

October 1, 2018

Humanitarian Shelter Damage Assessment

Contact Line Communities in GCA, Luhansk Oblast, Ukraine



Photo:Tatiana
Stepykina/NRC

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For additional information, contact: ua.info@nrc.no

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List of Acronyms

ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
GCA	Government-controlled area
HH	Household
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally displaced person
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
INSO	International Safety Organisation
NGCA	Non-Government controlled area
NRC	The Norwegian Refugee Council
UNHCR	The UN Refugee Agency



1 Background

While the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine enters its fifth year and, although several ceasefire agreements remain formally in force, a permanent resolution of the conflict remains elusive. Despite the decreased scale of clashes between the opposing sides, violations of the ceasefire happen regularly with the exchange of small arms, artillery, and heavy weapons, resulting in newly damaged or destroyed housing on a monthly basis. This, in combination with the fact that neither the Ukrainian government, nor donors, international organisations and INGOs have been able to meet the complete shelter needs generated from the outbreak of the armed conflict and, consequently, has resulted in unmet shelter needs in Luhansk oblast (GCA).

In Luhansk oblast (GCA), the contact line established as of February 2015 (Minsk agreements), covers three districts: Popasna, Novoaidar and Stanytsia Luhanska. This means that almost all damaged or destroyed houses are located in these areas, within 20 km of the contact line. The area of the city of Lysychansk is still considered affected due to the clashes that took place there in late 2014. Affected families are often unable to recover on their own due to many reasons, including labour and material grounds, currency devaluation (UAH) and interrupted access to markets. This means that there are remaining unmet needs. Although trends show a significant decline in ceasefire incidents and localised hostilities, occasional shelling may still cause additional casualties among civilians, together with damage to dwellings, infrastructure or institutions. Since active hostilities remain a reality in eastern Ukraine, historical trends suggest that recurrent damage and destruction of civilian housing and infrastructure in communities along the contact line will likely to continue in the future.

1.1 Limitations

One of the significant issues for humanitarian actors operating in the field of shelter assistance is the absence of relevant up-to-date information about all registered damage, except for those who have benefited from interventions. This makes it difficult to determine the nature of damage in any given area. The main sources of information on damaged dwellings are the local authorities at the district level, and they usually have outdated information. This means that the information shared among actors repeatedly leads to confusion during planning or gap identification. The data provided by the Shelter Cluster relies heavily on information received from authorities and other operating agencies. However, the large volume of that information is difficult to process and, as of 2017, the data provided were offered in different formats and languages, making it difficult to compare one data set to another, or to identify discrepancies or duplications.

Utilising the same information flow used in the past by most actors, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) was able to collect data from the local authorities of Popasna, Novoaidar and Stanytsia Luhanska districts, inclusive of village councils and civil-military administrations. Their combined data indicated a number of around 3,700 damaged addresses in Luhansk oblast (GCA); based on NRC staff's direct observation, NRC estimates this number to be much smaller. Given the conflicting and often confusing information available, NRC decided to

conduct an assessment in order to understand the real situation in terms of shelter needs across Luhansk oblast (GCA). The assessment included cross-checking the information at the lowest recognised local authority level (city or settlement councils), conducting technical surveys house to house, and undertaking interviews with key informants. Around 3,100 addresses were checked through direct visits, including the 492 that are being repaired or reconstructed by NRC in 2018. Some of the addresses reported to NRC represented either non-residential premises (55), those already repaired (237) or those not actually damaged (44). The information below is based on the identified number of 1,289 households (HHs) which are in need of shelter interventions and are eligible for future interventions. It should additionally be noted that the number of HHs which have not received any assistance for shelter repairs from any organisation is 865. The remainder of the addresses have already been supported with some assistance for light repairs, but supplementary assistance will be needed to fully cover the needs to restore their shelters.

1.2 Assessment Methodology

The assessment includes both quantitative and qualitative field information. Before arranging direct visits to the affected households, the addresses were verified by the local authorities at the village or community level. This allowed NRC to make a selection of addresses to visit and correct irrelevant information. However, further analysis showed that this did not guarantee 100% exclusion of non-residential buildings.

The geographical disaggregation of the conducted technical household surveys and interviews with key informants throughout Luhansk oblast (GCA) is shown in Annex 1. As can be seen, almost all of the villages and cities are located in the area of 20 km from the frontline.

