HIGHLIGHTS

- UNICEF held a seminar on Child Rights with the Members of the Parliament and the Permanent Council on Child Rights of the Parliament of Georgia. – please see MONTHLY FOCUS on page 5.
- UNICEF launched a third phase of its back-to-school campaign, stressing the importance of school reopening, emphasizing the digital divide for those children who lack the necessary digital tools to engage in distance learning, and highlighting the negative impact that school closures have on children’s academic, social and mental wellbeing. UNICEF and WHO issued a joint press-release calling for school reopening. A press-conference was held with the UNICEF Representative, which was followed with media interviews and his participation on a TV Talk-show on school reopening triggered public discussion.
- UNICEF’s campaign გათვალისწინებითმასწავლებლთა გადაღება to engage teachers and school administrators in the national vaccination programme was joined by three Ambassadors in Kakheti - Ambassador of Norway H.E. Helene Sand Andresen, Ambassador of Estonia H.E. Riina Kaljurand, and Ambassador of Lithuania H.E. Andrius Kalindra. In their video addresses, the Ambassadors stressed the importance of creating a safe environment in schools so that they are the first to open and last to close amid lockdowns forced by the pandemic.
- UNICEF Georgia continues to support the National Center for Disease Control (NCDC) in providing information on COVID-19 vaccination to medical personnel, teachers, media, religious leaders and municipal staff.
- Under an initiative of the European Network of Ombudspersons of Children (ENOC), and with UNICEF’s support, the Public Defender's Office completed a Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) related to COVID-19. The draft report has been shared with ENOC for comments and feedback.
- UNICEF launched a series of training sessions for academic staff of nine state universities to support finalisation and implementation of Bachelor level programmes for prospective preschool educators.
- Field work for the fourth wave of the Real Time Monitoring (RTM) survey has been completed, and preparation for the fifth wave has started. Data is being generated on the impact of COVID-19, COVID-19 vaccinations, access to healthcare services and learning, amongst others.

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Confirmed cases (7.31% 14-day positivity rate)</th>
<th>Confirmed deaths</th>
<th>Child (&lt;18 years) cases</th>
<th>Abkhazia Confirmed cases – 26,549 Confirmed deaths – 397</th>
<th>UNICEF funding gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>591,766</td>
<td>8,446</td>
<td>46,113</td>
<td>Boys: 23,678 and Girls: 22,435</td>
<td>US$2,272,750</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY

- UNICEF continues to work closely with the Government, WHO, and other United Nations and humanitarian partners to provide technical guidance and support. In line with WHO’s COVID-19 Strategic Response Plan, UNICEF is focusing on risk communication; provision of critical hygiene supplies and PPE for frontline workers; and mitigating the secondary effects of the outbreak by facilitating continued access to healthcare, education and child protection services, as well as social protection programmes for children, pregnant, and lactating women.

COMMUNICATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE (C4SC) & EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

- UNICEF continues to support the national COVID-19 vaccination process through provision of information about vaccination and debunking the misinformation through multimedia storytelling and media engagement.
- A third phase of UNICEF’s back-to-school campaign has been launched, stressing the importance of schools being open for children, emphasizing the digital divide for those children who lack the necessary digital tools to engage in distance learning. An extensive media and social media campaign has been launched highlighting the negative impact that school closures have on children’s academic, social and mental wellbeing with a joint UNICEF and WHO press-release calling on Governments to keep schools open and a press-conference with the UNICEF Representative for leading media representatives. The press-conference was followed by other media interviews and a TV talk show. The campaign has triggered wide public discussion
on safe school reopening and amplified voices of young people, parents and teachers who shared their challenges on distance learning.

- UNICEF also highlighted vaccination of teachers as an important component for school reopening. UNICEF Representative in Georgia and the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia visited the Medical University to monitor the vaccination process of Tbilisi school teachers and announced a three-month plan to reach more than 3,000 teachers throughout the country with messages about the benefits of vaccination.

- UNICEF’s campaign #UNICEFGeorgia to engage teachers and school administrators in the national vaccination programme was joined by three Ambassadors in Kakheti - Ambassador of Norway H.E. Helene Sand Andresen, Ambassador of Estonia H.E. Riina Kaliurand, and Ambassador of Lithuania H.E. Andrius Kalindra. In their video addresses, the Ambassadors stressed the importance of creating a safe environment in schools so that they are the first to open and last to close amid lockdowns forced by the pandemic.

