

Rapid Cash Feasibility Assessment Khersonska Hromada, Khersonska Oblast

January 2024
Ukraine

KEY MESSAGES



Most of the assessed consumers (80 of 117) reported that they usually **travel from their own settlements to Kherson city** to access supermarkets and withdraw cash.



Regular shelling was overwhelmingly the biggest barrier for retailers to open and consumers to access cash and markets, whether in their own settlements or in Kherson city.



The majority of assessed consumers (67 of 117) **expressed a preference for cash assistance** over in-kind.

CONTEXT & RATIONALE

Khersonska hromada, located on the right bank of the Dnipro river (4-5 km from the frontline), was under the control of the Russian government from March 2022 until November 2022 when it was regained by Ukraine. Due to its proximity to the frontline, the hromada is subject to regular artillery shelling and drone attacks which interrupt daily life. Additionally, [in June 2023 the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant was severely damaged](#), resulting in the flooding of [at least 80 settlements](#) downstream on both sides of the river bank.

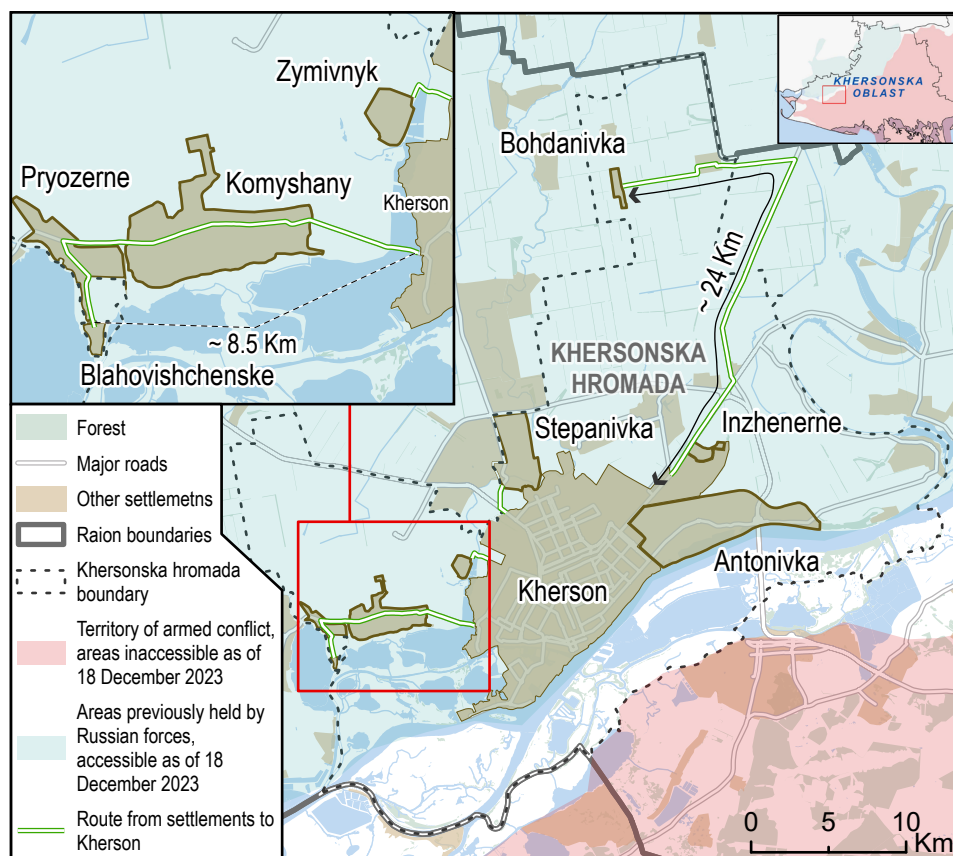
As of November 2023, oblast authorities report a total hromada population of over 90,000 with around 70,000 people living within the hromada center, Kherson city, and the remaining 20,000 spread across the 15 smaller settlements in the hromada. This assessment focused on 8 settlements: **Antonivka, Komyshany, Stepanivka, Zymivnyk, Pryozerne, Inzhenerne, Bohdanivka, and Blahovishchenske** with a combined population of about 14,000.

This assessment was initiated by the Cash Working Group's Task Team on Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) Feasibility in order to assess whether cash assistance would be feasible in the smaller settlements of Khersonska hromada outside Kherson city.

METHODOLOGY:

Task Team partners Caritas Ukraine and Polish Humanitarian Action interviewed a total of 10 retailers and 117 consumers in the assessed settlements. Due to the security situation, interviews were conducted mostly via phone. Data collection took place from the 18 December 2023 to 5 January 2024. **Findings presented in this factsheet should be considered indicative of the overall situation.**

Map 1: Assessed settlements in Khersonska hromada and their distances to Kherson city where many respondents access both cash and markets.