The survey was conducted by technically skilled and/or technically trained NRC staff, and the following was measured: the type of the damage to the structure in order to identify further potential interventions, household basic economic characteristics, vulnerability metrics and the necessity of legal assistance or other support to achieve shelter recovery. A critical aspect of this analysis was that the technical survey was conducted in the presence of a representative of the household. There remains a considerable number of cases where people do not have proper documentation proving their ownership of the land occupied by their damaged dwelling, as many families had privatised only their homes, and not the land on which it is located. NRC has a functional internal referral system for further legal counselling, but in some cases, this has not led to families proceeding with their shelter recovery.

The qualitative information included interviews with key informants in the following locations:

- Lysychansk (Head of the Capital Construction Department in City Council);
- Popasna (Deputy Head of the District Administration; Senior Inspector of Architecture, Urban Development and Land Management of the Popasna City Council Executive Committee);
- Zolote (Deputy Head of the Civil-Military Administration);
- Verkhniokamianka (Deputy Head of the Local Council);

- Novotoshkivske (Chief Specialist on Housing and Communal Services of the Civil-Military Administration);
- Troitske (Secretary of the Local Council Head);
- Stanytsia Luhanska (Acting Head of the Village Council);
- Verkhnia Vilkhova (Deputy Head of the Civil-Military Administration);
- Nyzhnia Vilkhova (Deputy Head of the Civil-Military Administration).

The objective of the interviews was to receive information as concerns: the policy of authorities as relates to newly damaged properties, residence of internally displaced persons (IDPs), population flow, and existing policies/practices for repair of these houses.

The areas where NRC teams conducted an on-site technical assessment are located in Popasna, Novoaidar, Stanytsia Luhanska districts and the city of Lysychansk, and included 27 locations:

DISTRICT	SETTLEMENT	TOTAL PROPERTIES WITH REMAINING NEEDS
Lysychansk	Lysychansk	9
Novoaidar district	Triokhizbenka, Shchastia	38
Popasna district	Bila Hora, Bilohorivka, Verkhniokamianka, Hirske, Druzhba, Zolotarivka, Zolote, Katerynivka, Komyshevakha, Loskutivka, Nyzhnie, Novotoshkivske, Oleksandropillia, Popasna, Troitske, Vrubivka	588
Stanytsia Luhanska district	Valuiske, Verkhnia Vilkhova, Vilkhove, Makarove, Nyzhnioteple, Plotyna, Stanytsia Luhanska, Pshenychne, Artema	654
TOTAL		1,289

As can be seen above, the two main geographical areas with a significant number of remaining damaged houses are: Stanytsia Luhanska and Popasna districts (with 96% of the remaining needs). In general, the main residential building types affected are single-story, single-family houses. There still remain areas affected by localised hostilities along the contact line in Luhansk oblast (GCA), according to INSO reports; thus, they are subject to the risk of resumed military activity, which may cause new damage and/or destruction at any time.

1.3 Inaccessible Locations

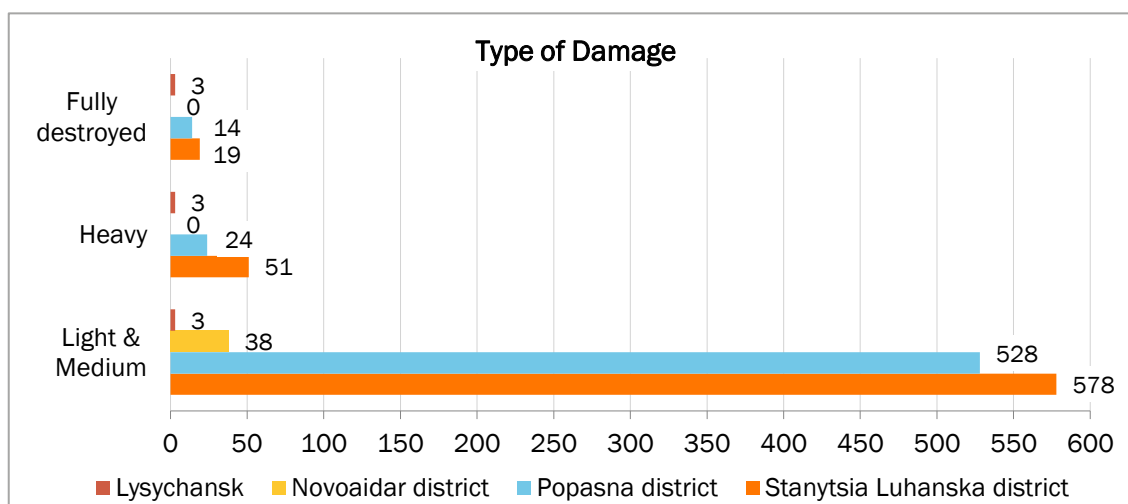
It should be noted that the area of assessment did not include several villages (see the table below) which are currently inaccessible for NRC staff due to existing internal security regulations. However, information regarding the current situation of shelter needs was obtained through contacting the local authorities; this could not be independently verified.

