

UKRAINE

Humanitarian situation in newly accessible areas of Kharkiv oblast

KEY FIGURES

382,000

OFFICIALLY
REGISTERED IDPS
AS AT 2 SEPTEMBER
(IOM 15/09/2022)

150,000

PEOPLE IN
NEWLY ACCESSIBLE
TERRITORIES OF
KHARKIV OBLAST
AS AT 23 SEPTEMBER
(UKRAINSKA PRAVDA
13/09/2022; RFE/RL
14/09/2022)

17,000

PEOPLE IN AREAS
UNDER RUSSIAN
CONTROL AS AT
23 SEPTEMBER
(CF SSS 23/09/2022)

OVERVIEW

The Ukrainian military launched a counteroffensive in Kharkiv oblast on 6 September, aiming to reclaim the northern and eastern areas of the oblast that were under Russian military control. In the following two weeks, Ukrainian forces regained control over 8,000km² of territory with a population of around 150,000 people (NP 23/09/2022; The Guardian 14/09/2022; Al Jazeera 14/09/2022; Ukrainska Pravda 13/09/2022; RFE/RL 14/09/2022).

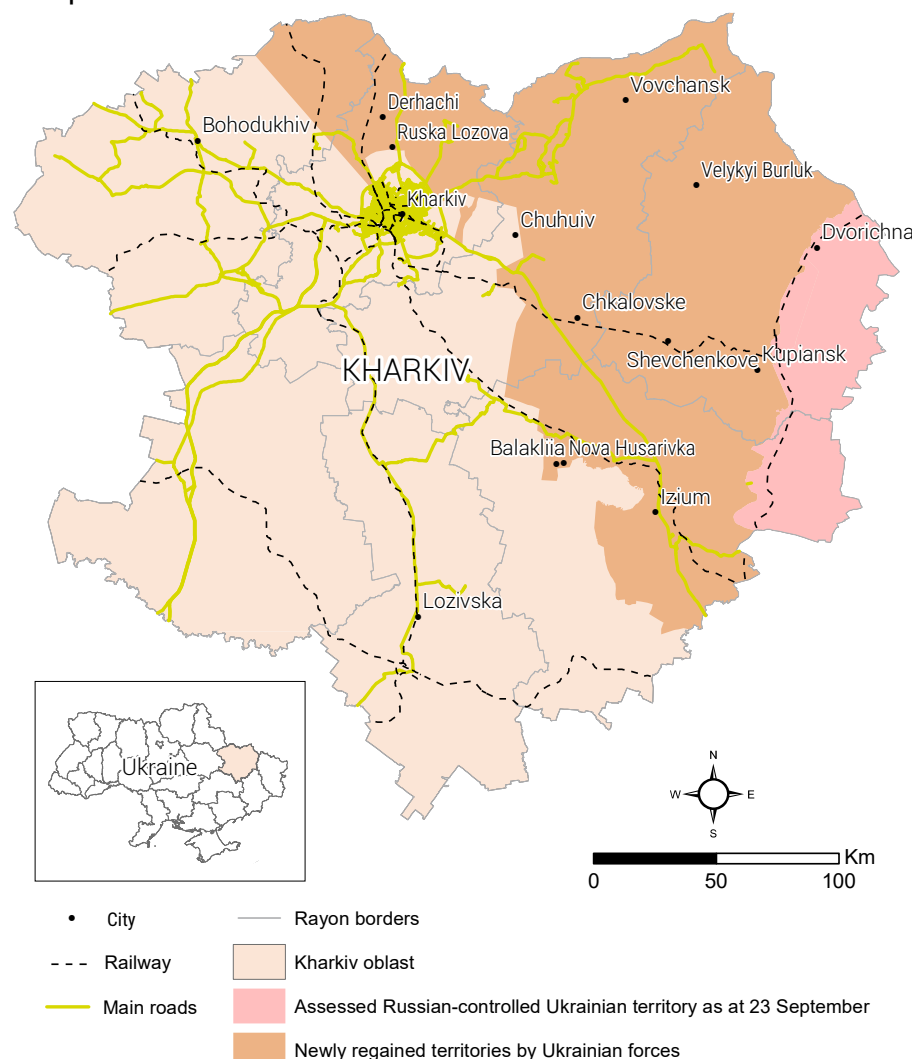
The change in control has made many areas newly accessible, making humanitarian access possible. That said, actual access still depends on several factors, including the proximity of communities to main tarmac roads, landmine decontamination, the availability of up-to-date information, administrative barriers, and whether military checkpoints allow the passage of humanitarian assistance.

