FLASH UPDATE  (7 Jul 2023)
UKRAINE – DESTRUCTION OF KAKHOVKA DAM – FLASH UPDATE #10

HIGHLIGHTS

- One month since the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam, the affected communities are facing the larger challenge of rebuilding destroyed or damaged housing and critical infrastructure systems.

- Access to water will remain the key humanitarian need in locations upstream from the dam where nearly 1 million people live in towns and villages estimated to be severely or catastrophically impacted by the sudden loss of water supply.

- The livelihoods of entire regions with irrigation-dependent agriculture are now at risk while the large-term environmental impact is being assessed.

- In the past month, 19 interagency convoys delivered almost 80 truckloads of essential supplies to Dnipropetrovska and Khersonska oblasts, including the city of Kherson.

- Humanitarian organizations delivered more than 4.3 million litres of bottled and trucked drinking water to affected communities to cover their immediate needs while also providing water filters and supporting the drilling of boreholes for water production.

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

One month since the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam on 6 June, the affected communities are now facing the larger challenge of rebuilding destroyed or damaged housing and critical infrastructure systems. Electricity, gas and water supplies remain disrupted in many areas. Municipal services, local communities and volunteers, including those from outside, continue to clean up the devastated areas.

Nearly 4,400 houses were flooded in Khersonska and Mykolaiivska oblasts in the south of Ukraine, according to the Ukrainian Government. After the water receded and the affected communities became accessible, the Shelter Cluster organized an interagency mission to Mykolaiivska oblast to evaluate the damage to over 550 houses caused by the flooding in this area. According to the mission’s observations, severely damaged houses were found in 18 locations, mostly in lower parts of the communities. The damage most frequently observed was related to the internal walls and plastering, where clay bricks have been mainly used. Exterior walls made from more robust materials were found to be in generally good condition. More damage is expected to be identified once the buildings have dried out.

Assessment of the impact on shelter in Khersonska oblast is yet to be conducted. The impact is expected to be more severe due to the larger number of communities affected by flooding. Field observations indicate that many houses are not habitable, and people urgently need support with basic household items, such as blankets, mattresses, bed linen and kitchen items. In the long run, larger repair works are required to rebuild destroyed or damaged housing and critical infrastructure.

Upstream the Dnipro River from the Kakhovka dam, the volume of water in the Kakhovka Reservoir has shrunk some 80 per cent, according to the Ukrainian Environmental Ministry, with far-reaching consequences for the region.
Water supply for nearly 1 million people in Dnipropetrovska, Khersonska and Zaporizka oblasts is estimated to be severely or catastrophically impacted by the depletion of the Kakhovka Reservoir, according to the preliminary findings of the Emergency Assessment conducted by REACH. The situation is especially critical in Kryvorizkyi and Nikopolskyi raions of Dnipropetrovska oblast, where some 90 per cent of the assessed locations are severely or catastrophically impacted. Almost one-third of the assessed locations also expect the impact to worsen during the next two months.

The critical water shortages are expected to affect agricultural production in these areas. According to the Government, the Kakhovka Reservoir used to provide water for nearly 6,000 square km of agricultural fields, which produced up to 2 million tons of grain per year. The large areas of land in central Ukraine, dependent on water intake from the Kakhovka Reservoir, are slowly drying out. If no sustainable irrigation solutions are found, many rural communities where livelihoods depend on it might face further displacement.

The long-term impact of the disaster might have widespread implications, particularly on the environment. An assessment of the environmental impacts of the dam breach is underway, coordinated by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) with support from the Joint Environment Unit of UNEP and the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Over half a million hectares of land listed as nationally or internationally important have been affected. Hazardous chemical substances, including oil and fertilisers, have been released during the floods. Of around 200 industrial, commercial and infrastructure objects located in the flooded area, pollution hot spots have been identified for further sampling and analysis.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Humanitarian organizations in Ukraine continued mobilizing assistance to support the people impacted by the Kakhovka Dam destruction to address their immediate needs.

In the past month, with the support of the Logistics Cluster, UN agencies and humanitarian organizations delivered 19 inter-agency humanitarian convoys to Dnipropetrovska and Khersonska oblasts, bringing almost 80 truckloads of water, food, medicines, repair materials, household items and other essential supplies to the people whose lives and livelihoods have been affected by flooding, as well as water shortages caused by the destruction of the dam. Of these, 14 convoys were delivered to Kherson city and other communities in Khersonska oblast.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Cluster partners have delivered over 4.3 million litres of bottled and trucked potable water since 6 June. Humanitarians have also been providing water treatment units and water purification tabs to affected communities. Partners have facilitated water pumping from submerged premises, disinfection of wells, household clean-up and repairs, installation of pump units and unblocking of sewage networks. To provide more durable solutions, WASH Cluster partners have reinforced the immediate response by supporting the drilling of boreholes for water production, including by delivering pumps, tap stands, water treatment units and water storage. Additionally, where feasible, repairs to water networks through connection to alternative water sources have started, providing water treatment support for surface and groundwater alternatives to complement the Government efforts.

To support people, mainly in the south of Ukraine, many of whom had lost their homes due to heavy flooding on top of the destruction caused by attacks and hostilities, Shelter Cluster partners continued coordinating assessments and delivering essential repair and household supplies to affected families. Almost 65,000 repair items and household supplies have been distributed in Khersonska oblast, including over 1,600 emergency shelter kits. More than 3,200 people in Mykolaivska oblast have received basic non-food supplies to support their daily lives.
Health Cluster partners continue outreach activities through mobile medical teams providing people with primary health care, mental health and psychosocial support services. Almost 40 organizations are on the ground in Dnipropetrovska, Khersonska, Mykolaivska, Odeska and Zaporizka oblasts addressing the consequences of the dam destruction. They have provided medicines and medical supplies to people and health facilities and supported the existing surveillance mechanisms to identify suspected cases of water-borne illnesses. In addition, partners have been conducting awareness-raising activities in the affected areas on access to drinking water, safe hygiene practices, emerging health risks and preventative measures.

More than 36,000 people have already been registered to receive multipurpose cash assistance to address critical and immediate needs, and already around 12,200 people have received the support. More than 9,500 of them have been reached in Khersonska oblast. Further assessments and registrations for cash assistance are ongoing.

Child protection partners have continued to respond to the humanitarian needs of children and their families affected by the flooding. Since the first days of the disaster, they have reached over 14,000 people, including 7,300 children and over 6,600 caregivers, by deploying multi-disciplinary mobile teams to the affected areas, providing mental health and psychosocial support, delivering essential supplies, as well ensuring child protection case management and legal assistance. Support services have also been provided through child-friendly spaces across the affected oblasts.

Humanitarian organizations will continue responding to the remaining urgent humanitarian needs in the affected communities while moving towards addressing more mid- and long-term needs. In particular, Shelter and WASH partners are mobilizing support to repair housing and critical water infrastructure. Continued assistance aims to restore disrupted livelihoods and help displaced people to return to their homes.

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