- UNICEF continues engaging with health officials and health workers on COVID-19 vaccination. In partnership with the Ministry of Interally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MoIDPOTLHSA), the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia and the National Centre for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC) information sessions were held in Zugdidi and Mestia where prominent health experts met with teachers to provide information on COVID-19 vaccination and answered their questions. The majority of participant teachers were vaccinated against COVID-19 after the meeting.

- In cooperation with the Administration of State Representative in Kakheti, information sessions were held in Kakheti region targeting school personnel and health practitioners of Akhmeta, Telavi, Lagodekhi and Khvareli Gurjaani and Signagi municipalities. Many teachers were vaccinated by the end of the information sessions.

- Video and photo stories about vaccination events of teachers from different regions of Georgia (Zugdidi, Mestia, Kakheti 1, Kakheti 2, Kakheti 3) continue to promote vaccination among educators. In the videos from Samegrelo, Svaneti and Kakheti vaccination events, teachers talked about how the information session helped them make the decision and get vaccinated with confidence. In his interviews, UNICEF Representative stresses the importance of teachers’ vaccination in the framework of safe re-opening of schools as the new academic year approaches. Each meeting was followed by multimedia, human-interest stories, testimonials, and media stories in local as well as national media. Talk-shows and live interviews were also organized with participation of UNICEF and partner doctors.

- UNICEF continued to share personal stories of teachers and young people from Akhaltsikhe, Zugdidi and Mestia about their motivation for getting vaccinated. In video and photo stories teachers spoke about personal responsibility, combined with obligation for caring for their students and contributing to a safer environment in schools.

- UNICEF has launched an advocacy campaign to address the digital divide and resulting learning crisis. The campaign aims to generate solutions for children without internet and/or electronic devices so they can continue their education through public advocacy and establishing public-private partnerships. Young people in Svaneti and mountainous Adjara regions discussed how a lack of internet access affects their learning and development. A plan to launch a pilot model of a school-based internet laboratory was developed in partnership with a local school in Makhuntseti village, Adjara. The lab will serve as a model for
other schools in the country to create hubs for children with no internet access to get connected through school-based gadgets. An ongoing social media campaign on reducing the digital divide shares the challenges of teachers (Natia and Tatin from Makhuntseti, Gulnazi from Uchkheti) and students (girls from Makhuntseti, Ana from Khaishi, Mariana from Ushguli) to learn and live with limited or no access to internet.

- As part of UNICEF’s campaign to reduce the digital divide, UNICEF organised a one-week seminar for 15 girls in mountainous Svaneti to improve their advocacy and digital skills. The participants attended training sessions, identified issues, including lack of access to quality internet and need for youth centers, and developed their own advocacy plans.
- UNICEF reached over 1,007,072 people through its social media platforms.

“Glad to see that after information sessions organised by UNICEF with the Ministry of Education and Science, NCDC and Kakheti Governor’s Office, more teachers from Kakheti were vaccinated against COVID-19. Vaccinations will help protect teachers from the virus, allow them to teach in-person, and keep schools open” – Ghassan Khalil, UNICEF Representative in Georgia.

**HEALTH, NUTRITION & WATER, SANITATION & HYGIENE (WASH)**

- UNICEF, with financial assistance from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and in partnership with Action Against Hunger (AAH), is rehabilitating of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities in 25 schools in Abkhazia. Currently, the first phase of construction and rehabilitation of WASH facilities in 8 schools are underway. WASH facilities are being rehabilitated in schools in Tkvarcheli, Gulripshi, Gudauta, and Gali; and water connections are being rehabilitated in schools in Gulripshi and Gagra. In the second phase, 9 schools will be targeted and in the third phase, 8 schools will be targeted. The second stage of the rehabilitation works is expected to start in early October.

**CHILD PROTECTION**

- Under an initiative of the European Network of Ombudspersons of Children (ENOC), and with UNICEF’s support, the Public Defender’s Office completed a Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) related to COVID-19. The draft report has been shared with ENOC for comments and feedback.
To support the deinstitutionalisation process, UNICEF, in partnership with MoIDPOTLHSA, organised a two-day working meeting for social workers about deinstitutionalisation and strengthening the role of social workers in this process. With the leadership of Deputy Minister of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs and the UNICEF Representative, the main accents of the meeting were the importance of developing a unified vision and action plan of deinstitutionalisation, also the strengthening of social work in this process.