Access to services and building materials is a main immediate concern for the population as winter approaches. Prolonged fighting has resulted in extensive damage to infrastructure, particularly power plants, causing disruptions to services (including water, electricity, gas, heating, and telecommunications). Some of the main immediate needs are power generators and building materials for the reconstruction of houses and critical infrastructure.

Food, medicines, and drinking water are also some of the main needs resulting from a lack of stock, high prices, and a lack of livelihoods.

Volunteers and local NGOs are the most active sources of humanitarian assistance in the area. They have reached the highest number of settlements among all responders and distributed aid in some of the main cities (Balakliia, Iziium, and Kupiansk). Less humanitarian aid is getting to the villages or inside the raions outside the big cities.

Map: Kharkiv oblast



Source: ACAPS

About this report

Aim: this report aims to provide an overview of the humanitarian situation in the areas of Kharkiv where Ukrainian forces regained control in September 2022, meaning areas accessible again to the humanitarian community. The report highlights critical needs and information gaps in these areas.

Methodology: ACAPS reviewed secondary data from public and non-public sources and, between 26–30 September, conducted 12 key informant interviews with Ukrainian civil society members, INGO workers, and volunteers.

Limitations: the conflict and access situation in the area is volatile. Local and international responders are also working to deliver assistance and address infrastructure damage in multiple areas. There is a lack of information as well on the humanitarian situation of people living in rural and remote areas. Needs may have changed, and new areas may have become accessible.

CONFLICT AND INSECURITY

Since the Ukrainian counteroffensive intensified, retaliatory shelling by Russian forces targeting civilian and critical infrastructure has been reported along the regained areas and the border with the Russian Federation in Chuhuiv, Izium, Kharkiv, and Kupiansk districts (NP 23/09/2022; Oleh Synyehubov Telegram 19/09/2022 and 27/09/2022; OCHA 02/09/2022, 14/09/2022, and 23/09/2022).

As at 28 September, **Ukrainian forces had regained control of at least 420 settlements**, including the cities of Balakliia, Chuhuiv, and Izium, that were under Russian control for the previous five to six months (RFE/RL 16/09/2022; ISW 15/08/2022; OCHA 14/09/2022; ISW/CT accessed 21/09/2022; NYT 11/09/2022).

Conflict and violence in Kharkiv oblast significantly decreased in late September compared to the period from July until the first half of September. Battles in September peaked during the second week of the counteroffensive before dropping in the following weeks (ACLEd accessed 03/10/2022).

IMPACT ON CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The prolonged presence of Russian forces and fighting have resulted in the extensive damage and destruction of all types of civilian infrastructure. The conflict in Kharkiv oblast has affected residential and administrative buildings, schools, grain and plant storage warehouses, railway tracks, and dams (ACLEd accessed 03/09/2022). Some of the most affected cities are Balakliia, Izium, and Kupiansk. According to local officials, the conflict has destroyed around 80% of Izium city (OCHA 14/09/2022). Balakliia has also sustained heavy damage (PIN 21/09/2022). Most, if not all, buildings in areas along main roads in the newly accessible territories have sustained damage (KII 28/09/2022).

The conflict has heavily damaged railways throughout the oblast. Restoration work has started on the railways between Kharkiv city and Derhachi city and between Kharkiv city and Chuhuiv city (Slovo i Dilo 16/09/2022).