Access to Cash and Markets

Of the 117 consumers interviewed, **80 (68%) said that they usually accessed markets in Kherson city.**¹ More than half (43 of 80) get to the city using public transport, about a third (24 of 80) by car, and 12 on foot (mostly those from Zymivnyk). The other 32% (37 of 117) of consumers chose their own settlement as their usual market location (though 9 of those said they also frequent markets in Kherson). Consumers in **Komyshany** and **Stepanivka** (two of the bigger settlements in the hromada) were more likely to predominantly shop in their own settlements than in Kherson.

In **Bohdanivka**, the assessed settlement furthest from Kherson city, all 10 of 10 consumers reported that due to the distance to Kherson (see Map 1), the lack of public transportation, and the poor road conditions, they mainly accessed markets within Bohdanivka, where item availability is reportedly limited (see section on item availability).

The main barrier related to market access was overwhelmingly the **active shelling in the area**, as mentioned by 113 out of 117 (97%) consumers. All retailers surveyed (10 of 10) also felt that shelling negatively impacted their business. Checkpoints were listed as a security-related barrier by a small number of consumers who usually travelled to markets in Kherson city (5 of 80). The main physical barriers to market access across all settlements included lack of transportation (27 of 117), damaged roads (27), and reduced market hours (23). At the same time, 24 out of 117 (21%) of respondents, mostly from **Zymivnyk** and **Komyshany**, stated that there was no impact on their physical access to the market.

"We have no working shops in Antonivka, [and] no electricity for more than a year. There was one ATM, but it is broken. It is possible to get to [Kherson] city, but a very big problem for us is the constant daily shelling."

- Consumer in Antonivka

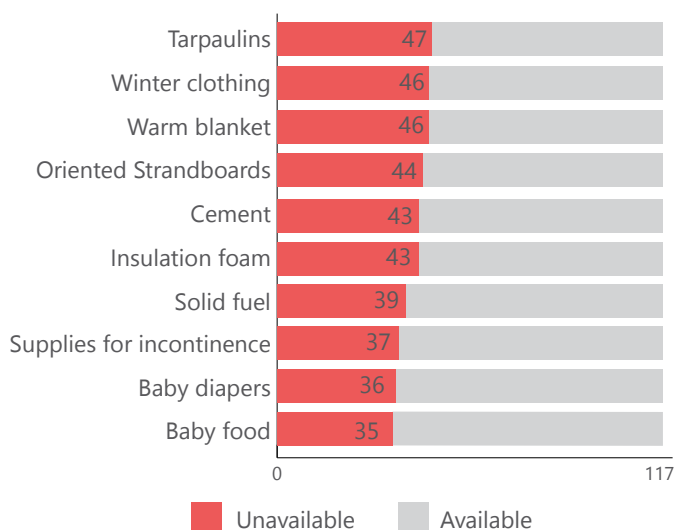
The majority of consumers (101 of 117) reported that they usually access cash in Kherson city, with the exception of **Bohdanivka** where half (5 of 10) accessed cash within Bohdanivka, mostly from the post office. Of all assessed consumers, 29 of 117 (25%) withdraw cash at the cash desk of supermarkets rather than banks or ATMs. Just over half (64 of 117) of consumers reported facing barriers in accessing cash including ATMs and banks not operating in their area (20), insufficient funds in their accounts (18), unsafe transportation to the ATM or bank (14), and high cost of transportation (13). Consumers in **Antonivka**, **Bohdanivka**, **Inzhenerne**, **Komyshany**, and **Stepanivka** were generally more likely to report barriers to accessing cash than those in **Blahovishchenske**, **Pryozerne**, and **Zymivnyk**.

Item Availability and Affordability

According to [REACH's Joint Market Monitoring Initiative \(JMMI\)](#), in December 2023 essential items such as food, hygiene items, medications, and warm clothes were available in Kherson city. Similarly, 78% (62 of 80) of consumers who usually shopped in Kherson city said all items were available. However, a significant number of consumers reported that warm clothing, solid fuel, and shelter repair materials were not available throughout the hromada (see Graph 1).

While there may currently be decent supply of essential items in Khersonska hromada, throughout the South macro-region² the proportion of retailers who rely on a single supplier for food and hygiene items is the highest compared to other macro-regions (over 65%), according to [the JMMI](#). Thus, there is some potential vulnerability if the existing single supply chains are disrupted and retailers are not able to access alternate suppliers.

Graph 1: Least available items as reported by consumers



In **Bohdanivka**, items were reportedly less available when compared to the other assessed settlement. All 10 of 10 consumers reported no availability of chicken, baby food, infant or adult diapers, solid fuel, shelter repair materials, or winter clothing. The same consumers said they were not able to easily shop in Kherson city or other settlements, suggesting that such materials may need to be provided in-kind in Bohdanivka.