DISTRICT	SETTLEMENT	TOTAL PROPERTIES WITH REMAINING NEEDS
Novoaidar district	Krymske (580 families), Lobacheve (250), Lopaskyne (56)	There are no damaged houses. Local authorities do not have access to Lobacheve and Lopaskyne themselves; thus, they cannot provide information on the damages scale and real needs.
Popasna district	Vyskryva (104)	10 HHs are in need of materials for light repairs due to damaged windows and roofs in Vyskryva.
Stanytsia Luhanska district	Pishchane (15), Heivka (100), Saryi Aidar (320)	In Saryi Aidar 20 HHs are in need of materials for light repairs, 7 HHs – for heavy repairs. In Pishchane and Heivka there are no damaged houses.
GRAND TOTAL		37

As can be seen in the table above, there exist shelter needs in these non-accessible villages that require intervention from the humanitarian community.

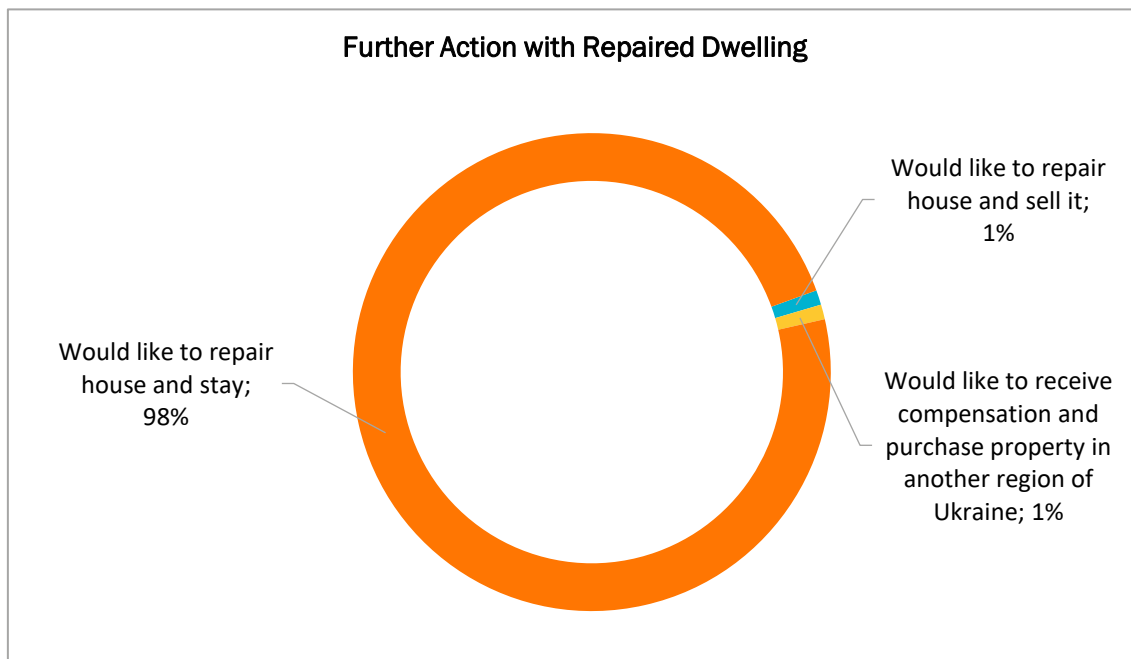
1.4 Findings

The damage assessment shows that the houses still requiring light and medium repairs are most prevalent, despite the efforts of the humanitarian actors and increased possibilities of a response from government programmes. The data show that in Novoaidar district, the only need is for light and medium repairs, while in the other two districts and in the city of Lysychansk, there remains a need to repair or rebuild damaged and destroyed dwellings. The total disaggregation per type of damage shows that 90% need light and medium repairs, 6% need heavy repairs and 4% require full reconstruction (having been completely destroyed)¹.