Shelling incidents and missile strikes have led to the interruption of services, including water, electricity, gas, heating, and telecommunications. Service has been restored in some areas, such as Balakliia, but remains cut off in many other settlements in the region. The quick restoration of critical infrastructure (starting with electricity) is a big priority for the coming weeks before winter (CF SSS 23/09/2022; OCHA 14/09/2022; NP 23/09/2022; KII 28/09/2022; Oleh Synyehubov Telegram 22/09/2022; Kharkiv RMA 27/09/2022). Damaged infrastructure includes electric substations, pylons for electric lines, gas pipelines towards villages, cell towers, and bridges. The continued shelling of infrastructure and repair depots is slowing down repairs (KII 30/09/2022 a).

Electricity: a lack of electricity is one of the main concerns. It severely limits access to other services, such as water and heating, as it impairs the functionality of water pumps and heating systems (RFE/RL 13/09/2022). 155,000 people were without electricity in Kharkiv oblast as at 28 September (Ministry of Energy of Ukraine Facebook 28/09/2022). The conflict has displaced many specialised workers able to restore electricity grids, meaning a high demand for those who have remained in the area. Reparation works remain delayed and are dangerous, particularly in areas experiencing heavy shelling (KII 26/09/2022 b; KII 27/09/2022 c)

Heating: repairing damage to heating infrastructure, such as damaged heat and power plants, is a key concern as winter approaches (NP 23/09/2022). Damage and disruption to heating and electricity service delivery have forced some residents to collect their own fuel, such as firewood. The use of such materials for open-air cooking poses serious protection concerns given the presence of explosive remnants of war (ERW) (KII 26/09/2022 b).

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

The return of newly accessible territories under the control of the Government of Ukraine has restored access to previously unreachable civilians. At the same time, prolonged conflict and the presence of Russian and non-government-controlled-area forces have resulted in access constraints, such as damage to road infrastructure and the presence of mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO). The clearing and reopening of roads take a long time, and status updates are limited.

Providing humanitarian assistance to people in frontline settlements is particularly difficult. Dvorichna town and Kupiansk city are under artillery fire, making it harder for responders to access both areas and organise logistics (Kharkiv RMA 24/09/2022). In northeastern areas of Kharkiv oblast, like Vovchansk and Dvorichna, shelling and a lack of access are hindering the delivery of any humanitarian aid (KII 26/09/2022 b; KII 27/09/2022 a).

Rural areas present higher access constraints for both humanitarians and people needing assistance. Villages and smaller settlements in northeast areas, such as Vovchansk and Velykyi Burluk, were inaccessible or very difficult to access in late September (KII 26/09/2022 a; KII 26/09/2022 b; KII 27/09/2022 a). The access situation in smaller, more remote communities away from main roads is unclear. They are unreachable for international organisations bound by their security protocols (KII 28/09/2022 a).

Humanitarian access has generally been possible to localities along main tarmac roads, as long as they have been cleared by deminers and provided that local authorities and Ukrainian armed forces stationed in the area allow passage (KII 28/09/2022 a). Cities such as Andriivka, Balakliia, Chuhuiv, Iziium, and Shevchenkove have been reported to be at least partially accessible (KII 28/09/2022 a; PIN 21/09/2022; WFP 24/09/2022; KII 26/09/2022 a; KII 26/09/2022 b; KII 27/09/2022 a).

Administrative impediments: access to certain cities may be limited and require a permit given active police and security service investigations and demining activities. These permits are requested from oblast authorities, but there have been reports of city-level authorities requiring their own additional permits (KII 28/09/2022 a). To access the region and carry out volunteer activities, organisations need a certificate from the coordination centre of the oblast indicating the type of humanitarian process they will carry out (Kharkiv RMA 27/09/2022). In Iziium, entry remains restricted but is possible for humanitarian goods, provided that those transporting them can present a permit from the oblast administration (RFE/RL 13/09/2022; KII 28/09/2022 a). In Kozacha Lopan, residents are required to get a permit from the city administration to be able to leave the city (The Kyiv Independent 27/09/2022).

Landmine contamination: newly accessible areas of Kharkiv oblast remain heavily mined, hampering aid delivery and causing civilian casualties (Maria Avdeeva Twitter 09/09/2022; Oleh Synyehubov Telegram 19/09/2022; OCHA 14/09/2022 and 23/09/2022). Deminers from the State Emergency Service of Ukraine had examined nearly 26 hectares and neutralised around 750 explosives in the oblast as at 25 September. They had also cleared major roads (Oleh Synyehubov Telegram 25/09/2022).

