

# Emergency Winterization Needs Assessment - Rural Hromadas, Iziumskyi Raion, Kharkivska oblast

October 2023

## Background and Methodology

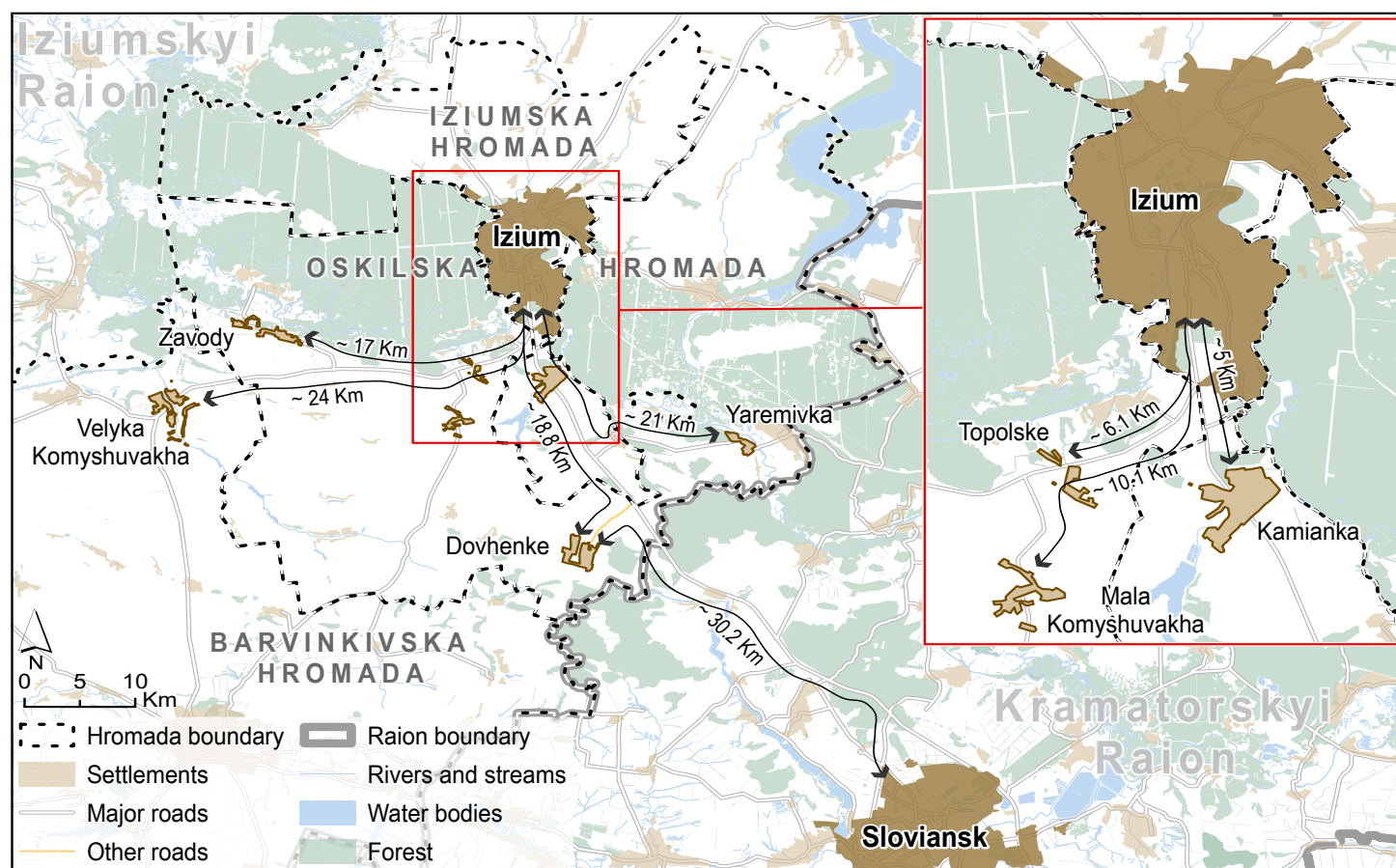
Izium raion with Kamianska, Oskilska and Barvinkivska hromadas were under control by the Russian Federation between February 2022 – September 2022. During this period, due to their proximity to a shifting frontline for a prolonged period of time, settlements like Kamianka, Dovhenke, Topolske, Mala Komyshevakh, Velyka Komyshevakh, Yaremivka and Zavody were catastrophically impacted by both ground fighting and artillery.

