteworthy examples include the Afghan War and the Arab Spring, both of which are pivotal to the main subject of this paper, the Syrian Civil War.

The Afghan War is undeniably a critical humanitarian issue and a prominent man-made disaster of the 21st century. This protracted conflict has spanned five decades and has left Afghanistan in a state of turmoil often referred to as a "failed state." The war can be dissected into four distinct periods: the Soviet Invasion, the Afghan Civil War, the Taliban Government, and the U.S. (United States) Invasion, each characterized by its own set of hardships for the Afghan populace.

The initial phase, known as the Soviet Invasion, resulted in immense casualties and devastation. Between 1978 and 1987, approximately 870,000 Afghans lost their lives, equating to an average of 240 people per day. The conflict led to the collapse of more than half of the country's irrigation systems, causing a significant decline in agricultural production due to population displacement and other factors. Around 1.2 million Afghans suffered disabilities, while three million were injured during this period. Tragically, an estimated 25,000 Afghans lost their lives due to landmines.

The second phase of the Afghan War is commonly referred to as the Civil War, and it was marked by intense conflicts between the Taliban and the Afghan Government following the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1989. This period was rife with numerous

human rights violations, including acts such as torture, kidnappings, sexual abuses, imprisonment, forced relocations, and other forms of violations committed by both sides of the conflict (OXFAM, 2009). Furthermore, millions of Afghans were forcibly displaced to neighbouring countries such as Pakistan and Iran, where they became refugees. Many of these individuals never had the opportunity to return to their homeland, further underscoring the profound and enduring impact of the conflict on the Afghan population.

The third phase of the Afghan War encompassed the rule of the Taliban from 1996 to 2001, marked by an extreme interpretation of Islam. During this period, it was primarily women and children who suffered the most under Taliban rule, as they were systematically isolated from social life. The Taliban regime enforced harsh restrictions on education, with schools and educational opportunities being entirely prohibited for girls. Women were also banned from working outside the home.

The fourth and final phase of the Afghan War commenced with the U.S. invasion and continued up to the present day. As a result of these operations, the Taliban experienced a significant decline in power, and a new Afghan government was established with the support of U.S. forces. However, over time, the Taliban gradually regained control over rural areas in Afghanistan. The prolonged conflict left over 250,000 Afghans internally displaced. Despite the return of over 5 million refugees to their homes between 2002 and 2008, approximately 2 million registered refugees remained in Pakistan, and 900,000 in Iran (UNHCR, 2008). In 2021, when the U.S. government withdrew its soldiers, the Taliban gained full control over Afghanistan, becoming the dominant power in the country.

The US invasion of Afghanistan in the 20th century triggered one of the most significant migration movements in history, forcing millions to leave their homes and seek refuge in neighbouring countries, predominantly Pakistan. This mass migration resulted in millions of Afghans enduring inhumane conditions, devoid of basic human rights and struggling to meet their fundamental living needs. Approximately 69 percent of Afghan immigrants in Pakistan reside in slums surrounding urban areas, while the remaining population resides in 54 refugee camps. (AA, 2022) Unfortunately, these camps lack essential amenities such as water, infrastructure, and sewage systems, exposing refugees to challenging living conditions and the threat of epidemic diseases. Particularly during monsoon periods, intensified rainfall submerges the living spaces of refugees in mud, exacerbating their already precarious situation.

Despite enduring these hardships, some refugees express a desire to return to Afghanistan. However, after spending many years away, many find they have little left in their home country and harbor reservations about returning due to uncertainty about the conditions

that await them. This underscores the complex and enduring challenges faced by Afghan refugees in the aftermath of geopolitical events.

The Arab Spring undoubtedly stands as one of the most momentous man-made disasters globally in the 21st century. This historical process was initiated in Tunisia when a street vendor set himself on fire in protest of economic crisis and corruption (Doğan, 2019). Commencing in 2010, this democracy movement swept through 14 Arab countries, including Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Bahrain, Algeria, Jordan, Yemen, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco. Citizens in these nations demonstrated and rebelled against the existing regimes, seeking greater democracy, human rights, and freedoms. Over the course of twelve years, the majority of Arab regions have been marred by internal conflicts and wars. In four of these countries as Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Yemen dictatorships fell, resulting in political transitions. These upheavals also led to the displacement and loss of lives for millions of people, turning them into internally displaced people (IDPs) or refugees. The financial toll of these conflicts in the Arab region is estimated to be approximately \$614 billion, according to research from ESCWA (BBC, 2016).

This study primarily aims to assess humanitarian aid operations in Syria in light of the Syrian Civil War and its repercussions. It aims to comprehensively analyze the actions of all stakeholders involved, including Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), government authorities, Local Councils (LC), humanitarian aid workers, donors, and beneficiaries. The goal is to objectively evaluate the successes and failures in these endeavors. It is essential to stress that, according to data and statistics from UNOCHA, Syria is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world, ranking second only to Afghanistan in terms of humanitarian need. Reportedly, Syria is home to 14 million vulnerable individuals, with 12 million of them in dire need of humanitarian assistance. The estimated budget required for humanitarian aid in Syria is approximately \$4.2 billion (UNOCHA, 2021). This information highlights the critical nature of the humanitarian situation in Syria and the pressing need for effective aid efforts.

The Olive Branch Area, also known as Afrin, is located in Northern Aleppo, and it was formerly controlled by the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) / PYD (Democratic Union Party) terrorist organization. This designation is recognized by the United States of America, the European Union, and Canada (Bureau of Counterterrorism, 2023, Official Journal of European Union, 2023, Public Safety Canada, 2023). The focus of this thesis is to analyze humanitarian aid activities in this region, including their modalities, implementations, challenges faced by various stakeholders, the underlying reasons for these challenges, and potential solutions as well as critically evaluates the approaches of all stakeholders involved and aims to provide

insights on how humanitarian aid activities can be made more productive and effective in the future. The paper addresses the dynamic nature of the field, acknowledging that changes in priorities and attitudes may impact humanitarian activities. The ultimate goal is to contribute to the sustainability and effectiveness of humanitarian assistance in the region.

1.2. Purpose, Objective and Main Questions

This study targets to evaluate humanitarian aid activities with its scale and content as well as examine the reason of lacking productivity in Olive Branch Area. This study aims to determine the points indicated below.

- Analyze the humanitarian aid programs conducted in the Afrin geography, also known as the Zeytindalı Region, and to elucidate their contribution to the area,
- The challenges and risks faced by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), crucial stakeholders in humanitarian aid, will be explored,
- It aims to offer resolutions regarding their issues,
- It aims to elaborate the best practiced implementation of humanitarian aid programs and how it should be occupied in the region.

In order to address a compound picture of the phenomenon, these questions were formulated:

- 1) What are the main issues causing vulnerability in the Olive Branch Area?
- 2) How do actors, who are operating in the region, respond to those issues?
- 3) What are the main coordination mechanisms on which those activities implemented in the region? How can it be worked more effectively?
- 4) What are the humanitarian aid programs implemented in the area?
- 5) What can be done regarding humanitarian aid activities' existence more fruitful?

1.3. Method and Technique

In order to address the research questions outlined above, it is essential to understand the dynamics and interactions among various stakeholders engaged in humanitarian assistance activities. It targets to uncover the specific conditions and challenges unique to this region. The research draws upon a various of sources, including publications from NGOs operating in the area, the perspectives of public authorities, and primary and secondary sources such as articles, books, and websites. Additionally, the study will involve gathering input from humanitarian aid workers, government officials, and beneficiaries to provide a comprehensive view of the situation. In total, it was met with 15 participants within the region. The participants were asked

questions about the quality of humanitarian aid, the best productive programs and the risk factors against the sustainability of the initiatives. The study was held based on the qualitative research methods and the answers of the participants analyses based on this technique. The meeting was held face to face meeting methods. This holistic approach to research helps to shed light on the complexities and nuances of humanitarian aid efforts in the Olive Branch Area and how they compare to global humanitarian activities. It will outline the approaches and techniques employed during the interviews. Upon completion of the study, the findings from these interviews will be analyzed to illuminate the actual conditions in the field. Subsequently, a hypothesis will be formulated based on these insights. In alignment with the Grounded Theory approach, the researcher reprocessed participant data, employing inductive methods to generate new questions and answers within the responses. The grounded theory approach is a method that characterizes social and societal events based on subjective experiences. Unlike traditional deductive research approaches that rely on predetermined hypotheses and assumptions, grounded theory utilizes an inductive method. Researchers consistently engage in comparative analysis to discern details and patterns within qualitative data. According to grounded theory, social events find expression through the lens of experiences and meanings. This multi-stage analysis aimed to extract meaningful insights and patterns from the data, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. (Mindthegraph, 2023)

Grounded Theory represents a qualitative methodology that relies on inductive logic for the discovery of theories, contrasting with the deductive approach. Unlike classical sociological studies that focus on verifying existing theories, grounded theory is designed to explore and develop theories based on the data at hand (Arik, 2016). Basic features of grounded theory encompass simultaneous data collection and analysis, along with analytical coding and categorization of data. The methodology also emphasizes the application of constant comparative methods (Charmaz, 2006).

In this study, the grounded theory approach was employed to facilitate active contributions from field participants, allowing them to share their personal ideas and experiences independently of the researcher's own background and opinions. The intention was to mitigate any influence of the researcher's knowledge and experiences in the field on the participants, ensuring that the study's findings truly reflected the perspectives and insights of those involved. In a similar vein, the present research shares common ground with Pamuk's 2013 study, which delved into the impact of history education on shaping individual and collective identities (Arik, 2016). Another relevant study is Yazıcıoğlu's exploration of the

effects of retirement, a significant life transition, on the lives of female retirees, employing grounded theory as the research approach (Arik, 2006).

This hypothesis will serve as a framework for addressing the inquiry of how humanitarian aid initiatives in the region can be executed with greater efficiency and enhanced quality.

1.3.1. Location of the Study

The research was conducted in Afrin, situated in the Aleppo province of Syria, along with its six subdistricts. Afrin encompasses an approximate area of 1,850 km², constituting 2% of Syria (SETAV, 2018). As of October 2023, Afrin's population was recorded at 615,610, with 387,031 identified as internally displaced persons (IDPs) (IMU, 2023). These figures also include the populations of Bulbul, Sheran, Raco, Jinderes, Sheik Al Hadid, and Mabtali, which serve as sub-administrative units within Afrin. Despite being predominantly populated by Kurds, demographic shifts persist due to the ongoing Syrian civil war and Türkiye's intervention. Consequently, Afrin is considered a relatively safer haven, leading to a substantial number of IDPs in the region compared to other parts of Syria.

1.3.2. Research Design & Method

This section of the study seeks to assess the various humanitarian aid initiatives in the Olive Branch Region, focusing on their effectiveness and the impact they have on the beneficiaries. The inquiries directed at participants aim to gauge the direct or indirect effects of the aid programs on the local population, while also exploring their perspectives and expectations for the future. The research adopts an active involvement of participants, emphasizing the utilization of their opinions and ideas instead of relying solely on numerical data. Consequently, a qualitative research method will be employed, allowing for a more in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences and viewpoints in this context.

In this study, the researcher embraced the principles and requirements of qualitative research from the outset, distancing himself from personal biases associated with both the region and aid programs. There was a deliberate effort to refrain from influencing participants toward a specific direction or topic. (Kumar, 2010) The researcher maintained a hands-off approach by neither adding nor subtracting from the participants' opinions and suggestions, presenting them without any editorial comments. The hands-off approach revolves around the researcher offering minimal guidance and direction to the research participants. In this method, the researcher strives to form an unbiased opinion on the research outcome by allowing participants the freedom to express their ideas and opinions without significant interference. (Network Support, 2023) Consequently, the researcher seeks to derive maximum value from

the study by amalgamating the diverse opinions of participants as the ultimate outcome of the research. The study was conducted with a recognition that each situation is distinct and unique. Furthermore, the researcher opted for purposeful sampling rather than random selection of participants. The researcher opted for a purposeful sampling method with the aim of reducing potential biases in the research and enhancing its credibility and reliability. This approach involved selecting participants intentionally from a subgroup believed to provide the most valuable contributions to the study. (Baltacı, 2010) Despite the availability of alternative methods like maximum diversity sampling, homogeneous sampling, and snowball sampling, the researcher favored the purposeful sampling method, considering it the most appropriate for the specific requirements of the study. Individuals directly involved in the subject matter, possessing knowledge of regional issues, and considered experts were purposefully chosen, aiming to maximize the study's effectiveness.

1.3.3. Research Ethics

Adhering to research ethics, the researcher ensured the safeguarding of participants' rights and safety throughout the study. Prior to commencement, all participants were fully briefed on the study's content, and their explicit consent was obtained through written consent forms, assuring them of the protection of their personal data. Questions posed to participants were devoid of any personal information, preserving their anonymity. The thesis text refrains from disclosing the names and details of the interviewed individuals. Moreover, the study unfolded in a setting where only the researcher and participant were present, fostering a sense of security and confidentiality for the participant and Certificate of Ethics Approval has been granted by ASBU.

1.3.4. Development of Research Questions

This study incorporated two types of data: primary and secondary sources. Primary sources encompass the questions directly posed by the researcher to the participants, while secondary sources were derived from diverse research and observations which forms literature review. This section elucidates the design of interview questions, which were organized thematically by the researcher, branching into various subtopics. The questions were presented to participants in both Turkish and English, and their responses were recorded through notetaking. Subsequently, all responses were transcribed and edited in English to align with academic literature standards.

The research questions are themed under 4 main headings:

- Section one encompasses inquiries related to the operational systems of NGOs, exploring the intricacies of their working mechanisms,

- Section two, the focus shifts to queries regarding the various types of humanitarian aid programs,
- Section three delves into the personal experiences of attendees, seeking insights from the personnel directly involved in these initiatives,
- Section four is dedicated to questions probing into the challenges faced by both NGOs and aid programs.

1.3.5. Data Collection Tools and Techniques

In this phase, observation played a crucial role in data collection, involving two distinct types: direct observation and participant observation. The researcher opted for the participant observation method, actively engaging in the activities and events of the participants being observed. (Salkind, 2012) By immersing oneself in the community's activities, the researcher directly witnessed the culture, traditions, and lifestyle of the region, gaining an intimate understanding of the nuances that might not be accessible through mere direct observation. This approach facilitated a firsthand experience, allowing the researcher to grasp the emotions, thoughts, and impressions of the participants in a more profound manner (Kaya, 2014).

The study employed an open-ended interview format, characterized by its focus on obtaining in-depth information and creating a conducive environment for participants to express themselves comfortably. Through this format, the researcher sought to elicit comprehensive and detailed responses from the participants. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, allowing for the observation of participants' body language and gestures, thereby enriching the data collection process with non-verbal cues. This approach aimed to foster a more nuanced understanding of participants' perspectives by encouraging a free-flowing exchange of information.

1.3.6. Analysis of Data

The data analysis methods employed in this section are delineated into three main stages. Firstly, the collected data were synthesized and transformed into textual form, symbolizing a transition from the periphery to the heart of the analysis. (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In the second stage, the researcher delved into questioning the data and the conceptual framework, introducing fresh insights and information gleaned from participants' responses into the study. The third stage involved the evaluation of data and patterns that surfaced during the research.

1.3.7. Theoretical Framework

In this section, we will examine the main principles of international relations theories and analyze humanitarian aid activities in the Olive Branch Area based on these principles. Given that contemporary global events are often interpreted through various political, economic, and social theories, it becomes crucial to identify the theoretical framework that best aligns with the subject of the study or assess whether a mixed approach is more suitable. Upon scrutinizing the study's content, it is evident that certain elements within the theories directly correspond to the realities of the region under investigation. However, there are instances where certain elements fail to align with the actual conditions of the region, despite their expected presence.

The first theory we will consider is realism, which was developed by influential philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, Thucydides, and Machiavelli (Aydın, 1996). Realism is characterized by key principles, including statism, survival, independence, and self-development. Statism, a central concept in realism, asserts that states are the primary actors in international politics. In this perspective, entities such as the United Nations, multinational organizations, and international organizations hold secondary importance in global affairs. The principle of survival posits that the international system operates within an anarchic framework, where there is no central authority to enforce order among actors. This theory also emphasizes that international politics are driven by the pursuit of national interests and competition among states.

Independence and self-development are additional aspects of realism. These principles highlight the inherent lack of trust among states in international relations. Therefore, states are expected to maintain independent policies and strive for self-improvement in order to safeguard their national interests (Sorensen, 1999). To grasp the core logic of realism, it is essential to understand the concept of "hard power" as it is closely intertwined with the realist perspective. Hard power is rooted in coercive elements and is primarily composed of two fundamental components: military power and economic power.

Military power, which is a key aspect of hard power, involves the use of military force to achieve objectives. Military intervention is a prominent manifestation of this element, as it seeks to accomplish goals through the application of military might. However, it's important to note that military intervention is not the sole method for achieving these objectives. Economic intervention is another significant tool employed in the pursuit of realist goals. This can take the form of actions like economic embargoes, as seen in cases involving Cuba, Iran, and Iraq.

Dora elucidates this concept by drawing on Joseph Nye's typology of power. According to Nye, economic power is primarily exercised through wealth generation and investment, utilizing both incentives and coercion. Nevertheless, drawing a clear line between economic power and military force can be challenging because these two forms of power often complement each other and are integral to the concept of hard power (Dora, 2021). Alexander George shares a similar perspective, asserting that the exercise of hard power involves the use of either economic or military power as a means of coercion (George, 2004). This understanding of hard power forms the basis for realist approaches to international relations and sheds light on how states may employ military and economic tools to pursue their interests, which has relevance in the context of humanitarian aid activities.

In the context of discussing humanitarian assistance in the Olive Branch Area, the idealism theory becomes another important perspective. The Wilson Principles, which emerged in the aftermath of World War I (Ayдын, 1996), stand as a crucial landmark in idealism theory. Idealism holds contrasting viewpoints to realism, and it articulates several key principles.

According to idealism, it posits that human nature is inherently inclined toward cooperation and peaceful collaboration. Wars and armed conflicts, according to idealism, stem from the absence of democratic principles and not from innate human nature. Additionally, idealism contends that war and anarchy are not inescapable realities. Rather, rivalry, warfare, and conflicts can be prevented through not only national efforts but also through international collective cooperation, either partially or in their entirety. Idealism thus offers an optimistic perspective on international relations, emphasizing the potential for peaceful collaboration and the capacity of international efforts to avert conflicts. In the context of humanitarian aid activities, idealism may emphasize the importance of international cooperation and diplomacy in addressing crises and supporting vulnerable populations.

Idealism presents an alternative perspective to realism by emphasizing that states are not the sole actors in international politics. Instead, idealism argues that states are the result of collaboration within international organizations and international politics, and they serve as both the outcome and the catalyst for increased cooperation. Idealism contends that international relations are determined by collaboration rather than power struggles and clashes of interest (Kakışım, 2017).

In the context of humanitarian aid, idealism aligns with its basic principles more than realism. As Dora's book notes, idealists believe that international relations are shaped not only by power but also by the influence of international organizations and moral values. They share the perspective, articulated by John Locke, that human beings are fundamentally good, and their

misbehavior is often a result of poor institutional and structural regulations that compel people to harm others. Idealists assert that with the right conditions, international politics can be conducted in a harmonious environment. They reject the classical power-focused approach of realism and advocate for the establishment of international peace through the development of a rule of law within international organizations (Dora, 2021).

Considering idealism in the context of power, it becomes evident that soft power is a key component. The United States of America, for example, effectively utilizes NGOs as instruments of soft power. These organizations play a crucial role in promoting economic development, environmental protection, human rights, conflict resolution, and humanitarian aid. As the Chinese commander and philosopher Sun Tzu noted, the greatest victory is one that can be achieved without the need for battle, highlighting the importance of soft power (Tzu, 1910).

Idealism and the concept of soft power indeed align well with the principles of humanitarian aid, emphasizing cooperation, diplomacy, and moral values as essential components to achieve humanitarian objectives. In contrast, realism and idealism often have fundamental differences in their approaches. However, the English School of international relations theory offers a middle ground that bridges the gap between realism and idealism.

The English School theory posits that states are the primary actors in international relations but also acknowledges the significance of other actors such as NGOs, multinational international organizations, and the United Nations. It primarily explores three key concepts: realism, rationalism, and revolutionism.

Realism, within the English School framework, focuses on states and their role in international politics, emphasizing power and interests.

Rationalism underscores the importance of law and a system governed by legal principles.

Revolutionism envisions a world system primarily based on individuals, which aligns with idealism's perspective on human nature.

The English School theory can be seen as a blend of both realism and liberalism, offering a middle ground that integrates elements from both approaches. This concept of balancing different forms of power is often referred to as "smart power." Smart power is a term developed by Joseph Nye, who coined it in 2003 to challenge the notion that soft power alone can drive effective foreign policy. It recognizes that power can be exercised through various means, including coercion, payment, and attraction. Hard power is associated with coercion and payment, while soft power relates to the ability to attract and shape preferences. Smart power

emphasizes the need for strategies that combine the tools of both hard and soft power to achieve desired outcomes in international relations. It acknowledges that different situations may require a mix of approaches, striking a balance between hard and soft power tools (Nye, 2009).

The English School of international relations theory does face criticism for its lack of strict boundaries and its perceived ambiguity, often seen as residing between the realms of realism and idealism. While this criticism is valid, it's important to note that the English School theory shouldn't be dismissed as a deficiency. Instead, it can be viewed as an ideology that seeks to find a middle ground between the more extreme positions of realism and liberalism, often referred to as a "third way."

In the context of humanitarian aid activities in the Olive Branch Area, these three international theories—realism, idealism, and the English School—can shed light on the diverse approaches and interpretations by various stakeholders, including both governmental and non-governmental actors. Humanitarian aid activities involve a wide array of participants, ranging from governments or de facto administrations with political power to state-civil society collaborations and civil society-led aid initiatives on the ground. These diverse interpretations, influenced by factors like legal compliance, budgeting, fundraising, and the political environment, highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of the humanitarian aid sector. Rather than being strictly black and white, the humanitarian aid landscape is characterized by shades of gray, emphasizing the need for nuanced and adaptable approaches to address the unique challenges and contexts in which aid is delivered.

