

Alert note*Tadjik-Kyrgyz border conflict*

The **alert note** is intended to alert all ACT Alliance members to an emerging emergency situation. It provides basic information to inform decision making within the Alliance regarding possible response options and it also forms the 'immediate assessment' of the situation and needs in the affected areas. An alert note should be completed **as soon as it becomes obvious there is a humanitarian emergency**.

The information in the alert note should be kept **short and concise**. Where you do not have information to address a question identified below simply state that the information is not currently available. You will not be expected to have all the information detailed below in the early stages of an emergency.

The alert note should be completed by the forum and sent to the Regional Humanitarian Programme Officer for review and circulation, with a copy to the Regional Representative.

Completed by: Réka Pankó (Hungarian Interchurch Aid)

Date completed: 10.11.2022

Forum: Europe

Type of emergency: Conflict

Date of emergency (if rapid onset): 14 September 2022 – 20 September 2022

1. The nature of the emergency

Clashes across the Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan border, in the Bulak-Bashi area of the Batken region (Kyrgyzstan) erupted on 14 September 2022 between the troops of Kyrgyzstan and of Tajikistan, which escalated into an International Armed Conflict, each accusing one another of using tanks, mortars, rocket artillery and assault drones to attack the outpost.

A ceasefire was instigated, yet intermittent heavy artillery and gunfire continued in several border villages during 16-20 September. A renewed ceasefire prevails, yet the situation remains tense. A state of emergency was declared on 16 September 2022 in the Batken region of Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan share 984 km of border, 30% of which is still disputed and leads to tensions due to lack of access to water, roads and pastures and nearby settlements.

The surroundings of Batken airport and objects on the outskirts of the city were also shelled. As per official data, the total death toll was 39 and 135 people were injured on the Tajik side, 59 people were killed, among them women and children and more than 100 were injured on the Kyrgyz side. Over 140 thousand civilians evacuated the conflict zone to the safer region (Kadamjai and Razzakov cities) of Batken and have become IDPs.¹

At this moment Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have a signed peace memorandum in force. In mid-October Kyrgyz delegation visited Dushanbe, Tajikistan to discuss further delimitation and demarcation process. Two sides plan to revise archive documents and maps from the Soviet times but in the meantime, both sides are upgrading their military capacities as observed. The situation is tense, and the risk of escalation of future conflicts is high.

2. The impact and scale of the emergency *(please include your source of information)*

The conflict has inflicted substantial losses and damages. Clashes damaged civilian facilities along the entire perimeter of the Kyrgyz-Tajik state border in the Batken region.

Heavy armoured vehicles, multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS), aircrafts, tanks, mortars, and assault drones have been used in an attempt to seize territory. The surroundings of Batken airport and objects on

¹ European Commission DG ECHO Daily Flash of 20 September 2022

the outskirts of the city were also shelled. Over 140 thousand civilians evacuated the conflict zone to the safer region (Kadamjai and Razzakov cities) of Batken and have become IDPs. This is a situation worse than it was after the conflict of 2021 not just because clashes took place along a longer perimeter of the border, and with heavy artillery, but also due to a higher number of houses destroyed, as a result of which families have no place to return to before winter. As per the initial assessment, considering above mentioned HIA qualifies this as a large-scale emergency. This is the first large-scale military conflict that took place in the history of the Batken region. Batken region is the most remote region of Kyrgyzstan, which is surrounded on all sides by the borders of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. On the territory of the region there are seven enclaves (the territories of one state, surrounded by another). Conflicts on the border of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan arise constantly, but the current escalation of the conflict has become the bloodiest in recent times. Areas that were affected as a result of the military aggression in Batken oblast and the number of displaced families whose homes were destroyed completely and uninhabitable. The following map shows geographical points where armed actions were taking place from 16-21st of September 2022.



Although the conflict has ceased the humanitarian needs are still high. The situation is still tense. There are high number of destroyed residential buildings and because of this the IDPs cannot go back to their houses and needs assistance.

To date, the affected number of IDPs by the conflict are:

Number of affected population	Location
56,684	Batken district (Min-Bulak, Ak-Sai, Samarkandek, Buzhum, Chon-Talaa, Zhany-Zher, Kok-Terek, Kok-Tash)
25,600	Batken city
56,486	Leilek district (Kulundu, Borborduk, International, Arka, Saada, Arka, Maksat, Dostuk)
3,562	Kadamjai district (displaced)
142,332	Total

444 families (2324 people) are still living in temporary shelters, mobile homes (tents,yurts) or renting rooms. The government promised to build their homes back by early December, but they have not started yet, the possibility of delay is high while winter is coming. Besides shelter, food and hygiene the

need is high for non-food items, winterization, and psychosocial support. The population near the border is endangered and lives in constant fear due to the repeating border clashes.

