

# UKRAINE COVID-19 Protection Monitoring Report

Of 119 isolated and conflict affected settlements along the contact line

10 April 2020

## Key Message

If it were to spread in the areas along the contact line, COVID-19 would have a **devastating impact**. Several factors contribute to the situation of **heightened risk** in the settlements situated within five kilometers of the contact line in government-controlled areas of eastern Ukraine:

- The population in these settlements along the contact line includes a **large proportion of older persons** (at least 41 per cent) who suffer from the insecurity, lack of services, stress and economic downturn associated with the armed conflict;
- The infrastructure for prevention of the COVID-19 (such as plentiful clean water for hygiene) and response (medical facilities) has been **weakened by the conflict**.
- In order to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 in Ukraine, on March 12, the Government introduced quarantine measures, which included the closure of public transportation. This has had **important implications** for these mainly rural communities.

## Presence on the ground

UNHCR's NGO partner Proliska has a **network of community workers** who live in settlements along the 'contact line' and collect information on preparedness levels and the impact of quarantine measures in these settlements.



**40**

Community workers



**119**

Settlements



**242k**

Population

## Summary of Findings

### **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

**36 settlements** had no public transport before the quarantine. Now 71 settlements have no public transport functioning because of quarantine.

### **ACCESS TO CASH**

**107 settlements** lack ATMs and cash-less payments in local groceries are rarely an option. Most residents receive their pensions through bank cards.

### **ACCESS TO FOOD**

**54 settlements** did not have grocery shops before the quarantine and depended on transport or mobile grocery stores.

### **ACCESS TO WASH**

**14 settlements** in Donetsk reported not being able to ensure their personal hygiene because they do not have clean water or no water at all.

### **ACCESS TO HEALTH**

**49 settlements** report that FAPs are not available. In 21 settlements, residents depend on public transportation to reach the nearest FAP.

### **TELECOMMUNICATION**

Villagers **depend on phone communication** in these locations. However, access to credits (scratch cards) have become a challenge.

## Recommendations

- Provide **mobile banking services** in those settlements that have been cut off from both ATMs and public transport (list is available);
- For provision of humanitarian food assistance, **prioritize settlements without grocery stores and public transportation**;
- Humanitarian actors to consider **provision of hygiene items**, since these are rarely available in local shops;
- Home-based care programs to **deliver necessary medication** to people who can no longer reach pharmacies;
- Medical services will need to become **more mobile to reach these settlements**; support with transportation of medical workers may be required;
- Advocate for **improvement of mobile phone coverage** in settlements with poor connections; consider creative ways to support settlements so that they can call for support when needed.

## Results

### Main Findings

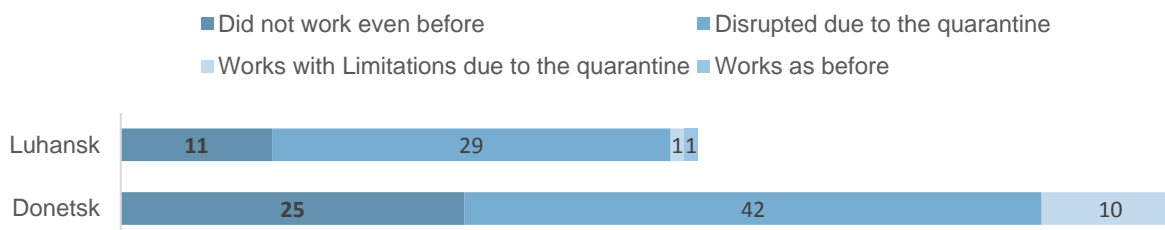
Over the past six years, armed conflict led to a collapse in the provision of basic services in many settlements along the contact line. Residents developed various coping mechanisms, **mainly relying on public transportation** to reach nearby villages and towns where basic services were still provided. The risk of COVID-19 and the quarantine measures have placed these coping measures under additional strain. As a result, the risks to vulnerable, conflict-affected persons have compounded.



### Access to Public Transportation

In 107 settlements, residents **face problems with availability of public transport**. It is important to note, that in 36 settlements, public transport was not available before the quarantine. At the same time in 71 settlements, public transport stopped functioning because of the quarantine. These recent changes have created overwhelming obstacles for 129,422 persons to access basic services. There is only one settlement in Luhanska Oblast where public transport works as it did before the quarantine.