The presence of UXO and the booby-trapping of civilian infrastructure pose considerable risks (NP 23/09/2022). Between 6–22 September, mine and UXO explosions killed six civilians and injured 13, primarily in Chuhuiv raion but also in Bohodukhiv, Kharkiv, and Kupiansk raions (ACLED accessed 03/10/2022). Current demining efforts have not yet covered rural parts of regained areas. Venturing away from roads into the forest is particularly dangerous (Oleh Synyehubov Telegram 24/09/2022). INGO and UN demining mechanisms are not fully operational in prevention of staff security risks (NP 23/09/2022).

Roads: the unavailability of clear and timely information on road accessibility and updated road maps is a major challenge and can deter humanitarian responders from attempting to reach certain localities. The exact details on which roads are open change daily depending on the evolution of demining activity. Humanitarians rely on informally transmitted information from local organisations to understand which roads are safe to travel on before departing. These organisations do not systematically share this information, which may not even reflect the reality in the region anymore. For example, humanitarians may be turned back at a checkpoint on a road announced as cleared or be allowed passage on a road not marked as cleared (KII 28/09/2022 a).

Damaged transportation infrastructure: bridges and other critical infrastructure have been targeted and heavily damaged during the conflict. In northeastern areas of the oblast, like Vovchansk and Dvorichna, damaged bridges on main roads force responders to take detours and secondary roads, almost doubling travel time. The only main road connecting to Iziium passes under an unmarked damaged railway bridge, also forcing responders to take detours (KII 29/09/2022 c). The damage on bridges in Kupiansk, Vovchansk, and Dvorichna also blocks the passage of bigger trucks and vehicles. Only small vehicles can get through, making it harder for responders to access those areas and organise logistics (Kharkiv RMA 24/09/2022; KII 26/09/2022 a). Damaged bridges are also reported in Yurchenkove (KII 26/09/2022 a). Additional information on bridges can be found in the «AREA PROFILES (in alphabetical order)», page 7 section of this report.

DISPLACEMENT

Displacement from newly accessible territories that cannot establish basic services before winter is highly likely (KII 28/09/2022).

Kharkiv is one of the oblasts whose population has been displaced the most but also hosts the highest number of IDPs. The majority of IDPs in the country have been displaced from Donetsk, Kharkiv, and Luhansk mainly as a result of conflict. At the same time, as at 23 September, there were around 382,000 registered IDPs in Kharkiv from neighbouring oblasts, making it one of the oblasts with the highest share of IDPs in the country (CF SSS 23/09/2022).

IDPs from Donetsk, Kherson, and Luhansk oblasts hosted in Kharkiv oblast are in high need of shelter, food and medicines, and hygiene items. Only around 4,000 are sheltered in official collective centres (CF SSS 23/09/2022). Most of them are hosted in informal communal shelters (like schools or summer camps) and have lost their livelihoods. Most of them depend on unemployment benefits (UAH 2,000 per month), which do not cover all basic needs (KII 26/09/2022 a).

Evacuations: with new territories becoming accessible, local authorities and volunteers have begun conducting civilian evacuations from the areas. Almost 9,000 people were evacuated to safer areas in late September (NP 23/09/2022; Kharkiv RMA 27/09/2022). The Kharkiv Civil Protection Office oversees civilian evacuations, which are coordinated with local volunteer collectives and NGOs, the military administration, and other relevant authorities. Although coordinated by the oblast, many of these evacuations are carried out on an ad hoc, per request basis and by local response mechanisms and volunteer collectives (NP 23/09/2022; Oleh Synyehubov Telegram 21/09/2022).

Returning residents: at the same time, people displaced by active ground conflict from areas in Kharkiv have started returning to some of the newly accessible areas since they have come under the control of Ukrainian forces, particularly to places like Balakliia and Ruska Lozova, to check on their properties. The dynamics are still unclear, and it is hard to determine exact figures (PIN 22/09/2022). The pendular movements of the population could add a strain to an already overstretched local response, and some people that have returned may need to evacuate again in the coming months because of unmet needs or insufficient heating for the coming winter (KII 26/09/2022 a).