The seven above-mentioned settlements had a combined population of around 3,000 persons prior to February 2022. The current population can be expected to be much lower. With the advent of winter, local NGOs raised the alarm about potentially high levels of shelter and winterization needs among the local community in this area. In May 2023, REACH observed critical levels of damage while passing through this area and local partners reported only limited recovery work had been initiated since, indicating humanitarian needs ahead of winter may be dire. REACH therefore launched a participatory assessment, together with ACTED's Emergency Response Team, the Kharkiv Relief Coordination Center and the local NGO "Unity and Strength" to assess emergency humanitarian needs, levels of preparedness for winter, and the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance provided thus far.

The findings in this brief are based on five Key Informant Interviews (KIs) with Starostas of the settlements, seven Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with local residents and 11 Individual In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) with local residents. Findings should be considered indicative.

Additionally, REACH conducted a remote-sensing damage assessment of residential buildings in Dovhenke, Kamianka, Topolske and Yaremivka. A multi-step methodology designed to generate accurate address-level damage data was utilised and entailed 1) automated damage detection using UADamage's artificial intelligence neural networks and high-resolution satellite imagery; 2) visual inspection of each building to confirm damage, assign severity, and exclude non-residential structures; 3) triangulation of results with ground-truthing by IMPACT field personnel and other relevant secondary data; 4) estimation of the number of impacted people based on the number of impacted buildings and the average household size in the area. Key findings and links can be found below in the "Damage Impact Analysis" section.

**Map 1: Izium raion, settlements visited and distance to Izium and Sloviansk cities.**



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## Damage Impact Analysis

The assessment revealed significant conflict-related damage due to the high intensity of military activity in this area, and proximity to the front line and to the strategic E40 highway. Out of the 1,692 residential buildings identified across these four settlements, 1,255 have been identified as damaged, including 712 destroyed, 190 with severe damage, and 304 with moderate damage (Kamianka and Dovhenke, the largest of the four assessed settlements, experienced the most significant damage, with respectively 79% and 91% of residential buildings impacted. This extensive damage poses significant challenges for remaining residents and those considering to return, particularly with the approach of winter conditions, highlighting the need for effective winterization strategies to safeguard the wellbeing of affected communities.

Links to detailed maps of conflict-impacted residential buildings:

- 1) [Kamianka, Iziumskyi Raion, Kharkivska Oblast.](#)
- 2) [Dovhenke, Iziumskyi Raion, Kharkivska Oblast.](#)
- 3) [Topolske, Iziumskyi Raion, Kharkivska Oblast.](#)
- 4) [Yaremivka, Iziumskyi Raion, Kharkivska Oblast.](#)

## Overview of demographics of population figures per settlement

Table 1: Population dynamics, before 24th February 2022 and October 2023

Settlement	Estimated population before February 2022	Estimated Population as of October 2023	Estimated number of households as of October 2023*
Kamianka	1000	64	21
Dovhenke	615	41	14
Topolske	161	45	15
Yaremivka	240	109	36
Velyka Komyshevakh	710	95	32
Mala Komyshevakh	140	22	7
Zavody	440	47	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>3306</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>141</b>

\*This is an estimate based on the current population divided by 3 as the country-average household size.

As shown in table 1, the combined population of these settlements after February 2022 decreased by 87%. Key informants in each settlement also shared figures on the number of vulnerable and marginalised groups living there (table 2).

Table 2: Presence of vulnerable groups by settlements as of October 2023

Settlement	Older persons (60+)	Children (0-17)	People with Disabilities (PWDs)
Kamianka	21	10-25	9
Dovhenke	12	0	2
Topolske	28	4	1
Yaremivka	47	2-10	27
Velyka Komyshevakh	19	6	5
Mala Komyshevakh	5	0	0
Zavody	15	1	3

\*Numbers may change within the range because of reported pendular movement between assessed settlement and Iziium city.

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A destroyed former school in Dovhenke (©Inès Dadda, October 2023)

## Damage to residential structures

In all settlements visited, both Starostas and local residents reported the delivery of emergency shelter repair kits (ESKs) in the last three months. ESKs typically contain a combination of OSB plates, boards, tarpaulins and tools. There were deliveries of building materials for emergency residential recovery (such as OSB plates, boards and tarps) by different humanitarian actors.

In Velyka Komyshuvakha and Mala Komyshuvakha, local residents reported the provision of emergency shelter repairment kits fully covered the needs of the population. They further reported that for more durable solutions to damage recovery, they rely on the governmental program of compensation for damaged property, so they do not require additional shelter support at this time.