2. THE PRINCIPLES, ACTORS AND PROGRAMS OF HUMANITARIAN AID ACTIVITIES

In this chapter, it's been assessed the principles, actors and the main substantial programs of humanitarian aid assistance based on the needs of the vulnerable. In the principle section, it has been easily said that these principles are crucially important to be successful and have fair programs when they are delivered to the BNFs. These principles are the criteria of all stakeholders, both public authorities and CSOs. The principles are Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, and Voluntary Service. (ICRC, 2015)

2.1. The Principles of Humanitarian Aid Activities

This segment will delve into the fundamental principles governing humanitarian aid, universally agreed upon by all stakeholders, and their application in the region. These principles serve as guidelines applicable not only locally but on a global scale. In addition, it should be stated that one of the most important bases of these principles is the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their additional articles, on which the whole world agrees, within the scope of humanitarian aid and human rights. (ICRC, 2023)

2.1.1. Humanity

Humanity is the first essential principle, and it encompasses few ideas. The first one is suffering is universal and it should be responded to immediately. It is not able to be met with any kind of indifference. The second one is human dignity is the foremost element and it comes before each and every priority. Human dignity implies delivering services to others regardless of their characteristics and actions. The third component of humanity is that it preserves life by delivering international humanitarian law, restraining from disasters, and standing life- serving activities from first aid to food security and shelter. (ICRC, 2015)

2.1.2. Impartiality

The rule of impartiality composes of three concepts, which are non-discrimination, proportionality and impartiality.

- Non-Discrimination: The services must be delivered to the vulnerable regardless of their nationality, religion, the color of the skin, political beliefs or where they come from.

- Proportionality: All humanitarian aid assistances must be addressed based on the principle that those in utmost need receive assistance first.
- Impartiality: While the services deliver to the BNFs, the decisions have to be made on a needs basis and must not be affected by personal feelings. (ICRC, 2015)

2.1.3. Neutrality

In order to give humanitarian aid assistance properly, it should not support any side of conflicts or engage with any controversial political, national, or religious nature. Then, the assistance must build trust among all sides and can continue to serve efficiently during the time of violence. (ICRC, 2015)

2.1.4. Independence

The aid assistance should be delivered only when the aid organizations are completely independent of the political or religious authorities. The organization should keep its autonomy and make decisions based on the principles of humanitarian aid assistance. The organizations do not take care any kind of interfere or pressure and all the assessments done by organizations have to be independent one and conversate freely with vulnerable. (ICRC, 2015)

2.1.5. Voluntary Service

The norm of voluntary service is that aid workers, whether they are paid or not, have to be motivated humanitarian way, voluntarily. (ICRC, 2015)

These principles are unanimously accepted by all humanitarian actors the entire world. Frankly, it is not always easy to implement all elements of these principles across the earth, where it does not have stable government authorities such as some places in Africa or existing powerful military forces rather than civilians in some part of Syria. Nevertheless, as stated before, these principles are the measurements of success of humanitarian aid activities. As the modality of aid activities, the paper will imply these principles from time to time.

2.2. The Programs and Actors of Humanitarian Aid

In this chapter, it will be elucidated the content and execution approaches of humanitarian assistance initiatives conducted in the Zeytindalı Region. The discussion will encompass the local community's perceptions of program implementation, the significance of these initiatives to them, and an evaluation of program efficacy within this framework.

Furthermore, the thesis will address challenges and concerns arising in certain program types due to diverse reasons, along with proposed solutions to mitigate these issues and risks in subsequent sections.

2.2.1. Food Security

The food security program has consistently held a prominent position within the realm of humanitarian aid initiatives. This prominence is chiefly attributed to the essential requirement of sustenance for the survival of beneficiaries amid crises and disaster scenarios. Humanitarian aid organizations must adhere to specific fundamental principles when implementing food security programs. These pillars availability, access, utilization, stability, agency, and sustainability were established during the 1996 World Food Security Summit convened in Rome under the auspices of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. (FAO, 2023). This summit was convened with the overarching objective of combatting global food deprivation and hunger. It gained widespread recognition and endorsement by significant states and NGOs globally, thus serving as a pivotal instrument in the prevention of widespread hunger.

Table 1. The Pillar Elements of Food Security



Source: This scheme is prepared by the author based on the information taken from (Baransky,2023)

-Availability: Availability to food encompasses various factors such as food supply, production, and distribution. Food availability and the means to acquire it are essential for

ensuring food security. Food consumption patterns differ from country to country, making considerations like storage, transportation, packaging, and the logistics of getting food to the market crucial. For instance, the condition of roads and transportation infrastructure plays a significant role. Unsuitable road conditions can result in increased transportation costs, leading to higher food prices. Additionally, transportation challenges can disrupt the supply chain, potentially causing fluctuations in market prices. These factors highlight the importance of efficient and reliable food distribution systems to ensure that people have consistent access to affordable and nutritious food.

- **Access:** Access to food primarily refers to the affordability and distribution of food for both individuals and households. The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) emphasizes that limited access to food is mainly a result of poverty, rather than an actual shortage of food or famine (FAO, 2010). There are essentially two ways for individuals and households to gain access to food. The first approach involves directly producing their own food, while the second entails purchasing food from the market. However, access to food can vary depending on factors such as household income, access to agricultural land, or inheritance status. Furthermore, the educational and demographic characteristics of the household members play a role in determining food preferences and the overall access to food (IFPRI, 2021).

- **Utilization:** Utilization, in the context of food, pertains to the ways in which food is consumed by humans and how it fits into their metabolic processes. The quality and quantity of food consumption can vary significantly based on factors such as food storage, preparation methods, and eating habits. The conditions under which food is stored, prepared, and consumed can influence its nutritional value and safety. For instance, various techniques like fermentation, sprouting, and brewing can have a significant impact on the safety and nutritional quality of foods. These methods may vary across cultures, geographical regions, and religious practices, reflecting the diversity in food utilization practices (FAO, 1997)

-**Stability:** Food stability pertains to the ability to consume and maintain food over an extended period. Many foods have a limited shelf life and can become inedible after a certain duration. Additionally, factors such as famines, civil unrest, or natural disasters can lead to reduced food production, resulting in food insecurity and increased food prices. Long-term food insecurity, often referred to as chronic or permanent food insecurity, is a more severe and enduring condition compared to temporary food insecurity. It significantly impacts individuals and communities, making them more vulnerable to the adverse effects of inadequate access to

food. Chronic food insecurity can have lasting, detrimental consequences on a population's well-being (FAO, 1997).

- **Agency:** The term "agency" in the context of food and nutrition refers to the capacity of individuals or groups to make decisions about what foods to consume, produce, and how to produce them. It encompasses the idea that people have the autonomy and ability to choose and shape their food-related practices, including their dietary choices, agricultural activities, and food production methods. Agencies empower individuals or communities to have control and make informed decisions about their food and nutritional needs.

- **Sustainability:** Sustainability, within the context of food security, pertains to the goal of ensuring the long-term stability of food security within the broader food system. It involves organizing and managing the food system in a manner that does not create economic, social, or environmental issues for future generations. In other words, sustainability in food security aims to meet the current food needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own food requirements. This approach considers economic, social, and environmental factors to establish a food system that can endure and remain resilient over time (Azhima, Deniar, Nugraha, 2023).

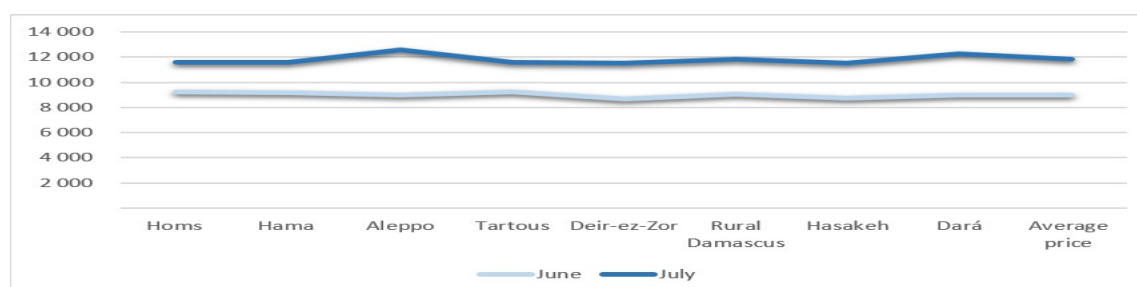
Once the pillars of food safety have been outlined, it becomes imperative to discuss the predominant factor impacting food safety, which is the economic aspect. The enduring Syrian Civil War, spanning over a decade, coupled with the instability in the global economy, has exacerbated economic challenges, not only in Afrin but throughout the entire nation.

To begin with, it's worth noting the devaluation of Syria's currency, the Syrian Pound (SYP). In July 2023, the Central Bank of Syria conducted its third currency exchange rate assessment for the year, establishing a rate of 1 USD to 85.425 SYP. This valuation reflects a significant depreciation, as the SYP has witnessed a 30% decline in value over the past three months. Nevertheless, it appears that the devaluation in the open market may surpass this officially reported rate (FAO, 2023).

Table 2. Trends of Unofficial Exchange Rate for SYP/USD

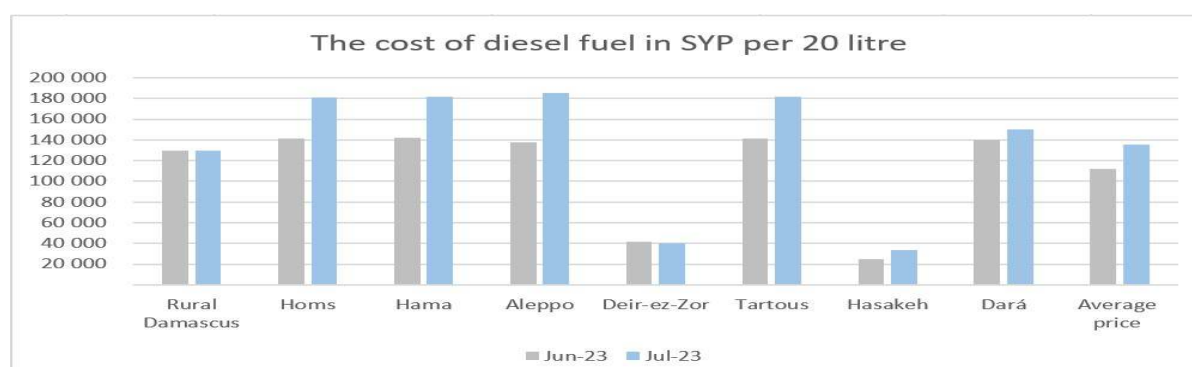
Trends of unofficial exchange rate for the last two months (SYP/USD)									
	Homs	Hama	Aleppo	Tartous	Deir-ez-Zor	Rural Damascus	Hasakeh	Dará	Average price
June	9 200	9 190	9 000	9 200	8 700	9 025	8 750	8 950	9 002
July	11 600	11 590	12 600	11 600	11 500	11 800	11 500	12 250	11 805

Note: The exchange rate was 50 SYP/USD before the crisis in 2012.



Source: (FAO, 2023)

Another critical factor influencing food security is the rise in energy costs. Elevated energy prices have a twofold impact: they drive up logistics expenses and lead to higher food prices, while simultaneously limiting access to food due to these escalating costs. Given the depreciation of the SYP, the cost of oil continues to surge across the nation. In July 2023, oil prices saw an approximately 20% increase compared to the previous month. Taking into account the intermittent challenges in accessing oil and issues within the supply network, it is anticipated that energy prices will persist in affecting both Aleppo-Afrin and the entirety of Syria. (FAO, 2023)

Table 3. The Cost of Diesel Fuel in SYP per 20 Liters

Source: (FAO, 2023)

When examining food prices, it becomes evident that they are on the rise in Syria and on a global scale. In July 2023, it was noted that the cost of a standard food basket had surged

by 11% compared to the previous month, requiring a purchasing power of 588,666 SYP to sustain a family of 5. This food basket was also observed to be 27% pricier six months ago and a staggering 50% more costly than it was a year ago. To put this into perspective, in July 2020, the same food basket was available for 86,197 SYP. One of the primary drivers behind these increases is the escalating costs of essential food items, particularly rice and sugar. (FAO, 2023)

India's prohibition on rice exports, the shortcomings of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, challenges in the distribution of Ukrainian wheat to global markets, and the devaluation of the SYP collectively signal an ongoing escalation in food prices. This surge in food costs is conspicuously evident in the Aleppo province, which encompasses Afrin. Over the past year, the price of the food basket in Aleppo has witnessed a doubling, with lentils increasing by 121%, rice by 163%, and sugar by 189% (WFP, 2023).

Table 4. Food Basket Cost and Changes, SYP

Governorate	July 2023	1 month change	6 months changes	12 months changes
Aleppo	609,621	17%	35%	101%
Damascus	616,213	11%	25%	92%
Dar'a	636,496	6%	19%	82%
Deir-ez-Zor	487,170	5%	28%	82%
Hama	604,093	9%	12%	95%
Al-Hasakeh	509,196	11%	42%	99%
Homs	605,091	12%	15%	84%
Idlib	570,032	16%	50%	121%
Lattakia	597,394	2%	24%	78%
Ar-Raqqa	543,975	14%	38%	96%
Rural Damascus	617,679	13%	25%	90%
As-Sweida	639,575	13%	29%	95%
Tartous	595,470	12%	27%	69%
Quneitra	631,763	14%	30%	95%
Average	588,666	11%	27%	91%

Source: (WFP, 2023)

A detailed examination of food price increases at the product level reveals the stark reality. In July 2023, a kilogram of wheat flour cost 6,876 SYP, reflecting a 4% increase from the previous month and a substantial 100% surge from the previous year. Over the past three years, the price of wheat flour has escalated sevenfold. Meanwhile, rice was priced at 10,230 SYP, marking a 16% increase compared to the previous month and an impressive 168% rise from the previous year. The Aleppo region, in particular, bore the brunt of the rice price hikes, with increases of 10% on a monthly basis and a staggering 150% annually (WFP, 2023).

Price stability has proven elusive in the case of chicken and egg prices. Chicken prices stood at 22,554 SYP per kilogram in July 2023, marking a remarkable 146% increase compared to the previous year and a staggering sevenfold surge over the past three years. In the same month, sugar prices witnessed a 14% monthly increase, reaching 10,340 SYP per kilogram. This price had surged by 143% in comparison to the previous year and had increased eightfold over the preceding two years. Notably, among all regions, the Aleppo Region has been the

hardest hit by sugar price hikes, with sugar prices soaring threefold in just one year (WFP, 2023).

At this point, it is delved into the various components of the food security program and closely evaluates the initiatives implemented in the Afrin region. The food security program can be essentially divided into four main categories: the distribution of food kits (in-kind distribution), voucher programs, assistance for bakeries, and nutrition programs.

2.2.1.1. Food Kits (In-Kind Distribution)

Food Kit Distribution, a commonly employed method in humanitarian aid efforts, is still widely used but is gradually losing its effectiveness. This decline can be attributed to several factors, with the primary ones being logistical and supply chain challenges, as well as security issues. The rugged and mountainous terrain of Afrin, coupled with inadequate road infrastructure, hinders the efficient delivery of food packages to certain regions. Escalating energy costs further exacerbate the situation. Another issue arises from the inability to store food parcels under suitable conditions, resulting in the premature expiration of some products. The reliance on food parcels sourced from Türkiye or other countries is also problematic due to occasional customs clearance difficulties, stemming from insufficient agricultural production in Syria.

Security concerns primarily revolve around the criteria used for selecting beneficiaries in this program. Unlike many other programs, food kit distribution employs specific criteria, including economic status, household size, disability, orphanhood, and more, which means not everyone in the region can access this assistance. This issue leads to significant discontent among the local population, resulting in potential accusations of corruption or nepotism against both NGO workers and local authorities. Consequently, undesirable incidents may occur during the distribution and verification processes, occasionally leading to physical or psychological harm to NGO employees.

Another security-related problem happens that FSA forces in the area to influence beneficiary criteria and distribution procedures, occasionally.. At times, FSA members may exert pressure on NGO personnel to include themselves in the program. However, adherence to humanitarian aid principles and donor regulations prohibits any political or military entities from benefiting from NGO assistance. As a result, FSA elements obstruct distributions, leading to issues such as delays or postponements in aid delivery.

Another significant concern related to the food kit distribution program is that it no longer adequately addresses the needs of the local population. Many residents resort to selling

the food parcels they receive to merchants at prices well below their actual value in order to fulfill non-food-related needs. This practice leads to food parcel inflation in the region, which not only hinders the program from achieving its intended purpose but also encourages merchants to purchase food products below their market value. These products are then taken out of the boxes and resold, resulting in an economic loss for the area's people.. However, the widespread implementation of the coupon program in the region is expected to mitigate the issue largely.

On the other hand, the food kit distribution program persists in the region and continues to be vital for the most vulnerable beneficiaries. This is because it ensures the delivery of essential food items such as bulgur, chicken, eggs, vegetable oil, red lentils, rice, salt, and sugar to households of individuals in need who lack access to these basic food necessities (JMML, 2023)

2.2.1.2. Voucher Assistance

The voucher program runs in tandem with the food kit distribution in the region and is implemented in nearly all areas where humanitarian aid initiatives are underway. This transition from food kit distributions to voucher programs is primarily driven by the challenges observed in the former method. The voucher program offers enhanced efficiency by reducing logistics expenses and enhancing market conditions. Under this approach, NGOs establish agreements with one or more markets closest to the beneficiaries in district centres and villages. They direct the beneficiaries to these markets, urging them to procure their necessities there. This shift helps alleviate certain security issues previously associated with food kit distributions. One of the pivotal concerns in this shift is the improvement of market conditions. The market conditions in Afrin districts and villages still fall short of the desired standard. As a result, food kit distributions continue in some regions, even though it may not be the optimal choice due to the inadequate state of local markets.

Nevertheless, numerous NGOs are taking proactive measures to address this issue by supporting small-scale markets lacking adequate financial or in-kind resources in the region through a program known as the Small-Medium Entrepreneurship (SME) program. This support serves to enhance the conditions of these markets and expedite the transition to a food voucher program (Startup, 2023). By bolstering these markets, not only do humanitarian aid efforts in the region benefit, but it also contributes to the economic development of the area, fostering economic vitality.

Besides the SME program, the coupon program, under the MPCA (Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance) project, provides financial aid to recipients based on the household's size. Through MPCA, beneficiaries can use coupons to cover essential expenses when shopping and have the flexibility to use the cash they receive to fulfill their other requirements.

Another notable advantage of the voucher program is the ease of implementing a control mechanism for both NGOs and local authorities. Under this program, the NGO pre-determines the prices of products with shop owners and communicates this arrangement to its beneficiaries. This practice prevents shop owners from manipulating product prices and safeguards the interests of beneficiaries. NGO personnel conduct regular inspections of the markets, and if any shops are found operating unlawfully, their contracts may be terminated. However, the inclusion of beneficiary criteria in the coupon program, much like in food kit distribution, occasionally sparks dissatisfaction among local communities.

2.2.1.3. Bakery Program

Bakery support programs hold a significant role in the region as they allow local residents to access their most essential food staple, bread. These programs primarily involve the provision of flour to bakeries at varying rates, often with full subsidies. For instance, NGOs supply flour to bakeries to cut the cost of bread production by 50%, effectively halving the price of bread. Subsidized flour is predominantly sourced from Türkiye and stored in warehouses managed by AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management Authority), in Çobanbey and Afrin or rented by NGOs.

A notable aspect of the Bakery Support program is its inclusivity. Unlike food kit and coupon programs, it doesn't impose specific eligibility criteria, making it accessible to all residents in the region. Nevertheless, the continuous influx of migrants and rising needs due to tensions in Idlib necessitate an expansion of the Bakery Program's capacity. Given the geographical challenges, increasing the number of supported bakeries is crucial to enhance the program's effectiveness. (IMMAP, 2022).

Despite its numerous advantages, the Bakery Program is not without issues. One significant problem pertains to pressures on bakeries supported by the FSA. Periodically, FSA forces demand payments from these bakeries in the form of mandatory taxes, hindering their smooth operation.

Furthermore, this program lacks the capability to meet the entire region's needs simultaneously. While it manages to fulfill the bread requirements to a considerable extent in Bulbul and Seran regions, the Raju and Mabatli regions remain inadequately supported due to

funding constraints, and maintaining consistent aid distribution across the region's diverse geography proves challenging.