As at 26 September, Kharkiv raion hosted the highest number of IDPs in the oblast (164,000), while Kupiansk raion hosted the lowest number (under 3,000), likely because of its proximity to the Russian border and Luhansk oblast (IOM 26/09/2022).

Number of IDPs hosted per raion in Kharkiv oblast as at 18 September

RAION	NUMBER OF REGISTERED IDPS
Bohoduukhiv	90,200
Chuhuiv	40,500
Izium	25,300
Kharkiv	164,000
Krasnohrad	34,500
Kupiansk	3,100
Lozova	28,000

Source: IOM (26/09/2022)

HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

According to local responders, priority needs in newly accessible territories are demining operations, power generators, building materials (particularly for the restoration of houses and critical infrastructure), and medicines.

Cash assistance should be a priority and remains one of the highest needs among the affected population, followed by in-kind assistance in the form of food, hygiene kits, and medicines in areas where markets are not functional (CF SSS 23/09/2022).

Humanitarian organisations have been reaching affected populations with aid, but some unmet needs remain. These needs include alternative means of heating and lighting homes, such as candles, solar systems, generators, batteries, thermal or warm clothing, and blankets, as well as means of water purification (CF SSS 23/09/2022).

Local authorities estimate that there are more than 150,000 people in the regained territories (Ukrainska Pravda 13/09/2022; RFE/RL 14/09/2022).

Power and heating supplies: many settlements still lack electricity, meaning that water pumps and heating systems cannot work. Villages need generators with 2–3kW worth of power and fuel to start them to ensure at least an intermittent electricity supply (KII 26/09/2022 a; KII 26/09/2022 b).

A lack of gas and electricity supply forces people to rely on wood for heating and open-air cooking. Heaters are in high demand (CF SSS 23/09/2022; KII 27/09/2022 a). Gathering wood in forests close to affected villages is highly dangerous because of the presence of mines (KII 26/09/2022 b). Obtaining wood is also likely more difficult for older people and people with disabilities because of mobility constraints (NYT 11/09/2022).

Shelter/NFIs: there is an urgent need for the supply of plywood, nails, wooden planks, beams, and especially windows to start reparation work before winter begins. Needs are particularly high in small villages in Chuhuiv, Kupiansk, and Ruska Lozova, where many houses have been looted or demolished and reparations are urgently needed before winter. Stocks for these materials are low in the region and unaffordable for the population (KII 27/09/2022 a; KII 27/09/2022 b; CF SSS 23/09/2022).

Screens for dividing the premises in IDP collective shelters are needed for more comfortable living conditions (CF SSS 23/09/2022; KII 27/09/2022 a; KII 27/09/2022 b). Adult IDPs are in need of winter clothes (Kharkiv RMA 26/09/2022; CF SSS 23/09/2022).

WASH: water supply remains very limited, and the lack of drinking water is a major concern, particularly in areas that do not have electricity or water pumps. In many cases, people get drinking water from available wells, such as in Kupiansk (RFE/RL 13/09/2022; PIN 22/09/2022; KII 30/09/2022 a). Electricity supply in the form of generators is needed to restart water pumps and access drinking water (KII 26/09/2022 a; KII 26/09/2022 b). In the meantime, filtration bottles are needed to give people at least provisional access to clean water and are a solution for elderly people who cannot carry heavy jerry cans with clean water (KII 30/09/2022 a).

Food: local markets are not operational in rural areas and villages, and the destruction or lining of roads with mines hinders access to commodities. People in remote areas depend on their own stocks and reserves of food they have been able to grow. In rural areas with intense active ground conflict, people unable to grow anything have high food needs given the absence of supplies (KII 26/09/2022 a; KII 26/09/2022 b).