¹ 28 houses assessed did not clearly meet criteria for one category or another, and were assessed as having between medium and heavy repair requirements

All key informants mentioned that they expect a return of significant numbers of displaced people to the previously inhabited locations. In addition, in many instances of direct information collection from relatives or persons responsible for the properties, it was indicated that in case of conflict resolution or a significant improvement in the security situation (e.g. end of military activities by all sides), many of those who fled the area after the conflict started intend to return to their places of origin. This would create an additional need for support.



As can be seen from the chart above, almost all surveyed households (which were accessible at the time of the survey) expressed an intention to stay in the same location after repair or reconstruction of their damaged houses. At the same time, only one household would like to receive compensation and purchase property in the same city/location. This seems to indicate that if a compensation mechanism existed, few among those surveyed would opt to live anywhere but in their original place of residence.

The damage analysis shows that among houses with light and medium repair needs, 28% require repair of the roof. There is also need for wall and foundation repair, glass replacement and some internal finishing works. For those households which had previously received assistance, the most typical needs are internal finishing work and repair of wall cracks which started to appear over time. Such cases were not considered by most of the organisations because priority was given to the recently occurring damage and destruction, and because of the absence of certain assistance modalities (e.g. repair of heavy damage) at the start of humanitarian interventions (2014/2015). There is also a number of cases in which the material assistance earlier provided was not used per its conditionality due to a lack of other resources at the household level.

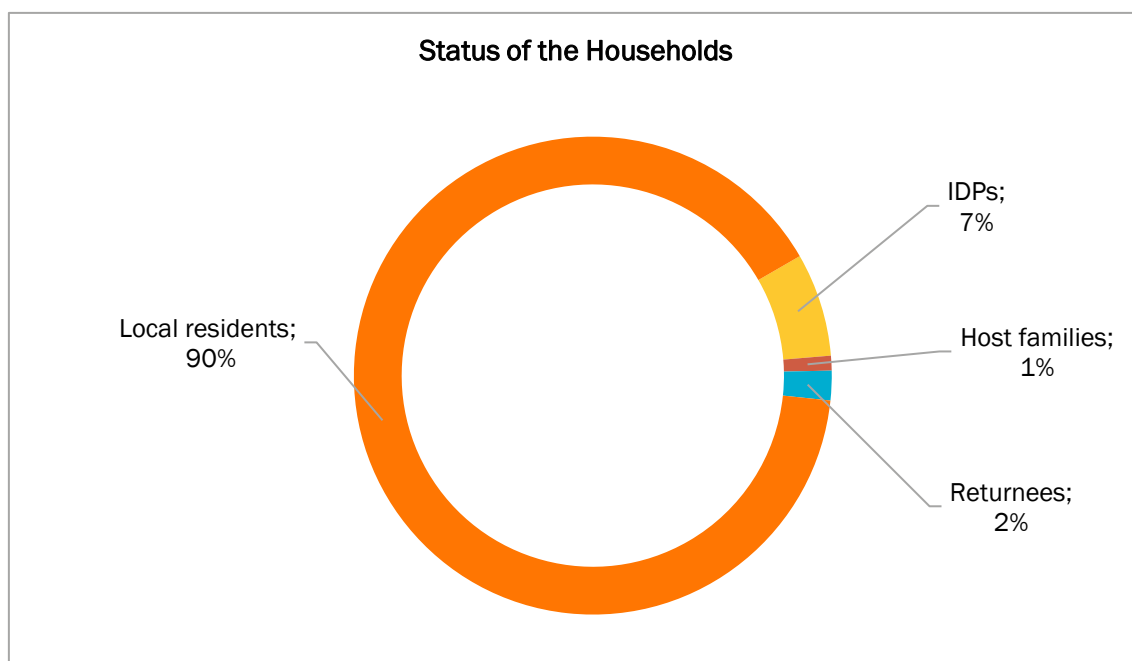
More than 40% of heavily damaged dwellings are in need of roof and wall repair. The preliminary disaggregation per square meter of the dwelling for core houses reconstruction is as follows: 25% - 30 m², 40% - 42 m², 35% - 54 m².

