The Children of the Contact Line in East Ukraine

2017 Assessment Update
EASTERN CONFLICT AREA

LEGEND
- Contact Line (~472km)
- ‘Buffer Zone’ (5km Zone)
- ‘Buffer Zone’ (15km Zone)
- Territory of Ukraine
- Non-Government Controlled Area (NGCA)
- Settlement
- Unicef Field Office/Presence

LOCATION OF UNICEF FIELD OFFICES/PRESENCE

- Kyiv
- Mariupol
- Donetsk (GCA)
- Donetsk (NGCA)
- Luhansk (GCA)
- Luhansk (NGCA)
- Zaporizhia

MAP OF UKRAINE WITH LOCATIONS OF KEY SETTLEMENTS

- Donetsk
- Mariupol
- Luhansk
- Zaporizhia
- Kyiv
- A number of settlements within the conflict area are marked, including Donetsk, Mariupol, Luhansk, and Zaporizhia.

MAP LEGEND
- Red line: Contact Line (~472km)
- Red shaded area: ‘Buffer Zone’ (5km Zone)
- Pink shaded area: ‘Buffer Zone’ (15km Zone)
- Blue circles: Unicef Field Offices/Presence
INTRODUCTION

The conflict in Eastern Ukraine continues to threaten the wellbeing of children. Some of the most vulnerable children live in close proximity to the ‘contact line’ between the government-controlled area (GCA) and the non-government-controlled area (NGCA). On the government-controlled side alone, it is estimated that over 55,000 children live within 15 km of the contact line. In addition to dozens of ceasefire violations recorded every day by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission along the contact line, these children are also exposed to mines and unexploded ordinance. However, it is not only direct exposure to violence that distinguishes this area from territory further from the contact line: The creation of a de facto barrier to movement of civilians (as well as goods) between the GCA and the NGCA, the damage to transportation infrastructure and the collapse of public transport have made settlements much more difficult to enter and leave. This isolation — combined with the on-going conflict, infrastructure damage, and mined farmland — has dramatically increased unemployment among parents, with many settlements having virtually no work outside government institutions such as local administrations, schools and medical facilities. High unemployment, coupled with the significant depreciation of the Ukrainian currency, has deepened the monetary poverty of families and further decreased their capacity to withstand shocks and stresses caused by this manmade conflict. Children and their families also suffer from damage and limited access to healthcare and education services, as well as basic necessities such as water supply. The situation is, overall, one of greatly heightened vulnerability for those living along the contact line.

This report is a direct addendum to UNICEF’s The Children of the Contact Line in East Ukraine: An Assessment of the Situation of Children and Their Families Living in Government-Controlled Areas along the Contact Line in the East Ukraine Conflict Zone (henceforward Children of the Contact Line or the CCL report) published in June 2017. It explains how the situation of children, their parents, their caregivers and education service providers has changed over the course of 2017, and provides additional information on specific issues identified in the initial CCL assessment in 2016. Issues addressed in the last report that are largely unchanged or where no significant additional data has been collected are not explored here. This addendum is not a standalone work: it is intended to be used in conjunction with the original Children of the Contact Line report.

Methodology:

This assessment is a direct follow-up to the first Children of the Contact Line assessment conducted in late 2016 with updates in April 2017. In-depth, open-ended interviews were conducted following the format used in the previous assessment, with over 100 respondents in 81 educational facilities along the contact line.1 This was supplemented by a desk review of recent publications and new enrolment data, GIS analysis, and several interviews with non-education key informants. A detailed description of the assessment methodology can be found in the methodology section of Children of the Contact Line, the previous assessment published in June 2017.

Three things differentiate this assessment from the previous one. First, this assessment was conducted in parallel with the 2017 Education Cluster School Survey, which covers all of government-controlled Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts creating a more comprehensive picture of the situation in the two regions and allowing findings from the contact line to be compared with areas further away. Data from that survey will be cited in this assessment. Second, some themes were added or expanded from the previous assessment, such as questions on social services and detailed mapping of the proximity of military sites to educational facilities. Finally, following the 2017 health facilities assessment and initial interviews that indicated little substantial change in the situation, collection of information on health and HIV and AIDS was very limited for this assessment.

