

Aiding the Local Humanitarian Response in Osh, Kyrgyzstan

ACT Alliance Rapid Humanitarian Needs Assessment – 23- 28, June, 2010

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(Photo: Michael Paratharayil/Christian Aid)

Dr. Michael Paratharayil, Christian Aid, Regional
Emergency Manager, London
Tatiana Kotova, Regional Representative, DCA CA
RO, Bishkek

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1. Introduction

On behalf of the ACT Alliance, Michael Paratharayil, Regional Emergency Manager, Christian Aid and Tatiana Kotova, DCA regional representative, visited Osh from 23-26, June. The main aim was to study the impact of the conflict and to prioritise the emerging needs. The visit also aimed at planning humanitarian interventions along with the local organisations.

2. Objectives

To assess the humanitarian needs in Osh

To analyse the existing humanitarian services for the families affected by the conflict

To prioritise the emerging humanitarian needs in consultation with the partners and communities

To strengthen the capacity of the partners to provide humanitarian assistance

3. Methodology

This assessment is based on primary and secondary data. The assessment team interacted with the conflict affected community members (Uzbeks and Kyrgyzs), national NGOs, UN systems, ICRC, the government officials and other relevant stakeholders[▼]. Secondary data have been also used in this report. These are from the OCHA situation updates and the assessment reports of other INGOs.

4. Background

The conflict between the ethnic minority Uzbeks and majority Kyrgyz started on June 10th. Hundreds of Uzbek and Kyrgyz owned houses were burned to the ground, mainly well built houses in affluent neighbourhoods. Shops, restaurants, big central super market, Osh bazar, mini supermarkets and even schools, are fully or partially burned and looted. There were clear signs on buildings distinguishing Kyrgyz and Uzbek properties.

5. Impact

The Kyrgyz government reported the death toll reached 275 as on 29th June (with the interim president once announcing that the actual death rate will climb to 2000); 2239 people were wounded in Osh and Jalal-Abad oblasts. The UN reported that 1 million people are economically affected and 400,000 are displaced. Here in Osh, national NGOs and international aid agencies report around 1500-2000 houses have been completely burned down, in addition to hundreds of business establishments. (The government reports 1,386 houses were burnt in Osh and Jalal-Abad).

A mother who does not want to be named, says,
“My daughter could identify some of the attackers in her neighbourhood. Her teachers were part of the violent mob; some of her university classmates were there. I do not feel confident in sending my daughter back to Osh to continue her studies”. She asks, “How can I send my daughter back to the university in Osh. She is going to sit with the attackers in the class. What is the guarantee for her security?”

[▼] The team is grateful to the community members, implementing partner organisations, the government staff, INGOs, UN systems, ICRC and the other stakeholders for facilitating our assessment.

5.1 Community relations and Psychosocial wellbeing

The mistrust between the communities, can not be quantified. This mistrust is being felt in every corner of Osh. A mother (does not want to be named) in one of the suburban districts in Osh, whose daughter was caught up in the conflict in Osh town sobbed. She does not want her children to go back to Osh immediately.

Men are slowly coming back to the original homes. Most of them are afraid to bring their wives and children back to the remains of their homes. Many are now living with friends and relatives or acquaintances.

Maharam Tilavaldieva, Director,
Mehr Shavkat, ACT Alliance
implementing partner

“There is a need to build the trust among both the communities. In addition to the efforts of the government, there is a need for traditional and informal leaders to engage in dialogue to build community trust”.

Many families are experiencing the impact of the trauma associated with conflict. Children and adults who witnessed the conflict require some psychosocial support. There is a need to support them with adequate psychosocial services for personal wellbeing. Most of the national organisations in Osh do not appear to have experience or capacity to develop and implement psychosocial programmes. The peaceful co-existence of the communities in longer term is another important concern.

Tension still prevails in Osh. We spoke to the Uzbeks in Shark, one of the most affected villages, in Nariman. The head of the district military unit was killed here along with his driver on 14th June. Subsequently, there was a military raid in the village. There are reports that the villagers have not surrendered their weapons. For security reasons, we could not go inside the village.

