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COVID-19 WASH CLUSTER RESPONSE IN 2020 IN UKRAINE

The **COVID-19 pandemic changed the nature of the humanitarian response** in the Eastern Conflict Area (ECA) in 2020, in Ukraine. As many WASH activities would help to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the WASH Cluster established, very early in the response, a **WASH response strategy**, focused on reducing the spread of the virus through:

- Improving hygiene and Infectious Prevention Control (IPC) at Health Care Facilities (HCF) and other institutions, and within communities, prioritizing older people; and
- Communicating clear coronavirus risks to the population, through hygiene promotion or mass communication.

Key Achievements

Overall, in 2020, over 930,000 people received WASH assistance as a part of a COVID-19 response. Three quarters of those people live in Government-Controlled Areas (GCA), of Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts, while one quarter live in Non-Government-Controlled Areas (NGCA), which has been considerably more difficult to access.

WASH partners implemented 800 separate IPC activities at health facilities, assisting 110 secondary hospitals and over 600 other institutions, such as schools, orphanages, kindergartens, old people's homes or social centres.

COVID-19 RESPONSE NUMBERS

- 932,936 people** received WASH-related help during the COVID-19 response.
- 110 secondary hospitals** received improved hygiene support. **71 in GCA** areas and **39 on NGCA**.
- 14 hospitals in GCA** also received improved access to water and sanitation
- Over 600 other institutions** received improved hygiene support (schools, nursing homes etc.). Around **500 in GCA** and **100 in NGCA**.
- Over 43,000 individual vulnerable people** benefitted from hygiene kit distributions at household level (**28,000 in GCA** areas and **15,000 in NGCA**)

CONFLICT RESPONSE NUMBERS

- 720,000 people** were reached by "normal" WASH activities: 54 % from the HRP target for 2020. 450,000 people on GCA and 265,000k people on NGCA
- 350,000 people** received recovery-related WASH support (GCA areas only)
- 87,000 people** received improved access to sanitation through improved centralized sewerage and Washrooms at institutions

Government Controlled Areas

At the start 2021 partners have **provided cleaning kits at least once, to cover a 3-months period**, to 31 of 36 COVID-designated hospitals in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. However hospitals were designated in three waves (the last being added only at the end of 2020) are targeted for support in Q1 of 2021.

- All 18 COVID hospitals from the first wave** (13 in Donetsk oblast and 5 in Luhansk oblast) received at least one cleaning kit covering needs for three months. Six received assistance twice (either through kits or vouchers).
- In September 2020 **two more hospitals were added** and were assisted by partners before the end of 2020.
- The **third wave** of COVID-designated hospitals included ten hospitals in Donetsk oblast and six in Luhansk. Eight received cleaning kits support in Q4 2020. Just five of these newly added locations did not yet receive WASH support.
- 314 primary health care facilities** received hygiene support receiving comprehensive cleaning kits.

Outside of the Eastern Conflict Areas (ECA) no facilities received a full approach to improve IPC, however 58 secondary health care facilities, received lighter, mainstreamed, hygiene support in other oblasts.

WASH partners also **improved water and sanitation access** in 14 secondary health care facilities and 12 primary HCF in the Eastern Conflict Area (ECA).

Non-Governmental Controlled Areas

WASH partners provided IPC support to **16 out of 20 COVID-designated hospitals in Donetsk NGCA**, through the provision of comprehensive cleaning kits, and in total assisted 39 secondary health care facilities.

Sadly, **due to extreme access issues, no secondary HCF in Luhansk NGCA has received full IPC support** at all in 2020! Significant, costed, assistance is already planned in Q1 of 2021, for this area, however lack of registration for humanitarian agencies was the main issue in 2020, and it remains a significant risk in 2021.

Additionally in NGCA, 67 secondary HCF received lighter hygiene support, 42 in Luhansk and 25 in Donetsk. 32 primary Health Care Facilities (HCF) received hygiene support (Donetsk NGCA only) and 7 primary HCF received only lighter hygiene support in Luhansk NGCA (not a full package).

Other COVID-19 actions

Outside of work at health facilities WASH Cluster partners distributed cleaning kits to schools, kindergartens and nursing homes, covering over 500 separate institutions on GCA side and almost 100 on NGCA. 48 institutions have improved access to water and sanitation (32 on GCA and 16 on NGCA). Over 43,000 people benefitted *individually* from household hygiene kits distributions, mainly old people, the most at risk from COVID-19. Around 28,000 were based in GCA, and more than 15,000 in NGCA.

WHAT ABOUT THE WASH RESPONSE TO THE CONFLICT?

Alongside the COVID-19 response, WASH partners continued providing support to conflict-affected people. More than 720,000 people were reached in this way, in 2020, more than half were actually assisted before the start of the COVID-19 response. Further, in 2020, for the first time since the beginning of the humanitarian response in Ukraine, a significant number of WASH beneficiaries were assisted through recovery activities. 350,000 people, were assisted in 2020, well exceeding the target of 100,000.