1 Of these, 75 were educational facilities with 5 km of the contact line and six were located in particularly vulnerable areas 5-15km from the contact line. Over three quarters of the respondents had been interviewed for the previous assessment.
While children living within 5 km of the contact line continue to live at risk of shelling, 2017 saw a slight improvement in the overall security situation in most communities. Over two-thirds of locations reported that the situation improved in 2017 (from January to October) compared to 2016. Only one location (Zolote-4 in Luhansk Oblast) reported a worsened security situation, while the remaining third of the locations reported that the situation had remained more or less the same. According to the respondents, the single biggest factor contributing to this marginally-improved security situation was changes in shelling patterns. In most locations fighting is still continuing, but attacks seem to have more closely targeted military positions outside of populated areas. As one respondent put it: “The boys have taken their fight outside.”

It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that this does not mean that the children and their families are now safe; it just means that their situation has slightly improved.

Even in locations that experienced where educational facilities sustained damages in major outbreaks in fighting in 2017, such as Avdiivka in January and Krasnohorivka in May, school and kindergarten directors reported that the situation has improved (and sometimes significantly) compared to 2016, not because the situation is even remotely safe, but because the previous several years had been horrific.

Mines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW) continue to threaten the safety and lives of children and their families throughout Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts. While the areas closest to the contact line generally have the highest concentrations of mines and ERW, they can also frequently be found in most areas that experienced armed violence earlier in the conflict and now lie over 50 km from the contact line. Incidents involving mines and ERW contributed to nearly two-thirds of all reported child casualties in 2017.

While demining has occurred in the last year in contact line settlements, and respondents report this is an important step, there is a general fear that a lot of ERW has been missed, while the ongoing shelling leaves undetonated weaponry dangerously scattered even in areas that have already been de-mined. For example, frequent sweeps to keep areas around schools clear from ERW still find new unexploded mortar shells. Regardless of the persistent danger these weapons present, the limited demining has positively impacted many communities, with respondents reporting more farming this year and more free movement within settlements.

The year 2017 has also seen an improvement in access to most contact line settlements. Bridges, especially in isolated parts of rural Luhansk, are being rebuilt and in some locations, such as Krymske, new pontoon bridges have been laid to better connect the town with GCA cities (since all the major roads lead to what is now the NGCA). In many locations (particularly in Luhansk Oblast), small military checkpoints have been removed or are no longer staffed, resulting in easier and faster access to contact line settlements.

2 OHCHR reports only four child fatalities (all boys) in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts as a result of the conflict between January and November 2017. Only one was the result of shelling and the other three from unexploded ordinance.

3 This has also resulted in an almost complete ending of children being forced to sleep in bomb shelters on a weekly basis.

4 Information from interviews also suggests that desensitization plays a role in the responses, though probably not significantly more than during the previous interviews in late 2016 and early 2017.

5 OHCHR, December 2017.

6 Respondents in three locations mentioned having found unexploded shells near schools in 2017.
The number of children living in areas along the contact line in the GCA has increased slightly in 2017. As of October 2017, nearly 56,000 children lived within 15 km of the contact line in the GCA, up from just over 54,000 in October 2016.\(^7\) Enrolment in standard schools increased from 28,987 to 29,883 and vocational schools and boarding schools saw an increase from 3,427 to 3,897.\(^8\) Kindergartens, on the other hand, did not see the same overall increase in enrolment despite an increase in the number of kindergarten-aged children.\(^9\)

This slight increase equates to a lower return rate than in 2016, and a relative stabilization of the population. As mentioned in more detail in the previous report, most educational facilities experienced the greatest fall in enrolment in 2014 and a slight recovery in 2015 and 2016.\(^10\) While the returnee rate is smaller than in previous years, it reveals (among other things addressed later in the report) a continued need for lifesaving mine-risk education (MRE), especially for returning children who have lived outside conflict-affected areas and never received such training.\(^11\)

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7 See Children of the Contact Line methodology for details on calculating population numbers.

8 This is largely because one vocational school was temporarily closed during the 2016 assessment and has since reopened, and because a very slight change of the contact line by 50 m added one boarding school into the 15 km zone. In addition, some of the new enrolment numbers for six vocational schools have not been independently verified and may be slightly too high.

9 See “Access to Education” below.

10 Notable exceptions include areas that experienced heavy late phase fighting in 2015 such as Marinka and Krasnohorivka, which saw greatest decreases in 2015. See the “Returnees” section of the Education chapter of the “Children of the Contact Line” report for details on changes in enrollment at educational facilities from 2014-2015.

