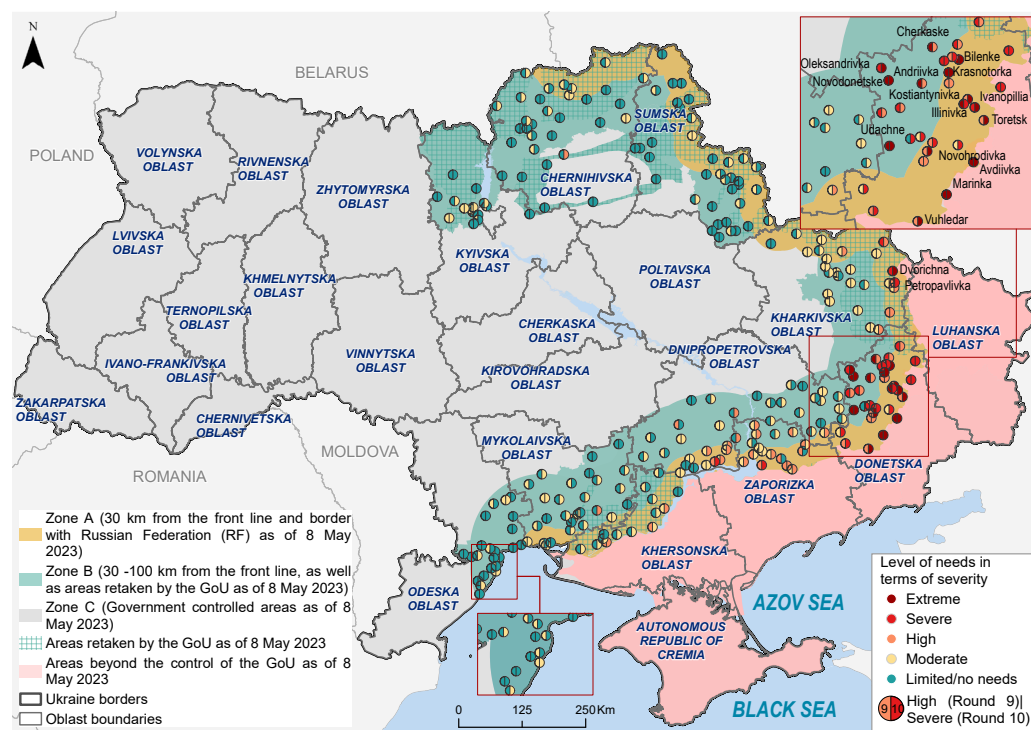# UKRAINE: HUMANITARIAN SITUATION MONITORING FOCUS ON THE AREAS CLOSER TO THE FRONT LINE

May 2023 | Ukraine

CONTEXT & RATIONALE

Escalation of the war in Ukraine on 24 February 2022 resulted in wide-scale displacement of people, with an estimated 5.1 million people displaced internally across Ukraine (as of 23 May 2023).[1] Furthermore, wide-scale destruction of civilian infrastructure across the country weakened people's access to essential services. While the situation with power outages that drove high levels of humanitarian needs during winter has stabilised, various types of infrastructure continued to be damaged, deteriorating people's access to essential services, including water supply, healthcare services, and education. **The crisis particularly exacerbated challenges in areas** closer to the front line that were found to be experiencing higher levels of overall needs and in some of which the highest numbers of people in need were registered.

REACH's Humanitarian Situation Monitoring (HSM) aims to provide updated, multi-sectoral information on the needs across Ukraine, and particularly in conflict-affected areas. The current situation overview provides key indicative findings on settlements in Government-controlled areas (GCAs) with a focus on settlements within closer proximity to the front line. **The findings are indicative** and are based on the data collected through Round 10 of HSM in May 2023. Round 10 Situation Overview in the areas beyond the control of the GoU can be accessed via bilateral request.