Dissagregated numbers of displaced people:

Province	District	Ayil Aimak (County)	Number of displaced families	Number of displaced people	Women	Men	Ethnicity
Batken province	Leilek district	Kulundu	32	181	111	70	95% Kyrgyz, 5% Tajik
		Zhany-Zher	74	373	183	190	1% Tajik, 33% Uzbek, 66% Kyrgyz
		Beshkent	1	7	3	4	Kyrgyz 100%
	Batken district	Samarkandek	59	295	114	181	100% Kyrgyz
		Ak-Tatyr	16	83	57	26	100%
		Ak-Sai	185	938	499	439	99% Kyrgyz, 1% Tajik
		Kara-Bak	67	402	229	173	100% Kyrgyz
		Bulak-Bashy	10	45	25	20	100% Kyrgyz
Total			444	2324	1221	1103	

The local Commission for Civil Protection has announced the assessment results of the damage done to Kyrgyzstan: 622 houses were damaged, 427 of which were destroyed completely and are uninhabitable, and 195 residential buildings need to be repaired. Also, 11 administrative buildings, 8 schools, 7 kindergartens, 3 FAPs (paramedic stations), 323 outbuildings and 197 life support facilities were destroyed and burned. In addition, a 36-meter bridge across the Ak-Suu River was blown up, and 27 cars were burned or smashed. Thieves robbed more than 800 houses and stole more than 2,000 heads of large and small livestock.

From over 140 thousand refugees over 130 thousand returned to their homes, but they have lost a lot of their belongings, especially livestock critical for income and life maintenance (cows, sheep, and horses that were stolen and crops at the field that were burnt).

Long-term consequences:

In 2022 the poverty rate in Batken region already reached 33% before the conflict. Recent violent conflict in Batken that affected more than 150 000 people could also negatively impact the poverty level. It is noteworthy, that Batken is highly dependent on migrants` remittances. Considering the situation in the Russian Federation (economic sanctions against Russia negatively affected the migrants` remittances and the question of military mobilizations resulted in an outflow of Kyrgyz migrants back home), the situation with poverty could be worse. People are living in constant fear of being attacked again, a lot of them feel some level of depression, and show signs of PTSD.

3. Local and national capacity

Those households that were robbed or partially destroyed will not get any compensation or cash vouchers from the state. As for the households that were completely destroyed, some families are accommodated in temporary shelters such as schools and kindergartens and some of them moved to their destroyed houses in order to save what still could be used. The government plans to start rebuilding of their homes by mid-December. Meanwhile, they are living in tents and yurts provided by the Red Crescent and Ministry of Emergency Situations, or in social dormitories. As per our assessment, around 60% of them are using their savings to cover food expenses, clothing, and items such as critical kitchenware and WASH supplies. But, their savings will not be enough to survive over three months period.

Thirty percent of affected people are surviving with the support of relatives and friends. While 20% are fully dependent on external support. They are being supported by the local municipality through limited food provision (wheat flour, vegetable oil, noodles, etc.). In order to meet the needs, people are decreasing food portions by older family members so the kids have the required nutrition.

All utility bills (electricity, water supply, waste collection) will be free of charge till the end of winter (till March 2023) as a support mechanism by the state.

Some of the families are already running out of their savings, therefore, are forced to take bank loans to buy coal and other necessary items to survive the winter.

Winters in Batken are pretty harsh meaning the NFI needs should be covered beforehand in order to avoid the deterioration of their already bad situation.

At this moment, local municipalities are providing school buildings and kindergartens as a shelter for displaced people, but in another region. In their home communities, most of the social facilities were destroyed. Therefore, many displaced people moved into tents and yurts that were provided by the Ministry of Emergency and installed so they can be near their home communities. Local social workers are providing care for the elderly and kids- spending time with them, reading books, and helping cook meals. Children of affected communities are not attending schools or getting education online until their school will be restored back. Food storages are running out of stock of basic products: oil, wheat flour, sugar, etc. While these houses are under construction, each affected family received 100 000 Kyrgyz soms (~1200\$) of allowance to buy critical items and needs. Forty percent of the displaced are living in tents, and mobile containers-trailers, while 60% are accommodated in social dormitories (schools and kindergartens). Meals are provided as humanitarian aid, but it is limited.

The coordination of emergency support is implemented by the local municipality. The state will be able to cover the only building of the house, but other items will not be covered. Families should bear these costs themselves. Therefore, displaced people hope to receive assistance from other sources, such as humanitarian organizations.

Noteworthy, the government of Kyrgyzstan is more focused on building the capacity of the military potential of the country to prevent future aggression. Therefore, the volume of emergency response for humanitarian needs is less than what is needed.

The UN working group has been activated. World Food Program has allocated 400 metric tons of wheat flour. It is being distributed with the support of the Ministry of Emergency situations. HIA's local implementing partner monitors the distribution process. In addition, UNICEF is providing psychological support for children from affected communities. UNFPA is providing sanitary kits for the victims. Although this support does not cover all victims, it is a valuable contribution as well. UNHCR has also visited within the monitoring group with OSCE, EU to evaluate the damage done and documented the violation of human rights. At this moment, together with other NGOs, they are providing legal assistance for the victims of the conflict to restore their legal documents including documents for property ownership. The government already conducted full revision and monitoring of affected communities and all landmines and unexploded rockets were deactivated and removed.