Almost 90% of households do not have access to centralised water supply and waste water system. Most commonly, wells and boreholes are used as water sources and ground pits are widely used as a substitute for a sewage system in the rural area of Luhansk oblast (GCA). In many cases, especially for older houses, pit latrines are not built according to standards and their volume is not high enough to cover the current needs of the household. For desludging, some people order sewage pumping machines in those areas where such services are provided, but more frequently a new pit latrine is dug at some distance from the home and all sludge is then deposited there.

As for social infrastructure, key informants noted that in all locations, except Stanytsia Luhanska, both primary and secondary educational, medical and administrative facilities have been operating normally. However, for all locations, a common need is the renovation of transport routes. This would increase transport opportunities for the population, suppliers of materials and service providers.

The current analysis of the households shows that the number of family members averages 2.05. This low number is explained by the fact that a significant part of the population residing in the vicinity of the contact line in Luhansk oblast (GCA) are elderly persons and the fact that a large portion of the population fled the region after the onset of the conflict. According to information provided by the local authorities, the percentage of elderly people varies from 50% to 70%, with no significant difference between towns and villages, nor between different districts.

The percentage of female-headed households is 61% among the total number surveyed. This can be further disaggregated to 56% among families in need of heavy repairs, and 44% among families in need of full house reconstruction (core house assistance). This should be taken into consideration during the planning stages, when the owner-driven approach is promoted because it will require significant external technical support.

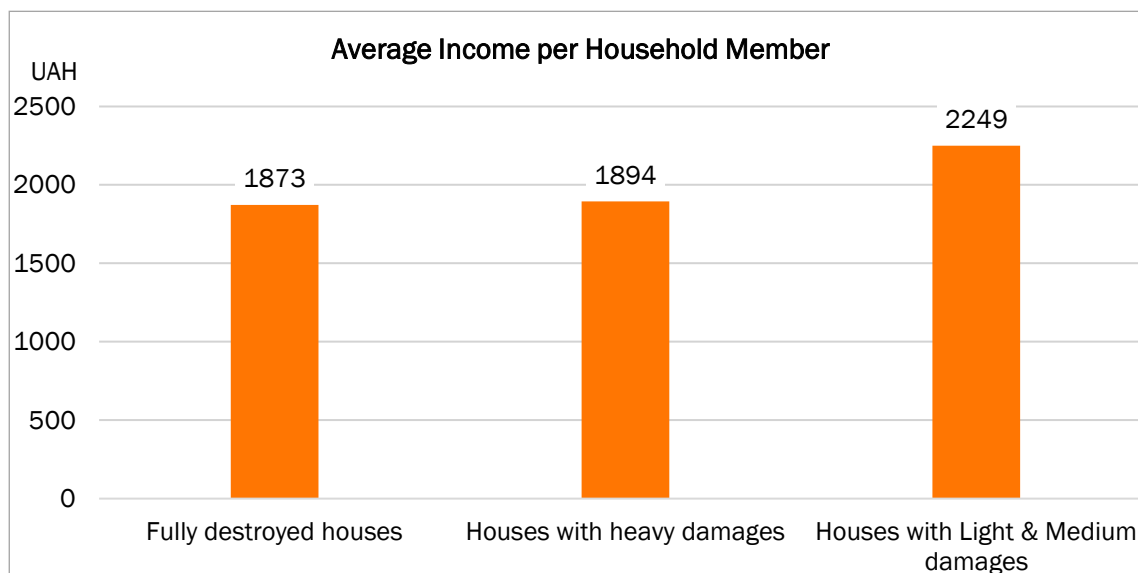


IDPs who have left the area, are not represented significantly among surveyed households and the highest number is in Stanytsia Luhanska district. The number of host families represents the lowest data set, as that was not the focus of the assessment.

The percentage of households which have members representing some of the most common vulnerabilities (persons with disabilities, people living with chronic diseases) is 62%. At the same time, this number is significantly lower among families in need of core house assistance at 25%. It should be noted that, among key informants, unemployed people of pre-retirement age are considered to be among the most vulnerable both among local communities and IDPs due to the lack of income and employment opportunities. It is assumed that general vulnerability may increase in the areas assessed in the coming years due to overall inflation rates and to the revision of social legislation that outlines who and how the local population is eligible for subsidies (i.e. many families expect to lose state support). However, in some locations (Zolote and Popasna), there are some economic development perspectives related to the potential for increased coal production.