11 Although most children living along the contact line have received several mine-risk education training sessions and teachers have often reported being tired of this training and having received enough, the presence of new children who are not aware of the dangers of mines and other ERW, along with the small but persistent number of children injured or killed by ERW, makes mine-risk education crucial.
ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Access to kindergarten remains difficult for children in some locations on the contact line including, but not limited to, Marinka and Krasnohorivka in Donetsk Oblast and Zolote and Petrivka in Luhansk Oblast. As mentioned in the previous section, although the population has increased, total kindergarten enrolment has remained relatively constant, equating to an overall worsened enrolment rate than in 2016. Like in 2016, barriers to enrolment include a shortage of places in kindergartens (especially in larger settlements), damaged kindergarten facilities, parents’ fear of sending their children to facilities that have previously been shelled, and (less commonly reported this year) monetary barriers to paying for tuition. In areas with the worst access issues, respondents reported that having to care for children equating to an overall worsened enrolment rate than in 2016. Since October 2016, one new kindergarten has opened (although total kindergarten enrolment decreased slightly in that settlement) and one school was expanded to take in a small number of kindergarten students. In addition, three kindergartens that had reopened in 2016 with limited capacity have expanded greatly. At least one school is in the process of expanding to become an “educational complex” (Ukrainian acronym “NVK”), which would allow it to take on kindergarten children. The locations that still have kindergartens closed because of the conflict and are experiencing a shortage or total lack of kindergarten places include Zalizne, Krasnohorivka, Marinka and Zolote. Since autumn 2016, one school has reopened (slightly relieving, but not ending, the overcrowding in Krasnohorivka that led to children to have to study in shifts), and two schools have closed. One rural school closed because of low enrolment and the relatively easy access to a school in a nearby settlement. The other closed school was in the larger town of Popasna, and children there now attend other schools in the town as the school building has been converted into a military base. Unlike children who do not go to kindergarten, the number of out-of-school children is not large along the contact line. However, access to a broad education has been complicated or entirely prevented by a continued shortage of teachers for certain subjects — especially sciences and foreign languages — in contact line schools.

While school enrolment is almost universal, there is a major gap in provision of adequate support for children in need of special education (whether because of physical or intellectual disabilities or of unique home situations). Many of these children are enrolled in what is essentially distance education from home. In some cases, they receive strong individualized attention from teachers, but this is rare. Circumstances range widely depending on the condition of the child and the support available, but often the result is that these children do not receive the same full education available to their peers. In some cases, it was reported that such children receive practically no education.

It is much less common for children to cross the contact line every day to attend school than last year. The “solutions” to these issues have rarely been ideal. In one location, the children who crossed from the GCA to the NGCA across the river by boat have been sent to a boarding school to live and study. In another case, only older children were crossing the contact line to school and they have all graduated. In yet another, the NGCA territory is now GCA due to minor changes to the contact line so, although the journey to school is still difficult, it no longer involves crossing the contact line. In the latter case, the GCA checkpoint has been shut and is no longer accessible to schoolchildren living in the “grey zone.” While some parents decided to send their children to live in the GCA town where they had been studying, others could not afford this and now it appears that they are sending their children to schools in the NGCA while kindergarten children just stay at home. As of November 2017, there is only one location where children cross from the NGCA to the GCA, and one where they cross from the grey zone to the GCA.

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12 Specifically, they said that it was difficult to travel to work, whether in other parts of the settlements, in factories or farms outside their towns, or in nearby settlements.
13 Including Marinka, Krasnohorivka and Luhanske.
14 See Children of the Contact Line, June 2017, for a full analysis of out-of-school children, as the situation is largely unchanged.
15 There are approximately one or two children with disabilities for every 100 students.
16 Shortly after the assessment was conducted, it was claimed that Ukrainian military forces had retaken this “grey” territory. If so, this would likely mean that these children again have easy access to the GCA school and kindergarten, if they were not displaced by the fighting.
On 6 March 2017, Diana (orange jumper) is the ‘captain’ of her class. Continuing education at school number 6 in Avdiivka, eastern Ukraine has been the one constant during the last three years of conflict and resulting instability, stress and fear. The 11-year old and her peers do what they can to continue going to school. When shelling starts they rush to the corridors with no windows and take cover, using blankets for extra protection from any flying glass.
School Size and Role of Schools in Small Communities