In Yaremivka, Zavody and Topolske however, both Starostas and local residents agreed that the emergency assistance provided thus far has not been sufficient to cover all the needs of the entire population. In Zavody specifically, the Starosta reported that a large proportion of the population consists of older persons or persons with disabilities (PwDs), who are not able to carry out repairment works on their own. Consequently, the provided building materials remain laying in the yards and become unusable over time. So population in Zavody reported the need for qualified workforce to carry out repairs in addition to shelter-repairment supplies.

In Kamianka and Dovhenke, according to both KIs and local residents, the emergency repair kits provided during the last 3 months do not meet the population needs of more durable materials to carry out longer lasting repairs, rather than the Emergency Shelter Kits aimed at carrying out temporary repairs. The need of assistance in long-term recovery was also mentioned in all seven assessed settlements (see section Recovery and Reconstruction).

Starostas in different settlements reported families with children return at a lower rate. This is mainly because of three reasons: severe damage to residences, lack of preparedness for the upcoming winter and damage to service infrastructure such as schools, kindergartens and healthcare facilities.

Weather conditions reportedly influence local residents' decisions on movement, in particular households with vulnerable persons such as children. For example, Starostas of Kamianka and Yaremivka settlements reported that during good weather the number of children staying in the settlement may increase up to 25 persons. When it's getting colder, parents tend to send their children to Iziun city to live in less-damaged and better-heated houses.



A destroyed house in Topolske, with a temporary shelter set up in the background (©Inès Dadda, October 2023)

*"We used similar materials last winter to temporarily restore our houses, but it doesn't help anymore. We need something more long-term now."* - Local resident of Dovhenke settlement.



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## Utilities: Gas, electricity and water (technical and drinking)

Centralized utility supply systems, such as heating, water supply and gas supply were heavily damaged in Izium raion during February – September 2022 and are still in the process of recovery.

Out of seven assessed settlements, electricity was restored in Yaremivka, Velyka Komyshevukha and Zavody. The other four settlements (Kamianka, Dovhenke, Topolske, Mala Komyshevukha and Zavody) remained without any electricity supply at the moment of field visits. According to Starostas in Topolske and Mala Komyshevukha, the Government of Ukraine (GoU) has included these settlements in the schedule for electricity restoration with the goal of restoring electricity by winter 2023-2024. However, work is reportedly delayed due to the heavy presence of mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) in the area.

Before 24th February 2022, two out of seven assessed settlements had a central gas supply: Velyka Komyshevukha and Zavody. However, ground-fighting and shelling have destroyed the systems, according to the Starostas. The KI reported these systems are damaged beyond repair and need to be completely replaced in order to recover gas supply. Local residents reported to rely on solid fuel stoves for heating and cooking. In Yaremivka, Topolske, Kamianka and Dovhenke both KIs and local residents reported that they received enough solid-fuel-stoves from humanitarian actors before, in the winter of 2022-2023, to cover the population needs. This year only solid fuel (firewood or briquettes) is requested.

Drinking water remains one of the main issues for all assessed settlements. All of the seven assessed settlements, according to reports by the Starosta, do not have confirmation from the State Sanitation-control service and laboratories that water in local wells and boreholes is safe for drinking. In all seven assessed settlements, local residents reported to use water from local sources (such as wells and boreholes) for technical purposes, but fully rely on humanitarian assistance for drinking water, because there are no shops. Only in Yaremivka, residents also obtain drinking water from the local market.

## Mines / UXO presence

The heavy presence of mines and UXOs inside the assessed settlements was mentioned as one of the biggest issues by both KIs and local residents.

*"The State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SESU) conducts demining only along main road in our settlement and under the supports of high-voltage lines. I have anti-personnel land-mines in front of my yard. After my request to the SESU I was informed that my request will be processed in 1-3 months." – Local resident in Topolske (29 September 2023).*



A destroyed barn in Topolske (© Ines Dadda, October 2023)



A destroyed House of Culture in Dovhenke (© Ines Dadda, October 2023)

According to the Starostas, the areas which surround their settlements, including forests and fields are all heavily mined. Consequently, farmers and sawmills cannot operate. This not only limits employment and income-generating activities in the community, but also impacts the local government's budget. For example in Topolske, where before 24th February 2022, there were three big farms which provided employment and services for the local population. As a result of damage to the farms, heavy presence of mines in the area, and the low population as an available workforce, these farms stopped operating.

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## Access to markets, public transport and livelihood

At the moment of the REACH ET visit, as reported by KIs and local residents, only Yaremivka has one opened grocery store in the settlement and three opened stores throughout starostat (includes three settlements). Local residents of Dovhenke, Zavody, Kamianka, Topolske, Mala Komyshevakh and Velyka Komyshevakh reported to have access to shops and markets only in Izium city.