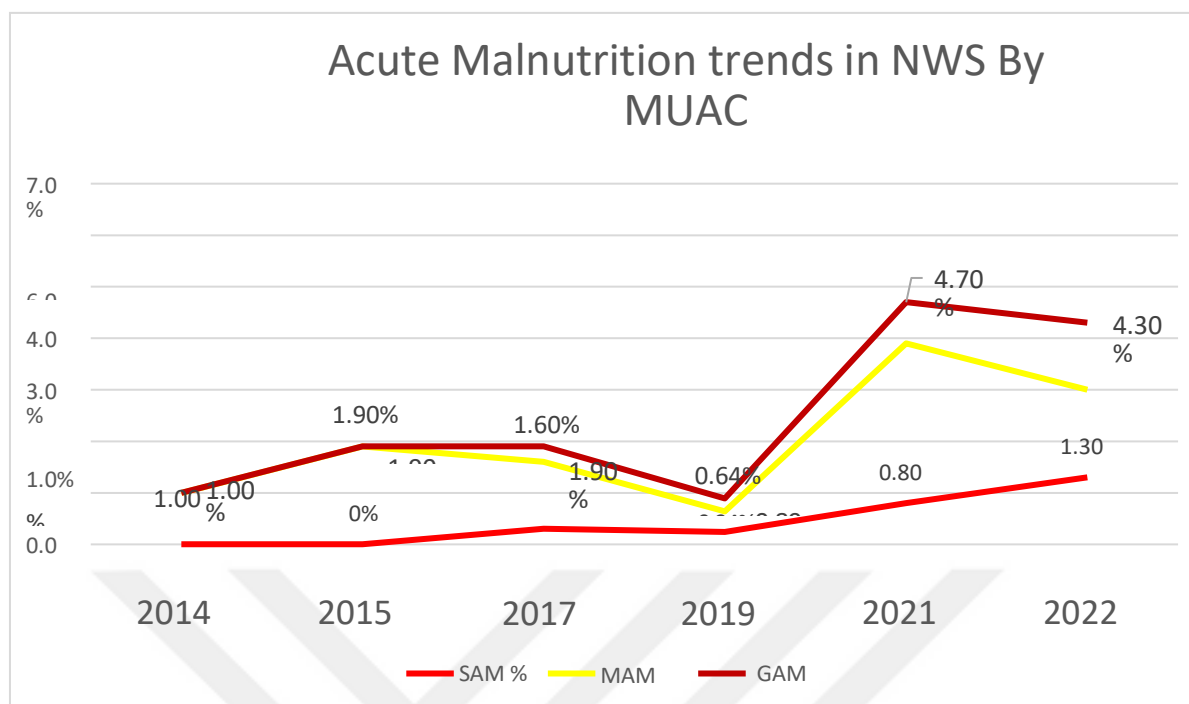
2.2.1.4. Nutrition Program

Although nutrition programs fall under the purview of food safety, they are also integral to health initiatives, as malnutrition-related issues pose a direct threat to human well-being. Nutrition programs categorize beneficiaries into two main groups. The first group comprises infants aged 0-6, and the second group includes adults and children aged 6 and above. Infants are particularly vulnerable to the effects of malnutrition, primarily because their health is directly linked to the nutritional status of their mothers. Consequently, programs targeting this group provide direct support to mothers, focusing on providing sustainable education, including breastfeeding and nutrition guidance. Additionally, infant growth supplements are distributed to eligible beneficiaries within this group without specific criteria.

Inadequate nutrition is not solely a concern for infants; it also affects adults, especially vulnerable populations such as the elderly, women, and disabled individuals, even in areas with sufficient food availability. NGOs operating in these regions adhere to standards set by the World Food Program (WFP). According to WFP, the recommended daily calorie intake for an adult is 2,100 kcal, with 10-12% of these calories coming from proteins and 17% from fats. Consequently, all food safety programs in the region adhere to these guidelines.

The chart below presents data on malnutrition rates in NWS, where Afrin is one of the components, measured using Mid Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) between 2014 and 2022. The figures provided in the table represent Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM), Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM), and Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) values. (UNICEF, 2022).

Table 5. Acute Malnutrition trends in NWS



Source: (UNICEF, 2022)

SAM: Severe Acute Malnutrition
MAM: Moderate Acute Malnutrition
GAM: Global Acute Malnutrition

2.2.2. Cash Based Programs

Cash based programs are offered to individuals who require financial support rather than receiving aid in the form of goods or services. These programs are a common component of humanitarian assistance efforts, alongside various other application projects. Cash programs come with several advantages in comparison to aid in kind. However, it's important to note that cash projects are not inherently superior to other aid initiatives; their effectiveness can vary based on the specific conditions and needs of the region. It's worth mentioning that the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) sometimes overlooks this aspect when comparing cash programs with other forms of aid. “Cash is flexible and adaptable, and allows people to meet their needs exactly as they prioritize them, paying for goods and services at any retailer or service provider. Vouchers restrict people to one particular trader or group of traders, to specific goods or services. In-kind, of course, restricts people to use or consume the items to given to them.” (ICRC, 2018)

It's essential to delve into the advantages and potential risks associated with cash projects at this juncture. This examination will provide a clearer understanding of the backdrop against which cash projects are gaining prominence in humanitarian aid initiatives worldwide.

As emphasized by the ICRC, one key advantage of cash programs lies in the empowerment of beneficiaries to exercise autonomy and prioritize their own needs. Cash, being the most versatile and widely accepted medium of exchange in a functional economy, diminishes the reliance of beneficiaries on humanitarian aid organizations when it comes to determining their requirements. This places beneficiaries at the forefront of the decision-making process. Additionally, cash programs contribute to the improvement of the economic circumstances of recipients. Some of the field research has demonstrated that these programs not only enhance food security but also prevent the depletion of assets and bolster labor capacity (ICRC, 2018).

Another notable advantage of cash programs is their capacity to infuse cash into a region, effectively revitalizing the local economy. As the positive impact expands, not only beneficiaries but also producers, markets, traders, and the entire regional economy reap the maximum benefits from these initiatives. Furthermore, the social repercussions of these programs are substantial.

Cash programs have been shown to lead to a significant reduction in domestic violence and stress levels. By providing households with cash, these programs deter the need to sell assets, preventing the exploitation of women and, in turn, preserving family cohesion. Moreover, cash programs play a vital role in facilitating access to healthcare and education services. When beneficiaries have the opportunity to access high-quality education and healthcare services within their region, they are more likely to allocate the funds received from the cash program directly to these services (ICRC, 2018).

On the flip side, cash programs offer specific benefits to vulnerable groups, particularly women and individuals with disabilities, especially in crisis-stricken areas. Disabled individuals can access healthcare services with the cash they receive, while women often gain a degree of empowerment within their households.

However, it's worth acknowledging that these programs can occasionally place additional burdens and pressures on women. Nonetheless, the overall impact of cash programs on women, in terms of advantages and disadvantages, is a topic that warrants further exploration, particularly within the context of gender-based research.

One of the foremost benefits of cash programs is the substantial convenience and operational flexibility they offer to NGOs. In contrast to in-kind aid, cash programs save a

considerable amount of time, cut down on logistics expenses, and enhance program efficiency. To illustrate, when an NGO provides food kits in the Afrin region, it entails significant logistics costs and necessitates the allocation of vehicles, personnel, and time for distribution. However, cash distribution significantly reduces all these operational expenditures and aligns with the paramount concern of cost-efficiency, which is of great importance to donors.

On the other side, there are inherent risk factors associated with cash programs, and certain considerations must be considered. The first of these concerns the potential for an abrupt injection of a large amount of cash into the region, which, much like the distribution of food kits, may lead to issues such as an excess of money and inflation in the area. Another observed risk in cash programs is that beneficiaries may unintentionally divert the cash they receive from its intended purpose to spend it on less essential items. To mitigate these issues, it is crucial to conduct a comprehensive review of the total amount of cash to be distributed, along with conducting professional market analyses and price assessments.

Another challenge with cash assistance is that it can sometimes lead to hostility among beneficiaries and result in negative identification. For instance, beneficiaries who have migrated to Afrin from other regions of Syria and belong to different ethnic backgrounds may face discrimination in local communities, even if they are recipients of cash aid. This issue, which is applicable to all projects with specific beneficiary criteria, is particularly pronounced in cash-based programs.

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, when positive discrimination is applied to women, they can derive the most benefit from these projects. However, this may inadvertently expose them to domestic violence and put them in a disadvantaged position. Balancing the benefits and potential drawbacks of such gender-focused assistance is a complex issue that requires careful consideration.

One of the most significant risks associated with cash programs pertains to the protection of the beneficiaries, NGO employees, and physical and legal security of the funds themselves. While conducting cash-based programs, humanitarian aid workers may face a variety of security threats when it comes to storing and distributing cash. These security risks encompass issues such as theft, threats, or looting. Even though cash distributions may be less conspicuous than in-kind or voucher distributions, the security problems mentioned above are still likely to arise (ICRC, 2018).

Moreover, when beneficiary selection criteria are applied in cash projects, it can lead to increased tension among local communities, with residents who cannot benefit from the programs potentially placing blame on the beneficiaries for various reasons. Additionally,

armed elements in the region may create disturbances during cash projects. However, as mentioned earlier, armed groups unable to access international humanitarian aid funds due to donor regulations can cause programs to be suspended or canceled. To address this, a balance is maintained by local councils and AFAD and efforts are made to prevent armed elements from interfering in humanitarian aid programs. AFAD and LCs, as crucial civilian actors in the region, are committed to ensuring that the people in the area do not miss out on aid due to security issues caused by a few individuals.

Managing compliance with relevant laws and regulations is another critical risk in cash projects. Cash distributed in the region must adhere to the legal requirements while passing from Türkiye to Syrian territory. Failure to comply with these laws can subject organizations to various penalties, which in turn hinders the continuity of humanitarian aid programs. This underscores the importance of meticulous legal and regulatory compliance in the execution of cash projects to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability.

2.2.3. Shelter

Shelter programs hold significant relevance in humanitarian assistance efforts, and their crucial role becomes even more pronounced in the context of NWS due to the high levels of internal migration in the region. Furthermore, the significance of shelter projects has escalated notably in Afrin and the Idlib Region, areas severely impacted by the earthquakes originating from Kahramanmaraş on February 6, 2023. Data from the Shelter Cluster unambiguously indicates a pressing demand for shelter projects among the local population. As per the statistics published in April 2023, the NWS region presents the following data.

- “ - 2,2 million need shelter assistance,
- 800.000 people live in tents (90% of which are more than 1 year old),
- 1,7 million people live in 1,400 unplanned, self-settled IDP sites which lack access to services,
- 86% of sites are critically overcrowded,
- 58% of people living in IDP sites are children,
- 40% of people living in NW Syria have a disability (53% of in camp households have 1 member with a disability),
- 548.000 people accessed GBV services in 2021.” (ShelterCluster, 2023)

Based on the data presented, it is imperative that shelter projects conducted in the region should carefully consider various factors, including the geographical and cultural conditions. When executing shelter initiatives, it is paramount to adhere to the S>4W+R formula, as

conceptualized by the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). This formula signifies that shelter encompasses more than just four walls and a roof, as it encapsulates all the essential elements of a shelter program in a succinct manner (Disasterready, 2023).

In addition to the OFDA formula, another fundamental requirement for all shelter projects, not only in this region but globally, is the adoption of the shelter principle outlined by the Sphere Project. According to this principle, regardless of the type of shelter project, a minimum land space of 3.5 square meters should be allocated per individual in each household. Furthermore, essential living materials such as Non-Food Item (NFI) kits, blankets, and kitchen kits should be provided to households. This approach is crucial in preserving the dignity of the beneficiaries and ensuring that they can live in conditions that uphold human dignity (Disasterready, 2023)

At this point, shelter activities and types observed in the region will be detailed based on Cluster data. Shelter types are evaluated in 6 categories in this context. These are solid/finished residential building, substandard buildings (damaged house, unfinished house, unfinished apartment block), nonresidential building (garage, shop), collective centers (religious buildings, schools), emergency shelters (hosting support, tent, makeshift shelter) and transitional shelter (container, refugee housing unit (RHU) and Concrete Block Transitional Shelter. (Shelter&NFI Cluster, 2021)

2.2.3.1. Solid/finished Residential Buildings

These are constructions that have been impacted by events like natural disasters and conflicts but have been restored for future use. These buildings are deemed functional when their doors, windows, electrical, and plumbing systems are operational, even if they haven't been fully finished with plaster or paint. In the context of the area's conditions, multi-story apartment complexes are rarely seen, as most buildings are single or two-story houses. (Shelter & NFI Cluster, 2021)

2.2.3.2. Substandard Buildings

Dwellings that have been impaired or rendered certain parts of them unusable due to various factors fall under the category of substandard buildings. In this context, if specific sections of a house have been damaged or are inoperable, it is categorized as a damaged house. If these damaged houses are repaired to a certain extent, they are classified as unfinished houses. Notably, there has been a significant presence of such houses, particularly in the Bulbul, Seran,

and Raco regions in the northern part of the area, especially following the Olive Branch Operation. However, as time has passed, it has been observed that these substandard buildings have transitioned into sturdy, completed structures, thanks to the contributions of local residents and the assistance of NGOs (Shelter & NFI Cluster, 2023)

2.2.3.3. Non-Residential Buildings

These kinds of constructions typically include garages or shops that have been left unused or abandoned by their owners. These structures, which are not originally intended for habitation, have started to be used as shelters by households who have been forced to migrate from the Idlib region during times of crisis. Such buildings come with both advantages and disadvantages. Residents living in these structures can convert them into small markets, creating opportunities for income generation. However, ultimately, households that cannot generate sufficient income from these small businesses and are in need still don't qualify as vulnerable according to NGOs criteria and, therefore, may not access NGO assistance. (Shelter & NFI Cluster, 2023)

2.2.3.4. Collective Centers

Collective structures refer to facilities like schools and religious buildings that typically remain intact following natural disasters and are relatively less affected during times of conflict. These structures serve as safe havens for vulnerable individuals in emergency situations. However, when overcrowded, they can lead to the rapid spread of various infectious diseases. Additionally, the prolonged use of collective structures for shelter should be discouraged, as it hinders the return of vulnerable individuals to their regular lives and daily routines after a disaster or conflict. This extended use can result in economic and psychosocial challenges (Shelter & NFI Cluster, 2021).

2.2.3.5. Emergency Shelters

Emergency shelters are typically classified into two main categories. The first category includes tents, and the second involves short-term shelters, often referred to as makeshift shelters or plastic sheets. Additionally, there is a hosting support option where individuals or families who have lost their homes are temporarily accommodated by their neighbors or relatives. However, it's important to note that hosting support may not always be a viable solution in all circumstances. (Shelter & NFI Cluster, 2021).

i. Tents

Tents are frequently used as a form of temporary shelter for individuals or communities who have lost their homes, but they are generally considered an option to be avoided whenever possible. Tents are viewed as impractical, less adaptable, and limited in space. They lack resilience against adverse weather conditions and often fail to offer privacy to the occupants. Due to these limitations, beneficiaries who have alternatives, such as staying with host families, utilizing damaged or undamaged public buildings, or utilizing collective centers, tend to forego the choice of residing in tents. Therefore, tents should ideally be reserved for individuals who have no other viable option and willingly choose to stay in them. (Shelter & NFI Cluster, 2021).

ii. Makeshift Shelters/Plastic Sheets

Makeshift shelters are a type of shelter generally made of plastic material and rope, used by families whose homes are damaged or destroyed because they want to be near their homes. Although shelters of this type are cheap and flexible, they cannot offer a permanent solution.

iii. Hosting Support

Hosting support refers to the capacity of individuals or families who have been displaced from their homes due to disasters or conflicts to stay with their unaffected relatives, even if only temporarily. One of the primary advantages of hosting support is that it expedites the process of self-recovery and aids in directing resources and assistance to individuals facing more severe hardships. This approach is aligned with a crucial humanitarian aid principle, which is to reach and help those in the most critical need (Disasterready, 2023).

2.2.3.6. Transitional Shelters

Containers, RHUs (Refugee Housing Unit), and Concrete Block Transitional Shelters fall within the category of transitional shelter options. These structures are notably more practical and comfortable compared to tents and makeshift shelters. Transitional shelters can serve as a temporary housing solution for individuals who have been displaced due to disasters or conflicts. Therefore, when constructing such shelters, NGOs should prioritize the preferences and needs of the affected communities and design the structures accordingly. Moreover, transitional shelters are not merely seen as humanitarian aid but also as a crucial component in the recovery process and the transition back to normal life. They play a significant role in helping individuals and communities regain stability and move towards a more sustainable living situation (Shelter & NFI Cluster, 2021)

2.2.3.7. Camps

Camps are often a primary choice for people who have lost their homes when they are unable to stay with relatives or find shelter in close proximity to their homes. Furthermore, camps are one of the first options for families compelled to migrate from their home regions and become IDPs. However, it's worth noting that camps can be seen as a type of shelter that hinders the return to normal life and the recovery process, potentially fostering dependency on aid among the affected population.

In the Afrin Region, camps are the most prevalent type of shelter, and this can be attributed to several key factors. Many individuals in this region had to migrate from other parts of Syria due to attacks by the Assad regime, leaving them with no alternative but to seek refuge in camps established by AFAD. The attraction of camps is further amplified by the aid provided by both AFAD and NGOs within these camps. These facilities offer various programs, including shelter, food security, WASH, and Cash programs, which encourage people to continue living in the camps.

Moreover, the criteria for beneficiary selection that are applied outside the camps do not typically apply within the camps, which draws the migrant population towards these facilities. Another significant factor contributing to the appeal of camps is the enhanced security they offer, managed by AFAD, which is perceived as safer than other areas. Consequently, the number of individuals residing in the camps in the Afrin Region is steadily increasing. However, this growth can impede the region's return to normalcy and the recovery of vulnerable individuals living in these camps.

The Shelter projects implemented in the region offers several significant advantages. They prioritize the physical safety of the beneficiaries, make efforts to enhance health and hygiene conditions, and safeguard their privacy and dignity. Additionally, these Shelter projects are designed to align with response, recovery, and disaster risk reduction (DRR) objectives, which are crucial aspects of humanitarian aid programs. Shelter projects hold immense significance in mitigating the impacts of disasters or conflicts. This is because an individual who cannot address their housing needs may struggle to address their other requirements effectively. Shelter can serve multiple purposes, ranging from providing a place of residence to being used as a business, factory, barn, or warehouse. It forms the foundation for meeting various essential needs and is crucial for overall well-being and resilience in the face of adversity.

When implementing shelter projects, it's crucial to consider the political and demographic conditions of the region. After the Olive Branch Operation, the region experienced a demographic shift, with some residents voluntarily relocating to other parts of Syria, notably the Tel Rifat area. In response to this, AFAD, LC, and NGOs, being the primary humanitarian aid stakeholders in the region, have adopted a policy of not initiating shelter projects in privately owned structures where the rightful owners are absent.

Furthermore, when establishing new camps or mass settlements under the control and organization of AFAD, the allocation of shelter areas is done in collaboration with Local Councils. New settlements are prohibited from being developed on privately owned land, and they are instead constructed on public lands.

Shelter projects, while crucial for beneficiaries, are not sufficient on their own to improve the quality of life for vulnerable people. Therefore, it is essential to integrate shelter projects with other humanitarian aid programs to enhance the well-being of camp residents. Notably, the Muhammediye and Derbalud camps in the Jinderes region stand out as exemplary cases in the Afrin Region, where these integrated efforts have been successful.

In these camps, nearly three thousand households reside, and their food security programs, and cash distributions are overseen by the GOAL International Humanitarian Aid Association. Cash assistance during the winter months plays a vital role in helping residents secure fuel for harsh winter conditions. The health clinic within the camp, managed by Doctors Worldwide, offers access to healthcare services, and medical and pharmaceutical aid is provided free of charge. Solar energy panels installed by the International -Humanitarian Relief (IHR) in these camps ensure access to clean water and necessary hygiene conditions. The school in the camp, including expenses such as teachers and books, is supported by the Hatay Provincial Directorate of National Education. While not all these activities may be carried out simultaneously in every camp in the region, Muhammediye and Derbalud Camps serve as successful examples of combining shelter programs with other essential initiatives, improving the overall quality of life for the residents.

2.2.4. WASH

WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) programs primarily aim to deliver high-quality services, ensuring that individuals reside in environments that promote health and hygiene. In the Afrin Region, prevalent challenges necessitating WASH interventions include insufficient toilet facilities, poor hygiene conditions within these facilities, ineffective waste disposal practices, and a general lack of awareness among local residents regarding hygiene.

Consequently, the region periodically witnesses outbreaks of diseases such as cholera, dysentery, and malaria, reaching epidemic proportions.

An illustrative instance is the cholera outbreak at the outset of 2023, which significantly impacted the entire NWS, with a pronounced effect on the Afrin region. The rapid spread of cholera was particularly notable in areas hosting tens of thousands of individuals in camps or informal settlements, extending its impact across Syria. Notably, the Afrin-Aleppo region registered a substantial number of cases, second only to Idlib. In the Aleppo region, which accounted for 30.5% of Syria's cases, there were 22,123 suspected cases, 2,885 confirmed cases, and 46 recorded fatalities (Reliefweb, 2023).

Given the critical significance of WASH programs for human health, it is imperative to conduct a thorough evaluation process before implementing any programs or practices. The assessments outlined by WASH Cluster data include the following:

- “- Number of IDPs in camp in sex and age disaggregated figures.
 - Prevalence of diarrhea cases and skin infections (if not feasible, rely on EWARN WBD data and reports).
 - Availability and affordability of WASH related NFIs and hygiene detergents.
 - Availability and number of large water containers to compare storage capacity with required water quantity.
 - Main water sources in camp and identify the quantity and quality of existing water supply sources.
 - Water treatment methods and average water consumption per household.
 - Coping strategies when water is not sufficient.
 - Percentage of people accessing toilets, other problems hindering IDPs’ access to toilets, and drainage related problems.
 - Garbage disposal mechanism and whether garbage is safely collected and disposed.”
- (Humanitarian response, 2023)

Monitoring sanitation is a critical aspect that requires meticulous attention throughout the entire duration of WASH projects, playing a vital role in preventing epidemic diseases. Among various types of waste, human waste stands out as a primary contributor to the dissemination of diseases such as diarrhea and vector-borne illnesses. Consequently, it is essential to implement effective and sufficient sanitation measures. The key considerations in undertaking these measures are as follows:

- “Public or family latrines/toilets including hand washing facilities appropriate to all including disabled and infirm

- Public or family bathing or showering facilities appropriate to all including disabled and infirm

- Public laundry and drying facilities appropriate to all including disabled and infirm

- Systems for regular SWM - Solid Waste Management

- Drainage systems for waste and rainwater” (Humanitarian response, 2023)

Solid Waste Management (SWM) constitutes a crucial element within WASH programs, necessitating the proper collection and disposal of garbage in camps, collective centers, or settlements to avert the risk of epidemic diseases. The successful execution of SWM projects requires careful attention to specific elements in the region, as compiled by WASH Cluster. These considerations include:

“- Waste containers type, and size should be determined based on the collection method and transportation truck capacity, in most informal settlement situations. These settlements are established in empty agricultural land with rough terrain and with no sealed roads, preventing the use of large waste collectors, equipped with hydraulic compressors and lifting mechanisms. This limitation enforces the use of small waste containers that can be handled by human labor. One of the lessons learned in the WASH interventions in the camps, informal settlement and collective centers of northern Syria is the use of metal containers with a capacity of 100 liters and targeting 1 bin for each 10 HHs.

