

A NAME AND A FUTURE

Child labor and educational emergency: a project for children in Aleppo

Donor: Support International E.V.

Period: January 2024 – April 2024

Funds received: 15.000 €

Contact person: Teresa Cinquina - t.cinquina@proterrasancta.org

SYRIA SITUATION UPDATE

Just over a year after the earthquake, the situation in Syria remains extremely critical.

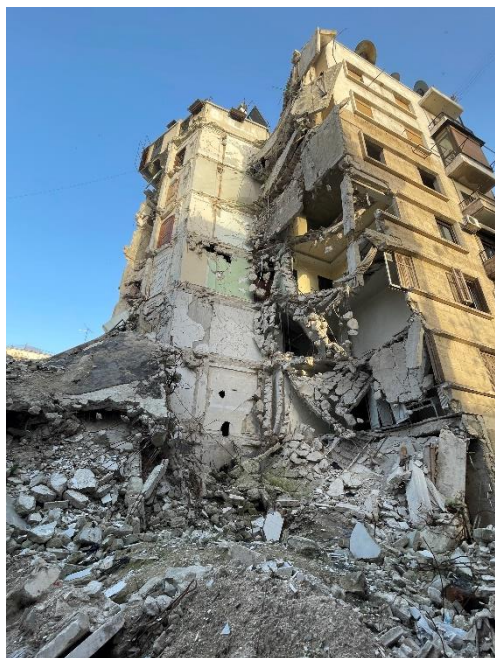
According to UNICEF's 2023 data, some 6,000 people, including children, were reportedly killed, more than 12,000 injured across Syria as a result of the earthquake that struck the country in February 2023. 265,000 is the number of displaced people. The earthquake damaged the infrastructure and facilities of essential services and aggravated the situation of children and their families, who were already vulnerable due to more than a decade of conflict, the COVID-19 epidemic and the instability of the entire region.

It has been confirmed that electricity service, crucial to daily life at the individual, family and community levels, has been further reduced: from 2 hours to only 70 minutes of electricity per day. This situation has led to 88 percent of the population permanently giving up the use of household appliances. The number of people suffering from food insecurity remains high (about 12.1 million, according to WFP's 2023 data). There is unprecedented price fluctuation: the average wage is 250,000 SYP, while the price of bread per kilogram varies between 12,000 and 20,000 SYP. In addition, a 75 cl bottle of oil sells for 65,000 SYP. Finally, there is the outbreak of the conflict between Israel and Palestine, which generates tension and concern about the possibility of further escalation of the conflict.

All this causes psychological distress, especially among children. As observed and analyzed by ProTS locally, families express the consequences of psychological trauma. Children are particularly affected by mental trauma, many of whom know nothing but years of crisis. According to OCHA's estimates for 2023, signs of psychological distress in boys and girls under the age of eighteen are reported by 29 percent of families and are highest when the head of household is a person with a disability, followed by female-headed families. Psychological distress was also reported among men and women at alarming rates, with more than 50% of the population reporting such signs among their family members.

The educational emergency remains high. The dropout rate and subsequent child exploitation are phenomena that persist in the social fabric of Syria: many children, ages 9 and up work to help their families make ends meet, and many parents forbid them to return to school, as in many Syrian families children are still a "sole" source of income. Even if they wanted to, the cost of school fees in Syria is unaffordable for many Syrian families: today it ranges between \$170 and \$500 per year depending on the quality of the school, an unbearable burden, considering that the average salary of a civil servant does not exceed \$15 per month.

Photos taken in Aleppo last April



A) A NAME AND A FUTURE CENTERS

For the aforementioned reasons, the activities carried out in the “A Name and a Future” centers in Aleppo have continued to be of significant importance in providing children and their families with services that improve their mental and physical state, as well as promote dialogue and inclusion.

A1) Expansion of centers and distribution of school and food kits

Improvements have been made at the three centers as of 2023: having to carry out renovations due to the earthquake, the opportunity was taken to expand previously narrow spaces to accommodate more people and make the rooms more welcoming. In addition, the Al-Shaar Center expanded its space by renting a third house.

As a result of these expansion works, **purchases of furniture for the new classrooms** (chairs, lockers, etc....) were made in the first months of 2024, also thanks to your valuable support. In addition, we were able to **distribute school supplies** (notebooks, markers, pens and other stationery) to 100 children, which are essential for carrying out educational activities in the new classrooms. Finally, again thanks to your help, we were able to cope with the time of economic hardship in which so many families are suffering by **organizing food distributions (snacks and lunches) among the children** so that they could feed themselves and find basic sustenance.