Map 1: Settlements by overall level of need and change over the month prior to data collection (settlements assessed in Zones A and B)[2]

KEY MESSAGES

- Across the assessed areas, **settlements in Donetska oblast appeared to have a higher level of reported needs and service access constraints than settlements in other oblasts**, indicating a deteriorating humanitarian situation due to the ongoing hostilities.
- The main drivers of humanitarian need across the assessed settlements were **safety concerns, limited access to housing, financial services, medicines, and healthcare services**.
- Access to housing appeared to be one of the main areas of concern in settlements 30 km from the front line with KIs in **73% of the assessed settlements in this zone reporting a 'stress' level of need or above in relation to access to safe and adequate housing**. The situation is further exacerbated by the reported damage to housing.
- Findings suggested an **increasing level of need for repair of damaged/ inadequate housing in Zones A and B**. This might further exacarbate humanitarian situation in the assessed settlements, especially for the **returnees** that were most reported among the groups of people least to meet their everyday needs.
- KIs in 16% of the assessed settlements highlighted a need for information on how to register for assistance, which likely suggests **additional barriers to people's access to humanitarian aid** along with reported constraints accessing essential services.

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✳ DRIVERS OF HUMANITARIAN NEED

Overall, in most of the assessed settlements, the level of need was either limited or moderate, particularly in Zone C.[3] However, the situation closer to the front line continued to present higher levels of need. **Therefore, the current analysis will focus primarily on the areas closer to the front line (Zones A[4] and B[5])**. Of the **257** settlements assessed in Zones A and B (**97** and **160** settlements, respectively), KIs in **23% (n=58/257)** reported that the **level of overall need was 'high' or above** (*see the Annex on p.7*). The majority of these settlements were located in Zone A **(n=40/58)**.

Findings from May 2023 (Round 10) suggest a slight increase in the number of settlements with reported 'high' or above level of overall need compared to **17% (n=43/257)** of settlements in March/April 2023 (Round 9). **The situation was particularly concerning in Donetska oblast**.

100% of the assessed settlements in Donetska oblast reportedly had a 'high' or above level of overall need (n=31/31)

In Zone A, **40% (n=40/97)** of the assessed settlements reported a 'high' or above level of overall need (*see the Annex on p7*). Furthermore, **out of the 27 settlements with reported 'extreme' and 'severe' needs, nearly all were found in Donetska oblast (n=23/27)**. **KIs in the majority of settlements in Donetska oblast also reported that the situation had worsened over the month prior to data collection (n=26/31)**.

The deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Donetska oblast may be attributed to the continuing escalation of hostilities in the region. **Lyman, Bakhmut, Avdiivka, and Mariinka remained the main area of fighting** at the time of data collection.[6]

Figure 1: % of settlements by reported top priority needs and by round (n=257 settlements assessed in Zones A and B)
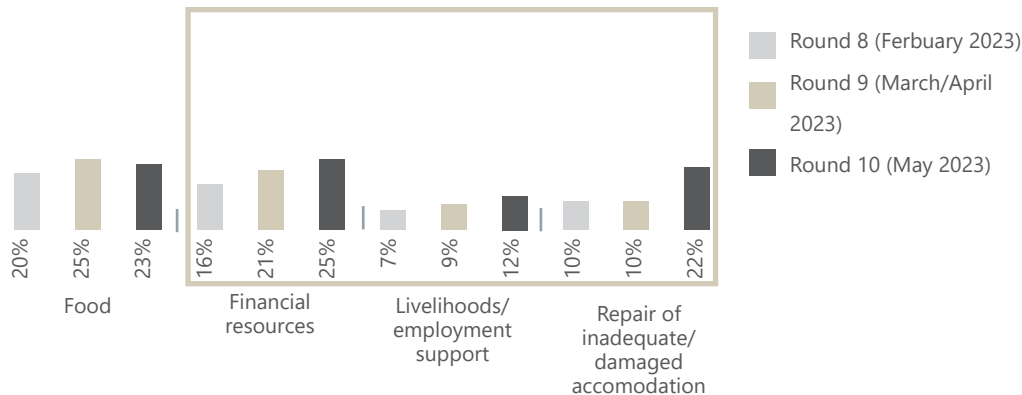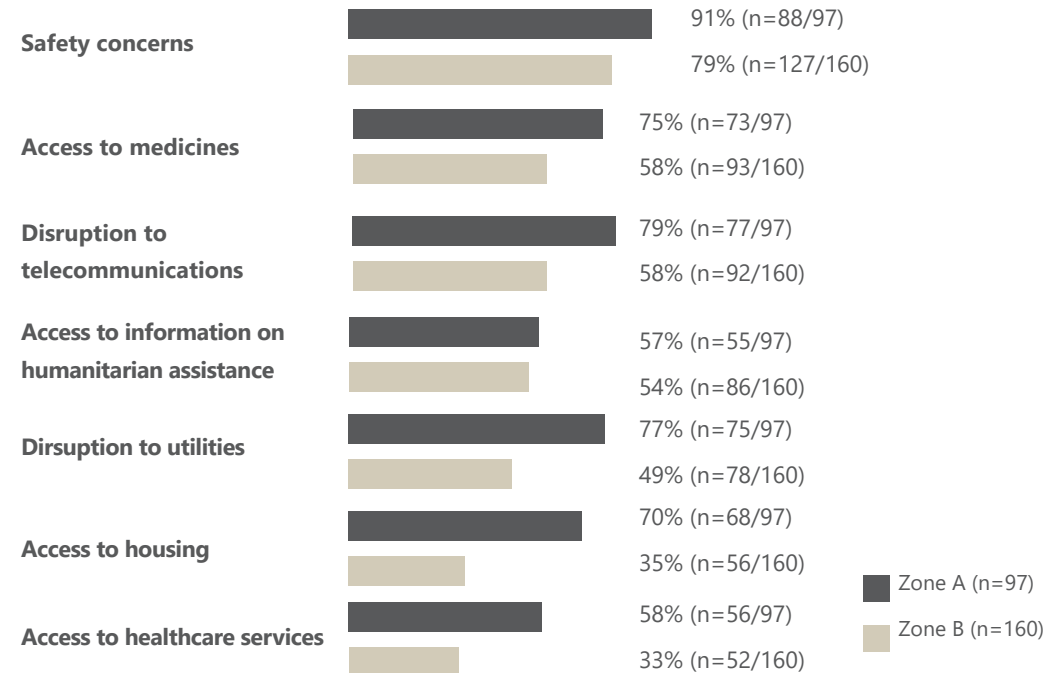