- Waste collection points should not be far from the IDPs dwellings, maximum 200 m away.

- Truck size should be determined based on the settlement situation and road conditions.

- Waste disposal dumpsites should be maintained frequently, due to the potential continued influx of IDPs. In case of big, crowded settlements, actors should factor in the waste treatment and dumpsite provision and maintenance. When constructing a new dumpsite/land fill, proper attention must be given to the location of the site taking into consideration the flow of air and continued access.

- Personnel and workers who are involved in this activity should be provided with all the necessary PPE needed (face masks, protective gloves, boots, visibility uniforms, and hats) in addition they should receive training on waste management and handling solid waste.” (Humanitarian response, 2023)

The components highlighted above within WASH programs are crucial, making the WASH projects in the region of utmost importance. NGOs play a significant role in executing projects across various domains. Activities such as providing hygiene training to camp residents, distributing hygiene kits, repairing, and maintaining toilet systems in compliance

with hygiene standards, organizing clean and dirty water pipelines, and ensuring access to clean water for camp residents are undertaken by associations operating in the region. Moreover, considering the regional climatic conditions characterized by a high number of sunny days, the installation of solar energy panels is gaining increasing preference as a project. Coordination of these projects within camps falls under the purview of AFAD, while those outside the camps are coordinated by SHW (State Hydraulic Works).

2.2.5. Protection

Protection programs are regarded as the fundamental component within the spectrum of humanitarian aid programs. (ECHO, 2023). They play a pivotal role by encompassing and addressing the overarching needs of beneficiaries. In a more specific context, protection programs extend both physical and psychological support to individuals or communities affected by the ramifications of war, conflict, or natural disasters. The primary objective is to mitigate the impact of the damages they have endured. In the course of delivering such assistance, protection programs prioritize psycho-social support, striving to empower beneficiaries to reintegrate into normalcy. Throughout the implementation of these programs, humanitarian organizations adhere to established guidelines:

- “-clarify diagnosis, treatment options and side effects and ensure that the patient understands the disease and her treatment options,

- acknowledge that distress is normal and expected and inform patients that points of transition can increase the distress,

- build trust,

- mobilize resources and direct patient to appropriate educational materials and local resources,

- consider medication to manage symptoms (e.g. analgesics, hypnotics, anxiolytics),

- ensure continuity of care” (NCBI, 2023)

As part of psycho-social support, collective sessions are arranged to assist beneficiaries in overcoming their traumas, with the objective of facilitating their adjustment to regular life. Specifically designed for women and children, these activities seek to safeguard individuals who are more vulnerable than other groups in areas where standard living conditions are compromised. The organized sessions aim not only to provide protection but also to support the adaptation of these marginalized individuals to a more normalized lifestyle.

Another component of protection programs, known as Case Management, aims to address the individual needs of beneficiaries, with a specific focus on the disabled, the elderly,

and women. In situations of international emergencies, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) describes Protection Case Management as an initiative designed to assist individuals facing challenging social conditions resulting from rights violations, guiding them towards specific and lasting solutions. Acknowledged as a comprehensive protection strategy for those most vulnerable in emergency and post-emergency settings, Protection Case Management plays a crucial role in aiding their recovery and overall welfare. It aims to enhance their protective capabilities and reconstruct social connections within their community. (INTERSOS, 2023)

The earthquakes that occurred in Kahramanmaraş on February 6, 2023, had a profound impact on the Afrin region bordering Hatay. Vulnerable individuals, already facing hardships and in need, found themselves in even more challenging circumstances, having lost homes and relatives. In this section of the thesis, the risks and proposed solutions related to the protection program will be elucidated, particularly in the context of the post-earthquake situation in the region.

2.2.5.1. Child and Family Separation

The primary risk identified in this context is the issue of child and family separation following the earthquake. The seismic event led to significant displacement in the region, compelling numerous individuals, including children, the elderly, and those with disabilities, to relocate from their homes. The challenging living conditions prompted families to migrate, resulting in their separation. According to Cluster data, the overall rate of children separated from their parents in the entire NWS post-earthquake was 34%. In the Jinderes district of Afrin, the area most severely affected by the earthquake, this separation rate spiked to 82%. Notably, 62% of these children found themselves under the care of relatives, 21% with their grandparents, 12% with their uncle/aunt, and 5% with other individuals and institutions. (Protection Cluster, 2023) The substantial number of children losing parental care not only poses significant protection risks but also underscores the critical importance of protective interventions in the region.

2.2.5.2. Restriction to Access to Civil Documentation and Judicial Process for Compensation/ Rehabilitation of Housing, Land and Property

An additional significant protection risk in the region is the potential challenges faced by local residents or migrants concerning housing, land, and property (HLP) rights. This issue

arises from restrictions in civil documentation and judicial processes within the region. A 2022 study revealed that 61% of households in NWS lacked official documents, and it was observed that this percentage further escalated following the earthquake. This lack of proper documentation not only jeopardizes individuals' HLP rights but also exacerbates the vulnerability of the population in the aftermath of the earthquake. The broad range of administrative regulations and impediments of de facto authorities governing HLP transactions adds to the complexity of ascertaining legal rights and accessing remedies. In the same study, 27% of the participants reported encountering issues related to housing, land, and property (HLP), such as evictions and homelessness. Among the regions in NWS, Afrin had the highest incidence of HLP problems, with 13%, while Jinderes and Raju experienced these challenges at rates of 3% each. These findings highlight the prevalence of HLP issues in the aftermath of the earthquake, underscoring the urgent need for interventions to address housing-related vulnerabilities in various affected areas. (Protection Cluster, 2023)

2.2.5.3. Risk Related to Limited Protection Services and Access to Humanitarian Assistance

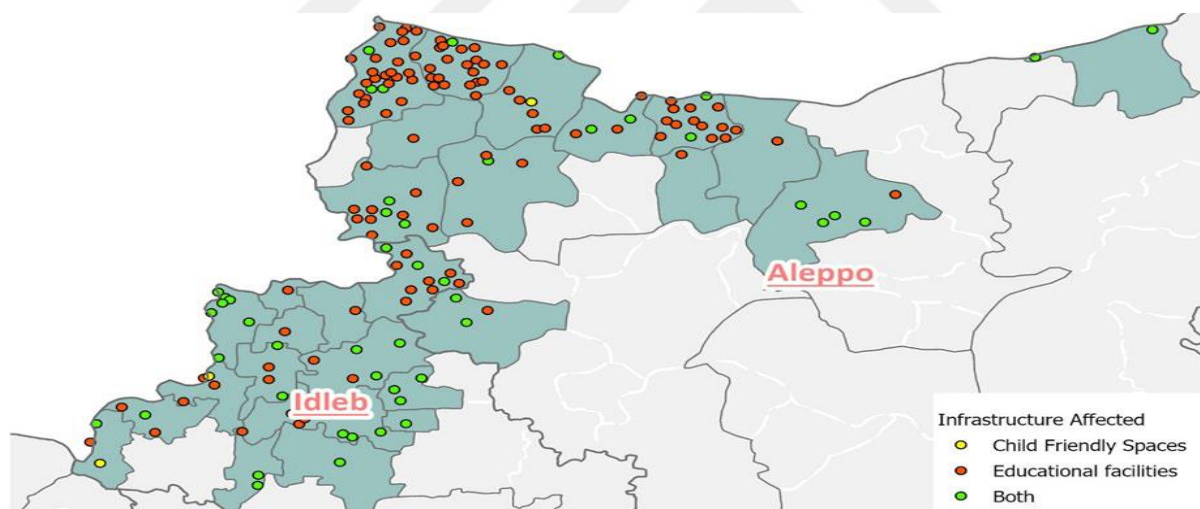
The dynamics associated with conflict and crisis stand out as critical factors affecting humanitarian access in the region, persisting as a longstanding issue. This challenge hampers vulnerable populations from reaching assistance, inhibits them from reporting the violations they've endured, and impedes their ability to survive. As highlighted in the introduction to the protection section, this program encompasses all other initiatives, including health, food, nutrition, shelter, education, and mental health and psycho-social services—essential for the residents of the region. However, the studies conducted in the area reveal a significant hurdle: these vital programs are unable to reach beneficiaries in an adequate and high-quality manner. According to the same research, the primary reason cited for the lack of humanitarian aid services, by 79% of participants, is the beneficiary selection criteria, followed by 17% attributing the issue to a lack of humanitarian aid programs, 1% to discrimination, 1% to a lack of documents, and 2% to other reasons. (Protection Cluster, 2023)

2.2.5.4. Denial Resources and Services

The denial of services disproportionately impacts the most vulnerable groups, namely the disabled, elderly individuals in need of care, and children. These individuals, already displaced in the aftermath of the war, became even more susceptible after the earthquake,

exposing them to a heightened risk of exploitation. The earthquake exacerbated the challenges faced by these populations, particularly people with disabilities, who lost their supportive devices. Accessing services and finding adequate accommodation has become increasingly difficult for them in the aftermath of the seismic event. This situation underscores the urgent need for targeted assistance to address the specific needs of these vulnerable groups in the post-disaster context. Elderly individuals in need of care faced various risks following the earthquake. Older individuals who were without family or caregivers encountered significant challenges in accessing assistance, and those unable to receive help became susceptible to abuse. The earthquake damaged educational buildings and child-friendly spaces, causing children to lose their safe havens. Illustrated on the map, these facilities, already limited in number, were severely impacted by the earthquake, making essential services for children even more challenging to access. In this context, child protection services assume paramount importance for the region, and psycho-social activities are particularly vital for children who have lost their families. (Protection Cluster, 2023)

Table 6. Educational Facilities and Child Friendly Spaces in NWS



Source: (Protection Cluster, 2023)

2.2.5.5. Risks of GBV

Security issues, particularly those affecting women and children, are examined within the realm of Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Notably, sexual abuse is the most prevalent form of violence experienced by these groups, despite the inadequacy of reporting mechanisms. Additionally, physical, psychological, and emotional violence, as well as issues like child or forced marriages, femicides, and honor crimes, constitute GBV problems for vulnerable women and children in the region. According to a survey in the Jinderes region, which was severely

impacted by the earthquake, 76% of participants asserted that the area was not a safe space for women and children within the framework of protection programs (Protection Cluster, 2023). This underscores the urgency of addressing GBV issues and enhancing protection measures in the region.

2.2.5.6. Population Groups Affected by Force Recruitment

The susceptibility of the local population to recruitment by armed groups is heightened due to factors such as family separations, inadequate shelter, and limited job opportunities in the region. It is crucial to closely scrutinize and monitor this issue, with special attention to children. To counteract these challenges, organizations should focus on implementing livelihood projects and undertaking initiatives that contribute to the economic rejuvenation of the area, thereby helping to prevent such recruitment. (Protection Cluster, 2023).

2.2.5.7. Forced Marriage and Child Labor as Negative Coping Strategies

Individuals facing heightened hardships from war, conflict, and a recent earthquake resort to forced marriage and child labor as coping mechanisms in the face of deteriorating living conditions. Unfortunately, these practices further jeopardize the safety of vulnerable populations, particularly children, subjecting them to physical and mental harm. Additionally, such circumstances deprive them of essential education and health services. The Afrin region is identified as one of the areas where child marriage and labor are prevalent in this manner. (Protection Cluster, 2023)

2.2.5.8. Protection Measures

The protection risks observed in the region can be summarized as follows. To mitigate or eliminate these risks, specific actions need to be taken, and the key measures are outlined below.

i. Strengthen Family Tracing and Reunification Services

Humanitarian aid organizations, when formulating protection programs, should prioritize initiatives to reunite children who have been separated from their families or caregivers. The process of reunification is crucial, and its success relies heavily on seamless collaboration with local councils. Additionally, establishing the appropriate human resources is essential to ensure the effective and sensitive reunification of families.

ii. Ensure Access to Civil Documentation

Facilitating the reacquisition of essential documents, such as identity documents, driver's licenses, birth certificates, and other official paperwork, for affected populations is vital for expediting and enhancing the efficiency of assistance. Moreover, the possession of official documents is crucial for validating the legal status of beneficiaries' assets in the region and safeguarding their rights from deprivation. Coordinating closely with local councils is of paramount importance when delivering this assistance to ensure its effectiveness.

iii. Improve Humanitarian Assistance Delivery

To diminish protection risks in the region, it is essential to execute humanitarian aid programs effectively and sustainably. The implementation of these programs acts as a preventive measure against the exploitation of vulnerable individuals. Emphasis should be placed on crucial areas such as health, shelter, nutrition, education, and protection, with special attention given to the fragile elderly, the disabled, as well as pregnant and breastfeeding women. This comprehensive approach is crucial for ensuring the well-being and security of the population in need.

iv. Strengthen Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

The central challenge in addressing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) is the ineffective implementation of complaint and reporting mechanisms for incidents of sexual abuse in the region. Vulnerable individuals who experience abuse often believe that their problems won't be resolved, and fear potential escalation of violence. The closed structure of the region further hampers the efficiency of these mechanisms. If humanitarian aid organizations are involved in complaint mechanisms, it is imperative that they coordinate closely with local councils and the Ministry of Family and Social Policies headquarters in Jinderes. Effectively addressing this highly sensitive issue requires robust collaboration with all stakeholders involved.

v. Increase the Provision of MHPSS

Mental Health and Psychological Support (MHPSS) services should extend their coverage to individuals significantly impacted by conflict and natural disasters, requiring immediate mental health assistance, trauma management, and psychological support. These services play a crucial role in addressing the mental and emotional well-being of those affected by such challenging circumstances.

vi. Strengthen GBV Prevention and Response Mechanisms

To mitigate GBV risks, it is essential to establish a precise and trustworthy reporting and referral mechanism. Additionally, addressing the issue of toilets, which is a significant

factor contributing to GBV risks, is crucial. WASH projects should be implemented to guarantee the privacy, dignity, and safety of women, particularly in camps and collective centers. These measures are pivotal for creating an environment that actively reduces the risks associated with GBV.

vii. Prevention of Negative Coping Strategies

The primary and crucial step in preventing negative coping strategies is to enhance job opportunities in the region and provide financial support to vulnerable individuals. This measure is paramount in preventing child labor and forced marriages. Furthermore, conducting awareness-raising training for the local population, supporting educational activities, and ensuring legal protection for victimized children or women in cases of abuse through appropriate authorities are essential components of a comprehensive strategy to address these issues effectively.

2.2.6. Health

While numerous organizations in the area strive to provide health services to the residents, their efforts may fall short due to the rising population in Afrin resulting from conflicts. A notable portion of hospitals (51%) and health clinics (52%) in Syria faces limitations in delivering sufficient services, leaving approximately 10 million individuals without proper access to healthcare. (Doctors Worldwide, 2023) The escalating demand for healthcare services is further exacerbated by insufficient hygiene conditions in the region.

Health services in the area are administered under the authorization and coordination of Hatay Governorship, AFAD, and Hatay Provincial Health Directorate, with no allowance for other humanitarian aid initiatives. Various organizations contribute to the region's health sector in diverse ways. Initially, support involves furnishing necessary medical equipment and devices to hospitals and health clinics in the Afrin region. Following collaborative identification of these devices and equipment with local authorities, coordination is established with the associations, and the provided materials are transported to hospitals through border gates.

Similarly, pharmaceutical requirements for these hospitals and clinics are met by associations or UN organizations, employing the same procedural coordination. A crucial aspect is that medicines and equipment dispatched to the region undergo scrutiny by Hatay Provincial Health Directorate teams. Subsequent to the inspection, permit processes are executed, and border crossing is facilitated. Consequently, bureaucratic procedures within the health sector may be somewhat more extensive than in other domains. To expedite the activities of the funded NGOs, UN organizations also participate in the process. They ensure the border

crossing of devices and medicines independently and subsequently deliver them to their collaborating partner NGOs, expediting the implementation of funded activities.

Moreover, NGOs dedicated to the health sector extend their services to the local population by establishing health centers, clinics, dental facilities, and maternity hospitals in the region. These NGOs also ensure on-the-ground health services through the deployment of mobile teams for individuals who lack access to these established centers. As of 2021, the Afrin region boasts 8 hospitals, 30 primary health care facilities, 22 mobile clinics, and 56 community health mobile teams. (ACAPS, 2021)

The region, along with Syria's Idlib region, has emerged as one of the areas most severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The surge in the number of cases can be attributed to the local population's disregard for curfews, mandatory mask usage, and social distancing regulations implemented to curb the pandemic. Additionally, the vaccination process has faced obstacles, including a slower-than-desired rate of vaccination due to public prejudices against vaccination, further exacerbated by inadequate hygiene conditions. In the year 2021, when the pandemic gained momentum, over 285,000 individuals were exposed to a moderate and high risk of contracting COVID-19. (ACAPS, 2021) NGOs prioritized vaccination efforts during the pandemic, striving to mitigate the impact by collaboratively organizing vaccination campaigns in partnership with the WHO.

2.2.7. Education

Although educational programs play a crucial role in the region, their functional implementation faces several challenges. According to a measurement, there are 1,453.28 children aged 6 to 18 in the NWS, presenting a considerable number facing difficulties in accessing education later in life (Washington Institute, 2023). The primary factor contributing to this lack of access is the inability of Afrin schools to accommodate the student population. As reported in 2021, there are only 232 schools in Afrin (ACAPS, 2021). Besides the limited number of schools, inadequate infrastructure and roads pose transportation challenges, further hindering access. Economic issues in the region also act as a barrier, with parents reluctant to send their children to school due to financial constraints. Overcrowded classrooms contribute to the education system's lagging performance, preventing it from reaching optimal levels of effectiveness. Moreover, insufficient training for educational activities is another notable challenge faced in the region.

Comparing the number of teachers in the region to the student population reveals an inadequacy in providing high-quality educational services. Furthermore, a significant issue

arises from the observation that some teachers in the region lack formal instructor training, impacting the overall quality of education. The insufficient training of certain educators contributes to a decline in educational standards. Additionally, the low salaries of teachers result in a loss of motivation, leading to a decrease in the overall quality of education.

Educational programs face even greater challenges in accessibility for IDPs compelled to relocate to the region from other parts of Syria. A study indicates that 20% of families forced to migrate more than three times do not enroll their children in school, a figure that can rise to 42% in the first year of displacement. Notably, child marriages are prevalent among IDPs residing in camps. The research reveals that 66% of children attribute their non-attendance to the insufficient availability of schools and educational resources in the region. (Humanitarian Overview, 2022)

In this context, NGOs are actively involved in addressing the aforementioned challenges through aid initiatives. Initially, NGOs focus on the repair and restoration of schools affected by both conflict and earthquakes. This involves the rehabilitation of damaged schools, ensuring they are brought back to a functional state for educational purposes. Additionally, material support is extended to these schools, with efforts directed at fulfilling the essential needs of students. Supplies such as notebooks, pencils, tables, chairs, and other educational materials are provided to ensure that schools have the necessary resources.

NGOs are also actively involved in addressing educational challenges by undertaking the responsibility of paying teachers' salaries. Economic difficulties in the region often lead to local authorities being unable to fulfill the financial needs of teachers. In response, associations step in to cover the salaries of teachers, particularly in camps and collective centers where they operate. The extent of this support, however, is contingent upon the financial constraints and budgetary capacity of the respective NGOs.

Education projects hold significant importance within the framework of protection programs conducted by NGOs. The psychosocial support sessions and awareness-raising initiatives implemented for children in schools serve a dual purpose. They not only aid children in adapting to normal life but also contribute to the sustained effectiveness of protection programs when integrated with the broader education program. These projects play a crucial role in promoting both the well-being and long-term resilience of the children involved.

In the course of these activities, NGOs operate under the requisite permission and coordination of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and the Hatay Provincial Directorate of National Education. Given the sensitive nature of education, strict oversight by the MoNE ensures that educational activities adhere to established standards. The MoNE

conducts regular inspections of NGOs-led educational initiatives, with a focus on preventing any projects that might cause unrest within local communities.

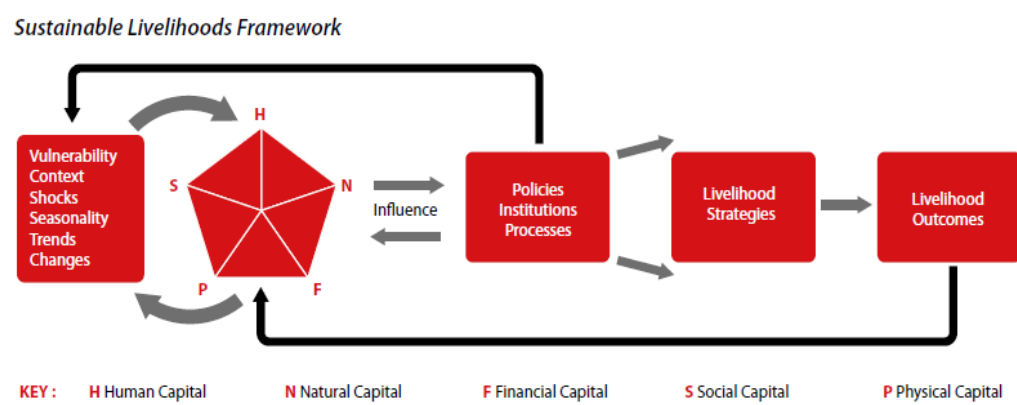
Moreover, the MoNE is actively involved in enhancing the quality of education in the region. Efforts include ongoing teacher training initiatives aimed at elevating the skills and capabilities of educators. Through organized instructor training, the MoNE seeks to improve the overall quality of teachers and education in the area. The ultimate goal is to provide a higher standard of education to the region's residents by certifying teachers through these training programs. (MoNE, 2021)

2.2.8. Livelihood Programs

Livelihood initiatives, in conjunction with protection programs, constitute a multifaceted core initiative encompassing various components and activities. The primary objective of livelihood programs is to enhance the economic well-being of recipients, elevate their overall quality of life, and empower them to navigate challenges independently. Throughout this process, beneficiaries receive financial, social, and material support, and ongoing communication is maintained to ensure the effective implementation of the programs.