In many locations in Ukraine, schools were built on the assumption that the population would increase. However, since independence Ukraine has lost over 10 per cent of its population. Greatly reduced birth rates since the early 1990s and migration to cities has meant that in many towns, especially in former industrial and rural areas, the young population has shrunk much more dramatically. The mean school size of the 852 open standard schools (usually Grades 1-11) in the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts GCA is 239.1 children. This number is misleading because a small number of very large schools in major cities like Mariupol, Sloviansk, Bakhmut and Lysychansk pull the average upward. The median school size is 144.5 (426 schools are smaller than this), and over 100 schools have less than 50 students. In the most conflict-affected communities within 5 km of the contact line, the average standard school has only 74.8 children. A series of reforms to the education system all across Ukraine — including the creation of larger “hub” schools and the closure of smaller facilities — has been planned to change this situation.

The school directors interviewed almost unanimously voiced strong concerns about these reforms. For communities along the contact line, the presence of schools is one of the most important factors for a child’s wellbeing. Among many other things, they are a safe space for the children (often the only one in the community), give children access to warm meals and heated spaces in winter, and provide needed structure and routine critical to coping with psychosocial distress and restoring normality to their lives. More generally, educational facilities are often one of the only sources of employment in conflict-affected communities and act as a kind of watchdog that monitors the wellbeing of children and can refer cases to social services. Most communities along the contact line only have one school, and closing them during the conflict and sending the children to schools in other towns could strongly impact communities. Educators cited fear of schools closures as one of their greatest sources of stress outside the physical dangers from the conflict.

An armed guard sits in the lobby of a school in Marinka, Donetsk Oblast, Ukraine, Wednesday 22 November 2017. After one child was shot in the arm in the playground, children are not permitted to play outside. During breaks, kids play soccer and ping pong in the hallways. “They can’t break the windows because they’re covered by sandbags,” says Lera, a student. “Once they broke a light bulb, and the cleaning lady was unhappy.”

17 As of October 2016 (from EMIS enrolment data).
18 Ibid.
Continued Attacks on Educational Facilities and Military Sites in or near Schools

Hostilities continue to put educational facilities and the children that attend them at risk. In 2017\textsuperscript{20} there have been at least 13 verified attacks on schools in GCA settlements within 15 km of the contact line. Although the damage has largely been the result of indiscriminate shelling and shooting, the proximity of military bases to schools and kindergartens may also put these facilities at higher risk of being hit. In the worst cases, educational facilities and military sites are only a few meters apart or surround each other, as was found in two locations between five and 10 km from the contact line in Luhansk Oblast. In one case (see Figure 1), the school was partially surrounded by buildings occupied by the military, parking places for military vehicles (including lorries and a helicopter) and checkpoints for entry to both the base and the school. More commonly, military sites can be found in areas within 500 m of a school or kindergarten\textsuperscript{21}. The proximity of the military to schools is not limited to areas along the contact line and can be found throughout the GCA of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts.\textsuperscript{22}

\textit{In 2017 there have been at least 13 verified attacks on schools in GCA settlements within 15 km of the contact line.}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{school_in_proximity_to_military_base.png}
\caption{School in Close Proximity to a Military Base.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{20} The eleven months from 1 January to 1 December.

\textsuperscript{21} Eight cases were observed during this assessment.

\textsuperscript{22} 2017 Education Cluster School Survey.
Soldiers continue to visit schools along the contact line. Often this is for “patriotic lessons,” mine-risk education, or national holidays. In some educational facilities, armed soldiers are posted at the entrances. Many schools have museums with real weaponry, including disarmed mortars and rockets, and some new pro-military imagery was found this year that was not present last year. Respondents in most locations reported that soldiers are seen slightly less frequently in residential areas and are less likely to be carrying visible weaponry than last year, although this still often occurs. Many locations still reported that children have an increased interest in the military and warfare than before the conflict, but that this year it is much less common for children to visit military posts than in the previous two years. Overall, most respondents reported minor improvements in relations between the military and civilians, though communities that had had bad experiences with battalions in the early years of the conflict (accounts range from forced occupation of educational facilities and homes, to rampant sexual assault, destruction of private property and extrajudicial torture and killings) are still wary of the military. Several respondents reported that most of these changes are the result of increased “professionalization of the military.”
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

As with the assessment in 2016, due to the limits to the methodology and research design used, a very limited amount of information was gathered on gender-based violence (GBV), domestic abuse and neglect. GBV was only mentioned by respondents from two educational facilities in 2017 (this was not part of the interview question design and was freely volunteered information by participants when asking about the current security situation), but interviews with UNICEF child protection partners confirmed the presence and persistence of a wide range of forms of GBV. This report cannot provide conclusions as to the prevalence, frequency or exact nature of these issues and their effect on people living on the contact line, though it does confirm that these problems do exist.