A2) Centers activities

During 2024, we continue to encourage the participation of children in eastern Aleppo in activities organized within the Franciscan Care Center (FCC) in western Aleppo to provide them with opportunities to do sports, art, and theater activities, which the FCC is equipped with, and to foster a positive exchange between children living in the same city but in very different contexts:

- more activities for children in eastern Aleppo within the Football Academy launched thanks to contributions from Milan Foundation;
- Increase in children participating in drama and art workshops.



At the Al-Shaar center in the early months of 2024, **courses in Arabic, English, French, math and physics/chemistry** went on for about 560 school dropouts. The boys' mothers participated in literacy classes to facilitate their social and job placement.

Thanks to your contribution, **psychological and pedagogical support activities** for about 300 children and youth were also carried out through the role of social workers and educators at the Al-Shaar and Karm Al-Doudou and Al-Myassar centers.

At the Al-Myassar center, personal awareness and work skill development activities were conducted for women in economic hardship through psychological activities and workshops. For example, educational sessions were offered to teach participants how to work with wool and make clothes, helping women develop job skills and save money on clothing costs for their children.



B) THE MINIBUS “PULLMINO DELLA VITA”

In the early months of 2024, thanks to your valuable support that helped cover the cost of gasoline and the driver, the minibus continued to operate between 4 and 5 days a week, including weekends, to provide a vital service to children and youth unable to go to school because they work. Educational and recreational activities are organized along the way. Some of them are then taken to the Aleppo East Centers, where they can participate in schooling and receive support

psychosocial. At the end of the day, they are always taken home via the bus, ensuring a continuous and indispensable service.



Beginning in February, bus trips to Terra Sancta College have increased to allow some of the children in East Aleppo to participate in the organized activities mentioned above.

During these first few months, again thanks to the service of the Life Bus, outings were made for the youth of A Name and A Future to the most significant and picturesque places in the city, often unknown to most of these young people. For example, a visit to the Aleppo Citadel, the city's historic fortress. This type of outings, from an educational point of view, improve the level of socialization among children and between children and educators, develop a sense of responsibility and autonomy, and stimulate curiosity to research. From an educational perspective, these direct experiences, rich in emotion and discovery, enrich the understanding of historical and cultural reality, thus contributing to the promotion of civil

coexistence.

Currently, about 102 children use the bus service, divided into 3 groups of 34 children each. Each group makes about 2 trips per week.

TESTIMONY OF ALI AND HER MOTHER, BENEFICIARIES OF THE CENTERS A NAME AND A FUTURE AND THE MINIBUS “PULLMINO DELLA VITA”



The child's name is Ali, he lives in Aleppo and is 13 years old. He lives with his mother and two brothers; his father died during the war. After the earthquake they lost their house and his mother had no economic support. Ali has always helped his mother by working since he was seven years old when his father died, and as a grown man he has worked in the fields of shoemaking, tailoring and packaging and has been through a lot in his life.

It was through her mother that they heard about the “A Name and a Future” centers in eastern Aleppo. She enrolled her and Ali in the project so that she could have psychological and labor support and Ali could attend a school program every week. In fact, thanks to the center's labor support, Ali's mother was able to start a business: the center designed a project for the women related to learning food preservation and also supported them with equipment. Ali's mother started making pickles and tomato concentrate and started to have an income that allowed her to buy more tomatoes and pickles and earn money from the concentrate, thus expanding her project. As a result, Ali devotes more time to study and goes to the centers of “A Name and a Future” thanks to the “Life Bus,” now that his mother often works and cannot accompany him.

While the focus in the centers is on individual study and psychological support, during the minibus trip, the social worker and educator provide psychological support through more playful and group activities. It is a leisure time where the emphasis is on building relationships with other children and adult educators, including through sharing food or a trip to a place in Aleppo.



At present, Ali continues to help his mother with various odd jobs, but their situation has greatly improved, as has their relationship. Thanks to her work, they are now able to afford to rent an apartment, and Ali often expresses his wish that his school experience will never end because he really enjoys attending it.

“Regarding A Name and A Future, it is very powerful for me to see women learning to read and write because of the centers. I was struck, for example, by the story of a widowed woman who insisted that she and her children take a school test together. Within the centers one can find numerous moments of humanity like this. I would also add that the centers in East Aleppo and the Franciscan Care Center are an example of tolerance and conviviality between Muslims and Christians”.

Jean Francois Thiery
Project Manager of proTS in Aleppo

Thank you for your constant support of this project!

Found as attachments:
- Financial Report
- receipts