The conflict has decreased access to livelihoods, increased the percentage of families relying on fixed income and inflated prices of shelter-related materials and services. This has created an atmosphere in which families are more economically vulnerable than before. In addition, there is a consistent shortage and lack of access to construction materials and to the service market in most villages located near the contact line, except for in larger towns. Simultaneously, prices tend to be higher than average in those locations where the possibility for livelihoods and reconstruction exists.

Another major issue that families face as a barrier to receiving adequate shelter assistance is a lack of formal documentation regarding tenure rights. Approximately 9% of families, who would otherwise qualify for assistance, face challenges receiving (or do not engage in receiving) assistance due to the complex processes required for them to legally build on the land on which they reside. In addition to the time it takes to pass through these procedures, there are also additional costs.



Except in some cases, the average income is less than that minimum wage; that is not enough to cover basic needs, let alone shelter reconstruction costs. Information regarding

income levels clearly shows that beneficiaries in general are not able to conduct repair and/or reconstruction works without external assistance.

1.5 State Shelter Support Programmes

It should be taken into account that, at present, there is no functional state programme of compensation for damaged or destroyed housing (since there is no existing legislation in this regard). All the initiatives led by state agencies or government are related to repair and renovation of infrastructure (educational, medical facilities, water supply infrastructure), municipal buildings or addressing durable solutions for the displaced population. No funding is allocated for the repair of private houses; the main priority for the authorities at the oblast level is stimulating the socio-economic development of territorial communities to improve living standards and economic activity. The *“Development Strategy of Luhansk Oblast through 2020²”* focuses mainly on the development of the social infrastructure, providing families in need of shelter assistance with few options other than looking for external support or using negative coping mechanisms (e.g. driving people deeper into debt). The humanitarian community has carried the major part of this burden since the conflict started; the main shelter actors operating in Luhansk oblast (GCA) currently are UNHCR, NRC, ICRC and ADRA.

To date, several state and regional programmes for supporting and adapting IDPs have been developed and accepted, such as:

- Regional Target Programme for Support and Adaptation of IDPs in the Luhansk Oblast for 2017-2018³
- Plan of measures for organizing the restoration of damaged (destroyed) social transport infrastructure, housing facilities and life support systems on the territory of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts⁴
- Strategy of social and economic development of Luhansk Oblast until 2020
- State Target Programme for Restoration and Building Peace in Eastern Region of Ukraine⁵

The *“Regional Target Programme for the Support and Adaptation of IDPs in the Luhansk Oblast for 2017-2018”* provides for the allocation of UAH 150,000 from the regional budget of Luhansk oblast to ensure IDPs' rights for housing, which includes the development of projects for the construction of energy-efficient housing for IDPs; allocation of land for the construction of housing for IDPs; a social housing fund for rent by IDPs; and the construction of cottage towns for IDPs. The allocation of budget funds for the restoration of damaged and destroyed housing is not provided for by the programme. The control over the implementation of the program is entrusted to the Deputy Head of Luhansk Regional State Administration,

² Development Strategy of Luhansk Oblast 2020 (http://loga.gov.ua/sites/default/files/collections/strategy_ukr_20-07-2017.pdf)

³ The Regional Target Programme for Support and Adaptation of IDPs in the Luhansk Oblast for 2017-2018 (<http://document.ua/pro-zatverdzhennja-regionalnoyi-cilovoyi-programi-shodo-pidt-doc302290.html>)

⁴ Plan of measures for organizing the restoration of damaged (destroyed) social transport infrastructure (<http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1002-2014-%D1%80?lang=ru>)

⁵ Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine #1071, 13.12.2017 (http://search.ligazakon.ua/l_doc2.nsf/link1/KP171071.html)

the responsible executor of the programme – the Department of Social Protection of the Population of the Regional State Administration.

The “*Plan of measures for organizing the restoration of damaged (destroyed) social transport infrastructure, housing facilities and life support systems on the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts*” focuses on the determination of the scope of destructions, the list of destroyed infrastructure facilities, attraction of resources of international organisations, development of the regulatory framework. The allocation of budget funds for the restoration of damaged and destroyed housing is not provided for by the programme. The main responsible stakeholders under the mentioned Plan are: the Ministry of Temporarily Occupied Territory and IDPs; the Ministry of Regional Development; Construction, Housing and Communal Services of Ukraine; the Ministry of Infrastructure; the Ministry of Justice; the Ministry of Economic Development; the Ministry of Finance; other concerned central executive bodies, local authorities, local self-government bodies (by consent).