Round 8 (Ferbuary 2023)
Round 9 (March/April 2023)
Round 10 (May 2023)

Food: 20% / 25% / 23%
Financial resources: 16% / 21% / 25%
Livelihoods/employment support: 7% / 9% / 12%
Repair of inadequate/damaged accomodation: 10% / 10% / 22%

Figure 2: % of settlements by reported main concerns in the 14 days prior to data collection and by Zone

Safety concerns: 91% (n=88/97) — 79% (n=127/160)
Access to medicines: 75% (n=73/97) — 58% (n=93/160)
Disruption to telecommunications: 79% (n=77/97) — 58% (n=92/160)
Access to information on humanitarian assistance: 57% (n=55/97) — 54% (n=86/160)
Dirsuption to utilities: 77% (n=75/97) — 49% (n=78/160)
Access to housing: 70% (n=68/97) — 35% (n=56/160)
Access to healthcare services: 58% (n=56/97) — 33% (n=52/160)

Zone A (n=97)
Zone B (n=160)

⊗ Restrictions of movement

While KIs in **47% (n=120/257)** of the assessed settlements in Zones A and B reported that there were no administrative restrictions (e.g. block posts, check-ups, other limitations imposed by the authorities) on movement into or out of the settlement, KIs in **73% (n=71/97)** of the settlements in Zone A reported **at least some restrictions on movement**.

All the settlements assessed in Donetska oblast reported some level of restricted population movement. Overall, KIs in **11 out of 31** assessed settlements in Donetska oblast r**eported that the movement was not possible at all, namely in Bakhmut, Zvanivka, Velyka Novosilka, Vuhledar, Komar, Yasnohirka Lyman, Avdiivka, Hrodivka, Dobropillia,** and **Marinka**. There were only 7 such settlements in Donetska oblast in March/April 2023 (Round 9).

🍲 FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS

Overall, KIs in assessed **settlements in Zones A and B most frequently cited food and financial resources as the top priority needs**. Additionally, KIs in over a quarter of the assessed settlements highlighted concerns surrounding access to food and financial resources (**34%** and **29%**, respectively), suggesting such barriers to accessing food are one of the drivers of humanitarian need across the assessed settlements.

