

## Tri-Cluster Mission to Nikopol

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**Mission Objectives:** To monitor life-saving services in Nikopol provided for housing, accommodation, and services and to extrapolate lessons for other partners who are coordinating with UNHCR’s Tri-Cluster (Shelter Cluster, Protection Cluster, CCCM Cluster)

### Mission Schedule:

Schedule of Activities and Visits	Objectives
Briefing with Nikopol City Council Representatives – led by Mayor Oleksandr Saiuk	Become familiar with humanitarian needs and challenges in the current context of Nikopol
Modular Town serving as Collective Centre	Assess current living conditions of IDPs who are still residing there
Visit to the distribution site of emergency shelter materials	Discuss ESK programming and needs and discussion with beneficiaries in frontline context



### Context

Nikopol is a town located along the Dnipro River that is now less than 5 km from the frontline. There continues to be fifty to sixty thousand persons residing in the town despite daily and artillery strikes that impact residential infrastructure. In terms of persons continuing to reside in the location, they

had lost the sense of personal danger and security, but many reported having no other option and not wanting to leave their own homes behind to move elsewhere. No location in the city is determined to be without security risk given the impacts of artillery fire and also daily drone attacks.

Given the location's proximity to the frontline, the format of this visit marked the first cluster mission to the city since the start of the full-scale invasion. Besides Proliska, the mayor mentioned that there are a few other humanitarian organizations (five or six) that have been active in the location, but that the city didn't actively keep a record of all of them. Proliska was the most active partner in the location and responds to daily shelling through the distribution of emergency shelter materials including tarpaulin, plywood boards, plastic sheeting, PSS and emergency shelter kits. Red Cross and IOM were also mentioned. The mayor was satisfied that he could receive such a mission and share some of the outstanding needs of the population and the daily challenges that they are having to continue to provide functional services for the residents' remaining inhabitants.

The main challenges mentioned by the mayor including the daily shelling and strikes on residential infrastructure, damages to critical infrastructure, the housing situation of the internally displaced, and the upcoming winter. While the mission inquired about other sectoral needs outside of its three areas of scope, the city couldn't think of top needs in other sectors but mentioned that many of the city's inhabitants had vulnerabilities. In terms of daily city operations, the mayor mentioned that the frequent damage to critical infrastructure including transportation infrastructure was challenging. In order to repair some of this damaged infrastructure, they would need to move them using some of their other transportation vehicles, but this would also put their functioning transportation services at risk and expose it to the risk of additional damages.

The city has long been a hosting city of internally displaced persons from the Donbas from the last ten years; however, the full-scale invasion and the occupation of Khersonska and Zaporizka Oblasts to the south also caused the movement of internally displaced persons to reside in the city. The number of internally displaced persons was estimated to be around 10,000. Data the Shelter Cluster received from the Oblast Administration in June noted that the official figure was 7348 persons. There are only two active collective centres in the city as of today.

## Shelter Assistance

UNHCR's partner Proliska works daily in Nikopol providing psychological support and distributing emergency shelter items that can be used to seal damages to residential properties. According to the reports provided to the Shelter Cluster, Proliska has provided emergency shelter kits to an average of 14 households per day between February 2024 and until the end of August. Total reports to the Shelter Cluster East Hub whatsapp groups number 2170 households, but among these recipients are households whose homes have been damaged two to five times during that same time period indicating that these are not unique households. Houses along the river are the highest risk zone and the locations of the most frequent damage. On the day of our visit, Proliska ultimately distributed emergency shelter materials to 35 households and NFIs to 11 households. They also provided psychological support consultations to 9 persons.

The mission met with one beneficiary who has had his house damaged 3 times in the last few months. While severely injured by a drone attack that entered his kitchen, he has also had to repair the windows to his house on several occasions. Proliska currently arranges distributions to these locations at determined distribution points, as it is too high risk to arrange the distribution in the location of the shelling, particularly in those neighbourhoods by the river. For damages that occur in the centre of the city with multistorey buildings, it is still possible to arrange the distribution in the

location. UNHCR additionally funds Proliska to support vulnerable households with installation of the emergency shelter kits, however; these locations prove to be very challenging, and every precaution must be taken if doing installation of emergency shelter materials in these neighbourhoods. For vulnerable households this extra service of going door-to-door is critical though is hard to perform in challenging access locations. Many organizations in Ukraine Shelter Cluster currently lack this capacity of door-to-door installations, so it is important to better track this indicator in Shelter Cluster reporting.