Interestingly, a **lack of demand** was mentioned by 2 retailers (one in Komyshany and one in Pryozerne), both of whom explained that there is no demand for items that are distributed as in-kind humanitarian aid. Of the 117 consumers interviewed, 108 reported receiving food kits, of which 93 received food kits regularly,³ 104 reported receiving hygiene kits, of which 44 received hygiene kits regularly, and 81 had received one-time cash assistance.⁴ Consumers

1. A "usual" or "primary" market location is the settlement where a consumer typically purchases the majority of their basic items.

2. The South macro-region is comprised of Khersonska, Mykolaivska, and Odeska oblasts.

3. A standard 30-day food parcel includes wheat flour, pasta, oil, canned meat, canned beans, oats, sugar, and salt.

4. Interviewed consumers were mostly beneficiaries of Task Team partners, thus there may be some bias in these figures.

indicated that they were not able to eat as much flour, cereals, pasta, and sunflower oil as they receive in the monthly food kits, and more than half (67 of 117) expressed a **preference for cash assistance over in-kind** (see Graph 2). Respondents said they would use cash assistance for shelter repair materials, medicines, heating, and meat.

Graph 2: Consumer preferences for modality of humanitarian assistance



The majority (85 of 117) of consumers surveyed reported that prices had increased over the 2-4 weeks prior to data collection. One vendor reported that some suppliers charge more because of the high risk involved in delivery of products to the area. High item prices prevented 74 respondents (64%) from buying all the items they needed, and 8 of 10 interviewed retailers said they allow customers to purchase on credit.

A price comparison with the [JMMI](#) suggests that items prices in smaller shops in Komyshany, Zymivnyk, and Pryozerne may be comparable to the average prices in the oblast, but more data is needed to verify this assumption. One consumer from Pryozerne, for example, explained that while some shelter repair materials were available in Kherson city, the prices were too high, so consumers prefer to purchase these items in Mykolaiv where prices are reportedly lower.

Conclusion

To conclude, Kherson city has a fairly well-functioning market, where residents throughout the hromada can access many of the goods they need. However, the **regular shelling**, lack of transportation, and lower item availability presented barriers for the assessed consumers in the smaller settlements outside Kherson city. While the majority of interviewed consumers can and do access markets in Kherson city, it is important to consider the personal safety risk that these consumers take to travel throughout the hromada. Cash assistance can be a useful short-term solution to a lack of product availability in these smaller settlements as it enables some consumers to afford travel to other market locations, but provision of certain items in-kind may also be warranted. It is important for humanitarian actors to carefully consider the different security factors and risk involved with different modalities of assistance provision, as well as potential harm to long-term market functionality in cases where in-kind aid is reducing demand for items that would otherwise be available at local markets. It is advisable for actors to consider [market-based programming](#), focusing on supply and availability in existing market structures when determining whether certain items should be provided in-kind.

It is equally important to take in to account the preferences of the assisted population. The findings of this assessment indicate a **preference for cash assistance** among the assessed population who seek to purchase items not regularly provided as in-kind assistance such as shelter repair materials and medicines. However, findings also suggest that settlements furthest from larger cities may be more likely to need some items in-kind due to lower item availability and increased barriers to accessing markets in other areas. While this cannot be conclusively stated based on the data collected, the case of Bohdanivka, the assessed settlement furthest from Kherson or any other larger settlement, demonstrated increased barriers in market access and notably lower item availability within Bohdanivka. Despite this, 5 of 10 interviewed consumers in Bohdanivka still expressed a preference for cash assistance only, and 4 of 10 expressed a preference for both cash and in-kind assistance (with the final consumer having no preference), which again demonstrates the importance of taking in to account the preferences of the population.

METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

This assessment was initiated by the Cash Working Group's Task Team on Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) Feasibility in order to assess market functionality and accessibility in hard-to-reach areas, including those within 30km of the frontline, newly accessible areas, and areas experiencing acute emergency situations where regular programming may be difficult. Data was collected by two members of the Task Team: Caritas Ukraine and Polish Humanitarian Action. Structured key informant interviews took place over the phone between 18 December 2023 and 05 January 2024.. **Findings should be considered indicative of the situation.**



Challenges and Limitations

Due to security concerns, the survey was conducted mainly by phone, the planned number of interviews with retailers and consumers could not be achieved due to difficulties in recruiting a sufficient number of participants, as well as power cuts prevented cell service. Further, the data collection took place during the holidays and two massive rocket attacks before and after the New Year.

Contacts of people who received humanitarian aid were mainly used for the surveys, such people are usually from vulnerable categories of the population.