The “*Strategy of Social and Economic Development of Luhansk Oblast until 2020*” provides for the restoration and construction of a regional infrastructure for the provision of medical and social services. The allocation of budget funds for the restoration of damaged and destroyed housing is not provided for by the programme. Participants in the implementation of the Strategy: the Luhansk Civil-Military Administration, local self-government bodies, regional state organisations of Luhansk oblast (responsible persons are not indicated).

The “*State Target Programme for restoring and building peace in eastern regions of Ukraine*” provides for a volume of funding from 2018 to 2020 of UAH 4.76 billion for: major repairs of educational institutions, health care facilities, social protection facilities, and restoration of municipal housing stock for IDPs. The allocation of budget funds for the restoration of damaged and destroyed housing is not provided for by the programme. The Head of the Programme is the Minister of Temporarily Occupied Territories and IDPs (MinToT). The executors of the Programme's activities are: the Ministry of Temporarily Occupied Territory and IDPs; the Ministry of the Environment; the Ministry of Natural Resources; the Ministry of Economic Development; the Ministry of Infrastructure, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Regional Development, the Ministry of Social Policy, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the State Service for Emergency Situations, the National Police, the Donetsk, Luhansk, Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv Regional State Administrations, local government in the specified areas, the National Academy of Agrarian Sciences.

All key informants confirmed the absence of state support allocated for repair of damaged or destroyed private houses. The only programme at the district level was identified in Popasna, where affected households are eligible to receive UAH 20,000 as a one-time assistance to cover medical needs, or as compensation for damaged property in the form of construction materials. At the same time, support from NGOs remains the main type of support in all locations. So far, the analysis of the interventions by humanitarian agencies in Luhansk oblast (GCA) in terms of shelter assistance shows that planned targets will not cover all the needs of population in 2018.

While there are significant efforts from humanitarian actors in covering houses with light and medium damages, the number of houses requiring structural repairs or total reconstruction is still high. One of the main obstacles for including such houses into the assistance programmes is the absence of the ownership documents at the household level. The process

of receiving relevant justification documents from the courts takes from 3 to 12 months; this makes it difficult to resolve in terms of the common project implementation period.

One of the solutions for registering such cases of assistance could be the provision of several justification documents, such as a statement authorised by local authorities showing that the beneficiary resided in the damaged building for a long period of time (usually several years before the conflict) and registration in the beneficiary's passport at the same address. The failure to resolve this issue leads to the situation where living conditions of people progressively deteriorate over a period of time and, in the end, can leave them without any available shelter.

The current analysis of legal needs along the contact line in in Luhansk oblast (GCA) shows that around 9% of the people owning residential property do not have title documents to prove their ownership. With increased levels of unemployment and poverty compared to the pre-conflict period, the average monthly income of ~ UAH 2,000 per household (as identified during the survey) along the contact line and the actual minimum cost of living as high as UAH 1,841 per person, the cost for restoring or obtaining title documents (e.g. of up to UAH 10,000 in some cases) is an expense that an average family living in a damaged property in conflict-affected areas simply cannot afford. Although a state mechanism exists to allow such families to apply for an exemption from court fees, there currently is a rupture in communication between the national, regional and district levels, and, in reality, this is not being effectively implemented. Regrettably, this situation has led to families being deprived of an opportunity to access repair/reconstruction assistance provided by humanitarian actors because they cannot provide documents proving their property rights.