One of the village elders from Shark village said, *“We are not sure what is going to be for us here. Hundreds of refugees are returning from Uzbekistan. When they come here, they come to houses that are fully burned. We have to survive without having a sense of hope. In addition to this, there is a big anxiety over the tension that prevails in our village”.*

We met with some Kyrgyz families. They are displaced and now live in Ahthaliku village in a temporary camp on the outskirts of Osh. Haticha Egembergieva, 51, lives in a tent with her five children. She sobbed, *“I could not recognise my old house. It is fully burned down. I have no idea when I will go back to my house”*

The referendum happened on 27th June. The emerging results indicated the support for the new government and new constitution. There is still an anxiety whether this would result into another wave of conflict. The early indications are that it would help to stabilise the political process and the governing structures.

5.2 Shelter and other infrastructure: 1500- 2000 houses have been completely burned down. The number may be higher. In addition to this around 150-200 business

establishments are completely or partially burned down and looted. As a result the main market in Osh is almost paralysed. There are some small shops that are operating in Osh. As of now, there is no clear policy on how to go ahead with the shelter programmes. Some aid agencies are planning for temporary or transitional shelters.

5.3 Food: Communities have lost their food stock due to burning or looting. WFP has provided food assistance to some 270,000 people in Kyrgyzstan since mid-June. One month ration (15 tons) of high-energy biscuits is now being distributed. This is to supplement and add nutritional value to the food rations for 10,000 IDPs and returnees. WFP have plans to distribute food through the international NGOs for some more time. The government has registered significant amount of relief materials, including food, at the government humanitarian coordination centre in Osh. It is not clear to what extent, food is going to be purchased locally. Some INGOs strongly view the need to buy food locally. During discussion with the affected communities, they said, that the harvest might be poor. The main reason is that a good number of the farmers were not able to look after the wheat properly.

With the support of the ACT Alliance members, implementing partners in the ACT appeal, such as Mehr Shevkat (MS), is procuring agricultural products like rice, potatoes, onions, carrots, and other vegetables locally. MS has already procured 20 tonnes of rice.

5.4 Market and Local Economy: Osh Central market alone, which was looted and burned down, employs around 40,000 persons (reported by an INGO), mostly men. Because of the business infrastructure is completely destroyed, these persons are unemployed, along with increasing number of unemployed in other sectors. This affects the household income and stability. National partner staff reported that there is no practice of having insurance for the shop keepers. It would take months or may be years to bring business back to the previous conditions.

The agriculture economy at the outskirts of Osh is functioning and active. A ten year old local market development programme, set up by ICCO in cooperation with Helvetas enabled local organisations in Osh to carry out the assessment on the availability of the local food items. It is reported that local food items worth of 1 million Euros is available within the local economy in the farming districts of Osh.

5.5 Health and WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene)

Not any major communicable diseases are reported now. Around 2500 were wounded. Some of them still require health care treatment. MSF reported that they do not see the need for advanced treatment and are planning to send back their surgeons. There are reports of a shortage of medicines in the local health centres/hospitals.

Oxfam reports there are no severe shortages of water and sanitation needs in IDP camps as more people are with host families or have returned home. UNICEF and UNHCR observe the need for non-food items, sanitation and hygiene promotion support. Save the Children reported a minor number of reported cases of diarrhoea among children immediately after the conflict, mostly associated with the type of food that was available during the first week of the emergency. In a cluster meeting on NFI/Shelter, UNHCR reported the need for hygiene kits and other non food items

that would promote hygiene. Save the Children has highlighted the need for sanitary napkins for women. UNHCR and UNICEF have also got plans to supply NFI and hygiene kits. During discussion with communities, they said, they have lost their clothes, and other basic hygiene promotion materials and essential survival items like cooking pots and pans.

5.6 Protection

International agencies responsible for safeguarding protection reported, there are some emerging protection needs. There are reports that some people are hiding due to fear for personal safety and security. Following are the other major protection concerns reported by the agencies: sexual violence especially for women in temporary accommodation; restrictions in movement as national identity documents are destroyed; reestablishment of family links. Some agencies are getting request for tracing missing persons. Access to detention centres is also very limited. Local agencies report around 10-15 new dead bodies are floating in the main river in Osh. However, it is yet to be confirmed by the international agencies responsible with protection.