School in Stantsya Luhanska (UNICEF/2021/ Filipov)

WASH INCIDENTS ANALYSIS FOR 2020: TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS

Fighting in the Eastern Conflict Area (ECA) of Ukraine continued to have a huge negative effect on water supply systems, with repeated major risks to safe drinking water provision to more than 5 million people living in the area. The WASH Cluster recorded **61 incidents on both sides of the Line of Contact in 2020**. Most happened in the first half of the year, however, in November and December there were again some violent incidents. Between **January and June 2020 there were 48 incidents affecting water and waste water infrastructure** in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, a little less than the same period in 2019 when there were 58 incidents.

In 27 July 2020, fighting sides reached a new ceasefire agreement which has been the most effective since the start of the conflict. Just before the ceasefire, the total number of incidents was 9, with notable water stoppages resulting (there were almost 5 million people-days of water stoppages in July). Notably, then, **the total number of incidents for the second half year is only 13, and only four of those occurred after the ceasefire. This is almost 10 times less than Q3 and Q4 of 2019, when there were 30 incidents.**

Two geographical zones seemed to be the most affected, receiving repeated violent incidents in 2020.

- 27 incidents affected water and waste infrastructure in the vicinity of between Horlivka from NGCA side and Toretsk from GCA side. Mainly has been affected Golmivskiy Waste Water Treatment plant (WWTP), Horlivka WWTP, Sieverskiy Donets-Donbas channel and etc.
- Secondly between Avdiivka GCA and Yasynuvata NGCA, 24 incidents affected the Donetsk Filter Station (DFS), and the 1st Lift Pumping Station of the South Donbas waterway (SDWW).

2020 was the first year since 2016 when recorded incidents near Horlivka city exceeded those in the Avdiivka area. In total, the sum of these two zones was 51 incidents: 84% from the total.

In 2020 the **most badly affected single location was Golmivskiy Waste Water Treatment Plant**, near Horlivka, which suffered 15 incidents. The second affected facility, by number of incidents, was the Donetsk Filter Station (DFS) with 13 incidents; while 1st Lift PS of SDWW had 11 incidents. Those three facilities, between them, recorded 64% from the total.

On 9th July 2020 ([Incident report# 269](#)) a **worker of Popasnianskiy Vodokanal (PVK) in Luhansk oblast was injured due to shelling**, emphasizing that risks faced by water workers, as a consequence of the multiple security incidents, are real. Thankfully his injuries were minor, and this was the first injury reported among water workers since January 2019, when three workers were injured clearing snow on a pumping station approach road. However many water workers are terrified, at times, during the course of their daily lives.

An incredibly serious shelling incident ([Incident report #271](#)) put at risk the stable water supply 3.1 million people in Donetsk region on Wednesday 22nd July 2020. **Shelling damaged three pipelines of the Sieverskiy Donets Donbas (SDD) channel**, where they cross the Line of Contact. All three pipes are more than two metres in diameter, running side by side, and repairs required demining work of the entire area. The SDD channel is key water supply infrastructure for the whole Donetsk region, helping people on both sides of the Line of Contact.

The number of WASH incidents one way to measure the negative impact of the conflict to the affected population. However the WASH Cluster also records the number of people-days of stoppages of water supply (one full day of water stoppage for one person = one people-day). In 2020 there were 9 million people-days of stoppages, the highest disruption since 2017 when there were 15 million. In 2019 there were only 6.9 million people-days of stoppages in the ECA. Fortunately, in the majority cases water shortages were relatively short, but even in those cases, WASH agencies start to plan water if trucking will be necessary, liaising with the authorities.

In conclusion, the WASH Cluster notes that when water stops, people are affected on both sides of the Line of Contact, wherever incidents occur, due to the shared nature of water systems. Clean water supply, centralized heating systems, people's health and children's education are all threatened by the stoppages. Sadly, it seems that ceasefires often seem to be effective only for a limited periods of time.

The WASH Cluster would like to emphasize that all fighters should respect International Humanitarian Law and should respect windows of silence agreed for water repairs. We continue to call for guarantees of the safety of all civilian utility workers and for safety zones to be established which would protect the main pumping stations and water treatment facilities.

PLANS FOR 2021

In 2021 WASH Cluster partners will continue responding to the twin challenges of helping the conflict and responding to COVID-19, and have requested **27.0 million USD to help 1.9 million people**, under the Humanitarian Response Plan.

There are some key events, planned, including:

- **Training for WASH Cluster Partners:** a systematic series of events to building capacity of humanitarian WASH teams and staff.
- **WASH Cluster Needs Assessment Study 2021:** partners are welcome to join a Technical Working Group to help steer this statistically representative survey and to help us plan focus-group discussions from a rigorous technical point of view. The study will also show trends since the last comprehensive survey in 2019.

For information on plans for 2021 or any other queries regarding this Bulletin, please contact the WASH Cluster team.

MANY THANKS

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