Kis in **19% (n=48/257)** of the assessed settlements in Zones A and B reported that **at least 1-9% of the population had not been able to access sufficient food** in the 14 days prior to data collection. This is consistent with the situation in relation to access to food reported in March/April 2023 (Round 9). **Notably, in Zone A, the share of settlements with reported 'high' or above level of need** (see the Annex on p7) **in relation to accessing food was 33% (n=32/97)** in May 2023 (Round 10). This suggests that food access is particularly limited closer to the front line. Moreover, KIs in Bakhmut, Velyka Novosilka, Vuhledar, Lyman, Avdiivka, Marinka, and Dvorichna (Donetska oblast) reported that more than half of the population in these settlements had not had access to sufficient food in the 14 days prior to data collection. This likely reflects the worsening humanitarian situation in the areas experiencing intense hostilities.

In Zones A and B, the main barriers to accessing food in the assessed settlements were related to economic factors, aligning with what was observed in previous HSM rounds, with KIs in most settlements reporting that the **lack of money and high prices were the primary obstacles to accessing food**. REACH's Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI)[8] also reported that the East appeared to be the most affected by such economic barriers.

Furthermore, areas closer to the front line experienced additional barriers to accessing food, such as the **lack of items in stores** which was reported by **23% (n=21/93)** of the settlements in Zones A and B with reported above-'minimal' level of need in relation to accessing food), and the lack of functional stores **(20%, n=19/93)**. The latter was particularly prevalent in Zone A where **16 out of 19** settlements had KIs reporting this barrier.
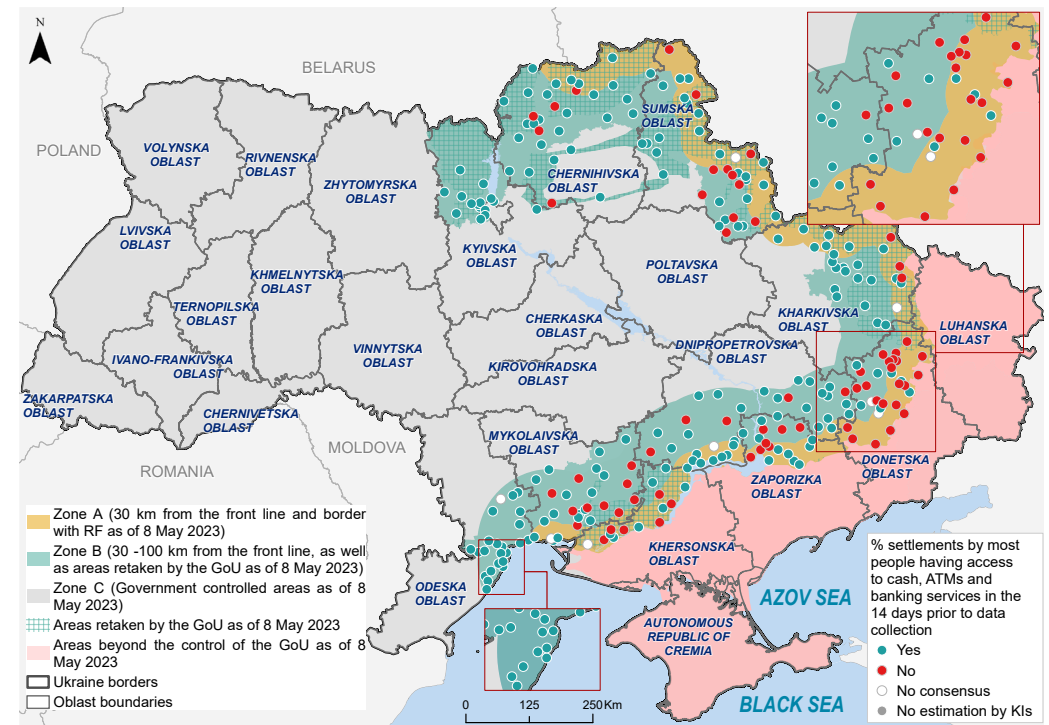
In terms of access to markets, KIs in **20% (n=52/257) of the settlements in Zones A and B reported a 'high' or above level of need** (nearly two quarters thereof located in Zone A).
The most reported barrier to people's access to markets to purchase goods in the 14 days prior to data collection was that **roads to the markets were dangerous due to presence of mines/UXO** (reported by **28 out of 90** settlements with above-'minimal' level of need in relation to access to markets). This barrier was predominant in Donetska oblast **(n=20/28)**, in particular in Kramatorskyi raion **(n=10/20)**.