High unemployment and extreme monetary poverty have resulted in acute vulnerability among people living in communities along the contact line. For some, this has resulted in highly damaging coping mechanisms, including reduced calorie intake, begging, taking children out of kindergarten and engagement in sex work. Sex work is widespread and cases of sexual abuse of schoolgirls under the age of 18 and even under 16 (the legal age of consent in Ukraine) were reported by school employees at several schools close to the contact line in 2016. It is difficult to discuss this topic with school employees, and in these interviews a degree of openness was reached that allowed the issue to be carefully and appropriately raised. Of 17 interviews at different schools where this question was raised in 2016, eight responded that some of their female students were engaged in such activities. Five other schools said that sex trade involving sexual abuse of schoolgirls does not occur but that a few of their older students do have intercourse with soldiers, with some having since married and others becoming pregnant and being abandoned. The most commonly reported locations for such encounters (whether money was involved or not) were near checkpoints and other military installations as well as local saunas. Given the high prevalence of HIV and AIDS in Donetsk Oblast (especially among sex workers) and the lack of sex education in the region, these women and girls are particularly vulnerable and require specialized protection.

When following up on these cases in October 2017, all the school officials said that they were not aware that this was happening anymore. In one location it was reported that no schoolgirls were now involved in the sex trade, but follow-up questions revealed that the girls previously involved have since graduated from school (even though they may still be forced into the sex trade), which could imply that the new generation of pupils are less likely to face the same fate. Further discussions with respondents along the contact line gave the strong impression that the sex trade and abuse of young girls is not as “open” as in 2015 and 2016, but has gone further underground and is still widespread.
As with 2016, nearly all the educational facilities in the 5 km zone noted striking behavioural changes in students from before the conflict to now. In heavily shelled districts in particular, numerous children show consistent symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder according to the trained psychologist who assisted in these interviews. Interviews with school psychologists, as well as psychologists from partners in UNICEF community protection mobile teams, confirm these symptoms.29

According to most respondents, although symptoms of psychosocial distress are still present among children, the situation has improved slightly. Training of teachers and caregivers in how to identify psychosocial distress and support children was universally regarded as helpful30 as were most of the psychosocial support mobile team visits to schools and kindergartens in 2016 and 2017. In some larger towns, such as Popasna, the expanded presence of community centres facilitated additional support in 2017. This additional support, combined with a relative stabilization of shelling patterns (creating more predictability to the violence) along most sections of the contact line, has created a situation where most respondents report that: “most children are coping, more or less.” Continued support is still needed, however, to help children and their caregivers cope effectively in the long term.

29 Due to the nature of psychosocial issues, the fact that those who have provided psychosocial support have different levels and sources of training that result in different ideas of what constitutes severe cases of psychosocial distress, the fact that many symptoms may not be evident to local actors, and the design of this assessment, it is impossible for us to provide an accurate estimate of the number of severe cases along the contact line.

30 However, many respondents also noted that taking teachers for this training was disruptive to the educational curriculum and caused a lot of stress among other teachers who had to cover the classes of those who left for training.
“After UNICEF training on life skills, many children found out more about dreams and interests of each other.”

Vladislava, 16 years old, student of School No. 10 in Toretsk, Donetsk Oblast
First responders aiding trauma victims during or immediately after an emergency are susceptible to secondary traumatic stress or "compassion fatigue." In terms of psychosocial distress and support, in many contact line communities, teachers, psychologists and educational staff took on first responder roles for the children in their communities. Examples include numerous accounts of teachers and staff calming children in bomb shelters during shelling during 2014-2015 or the constant support for children exhibiting distress and behavioural changes (the latter was reported in some form or other in over 95 per cent of facilities within 5 km of the contact line). For some teachers, this secondary fatigue is combined with the psychosocial distress they experienced directly from the conflict.

