



Survival Is Not Enough: Continuing to Hear Is Vital

Are You Prepared for an Emergency?

The major earthquakes in Türkiye became the starting point of this initiative. On the same day, two devastating earthquakes of magnitude 7 or above struck just 12 hours apart.

As the mother of a son who uses an Auditory Brainstem Implant, or ABI, one of the first questions that came to my mind was this:

Were the hearing aids, cochlear implants or ABI processors of the people trapped under the rubble still on their ears? Could they access their devices? When they were rescued from the rubble or had to leave their homes, were their devices still working?

Immediately after the earthquake, I sent our spare device, together with its working spare parts, to the earthquake region. Our aim was to make sure it reached someone who needed it. In a short time, we saw that many people acted with the same sensitivity.

At that time, most support focused on basic survival needs such as food, shelter, clothing and urgent supplies. Of course, all of these were extremely important. However, for us, there was another issue that was just as vital: the ability to continue hearing in a healthy and reliable way.

Later, we realized that many of us had spare cables, batteries, processors or other parts at home. Based on this idea, we created a “**spare parts pool.**” In Turkish, we affectionately called this idea a “parçacık havuzu” a pool of tiny parts.

This pool was imagined as a place where people could share small parts they no longer needed, but which were still usable, so that these parts could become different forms of support for people in need.

As can be seen in the visual, we represented this idea through the image of a real pool. Inside the pool, there are processors, spare parts and batteries. Later, together with our project team, we developed this visual and gave it its final form.

We were also inspired by a Turkish proverb: “Damlaya damlaya göl olur,” which means “**drop by drop, a lake is formed.**” This proverb reflects the spirit of the project: something that may seem small can become vital support when it reaches the right person.

In order to respect all companies, brands and users, we intentionally chose to make the brands and models of the processors and parts in the visual more blurred. We followed the same neutral approach for battery manufacturers as well. Seeing unprotected processors, parts and batteries inside a pool may seem unusual, and even a little concerning at first. However, the purpose of this visual is to make the message clear: when each person contributes a usable part to this pool, many different forms of support can become possible.

Parçacık Havuzuna Sen de Destek Ol!

Yenileme nedeniyle kullanmadığımız
implant ve parçalarını dostlarımızla paylaşıyoruz.



PARÇACIK HAVUZU

Parçacık havuzuna ilettiğin implant ve parçalar
ihtiyacı olan kullanıcı dostlarımızla paylaşılacaktır.





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This system was based entirely on volunteering. Our role was simply to connect the person in need with the person willing to help. In cases of device changes or urgent needs, we helped usable devices and parts reach those who needed them.

Over time, this initiative led us to a broader question: What should we do for people with hearing loss and implant users in emergency situations?

Earthquakes, floods, fires, tsunamis, landslides, volcanic eruptions or the threat of war... Emergencies can happen in different ways in every part of the world. Therefore, we realized that the contents of emergency packs need to be reconsidered.

For us, emergency preparedness was not only about water, food, medicine and basic supplies. The continuity of hearing also needed to be an essential part of this preparedness.

During this process, we also started working on digital visibility. In emergency situations, it is very important for response teams to be able to understand that a person uses a hearing aid, cochlear implant or ABI, without relying only on the person's own explanation at that moment.

Of course, the protection of personal data was one of our main priorities. For this reason, we worked on a system that could raise awareness among emergency teams without openly sharing personal data.

We also faced another important problem. Audiological evaluations, test results and device programming records were often stored on computers at universities. During the earthquake, we lost one of our academics, and the computers storing these records were buried under the rubble. As a result, it took time to reprogram the devices of some struggled to understand what had happened or to communicate with others.

In addition, these individuals did not only experience problems accessing their devices or hearing. Some lost family members, some experienced trauma, and some had difficulty understanding what had happened and communicating with others.

After such disasters, psychological support is also needed. For a person to understand their situation, stay in communication with others and receive support, the continuity of hearing is a critical point.

We also observed an important gap in the field: there are some common misconceptions about people with hearing loss. For example, it is sometimes assumed that all people with hearing loss know sign language.



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However, many implant users may not know sign language. Therefore, communication support in emergencies should not be limited to a single method.

This initiative showed us that being prepared for emergencies is not only necessary for survival, but also for staying connected after surviving.

For us, an important part of survival is ensuring the continuity of hearing. Because hearing is one of the key ways to access safety, information, family, healthcare services and psychological support.

Therefore, the needs of hearing aid, cochlear implant and ABI users must be visible in emergency plans. Spare devices, spare parts, charging solutions, personal emergency information and communication methods should become an essential part of these plans.

I hope that our work will contribute to giving the continuity of hearing a greater place in emergency planning.

With special thanks to Hacettepe University, Department of Audiology, and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Filiz Aslan for their support.

Sincerely,

Aylin Özgür

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