During the execution of Livelihood programs, NGOs adhere to the internationally recognized Sustainable Livelihood Framework. The comprehensive overview of Livelihood programs is detailed in the integrated table below, providing a holistic understanding of the initiatives in this context.

Table 7. Sustainable Livelihoods Framework



Sources: (CaLP, 2015)

As indicated in the table, the overall process of livelihood programs is influenced by factors such as vulnerability, contextual challenges, shocks, and seasonal or trend changes.

These elements have a significant impact, particularly on capital, a crucial component of livelihood. Consequently, the success rate of the programs fluctuates in response to these dynamic factors. (Elluard, 2015)

Human capital is defined as the knowledge and skills individuals possess that contribute to the advancement of social, financial, and cultural well-being within their society. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) emphasizes that beyond the expansion of human capital, individuals' political and religious preferences play a crucial role. According to CRS, individuals who share similar values are likely to generate more effective social benefits in their society through these preferences or viewpoints (Claudine, 2018).

However, in the context of humanitarian interventions, it is essential to recognize the specific types of human capital available, identify the needed capabilities, and devise strategies to ensure their efficiency in programs. For instance, in urban settings, where the number of highly educated individuals may surpass that of less educated ones, there might be an assumption that they can easily integrate into livelihood programs and acquire professions. Yet, the absence of soft skills, a vital requirement in vocational education, could pose challenges and potentially hinder the success of these programs.

Social capital is characterized as the network established by individuals who share similar values, norms, and understanding within a community. For refugees and IDPs, social capital holds significant importance. It serves as a crucial resource for these displaced groups, enabling them to exchange information about markets, social services, and employment opportunities. This network is essential for their survival in challenging environments, facilitating access to necessary services and resources. Nevertheless, it is frequently observed that these groups may experience a decline in their social capital, leading to a sense of isolation following displacement. In such circumstances, vulnerable individuals or communities become more susceptible to exploitation.

Financial capital refers to goods and services whose value can be quantified in terms of money, and it is provided to beneficiaries during the implementation of livelihood programs. This capital can take the form of in-kind assistance, such as livestock or agricultural materials, or it may be in the form of direct monetary aid, contingent on conditions where beneficiaries can enhance their income. The following table illustrates diverse forms of capital interventions:

Table 8. Examples of Capital Interventions*Examples of capital interventions*

Capitals	Types of Interventions
Human	• Money for training to develop technical skills for small-scale herding management • Vouchers for training to build awareness regarding livelihoods resilience
Social	• Cash-for-work to construct a cooperative building • Vouchers for training community workers to raise awareness of agricultural microinsurance
Physical	• Vouchers for boat-building materials • Cash for restocking of small ruminants
Natural	• Cash-for-work for reforestation • Cash for access to land ownership (for purchase or permit to access land)
Financial	• Vouchers for training in accessing microfinance systems • Transfer in cash for small business recapitalisation

Sources: (CaLP, 2015)

Physical capital is characterized as the infrastructure and production services provided to beneficiaries in the implementation of livelihood programs. Essential components of physical capital crucial for sustainable livelihood projects include transportation, shelter, water supply and sanitation, as well as access to clean and affordable energy. An additional consideration concerning physical capital involves the integration of these tools with WASH projects to enhance efficiency during delivery to beneficiaries. For instance, when beneficiaries receive support for agricultural projects and infrastructure is developed for them, the effectiveness of livelihood projects may be compromised if hygiene training is not included within the scope of WASH programs. Integration across these areas is crucial to ensuring a comprehensive and impactful approach to livelihood programs.

Natural capital encompasses the living elements such as air, water, and soil that are essential for sustaining life. It is of utmost importance to consider and preserve these elements, avoiding harm to nature, when designing livelihood programs. Taking environmental sustainability into account is crucial to ensure the long-term success and positive impact of these programs.

Within the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, processes are established involving various capitals, and discussions about relevant institutions take place, leading to the initiation of livelihood strategies. These strategies are designed to contribute to and guide the success of programs. Drawing from the CRS Integral Human Development Framework, six main livelihood strategies are identified:

- “Risk reduction mechanisms: Strategies that help reduce vulnerability to shocks, cycles and trends,
- Coping or survival mechanisms: Strategies that enable people to get through different periods,
- Engagement: Strategies that increase the influence of people and communities to advocate and claim rights and services,
- Asset diversification: Strategies that rebuild resilience by increasing the types of assets that can be depended upon in a crisis, and reduce vulnerability to the loss of one or a few asset types,
- Asset recovery: Strategies that rebuild assets lost in a disaster,
- Asset maximization: Strategies that increase the quantity and quality of assets to improve the capacity of households to leave property and reduce vulnerability.” (Claudine, 2018)

Upon implementing the various livelihood strategies, the outcomes and results of the program become apparent. It's crucial to emphasize that livelihood programs, as mentioned earlier, are humanitarian aid initiatives that operate in conjunction with other programs. They are designed to be integrated with and complement other ongoing regional efforts. In the explanation of livelihood programs, there is an implicit acknowledgment of the broader context, encompassing other programs and interventions occurring in the same area. This interconnected approach ensures a more holistic and effective impact on the overall well-being and sustainable development of the community or region. While detailing the livelihood programs occurring in the entire NWS, including the Afrin region, it's essential to consider the unique characteristics, challenges, and opportunities specific to this geographic area. By providing an overview of these programs, the focus should extend beyond the individual initiatives to highlight the collective efforts to enhance the livelihoods of the communities in the broader region. This comprehensive approach ensures a more thorough understanding of the interconnected initiatives and their combined impact on the well-being of the population in NWS.

The primary component of Livelihood programs is capacity building, encompassing various training initiatives for beneficiaries. This includes the provision of technical skills training, vocational programs geared toward labor market inclusion, and support to enhance the local labor force and production market. As an illustration, associations address challenges, such as insufficient labor for garbage collection, by implementing Cash-for-Work (CfW) programs. This not only provides financial support to local individuals but also integrates them into the economic cycle, preventing potential hygiene-related issues. Additionally, the repair

and maintenance of structures like markets, shops, warehouses, and irrigation facilities contribute to the overall economic vitality of the region.

The integration of livelihood and education programs is evident through various initiatives, such as the small-scale maintenance and repair of schools and classrooms in the region. Additionally, the payment of teacher salaries under the framework of CfW programs addresses situations where education services are hindered due to a shortage of teachers. Moreover, the provision of financial support for transportation fees required for children to attend school further underscores the interconnectedness of livelihood and education programs. These collaborative efforts aim to enhance educational opportunities and contribute to the overall development and well-being of the community. (Halimeh, 2022)

Indeed, there exists a highly interconnected relationship between livelihood and food security programs. This connection is evident through various collaborative activities, including the provision of support for inputs that enhance agricultural production in the region. Purchasing crops from local farmers and facilitating the transformation of these crops into bread through LCs is a notable joint effort. Additionally, supporting agricultural endeavors by covering maintenance and repair costs of bakeries and flour mills further strengthens this collaboration. Activities such as the collection of olives, a crucial agricultural product in Afrin, during the harvest season, and compensating workers for their efforts in processing contribute to the shared objectives of both livelihood and food security programs. These integrated initiatives aim to bolster agricultural sustainability and enhance food availability in the region.

It's noted that livelihood programs in the Afrin region face challenges in achieving comprehensive coverage and are perceived to fall short of the region's potential. Currently, with 800,000 individuals still residing in tents in the NWS and a 50% reduction in project funding, the assessment is that the inhabitants of the region are struggling to fulfill even their fundamental living requirements. (UNOCHA, 2023) As a consequence, substantial challenges arise in diversifying and expanding livelihood projects within the region, preventing these initiatives from reaching their intended level of development. However, there is a prevailing consensus among the local population that livelihood programs hold paramount importance. It is believed that investing in livelihood initiatives has the potential to address the long-term needs of the community, offering sustained benefits for both the beneficiaries and the overall well-being of the region. Despite the current challenges, there is a shared conviction that increased and sustained investment in livelihood programs could yield positive and lasting outcomes for the people and the broader community in Afrin. Furthermore, there is

contemplation on expanding the scope of livelihood programs and augmenting their allocation within the overall funds accessible in the region. (HLG, 2021)

2.3. The Actors of Humanitarian Aid Programs

Once the discussion shifts to categories of humanitarian assistance programs, a crucial step involves a comprehensive assessment of the entities entrusted with coordinating these programs. This evaluation is essential for ensuring the effective and well-executed implementation of such initiatives within the region. To oversee and supervise diverse program types, each demanding distinct expertise and skills, it becomes imperative for various public institutions to function in the area. These institutions play a vital role in coordinating the efforts of NGOs operating within their respective domains, overseeing necessary permits and procedural protocols, and reporting association activities to higher authorities.

2.3.1. AFAD

AFAD holds a pivotal role in delivering aid on behalf of the Republic of Türkiye to those in need, not only in Syria but across the globe in response to disasters or conflicts. As of 2023, AFAD stands out as one of Türkiye's most extensively organized institutions, operating in all 81 provinces with a workforce of 6,054 personnel, comprising 706 at the central level and 5,348 at the provincial level (AFAD, 2019).

In terms of humanitarian aid, AFAD performs two distinct functions. Firstly, it acts as a humanitarian diplomat, in line with the definition provided by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). According to IFRC, "humanitarian diplomacy involves persuading decision-makers and opinion leaders to consistently act in the best interests of vulnerable populations while upholding fundamental humanitarian principles." (IFRC, 2023)

Miner & Smith, authors of the book *Humanitarian diplomacy*, defined this definition in the broadest way as follows: "As an aid to understanding the challenges faced and the experiences recounted, this we understand to encompass the activities carried out by humanitarian organizations to obtain the space from political and military authorities within which to function with integrity. These activities comprise such efforts as arranging for the presence of international humanitarian organizations and personnel in a given country, negotiating access to civilian populations in need of assistance and protection, monitoring assistance programmes, promoting respect for international law and norms, supporting

indigenous individuals and institutions, and engaging in advocacy at a variety of levels in support of humanitarian objectives.” (Dora, 2021)

Indeed, the definition provided by AFAD aligns closely with the broad understanding of humanitarian diplomacy. According to AFAD's perspective, humanitarian diplomacy involves carrying out aid activities in response to natural disasters, wars, or conflicts to address the essential needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged populations. These needs may include security, alleviating hunger, and thirst, providing temporary protection, and safeguarding against epidemic diseases. Importantly, AFAD emphasizes that such humanitarian efforts should remain untethered to political, military, or economic considerations. By doing so, the goal is to contribute to the well-being and peace of the international community. This underscores the humanitarian principle of providing assistance based on need and impartiality, without being influenced by external factors that could compromise the integrity of aid activities (Özkılıç, 2014).

The emphasis on humanitarian diplomacy is particularly relevant in the context of AFAD's operations, both in the Zeytindalı Region and throughout the entire Syrian geography that the Republic of Türkiye has cleared of terrorism. AFAD serves as an organization that closely aligns with the definition of humanitarian diplomacy.

At the central level, AFAD's employees maintain communication with national and international donors. Their focus is on reducing the vulnerability of the people in the region by engaging in diplomatic efforts to secure necessary resources and support.

Simultaneously, at the local level, AFAD's officials play a crucial role in coordinating with various associations. Their responsibilities extend to implementing and overseeing humanitarian aid activities in the region. This two-tiered approach, combining central diplomatic efforts with local coordination and implementation, allows AFAD to effectively carry out its mission of providing humanitarian aid to populations in need in a manner consistent with the principles of humanitarian diplomacy.

The second pivotal function that AFAD assumes in the humanitarian aid activities within the Zeytindalı Region is coordination and implementation. As highlighted across various sections of this study, AFAD is entrusted with the coordination of programs conducted in the region. This coordination responsibility involves AFAD signing protocols with NGOs, operating as a stakeholder organization once the NGOs secure activity permits from the Governorship.

In collaboration with LCs, AFAD actively directs NGOs to areas in need, adhering to humanitarian aid principles and ensuring that programs align with universal aid standards. The

protocols established serve to delineate aid activities over a calendar year, a crucial element for sustaining programs in the region. Moreover, these protocols play a crucial role in averting conflicting activities among NGOs and preventing the duplication of aid efforts, contributing to the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian interventions in the area.

Especially during the harsh winter season in the region, natural disasters such as floods and avalanches pose significant challenges. The local population faces difficult times due to extreme cold and insufficient shelter conditions. In response to these challenges, AFAD applies the disaster management system principles that it has successfully implemented in Türkiye to the regions in Syria that have been cleared of terrorism. These principles include:

- Ensures cooperation between all relevant national and international institutions and organizations in order to plan, direct, support, coordinate and effectively implement the required activities,
- Increases community awareness and culture by conducting research, development and training activities,
- To take preventive and protective measures within the framework of the principle of social state,
- Providing multi-facted, multi actor resources in this field to rational use.” (Dora, 2021)

In collaboration with LCs, AFAD actively engages in assessing and determining the region’s needs. It provides guidance to NGOs on securing funds aligned with these identified needs, encouraging them to work in this direction. Additionally, AFAD conducts advocacy activities aimed at reducing vulnerability and fragility in the region. Given the substantial size and demographics of the area, the efforts of associations alone may prove insufficient to meet the extensive needs. Recognizing this gap, AFAD steps in to address shortages and deliver necessary materials directly to people in need. An illustrative example is the intervention during the severe winter of 2022 when the local population faced challenging conditions due to inadequate aid from NGOs. In response, AFAD utilized its own resources to deliver humanitarian aid, ensuring that the people of the region received essential support during this critical period. This underscores AFAD's commitment to filling gaps and providing immediate assistance in situations where NGOs may face limitations. In response to the urgent humanitarian situation during the severe winter, AFAD took immediate action by distributing essential relief items to the people of the region. The assistance included:

- **193 Family Tents:** Providing shelter for families facing inadequate living conditions.
 - **3,461 Food Parcels:** Offering sustenance to those affected by the harsh winter conditions.
 - **311,000 KG of Coal:** Addressing the heating needs of the community in extremely cold weather.
 - **660 Beds:** Furnishing necessary sleeping arrangements for individuals in need.
 - **3,438 Blankets:** Providing warmth and comfort during the cold winter months.
- (AFAD, 2022)

This rapid and comprehensive distribution of humanitarian aid demonstrates AFAD's commitment to addressing critical needs and mitigating the impact of challenging conditions on the local population. By delivering a range of essential items, AFAD aims to alleviate immediate hardships and contribute to the well-being of those affected in the region. Considering its significant duties and responsibilities in the region, AFAD stands out as one of the most crucial organizations for the ongoing and high-quality implementation of humanitarian aid programs. The observation that AFAD will continue to play this vital role in the coming years is supported by its favorable position. This is attributed to both the extensive experience it has accumulated over the past years and its substantial financial and personnel resources. The combination of experience, resources, and a strategic position enables AFAD to effectively navigate the complex challenges of delivering humanitarian aid in the region. As a result, it is well-positioned to contribute to the well-being of the local population and provide essential support during emergencies, ensuring the continuity and quality of humanitarian aid programs in the foreseeable future.

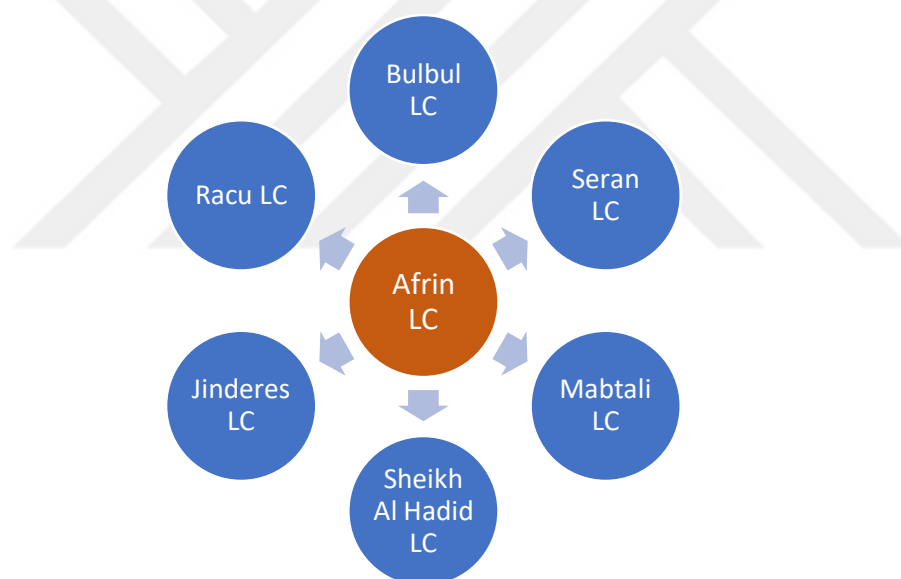
2.3.2. Local Councils

The origin of LCs in Syria can be traced back approximately a century to the era when they operated under the French mandate. In 1936, France made a significant decision to divide Syria into governorates, districts, and quarters. This division elevated the role of LCs in administrative management, assigning them the crucial responsibility of conveying the demands of citizens residing in specific areas to the central authorities. These demands encompassed various local needs, including those of a social and cultural nature (IMU, 2021). Following World War I and amidst the struggle for independence against French rule, the Syrian administration officially acknowledged the existence of LCs. The appointment of LC officials was initially carried out through regional election. However, the prevailing political

circumstances and tensions hindered the continuity of these electoral processes. Following the amalgamation of Syria and Egypt and the formation of the United Arab Republic in 1958, the administrative laws prevalent in Egypt were extended to Syria. However, with the separation of Syria from Egypt in 1961, this legal framework ceased to be applicable.

In 1972, under the leadership of Hafez Assad, a new decree was enacted, restructuring local governance in Syria into two fundamental categories. Under this decree, all settlements with populations exceeding 500, encompassing governorates, cities, towns, countryside units, and villages, were endowed with legal personality. Conversely, districts, regions, neighborhoods, farms, and villages with populations below 500 were not conferred legal personality. This organizational framework remains unchanged today, and as a result, the Afrin region of Aleppo province is governed by a total of 7 LC, including Bülbül, Seran, Racu, Jinderes, Sheik Al Hadid, Mabtali, and Afrin LC.

Table 9. Olive Branch Area- Local Councils



Source: This scheme is prepared by the author based on the information taken from (Demir, 2018)

Following the successful Olive Branch Operation that cleared regions of terrorism, swift efforts were made to reorganize LCs. Individuals who were well-known and respected within the local communities were appointed, taking into consideration the demographic makeup of each region. Consequently, these LCs resumed their functions in overseeing municipal, health, education, and administrative services. Humanitarian aid offices were also established within these councils to enhance coordination with non-governmental organizations operating in the area and facilitate oversight by local authorities. The eradication of terrorism from the region marked a significant transformation for these councils. Previously constrained during both the

Baath regime and PKK/PYD periods, they transitioned into civilian entities capable of making independent decisions and developing their own decision-making mechanisms (Alnajjar, 2020).

LCs, financially backed by Türkiye, deliver improved and higher-quality services to the residents of the region while maintaining autonomy from external interventions. Türkiye generally refrains from interfering in the internal affairs of these councils, intervening only in cases of security concerns. This approach encourages the councils to enhance and develop their capabilities independently. The financial support from Türkiye plays a role in fostering the self-sufficiency and effectiveness of these local governing bodies, allowing them to better serve the needs of the local population. LCs aim to provide a diverse range of services to the people of the region, encompassing various areas. The services they offer include:

“- Administering all aspects of civil life, for the Local Councils to represent all individuals who are working in providing civilian services to all governorates, in order to follow up and monitor efforts to guarantee quality and improve efforts.

- Distributing all aid that reaches governorates whether from individuals, groups, or nations through specialized networks in all aspects of the LCs’ fields of work, with the standards of justice and transparency.

- Offering services including relief services, medical services, media services, civilian police force, legal services, rebuilding services, development of administrative and skills services and others.

- Creating the nucleus of future municipalities, which will be tied to the temporary government, and then the elected government.

- To build and strengthen national support in society through civilian work far from any ideology, party, or political desires”. (SLAC, 2023)

Another crucial aspect concerning LCs is the significance of their coordination with AFAD to ensure the ongoing success of humanitarian aid programs in the region. As highlighted in the AFAD section, organizations seeking to operate in the area are expected to collaborate seamlessly and efficiently with LCs after completing coordination with AFAD. Maintaining clarity and avoiding confusion during aid activities is paramount for the sustainability and effectiveness of these programs. Field observations suggest that AFAD and LCs operate in complete harmony and coordination. AFAD respects the autonomy of LCs, refraining from interference in their duties, and fully acknowledging and respecting local dynamics. In turn, LCs exclusively collaborate with associations that are coordinated with AFAD, avoiding actions that might indirectly compromise the security situation in the region through their partnerships. Sustaining this harmonious collaboration is essential for both the

well-being of the local population and the effective and uninterrupted continuation of aid activities. It is noteworthy that all LCs operate under the Syrian Interim Government (SIG), established in 2013 with its headquarters in Azaz. This organizational structure provides a framework for unified governance and coordination among the various local councils within the region.

2.3.3. Other Actors

While elucidating the humanitarian aid programs in the region, several actors beyond AFAD and LCs play crucial roles. These actors include:

i. **PDoMoNE (Provincial Directorate of Ministry of National Education):** NGOs engaged in educational activities in the region must collaborate with the Ministry of National Education. PDoMoNE actively participates in and oversees long-term and comprehensive training programs, ensuring the alignment of educational initiatives with national standards.