Some street markets and small shops are operational, mainly in bigger cities but the choice of products is very limited. In areas heavily affected by conflict, such as Izium, no markets are operational, and many shops were looted (KII 25/09/2022 a; KII 29/09/2022 a). The availability of food and hygiene items is limited, and big price increases have been noted (from 10–40% depending on the area) (KII 26/09/2022 a; KII 26/09/2022 b; KII 30/09/2022 a).

Assessments by local organisations show that a lack of livelihoods, depleted savings, high prices, and the limited availability of food stocks have made it harder for most of the population to access food (CF SSS 23/09/2022).

Health: many hospitals were looted and damaged during the conflict (KII 25/09/2022 a). Local authorities in Izium report an urgent need for medicines, as healthcare facilities have been destroyed and pharmacies ransacked during the conflict. There is a lack of medical supplies and medicines, particularly insulin and pediatric medication (KII 25/09/2022 a). Regained territories only have 30–40% of their pre-conflict medical personnel. Surgeons and endocrinologists are in high demand (Hromadske 28/09/2022; KII 26/09/2022 a). and

In some of the newly accessible areas, residents have reported a strong corpse smell, indicating human remains under the rubble of buildings, which may contaminate water sources (CF SSS 23/09/2022; WHO 11/12/2019).

The already strained health system in the region cannot provide assistance to residents with chronic illnesses, cancer, or other serious diseases that require expensive treatment (Kharkiv RMA 26/09/2022; KII 25/09/2022 a).

The number of COVID-19 cases in the region has quickly risen according to local authorities, with localised outbreaks in some areas of the oblast and a rise in the number of patients hospitalised. The number of COVID-19 and flu cases is expected to increase with the beginning of the cold season, but the health system, already strained, may not be able to cope with a surge of patients. Hospitals are operational, but support is needed (PIN 22/09/2022). On 23 September, medical institutions in the oblast received a first batch of COVID-19 vaccines (Kharkiv RMA 23/09/2022; CF SSS 23/09/2022).

Health-related vulnerabilities:

- Conditions of patients with chronic illnesses have been rapidly deteriorating without access to care or medication over the prolonged period of conflict (NP 23/09/2022).
- Elderly people are in particular need of help, especially with medicines (CF SSS 23/09/2022; KII 26/09/2022 a).
- People with disabilities and those unable to move are reporting a higher level of needs (KII 26/09/2022 b; KII 27/09/2022 a).
- IDPs living in shared shelters are at higher risk of contracting COVID-19 or other contagious diseases. Localised outbreaks are expected (PIN 22/09/2022).

Livelihoods: the conflict has severely affected livelihoods, and community members have depleted their savings. Increased prices make it harder for them to afford products and meet their basic needs. Lack of cash remains a big problem in the region as most banks are not operational and people are unable to withdraw money. Elder people dependent on their pensions are unable to access them as local authorities are not able to deliver them (KII 03/10/2022 a).

Protection: the scale and scope of protection needs are unknown but considered high. Further assessment is needed (PIN 22/09/2022). **Reports of gender-based violence** in newly accessible areas have increased since access has improved. The scale of these incidents remains an important information gap because of cultural stigmatisation and a lack of actively operating women's clinics. Mine clearance and educational campaigns are an important need for civilians in the territories because of the presence of UXO (NP 23/09/2022).

Mental health and psychosocial support: civilians in newly accessible areas have spent months under heavy physical and emotional distress. They are struggling to cope with stress and trauma, with almost no access to mental health and psychosocial support. Addressing mental health concerns remains a priority (NP 23/09/2022).

Education: schools are not operational in most of the areas, such as in Chkalovske, where a lack of functioning schools has been reported (KII 28/09/2022; KII 30/09/2022 a; KII 25/09/2022 a). Children are in need of school supplies, electronic devices, and stable telecommunications to follow online education. Spaces for learning and games are needed in shelters (CF SSS 23/09/2022; KII 27/09/2022 b).

Information and communication: telecommunication services (phone and internet) are not operational in many areas or are intermittently available. People ask for newspapers and radios to access information on the situation in the rest of the country as they have gone for months without access to any information source (KII 27/09/2022 b).

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

On 27 September, the newly established Unified Humanitarian Coordination Centre under the Kharkiv administration became operational. It is an oblast-level government entity in charge of coordinating local evacuation and humanitarian aid for newly accessible territories (Kharkiv RMA 27/09/2022).