**Availability of public transport (# of monitored settlements per oblast)**



### Access to Cash

Most residents **receive their pensions and social benefits through a bank cards** (ATM machines). Similarly, national and international non-government actors normally choose bank transfers to deliver cash assistance. However, ATMs are scarce in the settlements along the contact line. Protection Monitoring revealed that **107 out of 119 settlements lack ATMs**. Cash-less payments are rarely an option as very few grocery stores in these settlements allow for cash-less payments. Since residents no longer have access to public transportation, they face difficulties in getting access to the cash they need to buy food, medicine and other goods.

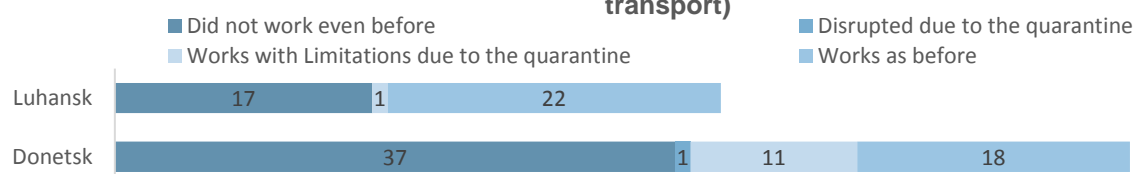


### Access to Food

In 54 of the monitored settlements, grocery shops were not available before the quarantine. The residents of these settlements **depended on mobile grocery shops** or, more often, **would take public transport to neighboring villages** and towns to buy groceries. With the quarantine, some groceries reduced their working days/hours and product range; in one settlement in Donetsk Oblast, the only grocery closed; one mobile grocery in Donetsk region also stopped working. Because of transport limitations, **2,395 persons have restricted access to basic food products**. According to the protection monitoring data, the residents of 40 settlements received food parcels from humanitarian actors in March:

- 26 of the covered settlements have no access to public transport and there are no grocery shops;
- In 14 settlements there are grocery shops available.
- 29 isolated settlements with no transport and shops were not covered with food assistance.

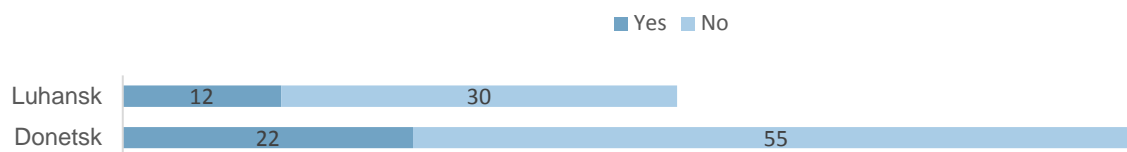
**Availability of Grocery Shops (# of monitored settlements with no or disrupted transport)**



### Access to Water and Sanitation

The residents of 14 monitored settlements in Donetsk Oblast complained that they are **not able to ensure their personal hygiene** because they do not have clean water, and in some cases, **do not have water at all**. Hygiene items like soap and washing powder are rarely available in grocery shops in the 119 settlements. In March, humanitarian actors distributed hygiene items in 34 settlements. Finally, monitoring was conducted to verify if critical items like masks and sanitizers were available in shops in these settlements. Findings showed that none of the shops carried these items.

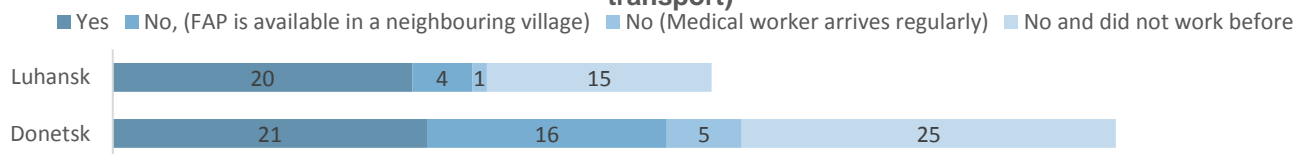
**Assistance with hygiene items by humanitarian actors (#of monitored settlements per oblast)**



### Access to healthcare services

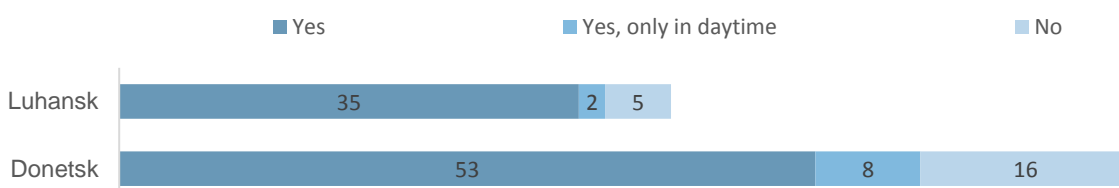
Residents of rural locations in Ukraine usually rely on FAPs (first medical aid points) for healthcare services. In areas along the contact line, the armed conflict resulted in closure or limited functionality of FAPs. In 49 out of 119 settlements, FAPs are not available. In 21 settlements, residents depend on public transportation to reach the nearest FAP. In the absence of public transportation, 11,551 inhabitants of 66 settlements have no access to basic healthcare.