Respondents seemed more willing during this assessment to admit the need for psychosocial support for teachers than in 2016, with most locations reporting such a need. Some reported that this change in response was because psychosocial support had become less stigmatized and more understood after they had observed or been involved in training or support sessions for children. Partners involved in psychosocial support training for teachers also noted that teachers from heavily conflict-affected areas displayed more symptoms of psychosocial distress than those living in less affected areas further from the contact line. Given that factors such as stress, anxiety and overall “burnout” can negatively affect the help that educational staff can provide for children, support for teachers remains an important need.

Olga Nikolaiivna Prais, a teacher at school number 4, teaches a class of students in Avdiivka, Donetsk Oblast, Ukraine, Wednesday 29 November 2017. Olga is a biology teacher and participated in a regional competition of teachers and she came 21st out of 400 contestants. She’s been at the school for 20 years, and during the conflict she left only once, for a month. Olga says the challenges are mostly emotional and psychological. “We have seen everything here, including grad rockets. Our students can distinguish between different guns. They can tell what types of weapons are being used by the sound” says Olga.
HEALTH AND HIV

The follow-up assessment in October 2017 did not include the same rigorous health and HIV components as the 2016 assessment and the spring 2017 update. This update includes brief information on the situation in areas within 5 km of the contact line. For comprehensive data on health and HIV and AIDS, please refer to the Children of the Contact Line assessment, published in June 2017.

The health situation has changed little from 2016. In terms of health infrastructure, a few damaged health points were repaired and facilities continued to sustain damages. Several small feldscher points and ambulatorias (two types of small healthcare facility) visited within 5 km of the contact line were still using plastic sheeting to cover their broken windows and had visible damages to walls and roofs, while destroyed facilities are still temporarily being housed in other buildings. In one location, the ambulatoria still operates out of a classroom in a functioning school, while in other locations the medical points are housed in former administrative buildings. Overall, most health points continue to operate, but often with reduced capacity. The separation of GCA medical facilities from major NGCA health centres — especially those in Donetsk, Horlivka and Luhansk — continues to pose a major challenge to healthcare access, especially for specialized emergency treatment. Reforms, such as those to create four major hospital centres in Donetsk Oblast (Mariupol, Pokrovsk, Sloviansk and Bakhmut) may improve access to treatment at these centres, but it is still too early to assess the effects.

While many communities along the contact line remain highly isolated, the situation has marginally improved. In addition to ongoing repairs to roads and bridges, and the removal of some checkpoints, 2017 saw the introduction of new public transport routes from contact line settlements to larger towns (usually district centres), and now most settlements within 5 km of the contact line are served by public transport. While worsened poverty resulting from the conflict is still creating barriers to accessing public transport, the new routes have greatly improved many people’s ability to access larger health centres. The relative stabilization of both conflict patterns and the changes to the location of the contact line, combined with a very minor increase in employment, have allowed for the opening of pharmacies (some state-sponsored, some private) in some vulnerable contact line settlements. The isolated town of Krymske is an extreme, but illustrative case of how these multiple factors have improved access to health. In 2016, heavily shelled Krymske had no pharmacy, no public transport, and no ambulance for evacuating injured or sick people, and the only access to town was on dirt tracks through fields that could become too muddy for cars to pass. In October 2017, the town had a new pontoon bridge across the river (dramatically cutting travel time and creating an all-weather route out of town), weekly public transport to the regional centre, an ambulance for medical evacuations, and a small pharmacy at the local medical point.

The dismal situation regarding access to HIV testing and support for people living with HIV remains similar to last year.

Main concerns refer to:

- the separation of facilities in the government controlled areas from major health centers in the non-government controlled areas,
- isolation of communities from emergency medical treatment and limited access to preventative medicine including vaccines for children,
- a precipitous drop in HIV testing access and lack of key HIV diagnostics capacity in the whole of the GCA Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts outside of Mariupol,
- reduction of available care at contact line facilities, a small number of facility closures,
- lack of access to pharmacies and increased distances and travel times to maternity facilities.

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31 Initial interviews and visits indicated no substantial change since 2016, so a full follow-up assessment on health was not conducted this year. With all the facilities mapped in 2016, the focus for this short follow-up assessment was shifted to surveying the physical conditions of facilities within 5 km of the contact line, improvements in transport networks to emergency medical centres, access to pharmacies and ability to pay for medicines.

32 Especially when compared to educational facilities.

33 This is in Verkhnotoretske in Yasynuvaskyi Raion, Donetsk Oblast.
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