While in other locations of Eastern Ukraine, Proliska does distributions at the same time that a city council would be issuing the official acts of destruction, the modality for act of destruction issuance by the city is a bit different in Nikopol. Given that the Housing and Utility Services can't also access the location by the river, the national police are registering the persons on the night of the hostilities whose houses are damaged and sharing the information from Proliska via the department of housing and utilities, so that they can inform beneficiaries about the details of where the distribution will take place. Security considerations are also exercised for the organization of the distribution, as in July there was an explosion nearby to the location where Proliska has frequently organized distributions. The organization tries to not widely share the address of these locations to avoid that these distribution centres could become a target of a drone attack.

While Proliska is the main responder in this location for emergency shelter materials, the mayor provided feedback on other interventions attempted by other organizations. City authorities did not see the pilot program conducted by one organization to use vouchers for construction materials as a successful intervention. The market for construction materials in the city is greatly reduced including with the destruction of the Epicentre construction store in March of this year. The mayor could not remember the name of another organization who was attempting to look into a solution for repairs to windows through the provision of an enhanced plastic sheeting material.

City authorities mentioned that the primary need of materials that they have is for roofing slate (*shiffer*). Normally, this material is found among the stock that local authorities are able to distribute to damaged households. However, the city council's stock depletes very quickly. They have made requests to Dnipropetrovska Oblast on several occasions, but in three months the items are already consumed. City authorities are willing to receive donations to their stock from international partners, and to collect the addresses through the Shelter Cluster's Standard Operating Procedure to prevent any duplications from the interventions of Proliska.

Proliska mentioned the challenges of the damages to the Nikopol hospital in that given the fact that the OSB over time and exposed to the elements does not help the rooms of the hospital in maintaining the most sanitary conditions. Window repairs would be ultimately required to better support hospital staff in these operating rooms of the hospital.

Given that the location is considered to be "an area of active military operations", people have the right to apply for compensation through *Diia* for the category of fully destroyed homes, there is no commission yet established, but the city is trying to solve this issue especially so that people can receive compensation to rebuild in other locations. Given the absence of functional compensation and the lack of humanitarian organizations providing light repairs in the location, there are significant needs to close the thermal envelope of residential buildings where people are still residing. Repairs of doors and windows are a critical need in the location. Nevertheless, many humanitarian organizations would consider the location to be high risk for such repair interventions. The other challenge noted on the mission was the frequency of damages to any type of light repairs that may be done in the location risking that any repairs done could only be damaged again. Beneficiaries who

receive such materials are often not using such permanent materials such as windows or roofing slates due to the fear that their homes will only be damaged again.

## Winterization

Nikopol's residential buildings are largely operating on electricity. The mayor cited that 70% of the buildings are operating through electricity. The city is planning a decentralized form of heating by relying on modular boiler rooms and generators to overcome expected blackouts during the winter. Unfortunately, this infrastructure and generators that the city had have also been damaged in the many shelling incidents which has reduced the town's current capacity. They would need generators of different categories and could share the list of their needs and the capacity required for the different buildings throughout the city. The city also has a number of households that will need solid fuel for this winter. While the request was made to the Shelter Cluster in June that in-kind solid fuel would be preferable, suppliers are able to provide solid fuel in the area, and households would be able to use cash to purchase their required amount of solid fuel. Given that no Shelter Cluster partners currently have plans to target the location<sup>1</sup> and that UNHCR's program is targeting cash assistance in the 10-kilometre buffer, UNHCR briefly presented on their capacity to provide cash for solid fuel in the location.

## Modular Town

In 2014, GIZ funded the establishment of modular towns as a temporary housing solution for internally displaced persons mostly from Donetsk Oblast. The project was covering many locations in the Eastern Oblasts, but many of the locations are in quite poor condition due to extensive use of the prefabricated structures. The site manager cites her strict maintenance and care of the facility for the longevity of the structures. The mission noted that also the site did not seem to be operating at full capacity. While originally hosting approximately 240 persons according to the site manager, the location is now home to between 70 to 90 internally displaced persons both from 2014 and 2022.