🏧 Access to financial services

Overall, **the findings suggest a slight decrease of the share of assessed settlements where KIs reported that most people had not had access to cash, banks, and ATMs:** from **33% (n=84/257)** and **30% (n=76/257)** in February 2023 (Round 8) and March/April 2023 (Round 9), respectively, to **27% (n=69/257)** in May 2023 (Round 10). Furthermore, **the situation appears to have improved in Zone A**. Compared to **55% (n=53/97)** of the settlements in this Zone where KIs reported that most people had not had access to cash, banks, and ATMs in the 14 days prior to data collection in March/April 2023 (Round 9), the share of such settlements was **36% (n=35/97)** in May 2023 (Round 10). Similarly, JMMI[9] reported in May 2023 that the overall access to banking services and ATMs had slightly improved, likely due to the relative stabilisation of the situation with electricity. **HSM findings indicated that challenges in terms of access to financial services still persisted in settlements primarily located in Kramatorskyi, Pokrovskyi (Donetska oblast), and Zaporizkyi raions (Zaporizka).** Access to financial services was reportedly mainly hindered by lack of functioning banks/financial institutions in the area, as well as lack of work opportunity.

Map 2: Reported access to ATMs and financial services in the 14 days prior to data collection, by settlement

Zone A (30 km from the front line and border with RF as of 8 May 2023)
Zone B (30 -100 km from the front line, as well as areas retaken by the GoU as of 8 May 2023)
Zone C (Government controlled areas as of 8 May 2023)
Areas retaken by the GoU as of 8 May 2023
Areas beyond the control of the GoU as of 8 May 2023
Ukraine borders
Oblast boundaries

% settlements by most people having access to cash, ATMs and banking services in the 14 days prior to data collection
● Yes
● No
○ No consensus
● No estimation by KIs

🏠 ACCESS TO HOUSING

Overall, **KIs in 32% (n=81/257) of the assessed settlements in Zones A and B reported a 'high' or above level of need in relation to accessing safe and adequate housing** in the 14 days prior to data collection. Additionally, findings indicate **an increase in the share of settlements with reported need for repair of inadequate/damaged accommodation.** This was reported as a priority need by KIs in **23% (n=56/257)** of the assessed settlements in Zones A and B in May 2023 (Round 10) compared to **10% (n=26/257)** in March/April 2023 (Round 9). Notably, REACH's Calibration Assessment[10] findings also showed housing repairs among the top self-reported priority needs (**11%** of surveyed HHs).

Damage to housing was the most reported barrier to accessing safe and adequate housing (HSM Round 10). Noteworthy, based on the same Calibration findings, **6%** of assessed HHs reported **conflict-related damage or defects** to their accommodation, with the highest shares of HHs found in **Donetska (34%)**, **Khersonska (30%)**, **Mykolaivska (22%)**, and **Kharkivska** oblasts **(22%)**. The recent estimates of the Kyiv School of Economics also indicated persisting damage to housing due to the war, with estimated number of damaged housing units having increased from **149,300** in January 2023 to **163,000** in May 2023.[11]

The situation appeared to be particularly concerning in Zone A with KIs in **73%** of the assessed settlements in the Zone reporting a 'stress' level of need or above in relation to access to housing *(see the Annex on p7)*. Furthermore, KIs in **12** settlements reported housing/accomodation as one of the priority needs for people in the settlement. Those were **Toretsk, Vuhledarsk, Druzhkivka, Illinivka, Kostiantynivka, Ivanopillia, Avdiivka, Novohrodivka** (Donetska oblast) **Dvorichansk, Kupiansk** (Kharkivska)**, Semenivka,** and **Horodnia** (Chernihivska).

Most reported barriers for residents to access safe and adequate housing (n=146 settlements with above-'minimal' level of need in this relation)

❌	💰❌	🏠
58%	**8%**	**7%**
Damage to housing/shelters	**Unaffordable rent**	**Lack of rental properties**

In terms of barriers to accessing housing for displaced people within the settlement, KIs most often indicated **lack of rental properties** and **overcrowded communal shelters.**

🫱 PROTECTION

Findings suggested an increase in the number of settlements where KIs reported safety as one of the main concerns: **84% (n=215/257) of the assessed settlements in Zones A and B in May 2023 (Round 10) compared to 32% (n=83/257) in March/April 2023 (Round 9).**

Figure 3: % of settlements by most reported safety concerns (n=257 settlements assessed in Zones A and B)