5.7 Education

The Ministry of Education plans to assess all of the 491 education facilities in the affected areas, including orphanages and vocational training facilities. In some of the Uzbek neighbourhoods, schools have been burned down completely or partially. Some agencies are thinking of starting summer camps for children. However, ACT Alliance implementing partners say that mothers are afraid to send their children away from home. It is important to organise discussions first with mothers before planning for any summer camps for children. There is a need to initiate those activities that would facilitate psychosocial wellbeing especially for children and teenagers.

6. Coordination

We observed active coordination mechanisms among the INGOs and the UN in Bishkek. ACT Alliance in Bishkek initiated the INGO coordination in the first two weeks. Later this was integrated with the OCHA led general coordination. OCHA led first coordination meeting was started on June 22nd in Bishkek.

In Osh, coordination should be strengthened. As of now, coordination is led by the INGOs. When the UN systems attends these meetings, the purpose of this meeting becomes limited. Some UN agencies take this opportunity to clarify the operational issues of their 'selected implementing partners'. Some clusters were up and running in Osh. The ACT alliance team observed two different coordination meetings on the same day. Until June 28th, there was no UN led general coordination meeting. OCHA is planning to initiate a coordination base in Osh. UNICEF is also planning to open an office in Osh. Two of the ACT Alliance partner NGOs were active in the Shelter cluster meeting, led by UNHCR. No other national NGOs are actively involved in the coordination process. Among the national NGOs, there is an informal coordination mechanism.

6.1 National NGO Coordination (Mobile Group- MG): Around 10-12 local NGOs and Resource Center for Elderly (based in Bishkek) came together and established a **Mobile Group (MG)** with the aim to get involved in aid distribution in Osh and Jalalabad. MG tries to coordinate aid coming from all possible sources. They help the

governmental bodies (mayor's offices) to distribute aid effectively. Since 15 June, MG reports, they facilitated to cover 120 000 beneficiaries and another 70 000 cases were reached in coordination with other groups and organisations. MG does not always involve in direct distribution. Their job is mainly to receive requests and complaints from individuals and groups, check information, compile lists of the needy families, deliver those lists to the government and/or other distributors of aid, monitor and document cases. MG carries out the following tasks: 1) documentation and data collection; 2) distribution of data to the government and other agencies; 3) human resource/coordination of volunteers.

Capacity of the ACT Alliance implementing partners: MG members have the capacity to gather information and to link with the local government structures. But the member NGOs have only very limited experience in managing humanitarian programmes. It would be better to identify one lead NGO, preferably, Central Asia Water Management Association. As per the ACT appeal plan, Resource Centre for the Elderly (RCE) is planning to implement the programmes with the MG members.

Among the implementing partners, not many organisations have got significant experience or capacity in managing humanitarian programmes. As part of the assessment, DCCA, MS and MG-RCE, were trained on basic distribution management. ADRA is involved in procuring goods from Bishkek and to transport them to Osh. It is important to ensure that professional procurement system is ensured. It was not clear to what extent implementing partners in Bishkek are going to work with their net work members and the other partners in Osh. There is also a need to ensure that a clear mechanism is developed among the ACT Alliance implementing partners. It is important to have a written agreed guideline on this.

Due to many INGOs coming to the town, national NGOs are going to be over stretched. We have reports that CRS and Counterpart International are going to work with DCCA. It is important to strengthen the capacity of the implementing partners.

7. Prioritised Preliminary Locations and Sectors

The following table summarises the prioritised preliminary locations and the sectors of interventions. This is based on the initial plan submitted by the implementing partners.