4. Key needs and gaps

The families that were affected largely are those whose houses (444 families) were destroyed completely and are temporarily accommodated in the dormitories of educational institutions in the Batken region. People who have been affected by the conflict will need to rebuild their lives, their homes will be restored by the state (government), but they will need support in recovering their assets and household needs. As the government will not provide any compensation.

The state hopes to build back the houses by December, so the victims will have their own houses by winter. Temporary shelters are provided by the state (schools and kindergartens that are adapted to shelter for IDPs), unfortunately, they do not meet the needs of the elderly, especially those who need special care, women and children.

Short-term consequences:

- 444 families (2 324 people) were displaced as a result of the violent conflict. They have nothing, as there were not able to pick up their belongings, even passports while evacuating. They lost completely everything, even clothing, dishes, documents, etc.
- Over 4000 children in affected communities are not attending classes due to the destruction of schools and kindergartens.
- More than 150 000 people have difficulties making ends meet due to loss of livelihoods (burnt crops, stolen domestic animals, etc).

- More than 150 000 people suffer from emotional stress due to bloody conflict and evacuation, as per recent official data 63 people were killed during the conflict. Some of the families lost more than 1 family member. 2 children died and 12 were injured due to shelling. The regular crisis at the border communities of Batken oblast is negatively affecting the region and its people.

During the conflict 8 schools, 7 kindergartens, and 3 FAPs (paramedic stations) were destroyed. Therefore, children of these 8 communities do not have access to education.

People with disabilities and the elderly are missing medical and social support as they have barriers to such services due to destroyed roads and bridges.

Medical staff from regional healthcare facility visit affected communities twice a week, but they cannot provide full-scale healthcare. Local healthcare facilities were also destroyed.

Psychological support has been provided only for a small amount of the victims.

Authorities announced food (rice, tea, buckwheat, sugar, vegetable oil, potatoes, onions, carrots, salt) as one of the top priorities for humanitarian response, followed by water, fuels, health/hygiene kits and NFIs (kitchen sets, winterization items).

Civil society cannot access the full emergency plan of the Ministry of Emergency. People from all over the country conducted food drives for evacuated and displaced people, but as coordination of humanitarian assistance from the ministry was weak it is very difficult to track the delivery of food to the victims. Information on the delivery of food is also not provided to the general public. Unfortunately, due to large-scale emergency situation and the destruction of bridges and roads the Ministry was not able to deliver food assistance on time.

The situation still persists. Assistance is not timely, and weak inter-agency and stakeholder coordination and communication are observed. Many organizations and private donors and sponsors provided support, but consolidated information on whom they have given support to and in what volume is not available.

At this moment, stakeholders have full information on the number of victims, and displaced families. But information on age, physical capacity, and health status are not available.

Please indicate whether you are considering:

	Indicate your intention with an X below
Rapid Response Fund (<i>intended for small and medium scale emergencies</i>)	X
Appeal (<i>intended for large scale emergencies</i>)	

If you indicate an intention to launch an appeal, the secretariat will activate an Emergency Steering Committee meeting within two working days on receipt of this alert.

Capacity details of forum members with the intention to respond are given below.

ACT Member	Geographical focus	Sectors of expertise	Support required	Estimated Budget range
HIA Hungary	West-Balkan, Ukraine, Iraq, Ethiopia, Afganisztan	Emergency response, PSS, education, WASH, health, livelihood, food security	Emergency support (NFI, winterization), PSS	150.000

5. Potential responses

There is no ACT member operating in Kyrgyzstan. Last year on April 28, 2021, when clashes on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border also took a serious turn, HIA implemented successfully a rapid response program with the support of the Hungary Helps Program and through our local partner. In total we reached 300 families with hygiene kits (as COVID-19 was also at peak), e.g. household hygiene and cleanliness packages containing health and hygiene care for women and children, as well as clothing, (underwear, socks, T-shirts, shorts, towels) and tools for collecting clean drinking water. In addition, 60 parents and 40 children received PSS to help them cope with the stress caused by the conflict. The total budget of the project was 35,000 USD. Our Kyrgyz partner has reached out to us now regarding how the humanitarian situation is getting worse and worse on the field and how this September crisis has had an even bigger impact and scale. HIA would like to scale up the response and focus on winterization. Now the conflict came at a worse time, before winter when not only the emergency needs high like food, WASH, and shelter, but to survive in harsh winter the impacted people need extra support.

HIA, together with its local partner with the support of ACT RRF plans to deliver necessary NFI items: winter kits for 200 families (more than 1000 people). The winter kit will include heaters, blankets, thermos, winter clothing, teapots, socks, underwear, sleeping bags, cooking stoves, flashlights, power banks, etc. These items are essential to keep warm during winter in tents and yurts. Also, they can be located in new homes, when they are finished and keep the family warm. Also, the project plans to conduct training for social workers from the affected communities on the provision of psychosocial support (PSS) for the victims of violent conflicts. After the training, trained social workers will provide therapy sessions for 1500 people to help manage their stress, thus preventing mental disorders.

HIA requests ACT RRF to support the implementation of the proposed project.