Threat of missile attack	**64%, (n=164/257)**
Exposure to armed violence/shelling	**30%, (n=78/257)**
Presense of landmines/UXO	**21%, (n=53/257)**
Lack of bombshelters	**14%, (n=37/257)**
Damaged/destroyed property	**14%, (n=35/257)**

The same patterns indicated in the Figure 4 above were observed in Zone A as well, with **threat of missile attacks** reported as a protection concern in **68% (n=66/97)** of the assessed settlements in the Zone, **exposure to armed violence/shelling** reported in **49% (n=48/97)** of the settlements, and **presence of landmines/UXO** in **33% (n=32/97)**. According to the Ukrainian authorities, the **landmines/UXO contaminate approximately 30% of the country's territory**,[12] which likely hinders humanitarian access to some territories.
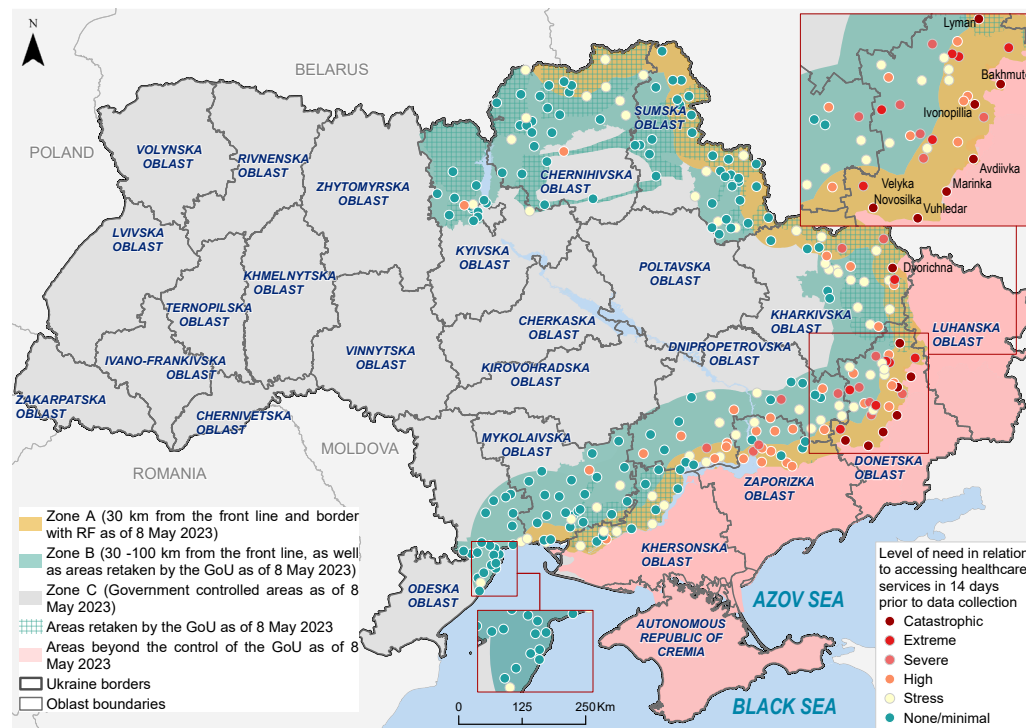
Among the population groups less able to meet their everyday needs, KIs most often identified **returnees** (reported by KIs in **35% (n=91/257)** of the assessed settlements in Zones A and B). KIs in a third of the assessed settlements **(34%, n=88/257)** indicated that **people directly harmed by the ongoing violence** were among the groups of people less able to meet their everyday needs. In a number of settlements **(14%, n=37/257)**, KIs also highlighted **pregnant and lactating women** among such vulnerable groups.