**Availability of medical facility (#of monitored settlements with no or disrupted transport)**



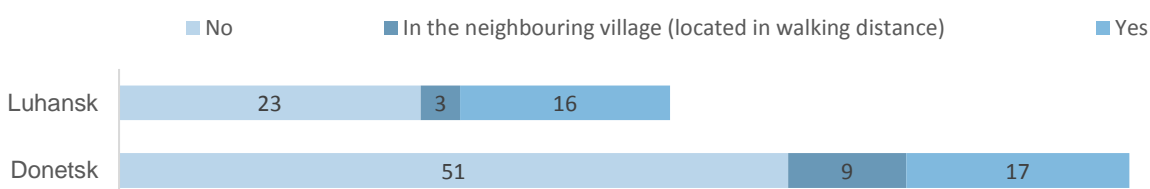
**Ambulances:** Even urgent medical assistance is not always available for people who live in these settlements. Due to insecurity and bad roads, **the ambulance does not serve 21 settlements** and comes only during daylight hours to 10 additional settlements.

**Coverage by ambulance (#of monitored settlements per oblast)**



**Pharmacies:** **Only 33 settlements out of 119 have pharmacies;** residents of a further 12 settlements can access pharmacies within walking distance in neighboring settlements. The residents of 74 settlements have no access to pharmacies.

**Availability of pharmacy (#of monitored settlements per oblast)**

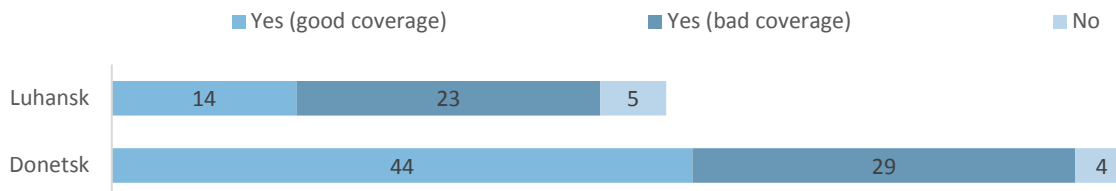




### Access to mobile network

During the quarantine, most people access services over mobile phones or internet. This is difficult for many persons living along the contact line, since some settlements do not have a stable mobile network, or any coverage at all. Mobile phone coverage is critical for access to healthcare during the COVID-19 outbreak, since people are instructed to call their family doctors in case of illness.

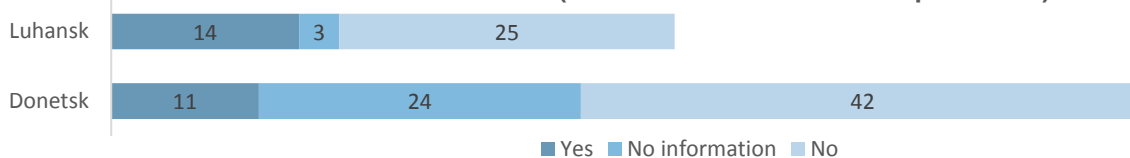
Mobile network (#of monitored settlements per oblast)



## Risk Factors

Since the global pandemic broke out, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians have returned home, including from countries with ongoing transmission. It was identified that in **25 settlements, there are persons who returned from abroad in March**. The number of persons who returned varies from one to six in different settlements. Not all returnees complied with self-isolation from the moment of their return. However, as of 31 March, there was one confirmed COVID-19 case in a monitored settlement in Luhanska Oblast.

Returned from abroad (# of monitored settlements per oblast)



## Conclusions

- The quarantine measures, especially restrictions imposed on the public transport, disrupted access to basic services for residents of settlements along the contact line. Their fragile coping strategies have been disrupted.
- In the coming weeks, residents will face a cash shortage if mobile banking services are not made available.
- Without public transportation and cash, residents of many settlements will be unable to purchase food, medicine and hygiene items.
- The healthcare system has been crippled by the six-year-long armed conflict and will face extreme pressures if faced with COVID-19 cases.
- Access to a stable mobile telephone network may have life-saving significance in the situation of quarantine; however, in some settlements, it is not available at all.

## Contacts

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