

HUMANS OF THE FIELD



**STANDING UP FOR YOUR COMMUNITY, DESPITE YOUR OWN LOSS AND YOUR FEAR.
NO MATTER WHAT.**



Ismet Yalcin, Ph.D.

*Agricultural engineer and economist.
In the wake of the earthquake, he
co-coordinated the Food Security
Cluster's emergency response.*

“As I am sleeping on the morning of February 6, I suddenly feel my bed being violently tossed across the room and smashed into the walls. This is not a first. I was there in 1999. This is an earthquake and appears to be quite a massive one.

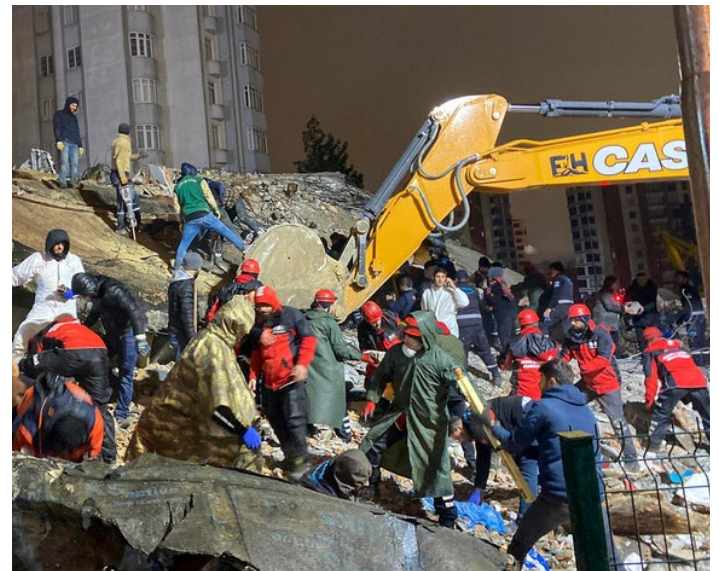
I must not move, I cannot do anything but wait, like everyone else. A deep feeling of helplessness. Fear. It eventually stops. So, I rush down the stairs and join my neighbors. Thankfully, our neighborhood suffered no significant damage or loss. We call our families. We want to make sure everyone is safe and try to understand by word of mouth for now how serious the situation actually is.

Where is the epicenter? What is the magnitude of the earthquake? Is it over? As time passes, we understand the level of destructiveness the country just witnessed. Many are afraid and drive away from the city as fast as they can.”

The victims of the earthquake have no choice to also be the first responders to the scene.

“Once the immediate shock fades, the community quickly mobilizes to provide first aid and organize rescue operations. Despite the freezing temperatures and in some places heavy snow, we all volunteer to help. Together with my neighbors, we liaise with official

institutions to support mapping and guiding the operations. Who has a vehicle rushes to the most marginalized areas which are now further cut off as the roads were significantly damaged during the earthquake. We relentlessly keep in touch with our loved ones across the country, while supporting our neighbors, strangers in our own community.”



Providing food assistance, fast and without duplicating – and otherwise hindering – efforts.

Ten days after the earthquake, Ismet is assigned as the Field Emergency and Livelihoods Co-Coordinator in Gaziantep, joining the efforts of UN agencies and NGOs on the ground. He will support the United Nations Flash Appeal activities for the next three months. His team aims at ensuring the effective coordination of assistance, avoiding duplication, and leaving no one behind.

The damages are extensively widespread which challenges our coordination efforts. While eleven provinces were affected, five experienced severe destruction. Homes were destroyed, people lacked clothing, and winter conditions made food scarcity even more critical.

They split responsibilities per provinces and continuously communicate with partners in the field as well as the UN coordination office and the AFAD (Turkish government). Most of the support is provided remotely, via virtual meetings, phone calls and emailing. To accurately identify and map the severity of the needs was the most pressing issue – and the most challenging.



Humanity comes together in the face of adversity.

“The earthquake was simply devastating. But the humanity I witnessed in the aftermath of the disaster fills one with hope. Homes were destroyed. Agricultural tools and fields were damaged. All people alike – the wealthy, the poor – were now left with nothing but their clothes on their back and joined the food distribution lines altogether. Amidst the disaster, people supported one another to continue their lives.”



The sector distributed meals for urban residents and provided rural earthquake victims with animal feed, farming equipment, and milking machines for the agricultural production to not be discontinued as much as possible. This gave hope for a better future, no matter how weary the present.

Hope is key to overcome the challenges ahead. So is good coordination.

The sector first focused on distributing food, and stabilizing housing and food security. Now it remains crucial to ensure container areas far from the cities have access to markets and food items, within a reasonable distance is important.

Considering that the region contributes to nearly 20% of Turkey's food and agricultural output, without urgent support the country will most likely suffer food shortages in the upcoming season. We must continue our efforts and join forces to support the region's food and agricultural production to restore food security.