1.6 Recommendations

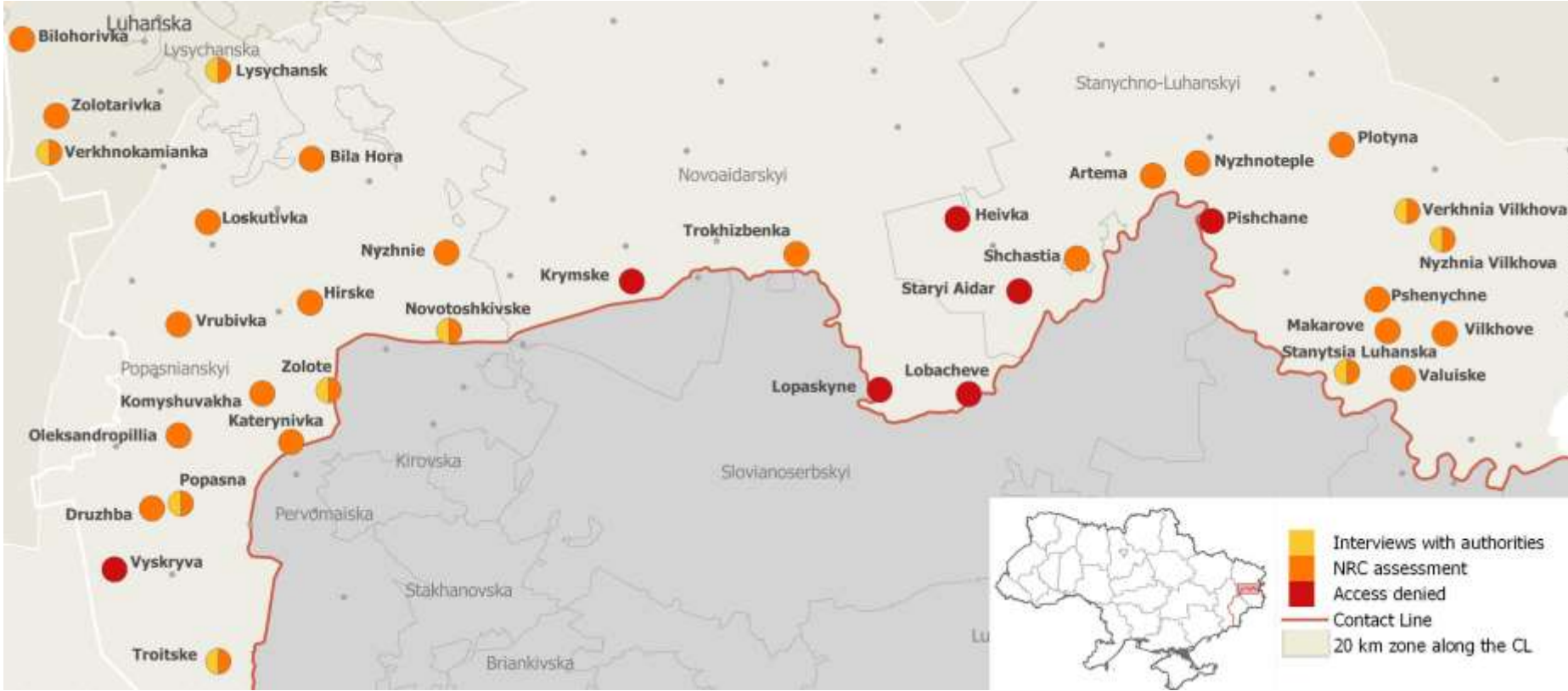
The findings of this damage assessment demonstrate that the humanitarian community has come very close to meeting the humanitarian shelter needs of the most vulnerable and exposed areas of Luhansk oblast (GCA). NRC recommends:

- The remaining humanitarian shelter needs can be met in Luhansk oblast (GCA) in 1-2 years at a cost that is not unreasonable or incomparable to what the international community has already spent during similar timeframes in the area. The work should continue until the caseload has finalised.
- In order to continue, donors must not step back from funding HRP shelter activities at this point, despite the significant progress that has already been made.
- A similar damage assessment in Donetsk oblast (GCA) would help affirm evidence and granular level information regarding the humanitarian shelter needs there, which can likely be similarly addressed in a short time frame.
- Additional, relatively small levels of funding and innovative thinking are required to address barriers to final occupancy for some households, particularly around legal tenure, winterisation, material, and WASH needs. Household surveys and coordination with existing programmes is needed to determine the scale of such needs.
- While the pace and scale of new damage in frontline areas of Luhansk oblast (GCA) continues to decrease, it still does occur on a regular basis. Instead of relying on an

annual humanitarian project cycle, newly damaged shelter needs should be included in ongoing activities for immediate assessment and assistance. The Shelter Cluster, in coordination with government counterparts, can play a key role in identifying the appropriate “trigger” mechanism for such a response.

- Affordable housing, social housing and compensation mechanisms should be supported as strong pathways towards sustainable and responsible durable solutions for those who have been displaced by the conflict, as well as for those civilians whose homes have been damaged or destroyed, but who remain in place waiting for assistance.

Annex 1. Map of the Technical Survey and Key Informant Interviews





NORWEGIAN
REFUGEE COUNCIL

This report was made possible through the support of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)



www.nrc.no
Norwegian Refugee Council
Prorizna 18/1-G
01034, Kyiv, Ukraine