Under the UNICEF and EU joint project Strengthening Systems and Services for Child Protection in Georgia, a two-day working meeting was convened to discuss next steps on how to ensure a family environment for every child. Recommendations for inclusion into the Deinstitutionalisation Strategy and Action Plan were drafted around three thematic areas: deinstitutionalisation of current institutions, strengthening family support and prevention mechanisms, and improving the quality of alternative care in Georgia. The consolidated document is being shared with stakeholders to consider in the process of the development of DI strategy and action plan.

UNICEF, in close cooperation with the Georgian Association of Social Workers, held a meeting on COVID-19 vaccination for 60 social workers from different State agencies as well as NGOs. The session was delivered by medical doctor Bidzina Kulumbegov.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

- UNICEF, together with the Europe Foundation, organised an online meeting with organizations of persons with disabilities on the issue of their meaningful participation in the social protection system reform.
- The fieldwork of the fourth wave of the Real Time Monitoring survey was completed. Preparation of the fifth wave of the Real Time Monitoring survey started, including development of draft questionnaire which focuses on impact of COVID-19 vaccination, access to healthcare services and learning.

EDUCATION

- UNICEF launched a series of training sessions for academic staff of nine state universities to support finalisation and implementation of Bachelor level programmes for prospective preschool educators. The training sessions were developed based on the universities’ needs and will be held on a weekly basis until the end of December 2021.
- A two-day workshop was organised as part of the trilateral partnership project between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Ministry of Education and Science, and UNICEF. The purpose of the workshop was to generate policy recommendations promoting the implementation and institutionalisation of the catch-up/accelerated learning curriculum (adapted curriculum) and a second-chance education programme. The topics discussed at the meeting were: identification mechanisms of out-of-school children and youth; programme implementation model, enrollment procedures and regulatory documents; programme accreditation rules and programme monitoring; programme funding and risk insurance strategies. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science, National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement and local and international non-governmental organisations.

MONTHLY FOCUS: UNICEF’s seminar on child rights with the Members of the Parliament and the Permanent Council on Child Rights of the Parliament of Georgia

On 11-12 September, a seminar on child rights for parliamentarians and the Permanent Parliamentary Council on Child Rights was organised by the Parliament of Georgia and UNICEF.
The seminar was led by the Deputy Chairperson of the Parliament, Chair of the Permanent Council on Child Rights, David Sergeenko and UNICEF Representative in Georgia, Ghassan Khalil. The seminar included information on the development of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), its basic principles, and general implementation mechanisms. The seminar also touched on upholding child rights in emergencies, during COVID-19, with a focus on the importance of schools reopening. In addition, the work of the Permanent Parliamentary Council on Child Rights was discussed. This was the second seminar for Parliamentarians on child rights this year, with the aim to reach 20 per cent of Parliamentarians in 2021.

“IT WAS AN HONOUR TO LEAD THE TWO-DAY SEMINAR ON CHILD RIGHTS FOR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBERS OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL ON CHILD RIGHTS OF THE PARLIAMENT OF GEORGIA. WE HAD AN INTERESTING DISCUSSION ON UNCRC AND THE COUNCIL. UNICEF CONTINUES SUPPORTING THE PARLIAMENT OF GEORGIA IN OVERSEEING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNCRC AND THE CHILD RIGHTS CODE” - SAID DR. GHASSAN KHALIL, UNICEF REPRESENTATIVE IN GEORGIA.

MP David Sergeenko, the Chair of the Permanent Council on Child Rights, stressed that child rights is a topic that unites both the ruling party and the opposition, Government and NGOs alike, but the role of the Parliamentary Committee on the Rights of the Child is crucial since it is mandated to monitor the ongoing activities, analyse data and provide relevant recommendations based on this analysis. MP and Lawmaker Ana Natsvlishvili, also underlined the importance of the seminar, since the MPs are required by the Georgian legislation to assess the impact of any draft law on the rights of children before supporting it.

FUNDING 2021

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<th>Programme Areas</th>
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<th>Funds Identified</th>
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<td>Child Protection</td>
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<td>Social Protection</td>
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<td>Risk Communication and Community Engagement</td>
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<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>2,472,750</td>
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PARTNERSHIPS

UNICEF wishes to express its gratitude to donors supporting its response to COVID-19: Bulgaria, Estonia, the European Union, Korea, Norway, SIDA, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and USAID.

The next Situation Report will be issued on 13 October 2021.

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