Region and partner	District	Total Population	Beneficiaries: Total 25.589 HHs	Sectors: Food and select Non Food items
Osh City (RCE)	1. Ak-Tilek	1. 24,500	1. 20000 people in need – 3169 HH	Food (locally purchased: rice, cabbage, onion, potato, carrot, purchased in Bishkek: noodles, sugar, oil, salt) Non-food (detergent, hygiene kit, medicines, blankets, tents, bed clothes, mattresses, pillows, spoons, plates, tooth brushes, tooth pastes, candles, caps, spots)
	2. Keremet-Too	2. 18,399	2. 12879 – 4637 HH (1 burnt house, 20 apartments are robbed), plus 463 refugees needing both food and non food;	
	3. Manas-Ata	3. 30,000	10000 people – 631 HH Total 8,437 HH	
Djalal Abad suburbs DCCA	1. Suzak rayon	-31844	7000 (10 houses burnt)	Food (locally purchased: rice, potatoes, onion; purchased in Bishkek: salt, oil, noodles, sugar) Non-food (Tents, blankets, food, clothes, medicines) Food (rice, potatoes, onion, salt, oil, noodles, sugar, flour, canned meat)
	- 6 villages in Yrys a/o	- 21000	6000	
	- Atabek a/o , 2 villages	- 16600	4000 (31 houses burnt)	
	- Tash Bulak a/o	- 18926	5000	
	- Bagysh a/o	- 32000	8000	
	- Suzak a/o	- 24460	7000	
-Barpy a/o	- 32200	- 8000 (229 houses burnt) Total 40,250 people Total 6,700 HH		
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Osh urban: MS	All districts:			Food (<u>locally purchased</u> : rice, potatoes, onion; <u>purchased in Bishkek</u> : salt, oil, noodles, sugar, flour) Non-food (pots, spoons, plates, caps), hygiene kits (soap, detergent, tooth paste, tooth brush, towel, etc)
	Kalinin Str.			
	Zainabedinov Str			
	Shaitepa district			
	Kyzylkyshtak village On			
	Adyr village			
Bir Adyr village Yujnyi				
district				
Geologo-gorodok				
Judalyik district				
Ak-Tilek district				
Zapadnyi district				
			Total 21837 HH	

8. Prioritised Needs and Recommendations

The following are the priority needs and sectors of intervention:

8.1 Food assistance: While some agencies are providing food, it is important to continue to prioritise this sector. The main reasons are: most of the people in the town are unemployed; while some food products are available in the farming districts, it is not certain how the harvest for the season would be; most host families are sharing their food with the displaced families. It is important to procure food items locally as far as possible.

8.2 Non-food items and hygiene kits: There is a need to help families to restart their lives when they come to their original houses. Even in crowded host families, there is a need to provide them with these basic survival kits

8.3 Shelter: It is important to have transitional shelters. While winter will be at the doorstep within next four months, most of those who lost their houses should have a basic shelter to stay. While this sector is comparatively resource induced, it depends on how the ACT agencies are able to mobilise funds.

8.4 Psychosocial support: The team heard terrifying stories about children and women (including pregnant women) being abused, tortured and killed. It is important to give special attention for the psychosocial wellbeing of refugees and IDPs. Most national agencies are new to psychosocial programmes. There is a need to strengthen the capacity of the national agencies in delivering culturally appropriate and community focused psychosocial programmes.

8.5 Peace-building and reconciliation: The mistrust between the ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz are observed at every corner of Osh. It is important to integrate peace building and reconciliation in the relief and rehabilitation phase. Most national NGOs are new to this field. There is a need to strengthen the capacity of the partners on this.

8.6 Agricultural and local economy development: It is important to prioritise this sector in the rehabilitation. Given the experience and capacity of the ACT Alliance members in the region, it is important to focus on this sector. This would also strengthen the local economy and market.

8.7 Partner Capacity Building: There is a need to strengthen the partner capacity. To start with, the ACT Alliance members should focus on the following: Relief management, Sphere standards, Accountability to the beneficiaries and psychosocial support. At the rehabilitation stage, there is a need to strengthen the partner capacity on local market and agricultural development and emergency preparedness.

8.8 Distribution and Coordination Management: It was not clear to what extent the implementing partners in Bishkek are going to work with their net work members in Osh. It is important to have a written agreed guideline to clarify the role of different partners to strengthen the distribution and coordination management process.

8.9 Advocacy Messages: ACT alliance should highlight the following in the advocacy messages; need to procure food locally, importance of activating local

economy; strengthen the capacity of the local organisations; better coordination mechanisms involving the local agencies. It is likely to have more advocacy messages as appropriate given the fluid situation on the ground.

8.10 Coordination: There is a need to explore how best the ACT Alliance could be represented at the coordination mechanisms in Osh. In Bishkek, ACT Alliance has a significant presence in different UN led coordination mechanisms.

9. Conclusion

The humanitarian situation in Osh is very fluid. Agencies have to be flexible to accommodate the emerging needs. It is important to take into the views of the national actors on the ground when planning the emergency programmes.