Local response

Local response coordination: volunteers and local NGOs are the most active humanitarian responders in the area, reaching the highest number of settlements among all responders and distributing aid obtained from partners (KII 27/09/2022 c). As at 23 September, five volunteer caravans were working in three areas – the northern, northeastern, and eastern regions of the newly accessible territories – to cover needs in both urban and rural areas (Kharkiv RMA 27/09/2022).

In September, as more areas became newly accessible, humanitarian aid mainly comprising food, drinking water, and hygiene products was delivered to Balakliia, Cherkaski Tyshky,

Chkalovske, Izium, Kupiansk, Lyptsi, Shevchenkove, Tsyркuny, Velykyi Burluk, and Vilkhuvatka (Kharkiv RMA 20/09/2022, 21/09/2022, and 24/09/2022).

A lot of the current response heavily relies on informal networks of volunteers and local organisations, making it hard to track which areas have not yet received assistance or been reached (KII 25/09/2022 a).

International response

International response coordination: international organisations operate from Kharkiv city and distribute aid through oblast authorities, local administrations, and some local partners (KII 27/09/2022 c). Over 80 local and international organisations are operating in Kharkiv oblast, mainly focused on food security and livelihoods (OCHA 03/10/2022).

Newly accessible areas that have received international assistance: between 16–20 September, two UN inter-agency convoys reached the populations of Shevchenkove and Chuhuiv, delivering food, water, hygiene kits, and shelter materials. Humanitarian aid was distributed to local partners (OCHA 23/09/2022; UNHCR 22/09/2022). People in Need and local humanitarian partner U. Pravda also delivered drinking water to the newly accessible Izium and Balakliia cities in Kharkiv oblast (PIN 30/09/2022).

Main gaps in the response

As at 23 September, existing activities covered an estimated 60% of current needs. The main cities of the newly accessible territories, such as Balakliia, Izium, and Kupiansk, were receiving most of the attention. Humanitarian aid still could not access villages or raions near big cities mainly because of a lack of knowledge of their situation (KII 26/09/2022 a; KII 26/09/2022 b; KII 27/09/2022 a).

Emergency services and local volunteer collectives struggle to sustain their response efforts because they do not have all the necessary supplies to rebuild damaged infrastructure. Cases of burnout are reported among the volunteers and staff of local NGOs who served as first responders to the humanitarian crisis for months. Resources and staff to address the high population needs are insufficient (NP 23/09/2022).

In some cases, international organisations avoid working with unregistered volunteer organisations (KII 27/09/2022 b; KII 26/09/2022 b). For volunteer groups and local NGOs with the highest access to communities, this constraint creates difficulties in procuring goods (NP 23/09/2022; KII 26/09/2022 b).

AREA PROFILES (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

Balakliia: the total population in the area was around 30,000 before 24 February. Local authorities estimate that 12,000–15,000 people have entered the city since it became accessible (The Kyiv Independent 08/09/2022; PIN 22/09/2022; KII 25/09/2022 a). Needs are focused on winterisation and reconstruction work, including materials such as window coverings, sealing kits, and screws. Food is available in working shops, but prices are, on average, 10% higher than before the conflict (KII 30/09/2022 a; KII 29/09/2022 a)

The mayor reported that people prefer in-kind assistance because of the limited availability of items and limited operations of bank systems (PIN 22/09/2022).

Electricity supply has been cut off and remained unavailable for some residents. As at 26 September, supply was restored for around 11,000 inhabitants (Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine Telegram 22/09/2022; Oleh Synyehubov Telegram 26/09/2022). The restoration of electricity has made it possible to resume activities at the city hospital, central boiler house, three schools, a polyclinic, sewage treatment plants, and water intake infrastructure, restarting the water supply (Oleh Synyehubov Telegram 26/09/2022). That said, the conflict has highly damaged the water system. Gas stations ensuring heating are intact, but the internal heating systems of houses and buildings have received significant damage, meaning many households do not have access to heating. Local authorities report limited capacity to restore all damaged infrastructure (PIN 22/09/2022).