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⚕ ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE SERVICES

Overall, KIs in **23% (n=59/257)** of the assessed settlements indicated that **at least 1-9% of people who needed healthcare services had been unable to access those** in the 14 days prior to data collection. **In Zone A, the share was almost twice as high with KIs in 38% (n=37/97) of the assessed settlements reporting a 'high' or above level of need in this relation** *(see the Annex on p7)*. Furthermore, **62% (n=37/60)** of the assessed settlements with reported 'high' level of or above level of need in relation to accessing healthcare services were in Zone A, suggesting that the limited access to healthcare services may be influenced by the proximity to the front line. A **'catastrophic' level of need in relation to accessing healthcare services (corresponding to most people (>50% of the population) in the settlement needing healthcare services having been unable to access those)** was reported by KIs in **Bakhmut, Velyka Novosilka, Vuhledar, Ivanopillia, Lyman, Avdiivka, Marinka** (Donetska oblast), and **Dvorichna** (Kharkivska).
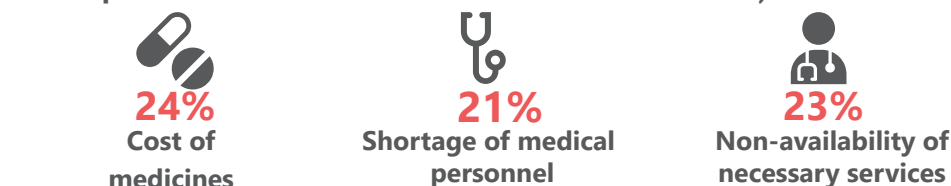
Healthcare services/facilities that people reportedly were unable to access included

Map 3: Settlements by level of need in relation to accessing healthcare services

laboratory and diagnostic services (reported by KIs in **30% (n=36/121)** of the settlements with above-'minimal' level of need in relation to accessing healthcare services), **specialty hospital care (28%, n=34/121)**, and **hospital care (24%, n=29/121)**.

Most reported barriers to accessing healthcare services (n=121 settlements with reported above-'minimal' level of need in this relation)

24% Cost of medicines	**21%** Shortage of medical personnel	**23%** Non-availability of necessary services

🩹 Access to medicines

Access to medicines was one of the most reported concerns highlighted by KIs in **65% (n=166/257)** of the assessed settlements. It is noteworthy that access to medicines appeared to be particularly limited in Zone A. Kis in **74% of the assessed settlements within 30 km from the front line reported that people experienced some barriers in obtaining essential medications**. KIs most often reported **cost of medicines** as a barrier in this relation, along with **lack of pharmacies** and **non-safety/ insecurity while traveling to pharmacy.**

🏃 ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS (AAP)

In terms of the modality of aid, KIs in **87% (n=224/257)** of the assessed settlements in Zones A and B reported a **preference for multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) for the majority of households in the settlement**, and **for in-kind assistance** in **66% (n=169/257)**. While in most of the settlements in these zones KIs did not report a clear preference for one specific type of aid over the other, KIs in **78** settlements reported preference for MPCA over in-kind assistance, and in **23** other settlements - preference for in-kind assistance over MPCA. With people in more than a half of these settlements also reportedly experiencing a 'high' or above levels of need in relation to accessing markets **(n=13/23)**, this likely suggests that limited access to markets might be driving the preference for in-kind aid in settlements within closer proximity to the front line.

Regarding the delivery of humanitarian assistance to settlements with reported preference for in-kind aid, the majority of KIs in these settlements selected **delivery by road** as the most reliable method **(87%, n=147/169)**.

In terms of humanitarian information needs, while most of them revolved around top priority needs (such as how to get money/financial support, food, or work), KIs in **16% (n=40/257)** of the assessed settlements in Zones A and B also highlighted the need for **information on how to register for assistance from humanitarian agencies**. This may indicate additional barriers for people in these settlements to access aid, along with the reported constraints to accessing essential items and services.

METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

Data collection in Government-controlled areas was conducted on **15 May - 29 May 2023** through phone interviews with **community key informants (CKIs)**: representatives from local government, local non-profit organisations (NGOs), and specific population groups (older persons, people with disabilities, children, women, internally displaced people (IDPs), returnees, and others). **317 settlements (towns and villages)** were assessed through a total of **1197 KI interviews**.