The city council determined that container solutions were not suitable housing for IDPs, particularly due to safety concerns and the absence of an adequate bomb shelter at the facility. The closest bomb shelter is about 400-500 meters away. While the city council has two buildings on its balance that could be rehabilitated to serve as a collective site for residents of the modular town, there is insufficient funding in the local budget to carry out the necessary repairs. The locations would require interior heavy repair interventions in addition to the installation of a bomb shelter. The buildings fall under the communal property of the city. Currently CCCM Cluster has no partners in Nikopol. While several development donors had been focusing on Nikopol prior to the full-scale invasion for social housing projects, these projects are now suspended. Both the city council and site manager have reported several attempts to relocate residents of the modular town to other settlements within Dnipropetrovska oblast, but the residents either refused to move or returned shortly after relocating.

The mission spoke with one internally displaced woman who had been living in the centre since 2014 whose family is now in occupied territories and with whom she has lost contact. When asked about an alternative location as a possibility for accommodation, the woman stated that for her she was

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<sup>1</sup> Precision post mission, Danish Refugee Council through their partner Pomogaem plans to target households in Nikopol with cash for solid fuel.

already comfortable in the location and hopes she will not have to be evacuated from the location, and she is not interested in an alternative accommodation.

Proliska mentioned that they had provided CCCM coverage for the site back in 2023, having hard and soft components there, including distribution of necessary NFIs at the collective site. The location has been struggling with the frequent electricity cuts. There is a generator available at the facility, but the city budget lacks the funds to fuel it, which is essential for keeping the facility operational during potential power outages in the heating season. The heating system relies on autonomous electric heating. Water is heat by boilers.



## Evacuations and Protection Response

The registration process for civilian evacuations is currently being administered by the city authorities. Currently, 50 individuals are registered and awaiting evacuation, pending confirmation from the Oblast administration on the availability of spaces within designated evacuation routes and shelters. This delay in response from the regional authorities highlights ongoing coordination challenges between municipal and oblast-level administrations, particularly in securing timely transportation and shelter for evacuees. To address these issues, the Protection Cluster has initiated discussions with the city authorities to explore how the Protection Cluster can provide further support to strengthen the evacuation process, focusing on logistical assistance, coordination, and enhancing communication with affected populations. Proliska has recently facilitated the medical evacuation of three high-priority cases, highlighting the critical need for targeted interventions in medical evacuations, which demand swift coordination and specialized support to ensure timely and effective assistance.

Direct feedback from residents and IDPs in Nikopol indicated a general reluctance among the population to relocate to other areas. Many residents and IDPs expressed no immediate intention of

moving, highlighting the importance of addressing not only logistical concerns but also the perceptions and decision-making processes of affected individuals.

Effective communication strategies must be established to provide clear, accessible information on evacuation processes, safety advisories, and services in evacuation destinations. This includes sharing specific helpline contact details and utilizing alternative communication channels to ensure that those awaiting evacuation, as well as other vulnerable groups, are fully informed. Timely and accurate dissemination of information is crucial to ensure that individuals are aware of their options and the support available to them in safer areas.

### Recommendations:

Recommendation	To whom
Encourage Shelter Cluster partners to contribute to the stock of Local Authorities in Nikopol in line with Shelter Cluster SOP	Shelter Cluster
Explore feasibility of light repair construction materials distribution for certain vulnerable categories such as shiffer with Cluster partners by conducting monitoring of the intervention in other locations	Shelter Cluster
Partners to scale up provision of technical assistance of shelter materials	Shelter Cluster partners
Share the needs for alternative solutions than OSB for Nikopol Hospital	Shelter Cluster
Circulate needs for generators with Cluster partners	Shelter Cluster
Follow up on beneficiary lists for cash for solid fuel program to cover needs in Nikopol	UNHCR
Share contact details of available helplines to support legal assistance	Protection Cluster
Bilaterally engage with local administration on the possible support on evacuations	Protection Cluster
Share leaflet on evacuation procedures and available services in oblasts receiving evacuees	Protection Cluster
Involve CCCM partners from Dnipropetrovska oblast to work on alternative accommodation solutions for people residing in the modular town	CCCM Cluster
Bilaterally engage with local authorities on available options for relocation	CCCM Cluster
Engage with Proliska to involve team for PSS to support decision-making of IDPs for relocation to safer locations	CCCM Cluster, Protection Cluster
Present report and findings to Intercluster Working Group and engage more clusters to mobilize partners response in Nikopol	Shelter, CCCM, and Protection Clusters