Landmines are reported to affect civilians in public spaces. In late September, the city only had one safe entrance for small vehicles, and all bridges crossing the railway tracks remained destroyed (PIN 21/09/2022; KII 30/09/2022 a).

Chuhuiv: the city remained without any water, electricity, or gas in late September. The city has been heavily damaged during the conflict, with a lot of destroyed residence buildings. Surrounding villages (such as Bairak) also report a lack of electricity and telecommunications (KII 26/09/2022 a).

Izium was a major base for Russian forces in Kharkiv region (AP News 13/09/2022). The city has sustained more damage than other cities in the area (PIN 22/09/2022; KII 30/09/2022 a).

Markets are generally operational, but most of the population have lost their livelihoods and can only afford to buy the most basic commodities. There is a lack of electricity, as generators that serve a mass of people are only operational at certain hours. The majority of people cook with an open fire. Telecommunications are not stable.

There is a lack of medicines, especially insulin, and a lack of specialised doctors and ambulances, although military hospitals are functional and people that need specialised treatment can be evacuated.

A lot of roads and bridges to access the city have been destroyed, and movement is only possible for small vehicles (KII 25/09/2022 a). Fuel is expensive (KII 27/09/2022 b). Entry remains restricted but is possible for humanitarian goods provided that those transporting them can present a permit from the oblast administration (RFE/RL 13/09/2022; KII 28/09/2022 a).

Kupiansk continued to be affected by active fighting and some very heavy shelling in late September. The city sustained much damage, resulting in no electricity, telecommunications, or functioning air raid sirens in late September. Residents remained in cellars and bomb shelters, briefly exiting only to gather aid and basic necessities (The Kyiv Independent 27/09/2022; KII 30/09/2022 a; KII 29/09/2022 c).

The reparation of damaged water, gas, and electricity infrastructure in Kupiansk is very difficult because of constant shelling (The Kyiv Independent 27/09/2022; KII 30/09/2022 a; KII 29/09/2022 c).

The main reported needs are food, drinking water, and reconstruction materials, particularly windows and materials to seal houses. Drinking water is only available from wells where residents have to manually obtain the water from. Water pumps are not working because the electricity grid is not operational. Local gardens have been providing food for the residents (KII 29/09/2022 c).

Some humanitarian aid has reached the city, particularly assistance organised by volunteers and small organisations that work independently (KII 29/09/2022 c). That said, local responders could not reach the city centre, where shelling is the heaviest (KII 29/09/2022 c; WFP 24/09/2022; The Kyiv Independent 27/09/2022).

Nova Husarivka: Nova Husarivka village has had no electricity, gas, or telecommunications since March. The village had around 90 residents in late September, most of whom were elderly people or people with disabilities. Remaining residents obtained water from village wells but could not filter it without electricity. Some of the main needs are window-sealing kits, heating, lanterns, batteries, gas cookers, gas tanks, and wood. Limited transportation options and a lack of local food supply are affecting villagers' access to goods and services. Community members reported similar situations in nearby villages. Village roads have holes and ERW contamination, making transportation difficult (KII 30/09/2022 a).

Savyntsi (Izium district): around 3,000 people have remained out of a population of around 19,500 before 24 February. As at 23 September, electricity, water, gas, and telecommunication services were unavailable. Most of the remaining residents are elderly and present acute needs. There is one working medical clinic, but it is not available 24 hours. Food, windows, and home-sealing kits for windows and doors are among the key needs. A lack of firewood is reported. Surrounding woods were reported to be contaminated with ERW and unsafe for wood collection until clearance is obtained (KII 30/09/2022 a).

Vovchansk: access to the region is restricted because of demining activities and police investigations (PIN 21/09/2022). There is generally a high level of uncertainty and insecurity in border settlements like Vovchansk as they are very close to the border with Russia. These settlements need emergency stocks in preparation for temporary road closures and in case fighting resumes (KII 27/09/2022 c). As at late September, no humanitarian aid had been delivered because of shelling and a lack of access (KII 26/09/2022 b; KII 27/09/2022 a).