Inactivity of local businesses and the fact that the main source of income for these communities had been agricultural and farming activities, which are no longer possible, local residents cannot generate income for themselves and reported to rely heavily on provided humanitarian assistance.

As the closest city and raion centre, Izium is a central hub for communities from the assessed settlements to access administrative services (such as core documentation), and social services (pensions, banks, post office, pharmacy etc.). However, according to Starostas from all seven settlements, the public transport connection to Izium city is a big challenge. At the moment of field visits by REACH and "Unity and Strength", the settlements Yaremivka, Velyka Komyshevakh and Kamianka had a scheduled bus that runs twice a week. In Dovhenke, Topolske, Mala Komyshevakh and Zavody however, people have to rely on personal transport or passing



*A destroyed shop in Dovhenke (©Inès Dadda, October 2023)*

## Emergency Winterization needs

Both local authorities and residents reported the urgent need for solid fuel stoves and solid fuel in the form of firewood or briquettes. None of the assessed settlements have centralised heating, and in four of them (Topolske, Dovhenke, Kamianka and Mala Komyshevakh), the electricity supply has not been restored so communities rely entirely on solid fuel. However, since the area is severely contaminated with mines and UXOs, from private gardens to fields and forests, people cannot collect firewood by themselves. Local sawmills also cannot operate due to the presence of mines in nearby forests, meaning their firewood stocks will remain empty over the winter.

In all of the assessed settlements, the needs for solid fuel reported by KIs ranges between 10-15 cubic meters/ household per winter season (number of households find in Table 1). To cover all households in the seven settlements, this would amount to a total of 2,115 cubic meters for the winter season.

Key Informants in Kamianka, Dovhenke, Mala Komyshevakh and Topolske reported the need for low-power generators and fuel, as these settlements are not electrified. Kamianka and Dovhenke are already provided with generators, Mala Komyshevakh and Topolske both reported a need of 10 low-power generators. According to the local residents, cash assistance for fuel for generators is preferred, because of difference in the types of generators and it's average consumption in every household.

Local residents in Yaremivka, Kamianka, Zavody and Mala Komyshevakh reported a need in winter NFI kits, including winter clothes, shoes, blankets, sleeping bags, power banks, etc. According to local residents, this is needed because returns took place to homes that were damaged and looted, and returnee households did not receive such assistance last winter.

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## Accountability to Affected Populations

Starostas interviewed for this assessment reported that in their view the levels of assistance received by their community was fair and in line with local needs, when compared to neighbouring settlements and hromadas. In Kamianka Starosta reported there was additional need for ESKs, as those received thusfar are not enough to cover all the needs of the population. Starostas in Mala Komyshevukha and Velyka Komyshevukha reported having enough humanitarian assistance and shelter repair kits for their settlements.

Several Starostas reported challenges related to coordination with international aid providers. According to them, the chain of reporting needs from the settlement-level up to international partners involves many intermediaries including hromada, raion and oblast authorities. This can lead to delays or miscommunications and affect assistance delivery.

Three Starostas reported to go through the hromada (admin 3) level, and one said to go straight to the raion-level authority (admin 2). Another reported to request assistance directly from local volunteer organisations without reporting to higher administrations. One Starosta said they preferred to communicate directly with INGOs, as this could speed up assistance delivery, but that they did not know how to contact or request support directly from an international actor.

Local residents in all of the assessed settlements reported, that all the communication about deliveries of upcoming assistance, needs of local population and feedback about received assistance is going through starostas of the assessed settlements. Notably, local residents reported they know about governmental hotlines where they can leave their feedback or request assistance but are not aware of any similar mechanisms with international partners. When asked, local residents said they did not believe they can somehow influence the type and quality of the assistance they receive.

## Recovery & Reconstruction

Out of seven assessed settlements, only KIs in Mala Komyshevukha and Velyka Komyshevukha reported that emergency shelter repairment kits which they received were enough to meet the needs of population in emergency recovery of residential buildings. Starosta in Kamianka reported about insufficient amount of ESKs to cover the population needs. In other settlements, both KIs and local residents stated that emergency shelter repairment kits are no longer relevant for the needs of reconstruction.

Local residents in Kamianka, Dovhenke and Topolske reported they received emergency shelter repairment kits prior to the winter of 2022-2023, which they used to restore their homes as much as possible. Now, according to these local residents, delivery of more building materials for more durable solutions such as cement,