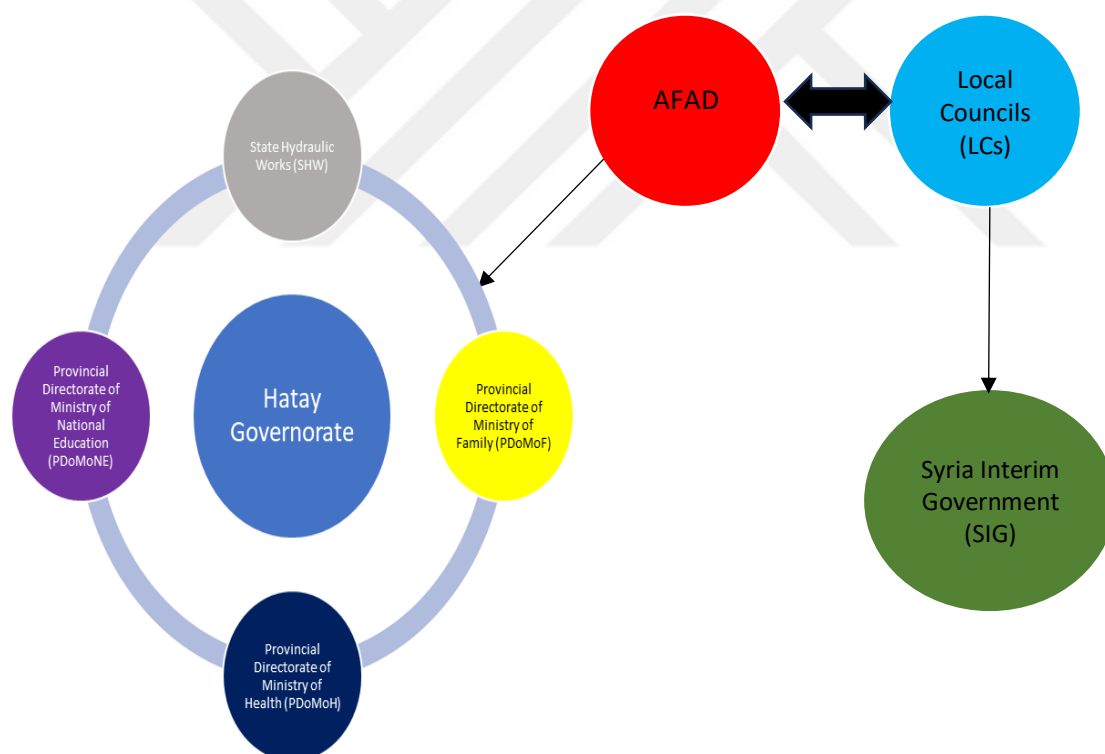
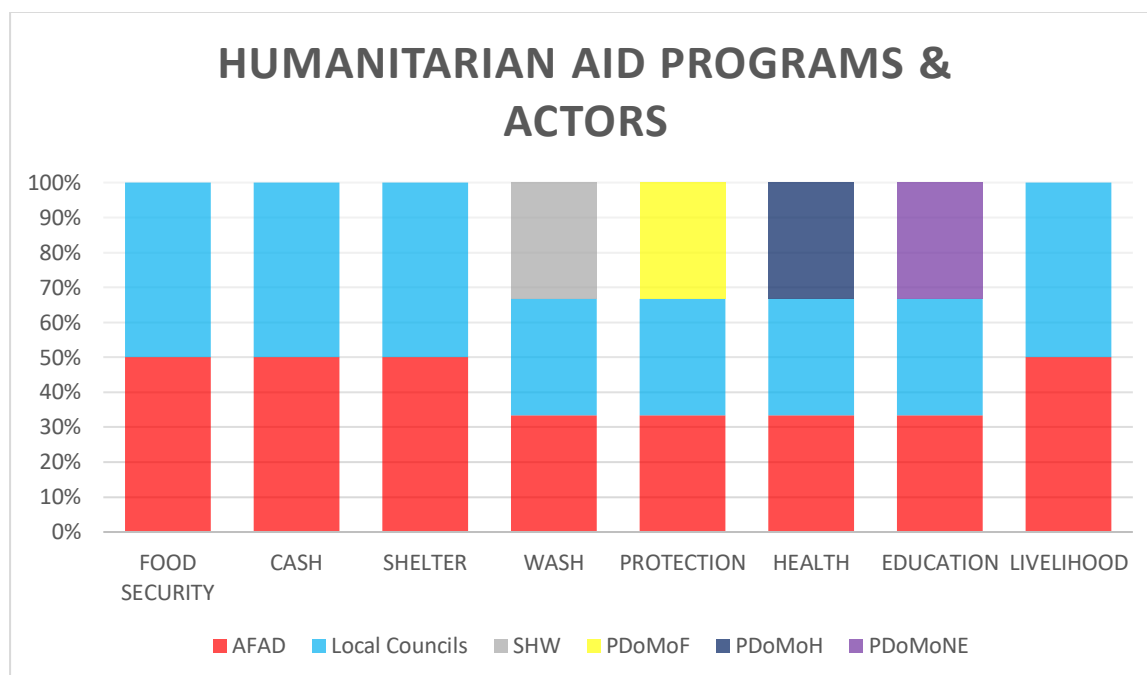
ii. **PDoMoH (Provincial Directorate of Ministry of Health):** NGOs working on health-related activities need to coordinate with the Ministry of Health in addition to AFAD. The approval and permission of PDoMoH are essential for the border crossing of medical equipment and medicines, highlighting the critical role this ministry plays in health-related initiatives.

iii. **PDoMoFSS (Provincial Directorate of Ministry of Family and Social Services):** Protection projects in the region fall under the coordination of the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Services. NGOs collaborate with PDoMoF in the implementation of protection projects, fostering joint efforts to ensure the well-being of vulnerable populations.

iv. **SHW (State Hydraulic Works):** WASH projects are coordinated with the State Hydraulic Works (SHW) in addition to AFAD. This collaboration ensures that water and sanitation projects are effectively planned and implemented to meet the basic needs of the population.

v. **Governorate (Hatay Governorate):** The Hatay Governorate serves as the central administrative entity responsible for the smooth execution of all humanitarian aid programs in the Zeytindalı Region. Periodic reporting by all actors, including AFAD, PDoMoNE, PDoMoH, PDoMoF, and SHW, to the governorship is crucial for maintaining effective coordination and oversight. The governorate plays a pivotal role in facilitating communication and collaboration among the various actors involved in humanitarian initiatives.

Table 10. Humanitarian Aid Programs and Actors



Source: This scheme is created by the author

3. FINDINGS & OUTCOMES

In this chapter, the results derived from the inquiries posed to the participants and their corresponding responses will be elucidated. Subsequently, the thesis will be concluded, and recommendations for enhancing program effectiveness in the region will be presented. Throughout the explanation of the findings, the participants' responses to the questions will be detailed, emphasizing both their distinctive and shared features. In this context, the aim is to provide the reader with comprehensive insights.

3.1. Operational Systems of NGOs

This portion will delve into the activities carried out by NGOs within their programs and assess their effectiveness in addressing potential issues such as beneficiary dissatisfaction or injustice. Additionally, the underlying factors contributing to these problems will be explored.

3.1.1. Awareness About Complaint Mechanisms

The participants sought to gauge their awareness of the complaint mechanism within the humanitarian aid sector system. Subsequently, they were prompted to articulate their positive and negative perspectives on this mechanism, identify any shortcomings, and express their level of satisfaction.

From the collated responses, several common themes emerged. Notably, participants underscored the diverse nature of complaint mechanism processes across different NGOs, making it challenging to provide a universal assessment. Despite this diversity, a prevalent sentiment was the perceived inefficacy of complaint mechanisms. Beneficiaries faced difficulties utilizing the system due to prolonged response times and a lack of telecommunication infrastructure in the region. Furthermore, participants expressed a widespread belief that even when complaint mechanisms were activated, the outcomes remained unchanged for beneficiaries, leading to diminished trust in the system. Conversely, insights revealed that complaint mechanisms were more actively and effectively employed in camps, particularly when beneficiaries contested their removal from the beneficiary list by camp management or the NGOs themselves. Lastly, a discernible discrepancy in understanding complaint mechanisms was noted between humanitarian aid workers actively engaged in the

field and those operating from a desk. Field personnel demonstrated a deeper familiarity with the system, offering problem-solving insights, while desk-bound staff regarded this knowledge as standard practice without the same level of experiential depth.

3.1.2. Conduct and Attitudes Directed to BNFs and Aid Workers

The participants were probed regarding the conduct and attitudes of both NGOs' employees and beneficiaries towards them. They were also asked to comment on whether disciplinary processes were in place for addressing negative or unethical behavior within the associations.

The prevailing response indicated a generally smooth communication and adherence to rules of conduct in the region, with almost all participants affirming the absence of significant issues between beneficiaries and humanitarian aid workers. Nevertheless, a noteworthy observation surfaced regarding the perceived contrast in the operational approaches of international and local NGOs. According to participants, INGOs were viewed as operating with greater systematicity and discipline. In isolated instances of negative or unethical behavior, INGOs were reported to promptly activate disciplinary mechanisms and take necessary actions. Additionally, participants highlighted a significant distinction related to the employment status of association personnel serving the region. Specifically, professionals working for a salary, predominantly employed by INGOs, were noted to potentially acclimate to the region's challenges over time, leading to a partial loss of their empathetic capacity. Conversely, volunteers in local associations, who provided services to the local population without financial compensation, were said to avoid such an erosion of empathy. The absence of empathy becomes evident in the heightened sensitivity expressed during objections to beneficiary selections or in the attitudes and behaviors exhibited towards beneficiaries during distributions. While the rigid rules and procedures of INGOs are often attributed to this erosion of empathy, it is crucial for the paid staff within these organizations to assess the current situation through the beneficiaries' perspective and respond accordingly. Volunteer employees tend to display greater sensitivity, and the presence of more flexible rules proves advantageous in this regard.

3.1.3. The Existence of BNF Selection Criteria

The participants were asked to share their perspectives on the beneficiary selection criteria employed in humanitarian aid programs within the region, and to assess whether these criteria were beneficial or not.

There is a lack of agreement on this matter, with diverse viewpoints existing on various situations. Thus, it is examined the circumstances that give rise to these differing opinions.

3.1.3.1. The Negative Aspects Through Criteria

Those expressing negative opinions primarily emphasized the perceived unfairness of the beneficiary criteria. They argued that, despite high levels of poverty in the region, the criteria excluded many impoverished individuals, rendering the selection process inequitable. Another concern voiced by participants was the inconsistency of criteria across different NGOs, leading to discontent among the local population. The varying criteria contributed to mixed responses from the community, with some people not seeking aid due to the criteria, while others created high demand. Participants noted that the rationale behind the criteria changes from one NGOs to another was not clear to local residents. Additionally, participants highlighted that the criteria triggered minor security issues during distributions in the region. They pointed out instances where the cultural characteristics of the region did not align with the criteria, leading to disappointment among the local population. Overall, the feedback suggested that the beneficiary selection criteria had practical challenges and were perceived as contributing to disparities and discontent within the community.

3.1.3.2. The Positive Aspect Through Criteria

On the positive side of opinions regarding beneficiary selection criteria, some participants viewed these criteria as not only necessary but also beneficial for the region. According to this perspective, the criteria play a crucial role in ensuring that the diminishing funds, already limited in the region, are directed towards those who genuinely require assistance. The presence of these criteria facilitates the distribution of available humanitarian aid to individuals most in need, offering a potential reduction in the overall vulnerability within the region. Acknowledging that certain criteria might be burdensome and lead to unrest, participants in this group still emphasized the essential nature of having criteria in place. They suggested that while some criteria could be perceived as stringent, the optimal approach would be to consider easing them to some extent, maintaining the balance between ensuring aid reaches those in genuine need and addressing concerns about the criteria's weightiness.

3.1.4. The Quality of the Humanitarian Aid Assistance

Regarding the quality and impact of aid programs, participants emphasized the need to evaluate aid based on specific sectors. While some programs were acknowledged for their high quality and functional execution, participants generally noted that achieving such efficiency was not uniform across all initiatives. Several variables were identified as factors that diminished the overall quality of humanitarian aid programs, at times reducing their effectiveness. Firstly, participants highlighted that limitations in the regional market capacity hindered the desired efficiency of voucher programs. They also pointed out instances where food kits purchased by traders were reintroduced into circulation at higher prices after parcels distribution, negatively impacting the effectiveness of certain programs, particularly in the realm of food security.

Secondly, participants stressed the dynamic nature of the process, asserting that numerous factors could influence the quality of aid programs. They underscored the importance of ongoing scrutiny and efforts by humanitarian organizations to control and enhance the quality of assistance provided. Participants cited specific programs such as shelter initiatives, cash and voucher programs, bakery projects, and livelihood projects as examples that contributed to elevating or transforming the quality of life in the region. Thirdly, the participants emphasized that budgetary concerns directly impact the program's quality. When the region experiences a reduction in budget, both the quantity and quality of aid provided are diminished accordingly. Overall, the responses highlighted the nuanced challenges and opportunities for improvement in the realm of humanitarian aid quality and effectiveness.

3.1.5. The Sustainability of Aid Programs

The respondents were inquired about their perspectives regarding the viability of the initiatives implemented in the area. They were posed with inquiries such as "What factors contribute to the continuity of these programs?" and "What factors lead to the discontinuation of these programs?" and were prompted to respond accordingly.

A prevalent theme in the participants' responses was the observation that the persistence or discontinuation of programs is closely tied to the evolving needs of the region. Participants emphasized the critical need for the development and enhanced sustainability of economic recovery, livelihood, and development projects, particularly regarding their significance for the region. They highlighted that the inhabitants, facing a substantial decline in income sources post-earthquake, urgently require such initiatives. Participants urged that financial resources

and donor organizations should prioritize the creation of projects addressing these needs. According to them, focusing on these endeavors would not only ensure sustainability but also leave a lasting positive impact on the welfare of the local population. Furthermore, participants expressed dissatisfaction with certain programs, such as food kits distribution and protection efforts, asserting that these initiatives were not effectively tailored to meet the region's specific needs, thereby jeopardizing their sustainability. Another shared concern among participants was the diminishing funds within the region, identified as a major impediment to sustaining aid programs. They argued that the decreasing funds posed significant challenges for both local authorities and residents, intensifying the overall discomfort in the area. As a solution, participants stressed the importance of international involvement, asserting that not only NGOs but also global actors should actively engage and advocate for the cause. This collective effort, they believed, would address the financial constraints and contribute to the overall betterment of the region.

Analyzing the diverse responses from participants revealed several noteworthy issues. One example is the assertion that AFAD actively discouraged NGOs from distributing tents and instead guided them towards more dignified shelters, contributing to a more organized camp life. However, the proliferation of these semi-permanent structures, accepted as such by donors, led to considerations of implementing an exit strategy from the region. This potential withdrawal raised concerns about a further decline in funds available for the area. Nevertheless, participants emphasized that local residents' dependence on assistance from NGOs, particularly in the camps, remained unabated, indicating the vital role of such aid. Another divergence in responses highlighted infrastructure challenges in certain parts of the region, where inadequate roads to some villages and hamlets hindered regular aid delivery. The incomplete and insufficient needs analysis was identified as a contributing factor, compromising the overall sustainability of aid programs. A distinct perspective emerged when participants evaluated the sustainability of aid in two periods—before and after the Olive Branch operations. Allegations were made regarding aid diversion under the PKK/YPG administration, with claims of arbitrary distribution and certain individuals being unfairly deprived of assistance. After Türkiye's intervention, participants asserted that such issues were resolved, emphasizing fair and just distribution, improved security, and the cessation of negativities. The trust and loyalty of the local population, not only towards NGOs but also towards AFAD, were noted. The residents expressed confidence that AFAD would step in to help if NGOs assistance was insufficient or discontinued.

3.2. Types of Humanitarian Aid Programs

In this part, the questions directed to participants regarding types of humanitarian aid activities in the Olive Branch Area. The questions indicate the thoughts of participants based on the possible long-term programs, the effective and ineffective program types in the area.

3.2.1. The Possible Long-Terms Programs

The respondents were tasked with identifying potential enduring initiatives for implementation in the region. If such projects existed, participants were expected to specify them and provide reasons for their selection. The analysis revealed that Shelter and WASH programs were widely endorsed as the most crucial program types. The rationale behind this consensus was that these programs effectively address immediate needs in the region, and these needs are anticipated to persist in the future. Consequently, it was recommended that both Shelter and WASH programs be sustained in the region over the long term. Within the realm of WASH programs, particular emphasis was placed on the critical necessity for access to clean water in the region. The recommendation underscored the importance of continuous support for this need and the ongoing monitoring of water quality. The discussion further highlighted the potential escalation of epidemic diseases and hygiene issues in the absence of clean water. As for the Shelter program, the urgent demand for shelter, particularly during winter seasons, was acknowledged. However, the inadequacy of tent distribution and the short-term usability of tents prompted the suggestion for regular shelter construction. It was posited that such construction would not only address immediate needs but also contribute to lasting peace and prosperity in the region.

Another consensus among the participants is the unanimous agreement on the necessity of implementing livelihood and economic recovery programs in the region over the long term. Participants asserted that the impact of Livelihood projects is more pronounced in the extended duration, emphasizing that sustained investments in these programs would contribute significantly to both the economic well-being and peace of the region. Specifically, there was a call for the further development of SME and Vocational Training programs, with the belief that these initiatives empower individuals by imparting skills, embodying the adage of "teaching how to fish rather than giving fish," a classic expression in the humanitarian aid sector. Participants advocated for expanding these programs to benefit the local population. In the context of livelihood projects, participants recommended the long-term development of agricultural initiatives. They highlighted the pivotal role of olive production in the region's

agriculture and urged for its support. Additionally, there was a proposal to enhance agricultural projects by supporting the production of flour from wheat. Moreover, distributing fruit and vegetable seeds to local residents free of charge was suggested as a measure that could not only create income opportunities for the people but also bolster the regional economy.

Divergent opinions were voiced by some participants, highlighting challenges that set their perspectives apart from the earlier responses. Firstly, a subset of participants expressed skepticism regarding the feasibility of establishing long-term programs in the region. They attributed this skepticism to a lack of financial resources and the ongoing humanitarian crises in other parts of the world. According to their viewpoint, the region faces increasing difficulties as funds are allocated elsewhere on a daily basis. Additionally, these participants emphasized the significance of education projects as vital endeavors requiring sustained investment. One participant eloquently articulated the crucial role of education in the region, likening an uneducated person to "rusted iron." This metaphor underscores the belief in the transformative power of education and its indispensable nature for the development and progress of the community.

3.2.2. The Effective Humanitarian Aid Programs

In response to the seventh question, participants provided diverse perspectives on the most effective program type among those currently implemented in the region (Food Security, Cash, Shelter, WASH, Education, Health, Protection). Notably, participants approached this query based on the immediate needs rather than long-term considerations. The responses highlighted the varied priorities and challenges faced by the community. Some participants asserted that shelter programs stand out as the most effective. They justified this perspective by pointing out that thousands of individuals still reside in inadequate structures in the region, leading to distressing situations, particularly during the winter season.

Conversely, others emphasized the significance of the food security program, despite acknowledging criteria and logistics challenges. They underscored the program's critical importance for sustaining daily life in the region. Within the food security program, the Bakery initiative was specifically commended for its success. Participants noted that this particular program efficiently catered to the needs of all individuals in the region without encountering problems, playing a crucial role in supporting the community.

In an intriguing connection to Maslow's Hierarchy, a participant underscored the paramount importance of the food safety program, asserting that addressing basic needs, such as providing sustenance, takes precedence. According to this perspective, ensuring people are

fed is foundational, forming a prerequisite for the success of other programs. Without meeting this fundamental requirement, the participant argued, the impact of other initiatives may be compromised. Furthermore, participants collectively recognized the significance of WASH programs, emphasizing the crucial role of access to clean water. They noted that the local population effectively benefits from the implemented WASH programs, aligning with the fundamental importance of clean water for health and well-being. Adding to the spectrum of effective programs, participants highlighted the commendable impact of CVA programs. While not specified in detail, the acknowledgment of CVA's effectiveness suggests its role in providing direct financial support or vouchers, contributing to the overall well-being and recovery of the community. This diversity of perspectives underscores the multifaceted nature of addressing the immediate and essential needs of the region.

Participants emphasized the vital significance of cash and coupon distributions, highlighting their dual impact in meeting the basic needs of the local population and providing them with a degree of financial autonomy. According to their perspective, this financial freedom, albeit partial, enhances the overall effectiveness of such programs. By affording individuals the flexibility to make choices based on their unique circumstances, cash and coupon distributions were seen as versatile tools for addressing immediate needs. In a departure from the prevailing views, one participant stood out by underscoring the immense value of education projects for the region. They expressed a belief that education represents not only the greatest treasure for the present generation but also a crucial legacy for future generations. This unique perspective draws attention to the enduring impact of education as an investment in the long-term well-being and development of the community.

In summary, participants collectively highlighted the dual benefits of cash and coupon distributions, balancing immediate needs and financial autonomy. Meanwhile, the participant advocating for education projects brought attention to the enduring value and far-reaching impact of investing in education for both current and future generations.

3.2.3. The Ineffective Humanitarian Aid Programs

In response to the eighth question about the least effective program among those implemented in the region (Food Security, Cash, Shelter, WASH, Education, Health, Protection), participants unanimously identified the protection program as the least effective. This consensus marked a notable agreement among the respondents, and they articulated several reasons for this perspective. The predominant rationale behind the perceived ineffectiveness of the protection program was its failure to align with the dynamics, culture,

and lifestyle of the region. Participants pointed out that certain elements of the protection programs, such as awareness-raising sessions on early marriages, were deemed unnecessary and even misguided. Specifically, participants argued that early marriages for women under the age of 18 were ingrained in the region's culture and daily life. Consequently, efforts to intervene in such cultural practices were viewed as a misallocation of time and resources. This collective viewpoint highlights the importance of tailoring protection programs to the specific cultural context of the region to ensure their relevance and effectiveness in addressing the needs and concerns of the local population. Participants elaborated on the perceived shortcomings of the protection program, emphasizing that sessions lacking sensitivity to the local context could incite unrest among the residents. They argued that initiatives such as awareness-raising sessions on topics like early marriages, which did not align with the cultural nuances of the region, were not only ineffective but also caused dissatisfaction among the local population. Moreover, participants contended that the impact of protection programs was notably inferior to other initiatives that directly addressed the immediate needs of the region's residents. Sessions such as psycho-social support or awareness-raising were deemed to have zero impact, with people expressing more pressing needs. For instance, organizing information sessions on protection for someone in urgent need of shelter, like a tent, was perceived as futile.