The settlements were grouped in three geographic zones within the GCAs:
- **Zone A**: Areas within 30 km range from the frontline at the time of sampling (08 May 2023), as monitored by LiveUA, and the state border with the Russian Federation. (**97 out of 317** assessed settlements)
- **Zone B**: Areas within 30-100km range from the frontline at the time of sampling, as monitored by LiveUA, Areas retaken by the GoU, and raions intersecting with these areas by 50% of the raion territory. (**160 out of 317** assessed settlements)
- **Zone C**: Remaining GCAs. (**60 out of 317** assessed settlements)

'**Administrative centre**' approach was applied in all zones:
- **All administrative centres** (including hromada, raion, and oblast centres) were sampled in **Zones A and B**.
- Only in the case of Chernihivska oblast that did not include any settlements categorised as administrative centres within Zone A, the settlements were selected purposively among non-administrative-centre settlements.
- To avoid over-representation of settlements from specific oblasts in the overall sample of Zone B, rural settlements (administrative centres) were purposively sampled in these oblasts (Dnipropetrovska, Odeska).
- In **Zone C**, as it covers a wider area and larger number of settlements, only **three administrative centres were purposively sampled in each oblast**.
- Settlements with a **pre-war population size of less than 1,000 people were excluded from the sample**.

To account for a possible higher variation in needs in units with a larger population size (irrespective of the type of the settlement: urban, urban-type, or rural), the number of KIs per settlement differed for the following **3 categories**:
- **3 KIs** in every selected settlement with population size of 1,000-9,999*,
- **5 KIs** in every settlement with population size of 10,000 – 99,999*,
- **7 KIs** in every selected settlement with population size of over 100,000*.

* Population size prior to the start of the war in February 2022.
All KI responses from the same settlement were aggregated to have one data point

for each variable per settlement. The **Data Aggregation Plan** used the **average approach** to aggregate the settlement responses by using a severity scale in cases of **single-choice** questions. In case of **multiple-choice** questions, the rule was to select all responses that have been reported by at least 1 out of 3 respondents, 2 out of 5 respondents, and 3 out of 7 respondents in the settlements per the relevant categories, as presented above.

In this situation overview, the data represents a percentage of settlements (towns or villages) for which KIs reported a specific answer to a survey question. These statistics **cannot be extrapolated to represent a proportion (%) of the population, and thus should be interpreted as indicative** rather than representative. Given the small and unrepresentative sample, these results only provide an indicative understanding of the situation in the assessed areas.

ASSESSMENT COVERAGE

ENDNOTES

[1] IOM, General Population Survey Round 13: Snapshot report | Population figures and geographic distribution, 11-23 May 2023.
[2] Please refer to the Methodology on page 6 of this Situation Overview for more information on the 'zoning approach'.
[3] Ibid
[4] Settlements within 30 km from the frontline and the state border with the Russian Federation
[5] Settlements within 30-100km distance from the front line, areas retaken by the GoU, and raions intersecting with these areas by 50% of the raion territory.
[6] Suspilne News, Bakhmut and Maryinka remain at the epicenter of hostilities on the fronts - General Staff, 24 May 2023.
[7] Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union, 455 days of full-scale war in Donetsk region: summary of events, 30 May 2023
[8] REACH, Joint Market Monitoring Initiative: Round 14, May 2023.
[9] Ibid
[10] REACH, Humanitarian Situation Monitoring: Calibration Assessment, May 2023.
[11] Kyiv School of Economics, Over $54 billion in damage to Ukraine's housing stock as a result of a full-scale war as of the end of May 2023
[12] UN OCHA, Ukraine Humanitarian Response 2023: Situation Report, 26 May 2023.

ANNEX: SEVERITY SCALE DEFINITIONS

Overall levels of needs

Extreme: loss of life or imminent risk of loss of life as a result of lack of access to services, food, shelter, or other life-saving assistance.
Severe: living conditions are very poor in the settlement and most people are finding it difficult to meet basic needs, leading for concerns for the mental or physical wellbeing of the population.
High: most people still able to meet their basic needs, but living conditions are very poor in the settlement.
Moderate: most people still able to meet their basic needs, but situation with living conditions requires attention, monitoring.
Limited/no needs: most people are continuing to meet their needs as normal, without significant deterioration of living conditions in the settlement.

Levels of sector-specific needs

Catastrophic: Most people in the settlement were unable to access necessary services/items (>50% of the population or more than 1 in 2 people).
Extreme: Many people in the settlement were unable to access necessary services/items (25-50% of the population or up to 1 in 2 people).
Severe: Some people in the settlement were unable to access necessary services/items (10-24% of the population or up to 1 in 4 people).
High: A few people in the settlement were unable to access necessary services/items (1-9% of the population or up to 1 in 10 people).
Stress: Situation of concern that requires attention/monitoring, but is manageable/normal, but people were still able to access necessary services/items.
None/minimal: Situation is under control/as normal, people were able to access necessary services.

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