Beyond the protection program, some participants identified the food security program as less productive for the people of the region. They attributed this perception to the concern that beneficiaries were increasingly becoming dependent on aid and NGOs with the food security program, which, according to participants, had a negative impact and was deemed unsustainable.

Lastly, participants expressed that educational programs were perceived as less effective compared to other initiatives for the people of the region. The reasons behind this perception were not explicitly outlined, but it suggests that, in the eyes of the participants, educational programs may not be as immediately impactful or aligned with the urgent needs of the local population when compared to other assistance programs. Participants highlighted the inadequacy of educational opportunities and support in the region, expressing dissatisfaction with the outcomes. One major concern raised was that the existing educational efforts did not yield the desired impact, suggesting a gap between the educational initiatives implemented and the actual needs of the community. Moreover, participants pointed out the pervasive poverty in the region and the severely limited financial opportunities. In light of these economic challenges, some participants emphasized that children, instead of pursuing their education, were compelled to work to financially support their households. This economic necessity was

seen as a significant barrier to the effectiveness of education programs in the region. Basically, participants identified two key issues affecting the perceived effectiveness of education programs: the inadequacy of educational opportunities and supports, and the economic constraints leading children to prioritize work over continuing their education. These challenges underscore the complex interplay of socio-economic factors in shaping the success of educational initiatives in the region.

3.3. Personal Experiences and Thoughts

In this part, the participants are asked questions about their personal thoughts and beliefs regarding what the challenging factors of programs for NGOs are, positive and negative experiences that they observed or encountered in the area.

3.3.1. The Challenging Factors of Programs

Regarding the biggest challenges in implementing humanitarian aid programs in the region, participants overwhelmingly identified funding and security problems as the two most significant hurdles. As discussed earlier, the ongoing decrease in funds emerged as a critical risk factor, threatening the continuity of humanitarian aid initiatives in the region. Participants delved further into the funding challenge, distinguishing between local and foreign NGOs. Local ones were noted for their flexible and freely usable funds, yet their sustainability was questioned due to frequent interruptions. On the other hand, INGOs were perceived as having more regular and enduring funds, albeit subject to stricter rules such as selection criteria. However, a common concern among participants was the consistent decrease in the amounts of available funds, posing significant future challenges.

Another noteworthy issue raised by participants was the hindrance posed by bureaucratic processes in permit approvals. Despite having funds, some NGOs faced obstacles in carrying out permit processes or encountered delays due to authorities not granting permission. Participants stressed the importance of streamlining permit processes to facilitate faster and more efficient aid delivery, emphasizing that delays could result in significant regional losses.

In summary, the dual challenges of dwindling funds and security issues were identified as the foremost obstacles in implementing humanitarian aid programs in the region. Participants underscored the need for both local and foreign associations to navigate these challenges and

emphasized the urgency of addressing bureaucratic hurdles to ensure timely and effective aid delivery.

Participants identified security problems as another significant challenge in the region, and these issues were further categorized into subcategories, reflecting the multifaceted nature of security concerns. Different perspectives were shared among participants regarding the nature of security challenges:

- **Fake Beneficiary Names during Distributions:** Some participants flagged security issues arising from using fake beneficiary names during aid distributions. This practice was identified as a major problem, potentially leading to fraudulent activities and impacting the effectiveness of aid programs.

- **Public Order in Afrin City Center:** Specific attention was drawn to security problems related to public order, particularly in Afrin city center. Instances of car explosions, terrorist attacks, and security incidents occurring during humanitarian aid activities were highlighted. These events were noted as posing challenges to maintaining a secure environment for aid operations.

- **Kidnapping of Employees for Ransom:** Participants emphasized the serious security problem of employees being kidnapped for ransom. The threat of kidnapping was identified as a significant risk, leading to the intermittent halting of programs in the region. This security concern not only jeopardizes the safety of aid workers but also disrupts the continuity of humanitarian initiatives.

3.3.2. The Positive Experience Encountered/Observed

Respondents were prompted to share a positive instance from their involvement in humanitarian aid efforts in the region that brought them joy. The responses varied, reflecting individual experiences. Notably, some participants expressed that shelter initiatives profoundly impacted their lives. One respondent recounted the day they transitioned from tents to briquette houses as possibly the happiest moment in their life. Another participant shared the emotional significance of leaning against a wall for the first time a decade after the war's onset. The implementation of WASH projects also elicited joy among participants, with access to clean water and electricity via solar panels enhancing the quality of life. A specific example highlighted the happiness brought to Raco and its 15 villages through a WASH project, providing clean water access and generating widespread contentment in the region.

Respondents highlighted the transformative impact of Economic Recovery programs, emphasizing their direct and positive influence on individuals' lives. They expressed that these

initiatives were not only life-changing but also instrumental in granting economic freedom and fostering increased self-confidence among the local population. Furthermore, participants acknowledged the significance of emergency aid programs, particularly during harsh winter months. The distributions within these programs were seen as a source of happiness for the residents facing challenging living conditions. The provision of urgent aid to those affected by severe winter conditions, sudden floods, and other related events was underscored as crucial, emphasizing the substantial positive effect on individuals who had lost essential belongings.

Lastly, notable observations were made regarding the distribution events involving items such as toys, coats, and shoes for children, leaving a profound impact on certain participants. They expressed the view that children derive immense joy from simple and small things, describing this happiness as profoundly meaningful and beautiful, albeit tinged with a hint of bittersweetness. Despite acknowledging the poignant nature of this happiness, participants emphasized the significance of the smiles on the children's faces, deeming it a deeply memorable and unforgettable experience in their lives.

3.3.3. The Negative Experiences Encountered/Observed

The participants were prompted to share negative instances that left them disheartened during their engagement in humanitarian aid activities in the region. The responses were nuanced, reflecting individual encounters and a range of issues. Firstly, some participants recounted the fear and helplessness they endured during intense bombardments in Idlib and Aleppo amid the war. They expressed unparalleled fear and trauma, underscoring their inability to find refuge during these harrowing events. Another distressing aspect highlighted the moral erosion within the community, stemming from the pervasive poverty and fragility in the region. One participant recounted a disheartening incident where an adult forcibly took chocolate from a child's hand during a distribution, asserting a perceived right to do so. This event served as a stark illustration of the challenging conditions in the region, leaving the participant deeply saddened. Moreover, participants noted that such moral degradation manifested in various forms, with beneficiaries experiencing erosion due to desperation or trauma. Instances of individuals dishonestly registering themselves on beneficiary lists or engaging in immoral behavior were cited, leading to a sense of profound humiliation and disappointment among those involved in humanitarian efforts.

A participant underscored the fragility of the region, expressing deep sadness over the fact that some residents decline the opportunity to benefit from briquette houses and instead choose to live in tents solely to receive more aid. This decision, seen as a compromise of dignity

for material gain, was deemed unacceptable by the participant, highlighting the heightened vulnerability in the area. Another distressing incident involved a participant witnessing food poisoning during hot meal distributions in the region. The occurrence of mass poisoning was described as profoundly saddening, emphasizing the adverse impact on the affected individuals.

Furthermore, one participant recounted a highly emotional experience when they observed the apprehension of a group of illegal immigrants near the border with Türkiye. The participant described the enduring memory of witnessing hundreds of people, particularly women and children, desperately grappling with harsh weather conditions, including heavy rain, as an experience that left possibly irreparable wounds. Furthermore, the participant expressed deep sadness over mistakes made in beneficiary selections, emphasizing the conscientious concern that deserving individuals might be denied help due to errors or, conversely, that assistance might be given incorrectly. This, too, weighed heavily on the participant's emotions.

Lastly, a participant conveyed the indescribable destruction and sorrow that swept through the region following the earthquake on February 6, 2023. The participant expressed disappointment, asserting that NGOs faced significant challenges during the earthquake and did not effectively navigate the crisis. According to the participant, this failure was evident in both human and financial resource management, leaving a profound sense of sadness.

3.3.4. Matching Needs and Services

The participants provided generally similar yet varied answers regarding the effectiveness of humanitarian aid programs in meeting the needs of beneficiaries in the current conditions of the region. A substantial number of participants highlighted the positive impact of Shelter and WASH programs, indicating that these initiatives effectively addressed the immediate needs of the local population and significantly improved their lives. Furthermore, participants reiterated the importance of CVA programs, emphasizing that these initiatives played a crucial role in easing the lives of beneficiaries. The participants stressed that CVA programs directly influenced the daily lives of those receiving assistance, making a substantial and positive impact on their overall well-being.

Besides, as highlighted previously, participants emphasized the critical importance of implementing Livelihood programs tailored to the specific needs of the region's residents. They stressed that these programs not only serve the beneficiaries directly but also contribute to the regional economy. The positive impact of Livelihood programs on meeting the diverse needs of the region was underlined. Furthermore, despite acknowledging certain problematic issues,

particularly related to beneficiary selection criteria, participants recognized the significance of the food security program. They noted that this program played a direct role in the daily lives of the region's residents by ensuring the fulfillment of basic food needs. While participants acknowledged that food parcel distribution, as part of this program, may not offer a long-term solution, they emphasized the continued importance of such initiatives under current conditions.

Nevertheless, a participant provided a divergent perspective by pointing out factors that diminish the effectiveness of humanitarian aid programs. This participant specifically highlighted logistical challenges faced in the region, noting that aid activities encounter occasional disruptions due to these issues. Additionally, the participant emphasized that security problems in certain areas pose a significant obstacle, preventing aid efforts from being carried out in those regions. Furthermore, the participant pointed out that humanitarian aid workers face obstacles from time to time, which, if not minimized, could hinder the success of aid initiatives. In essence, the participant underscored the importance of addressing logistical and security challenges to ensure the desired level of success in humanitarian aid programs.

3.4. Challenges Faced by NGOs

In this part, the questions indicate what the existence security risks for NGOs are, the steps of NGOs which is make them more consistent and the primary obstacles of NGOs in the area.

3.4.1. The Security Risks or External Intervention

Regarding security risks during humanitarian aid programs in the region, participants provided generally uniform answers. While they noted that there isn't a pervasive, constant threat that significantly jeopardizes the safety of humanitarian aid programs, they did identify specific issues posing security risks.

One notable risk mentioned was the periodic long-range rocket attacks on the Afrin region from Tel Rifat, controlled by PKK/YPG. Participants conveyed that these indiscriminate rocket attacks resulted in unfortunate civilian casualties in the city center of Afrin. Another security concern highlighted was the vulnerability of Afrin city center to terrorist attacks, particularly via Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) deployed by motorcycles and vehicles. Furthermore, some participants pointed out security challenges arising from individuals attempting to fraudulently add themselves to distribution lists and thereby creating minor disruptions during aid distributions. The intervention of AFAD was noted as instrumental in resolving these situations and restoring calm in the region. Additionally, tensions between the

host community and internally displaced persons (IDPs) were identified as occasional sources of unrest during aid distributions. Participants explained that communities vying for more aid sometimes blamed each other, but AFAD's intervention helped to diffuse these situations, ensuring aid reached all segments and tranquility was restored. Participants mentioned the disruption caused by the collection of illegal taxes from the local population by the FSA in certain regions. This situation, participants noted, interfered with the region's dynamics and peace, occasionally leading to interruptions in humanitarian aid programs.

Finally, some participants raised concerns about the security risks associated with the necessary cash flow for the consistent implementation of humanitarian aid programs in the region. They highlighted dual aspects of these risks: legal compliance and the physical security of the money. According to these participants, maintaining legal compliance, especially in terms of reporting the money flow to Turkish authorities, is deemed vital. They emphasized that failure to achieve legal compliance could potentially lead to the deprivation of the people in the region from essential humanitarian aid programs. Additionally, participants pointed out the physical security of the funds, recognizing the importance of safeguarding the monetary resources required for aid efforts in order to ensure their effective and uninterrupted implementation.

3.4.2. The Steps of NGOs to be More Consistent

In the fourteenth question, respondents were inquired about the measures humanitarian aid organizations could take to enhance the quality and consistency of their operations in the region. The participants provided diverse and detailed responses to this inquiry, presenting various perspectives. Initially, emphasis was placed on the significance of fostering relationships with public authorities. It was highlighted that establishing effective coordination mechanisms with both Turkish and Syrian authorities is crucial for ensuring the quality of activities in the region. Furthermore, suggestions were made to enhance coordination among different organizations, emphasizing the need to optimize both referral and communication networks. This, it was argued, would not only elevate the quality of assistance in the region but also prevent unnecessary duplication.

On the other side, participants underscored the paramount importance of establishing a robust program quality department. According to their perspective, effective measurement of program quality in the region and substantial progress toward improvement can only be achieved through the presence of a strong program quality unit. Additionally, participants emphasized the need for a more proficient utilization of the community feedback mechanism

system, asserting that a more rigorous and higher-quality program content could be generated by integrating regional applications with technological advancements. Furthermore, alongside program quality, participants stressed the indispensability of transparency and accountability in both financial management and program implementations for NGOs. They highlighted that a more transparent approach to financial matters and program implementation is essential. It was also underscored that the efficacy of complaint mechanisms plays a pivotal role in driving the quality of programs in the region.

A considerable number of participants highlighted the need for increased and diversified funding from donor organizations, emphasizing that this approach can effectively address the scarcity of funds and financial shortcomings in the region. They also pointed out that some aid from donors did not align with local cultural dynamics, underscoring the importance for associations and donor organizations to be mindful of this aspect.

In conclusion, participants recommended that NGOs make investments in their personnel and organizational infrastructure to enhance the quality and efficiency of their activities. The prevalence of numerous associations in the region, coupled with frequent personnel turnover between them, was identified as a hindrance to program quality. Therefore, it was suggested that NGOs adopt a more dedicated human resources policy, provide training for their staff, and foster a sense of commitment among their personnel.

3.4.3. The Primary Obstacles of NGOs

The participants outlined key challenges hindering the sustained implementation of humanitarian aid programs in the region. Common themes emerged, with participants highlighting fundamental issues. Foremost among these concerns is the suspension of activities due to NGOs either failing to adhere to legal permit processes or deviating from established regulations, presenting a significant obstacle to aid programs. Participants stressed the importance of ongoing and consistent coordination with public institutions after obtaining necessary permits, asserting that this is essential for ensuring uninterrupted program operations. Furthermore, participants identified decreasing fund amounts as another significant obstacle and advocated for securing longer-term funds to address this challenge effectively. The emphasis was placed on the need for sustained financial support to enable the continued success of humanitarian aid programs in the region.

It has been reported that security concerns represent a potential obstacle to the success of programs in the region. Despite a level of trust existing in the area, participants noted that the pervasive military presence, influencing various aspects of daily life, poses challenges for

the humanitarian aid sector. In this context, it was observed that both NGOs and their employees do not feel adequately secure. Additionally, it was highlighted that certain NGOs faced rejection in specific regions due to dissatisfaction arising from beneficiary selection criteria or perceived shortcomings in complaint mechanisms. Participants suggested that such instances could be considered impediments to the successful implementation of humanitarian aid programs.

Participants highlighted the significance of the geographical areas chosen by donor organizations and their preferences. There was notable concern expressed about certain donor organizations insisting on working exclusively in specific regions, leading to unrest in the area. Participants conveyed that this situation was not entirely comprehensible to humanitarian actors, fostering suspicions of aid diversion. They emphasized the need for donor organizations to be highly sensitive to such circumstances, as a lack of awareness or responsiveness could adversely impact activities in the region. Maintaining transparency and addressing local concerns were underscored as essential elements to ensure the success and positive reception of humanitarian efforts.

To sum up the finding part, participants highlighted that the overall economic and social deprivation in the region consistently presents a challenge for humanitarian aid programs. They reported that issues such as logistics-related challenges, inadequate market conditions, and infrastructure and road problems are significant risk factors that impede the smooth implementation of aid initiatives in the area. Addressing these broader economic and social challenges is seen as crucial to ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of humanitarian aid programs in the region.

Consequently, despite the various sectors and organizations involved in humanitarian aid initiatives within the Zeytindalı Region, there is a pressing need for heightened attention and proactive measures to address specific concerns. It is imperative to prioritize the well-being and tranquility of both the aid recipients and the region as a whole. In the concluding section of this thesis, all relevant stakeholders will highlight the identified gaps and recommend more precise actions, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the effectiveness of aid programs. The resolution of these issues requires collective efforts, with each participant fulfilling their duties and responsibilities. Through a comprehensive development movement involving all stakeholders, the region can experience positive transformations, paving the way for a more promising and uplifting future for the vulnerable population.

OUTCOMES

This thesis examines the historical, economic, and social dynamics of the Afrin Region, also known as the Zeytindalı Region. It delves into the repercussions arising from the socio-economic conditions of the area. The study discusses humanitarian aid programs implemented in the area, elucidating the fundamental principles behind these programs and detailing their implementation methods in the region. Furthermore, it highlights the problems, risks, and dissatisfaction encountered during the execution of these programs. The thesis also addresses the shortcomings of diverse programs, each serving distinct purposes but fundamentally aiming to enhance the peace and welfare of the local population.

In presenting these circumstances, the study not only reveals the primary goals and positive aspects of the programs but also takes into consideration the sentiments and opinions of the region's inhabitants. Instead of adopting a broad perspective, the thesis incorporates the viewpoints of individuals or groups regarding both the positive and negative aspects of the programs.

Throughout the implementation of the programs under discussion, the thesis acknowledges the presence of organizations within the region that play a vital role in ensuring the programs' successful execution. It emphasizes the importance of effective communication between these institutions and NGOs. Additionally, the study underscores the significance of the collaborative efforts between these institutions and NGOs in their respective areas of responsibility, emphasizing their contributions to the overall development of the region.

Upon scrutinizing the findings derived within the scope of the research, the following conclusions have been drawn:

As emphasized in various sections of the thesis, humanitarian aid programs heavily rely on the pivotal role of NGOs, making it imperative for them to prioritize certain considerations. This importance extends to their internal procedures, rules, and interactions with public institutions and donor organizations. Foremost among these considerations is the need for transparency in adhering to permit processes as per existing laws and regulations, and in reporting their programs. Even with financial resources and human capital, NGOs risk losing access to regions and the ability to execute programs if they fail to secure operating permits or report their ongoing activities. Therefore, it is crucial for associations to prioritize transparency in their dealings with public institutions and organizations, fostering a trust-based relationship with local authorities.

Compliance with two specific laws is non-negotiable for associations when reporting their activities: the Law on Associations No. 5253 and the Law on Preventing the Financing of Terrorism No. 6415. Through these laws, the Ministry of Internal Affairs conducts annual inspections and evaluates the activities of associations. Given the significance of maintaining the financial flow and overseeing the conditions under which humanitarian aid from Turkey to Syria is conducted within Syria, especially concerning the flow of funds, this matter holds great importance for the Republic of Türkiye. This becomes especially vital for the continued presence of INGOs in Türkiye, particularly those reliant on foreign funds and involved in aiding Syria.

In the course of conducting their activities, NGOs must prioritize maximum coordination with another crucial organization, namely AFAD. The presence of AFAD personnel in the region plays a crucial role in coordinating NGOs with the area, and AFAD stands out as the primary organization in addressing security and access-related challenges. Its significance in facilitating the resolution of these issues makes AFAD an invaluable partner for NGOs. AFAD's enduring value as a stakeholder for associations in the region is evident in various aspects, ranging from its coordination with LC to its role in facilitating the movement of personnel and products across borders. Additionally, AFAD serves as a reference organization, providing opinions to associations before the Hatay Governorship and fulfilling various functions within Syria.

Consequently, NGOs must maintain a high degree of transparency and trustworthiness in their interactions with AFAD to ensure the success of their activities in the region. Moreover, it is crucial for NGOs operating in the area to maintain high levels of coordination with the pertinent public institutions overseeing the project. Transparency, particularly in projects involving technical matters, is essential for the sustained success of their endeavors. For instance, an NGO involved in educational initiatives should collaborate closely with AFAD, LCs, and the PDoMoNE (Provincial Directorate of Ministry of National Education). Reporting activities and seeking consultation with these institutions are vital steps to address regional needs effectively. Such collaborative efforts not only streamline the activities of the associations in the region but also contribute to meeting local requirements more efficiently, minimizing duplication.

To enhance the quality of humanitarian aid programs in the region and address current challenges, a critical step involves greater integration of the local population into the projects. Research findings indicate that the region has not fully grasped the fundamental principles of humanitarian aid programs and lacks complete alignment with the mindset underlying such

programs. In this context, NGOs should actively implement both Community Feedback Mechanisms and Complaint Mechanisms, fostering a more participatory approach.

The objective here extends beyond the mere distribution of food parcels or cash; it also aims to ensure that aid organizations work towards the peace and happiness of the local population, recognizing that such outcomes can only be achieved through active involvement of the beneficiaries. For instance, soliciting opinions from the local population in collaboration with LCs during project development, allowing beneficiaries to express which projects would be more beneficial for them, and involving the local community in all stages of the process will enhance the acceptance of NGOs and their projects in the region. This participatory approach will lead to a more secure project implementation process.

While this study touches upon the importance of Community Feedback Mechanisms and Complaint Mechanisms, it underscores the need for careful and detailed consideration of these aspects for the success of humanitarian aid programs.

Executing evidence-based projects is paramount for the sustained success of humanitarian aid programs in the region. The essence of this concept lies in ensuring that, with each successive project period or year, the community tangibly experiences the positive impact of implemented programs, leading to continual improvement in their lives. It is crucial for NGOs to prioritize evidence-based projects, particularly in their project formulation and interactions with donor organizations. Doing so not only provides a strategic advantage for all stakeholders in the region but also contributes significantly to the overall prosperity and peace of the community.

The research participants consistently emphasize the need to place greater importance on livelihood and development projects, expressing a desire to see an increase in such initiatives in the region. Unfortunately, the deficiency in the prevalence of livelihood projects is evident due to the socio-economic and financial conditions of the area. Hence, NGOs must address this shortfall by incorporating livelihood projects into their funding processes. It is essential for them to articulate to donor organizations that these projects hold substantial value for the region, emphasizing the positive impact they can have on the community's well-being and development.

An issue of utmost importance for the region needs to be highlighted at this juncture. The research underscores that the significance of certain types of programs is either misunderstood or neglected based on the perceived priority of needs for the people in the region. In accordance with humanitarian aid principles, it is crucial to provide basic humanitarian aid services and raise awareness for those who are defenseless or fragile. For instance, despite being

the cornerstone of humanitarian aid programs, the Protection program's importance is not accepted or understood by the region's residents, likely due to the specific conditions prevailing in the area.

In such cases, it becomes imperative to implement complementary services wherein various humanitarian aid programs are conducted simultaneously, offering a range of services concurrently. This approach ensures that beneficiaries derive maximum benefit from the programs. For example, while implementing Livelihood programs in the region, it would be more advantageous to simultaneously provide Protection sessions to beneficiaries, actively monitoring this process on a regular basis. Executing multiple humanitarian aid programs concurrently not only addresses various needs of the people in the region simultaneously but also serves as a practical illustration of the evidence-based projects mentioned earlier. The cases of Muhammadiyah and Derbalud Camps, as discussed in previous sections of this study, serve as positive examples of this approach. Expanding and increasing such integrated practices will enhance the success of all stakeholders involved.

The success of programs greatly hinges on determining the geographical areas for study with maximum coordination. A notable issue arises from the lack of coordination between donor organizations, LCs, and AFAD. The regions earmarked for activities by INGOs, especially those reliant on international funds, are predominantly dictated by donor organizations. In this context, associations often find themselves lacking flexibility, as donors impose firm decisions regarding operational areas. This not only strains the relationships between NGOs and local authorities, fostering suspicions of aid diversion, but also hampers the effectiveness of programs in the region. To address this, donor organizations and AFAD must establish robust coordination and jointly assess on-field conditions. Without such collaboration, humanitarian aid programs may fall short of achieving the desired success on a geographical scale, leading to repeated aid delivery without tangible impact in the region.

Coordinating efforts between AFAD and donor organizations will not only alleviate geographical concentration issues but also address many problems outlined throughout the study, particularly those stemming from beneficiary selection criteria. Establishing an effective coordination mechanism between AFAD and donor organizations can pave the way for more standardized and higher-quality programs in the region, ensuring that the expressed problems are mitigated and the desired impact on the local population is realized.

Donor organizations should delve into the dynamics of the region with greater attention and consideration, acting accordingly. The research and observations conducted in the region highlight a pervasive lack of empathy on the part of donor organizations. For instance, donors,

criticized for their beneficiary selection criteria, often do not receive due acknowledgment for their sensitivity in operating complaint mechanisms or adhering to Code of Conduct rules. It is essential to recognize that these mechanisms, which prevent fraud or misconduct in the activities of associations, exist precisely due to donor criteria. Unfortunately, this aspect is often overlooked by stakeholders in the region, overshadowing the positive principles embraced by donor organizations in this regard.

On the other hand, donor organizations may not always adapt their globally applied rules to local conditions, hindering the development of mutual empathy. To address this, donors should consider incorporating the feedback of LCs, AFAD, and the entire local population when making decisions and designing projects. This approach, not only through the associations they fund but also by involving all relevant stakeholders, would constitute a significant step in history. It would not only contribute to the success of programs but also play a pivotal role in fostering peace in the region.

In conclusion, this study explores humanitarian aid programs conducted in the Zeytindalı Region, detailing their implementation methods, encountered challenges, and proposed solutions. By incorporating the viewpoints of individuals actively involved in delivering aid and those receiving assistance, the study aims to address deficiencies from diverse perspectives, potentially enhancing aid effectiveness in the region. Moreover, by integrating themes of migration, humanitarian aid, and civil society—topics of significant relevance to Turkish society—the study offers valuable insights for academics interested in this area of research in the future.

It would be highly advantageous for the effectiveness of programs in the region to delve into specific, frequently discussed, and crucial issues highlighted in this study in future research. Firstly, a comprehensive exploration of complaint mechanisms and the application of Code of Conduct rules, both of significant concern to NGOs, will provide clarity on the nature of the relationship between service-providing NGOs and the beneficiaries in a region heavily engaged in humanitarian aid programs. Such an examination can shed light on the dynamics of this relationship. Additionally, a detailed investigation into the coordination issue, emphasized in this study, is essential. Given the inadequacy of donor-public coordination, a comparative analysis of coordination mechanisms in the region with those in other parts of the world can offer a fresh perspective to both donor and public institutions.

In future studies conducted in the region, it is imperative for researchers to consider the local conditions. Failure to do so may result in an incomplete understanding of the realities of the region. Researchers should engage with participants from diverse identities and conditions

during their fieldwork, ensuring the study's inclusivity. Failing to incorporate this diversity may lead to studies that do not fully capture the complexities and realities of the region.



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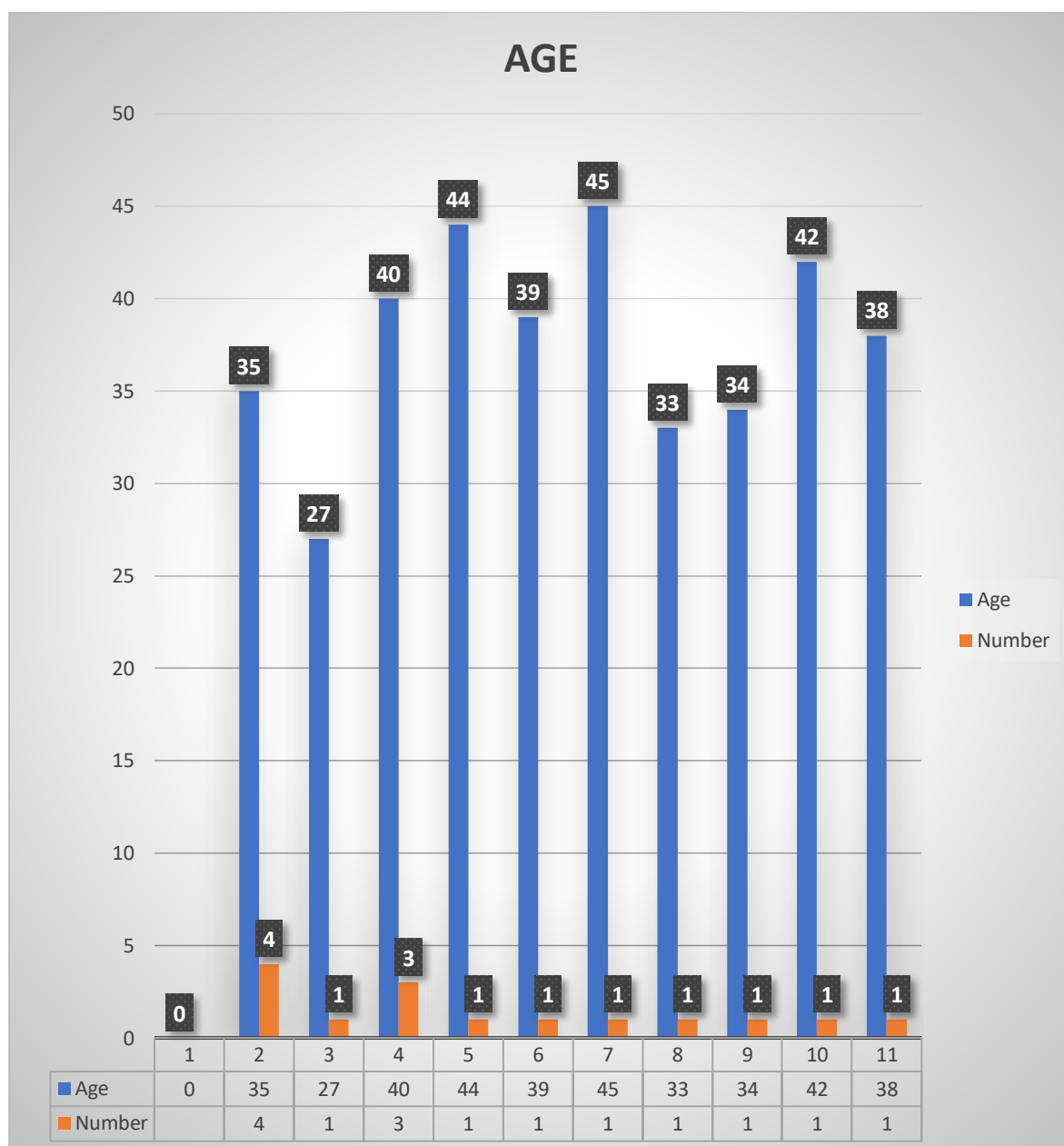
Yeryüzü Doktorları, (n.d.). *Suriye Savaşında 10 yıl Geride Kaldı*. Retrieved from <https://www.yyd.org.tr/tr/medya/blog/suriye-savasinda-10-yil-geride-kaldi>

Appendix 1: Interview Questions

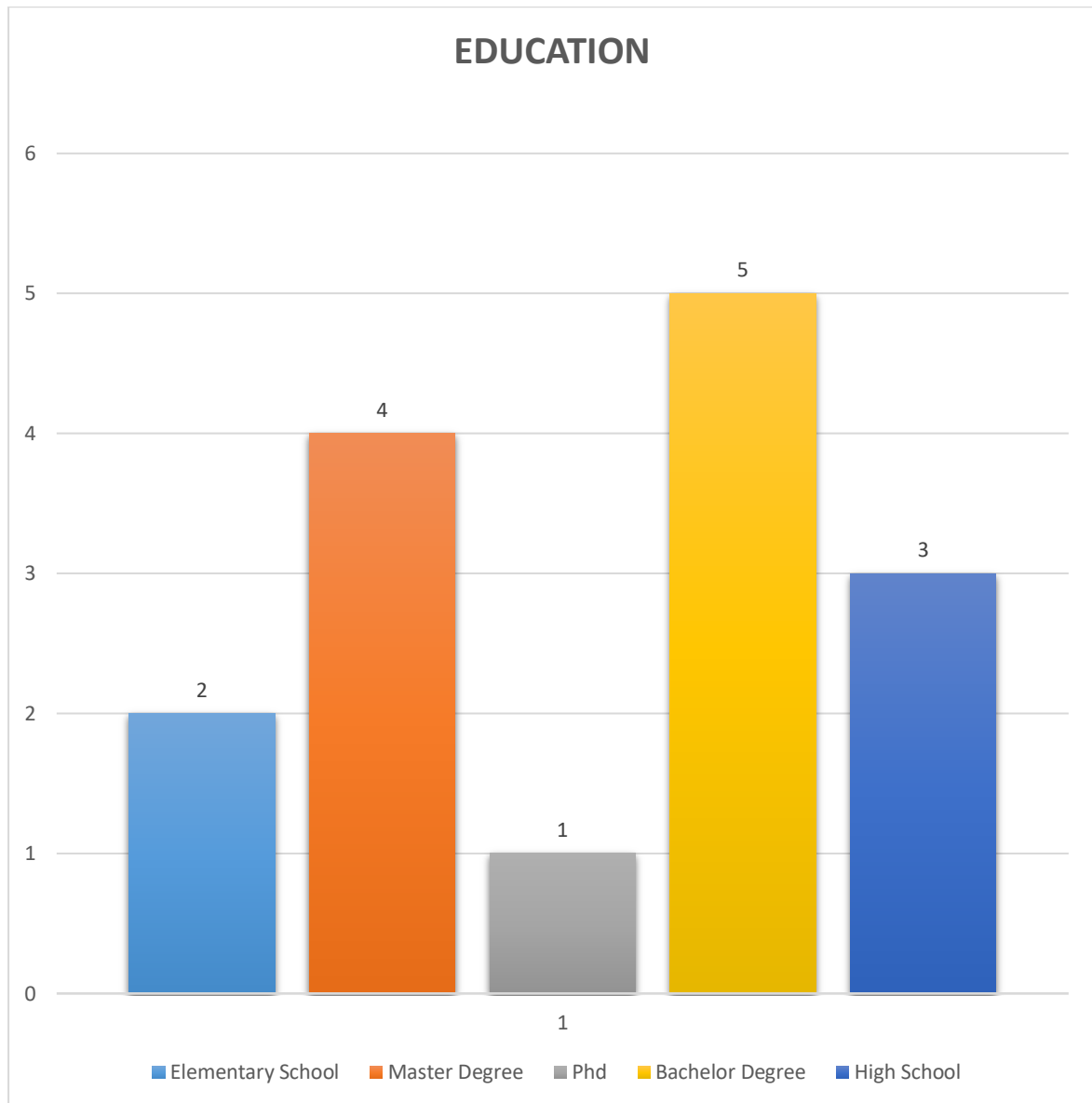
- 1) Do you have knowledge of the complaint mechanism procedures within humanitarian aid systems?
- 2) What is your perception of the overall attitude of humanitarian aid workers/beneficiaries towards you? In cases where these employees/beneficiaries display an inappropriate attitude, do you have knowledge about the disciplinary procedures within the organizations?
- 3) Do the humanitarian aid programs you receive/offer services from utilize beneficiary selection criteria? If so, do you find these criteria to be beneficial ?
- 4) In general, do you consider the assistance you receive/offer to be of high quality? Does the support you receive result in significant changes in your life ?
- 5) What do you think about the sustainability of humanitarian aid programs in your region ?
- 6) Do you believe there are any longer- term sustainable projects in your region ? If your response is positive, what types of projects do you think might fall into this category ?
- 7) Which of the humanitarian aid programs (food security, cash, shelter, wash, education, health, protection) implemented do you think is more effective ?
- 8) Which of the humanitarian aid programs (food security, cash, shelter, wash, education, health, protection) implemented do you think is less effective ?

- 9) What are the most significant challenges when you think about humanitarian aid programs carried out in your region ?
- 10) Can you describe a positive experience that you have personally encountered or observed regarding humanitarian aid implementations conducted in your region ?
- 11) Can you describe a negative experience that you have personally encountered or observed regarding humanitarian aid implementations conducted in your region ?
- 12) Do you think that humanitarian aid programs carried out in the region mostly match the needs of the beneficiaries ?
- 13) Is there any external intervention or security risk while implementing humanitarian aid programs in the region ? If so, how are these risks eliminated ?
- 14) What steps do you think NGOs should take to ensure that their operations in your region become more consistent and higher quality ?
- 15) What are the primary factors that act as obstacles to NGOs conducting operations in the region ?

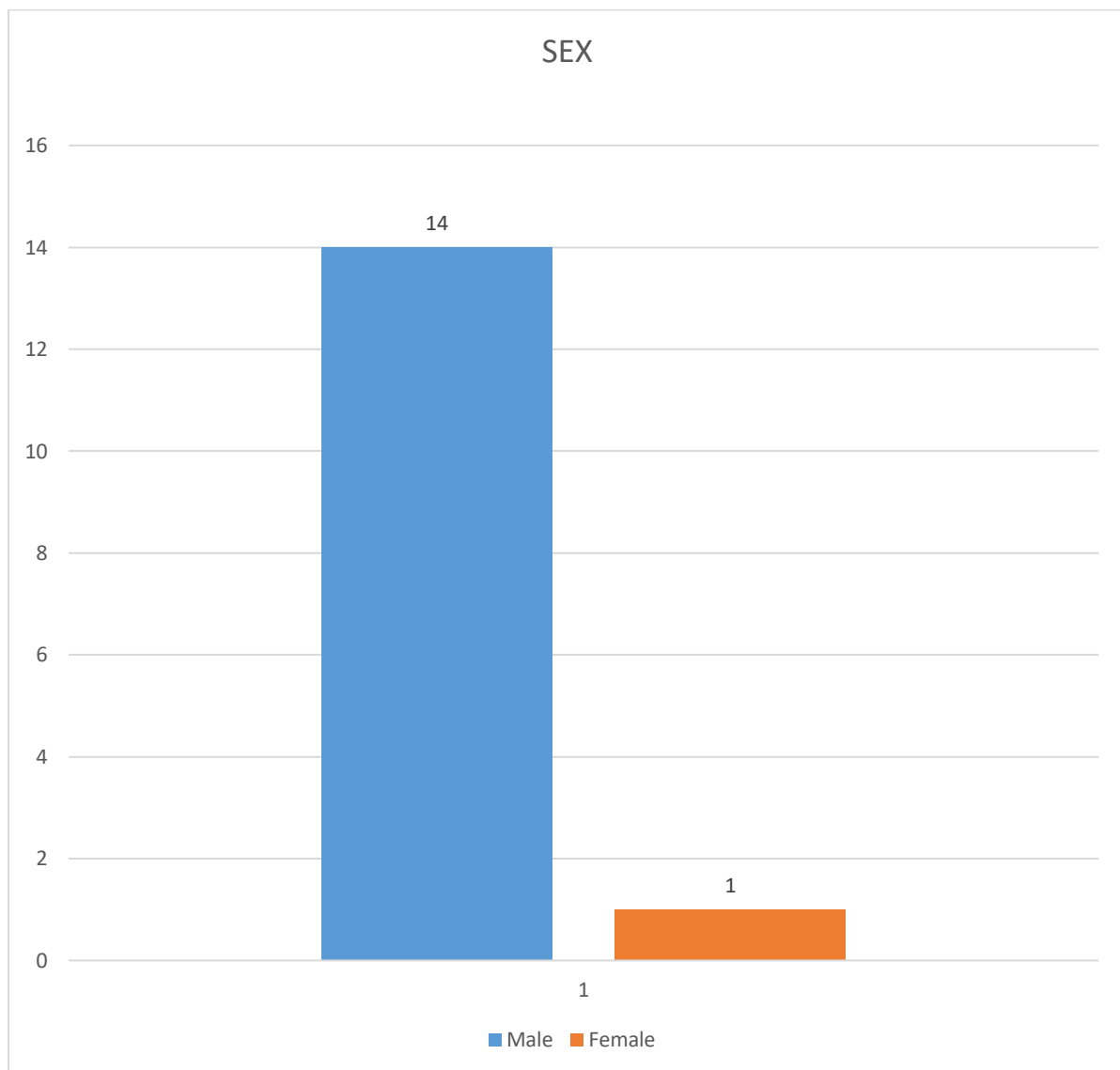
Appendix 2: The Age, Education, Sex and Nationality Information of Participants



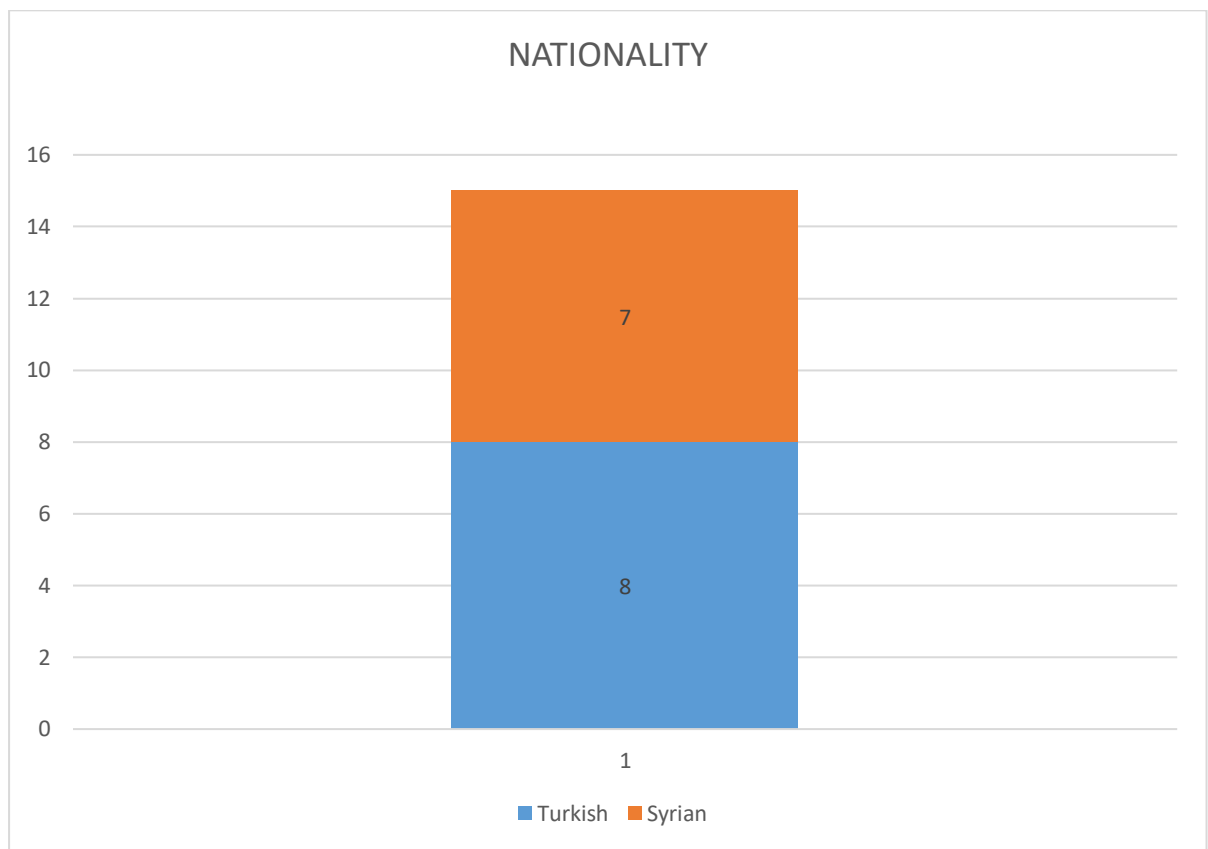
The age distribution of the participants is given in the table above. Accordingly, there are 4 participants who are 35 years old and 3 participants who are 40 years old. The other participants consist of one participant each aged 45, 44, 42, 39, 38, 34, 33 and 27.



When the educational status of the participants is examined, 2 of them are primary school graduates, 4 of them are Master graduates, 1 of them is PhD level, 5 of them are university graduates and 3 of them are high school graduates.



14 of the participants are men and 1 is women. The reason of the superiority of men is the difficulty of meeting with woman in the study area because of its tradition and culture.



8 of the participants are Turkish and 7 are Syrian.