

UNICEF Georgia COVID-19 Situation Report

12 June 2020

HIGHLIGHTS

- On 8 June, a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) was signed between the Georgian Coalition for Education for All, the International CK-12 Foundation, the Ministry of Education of Georgia, and UNICEF to support the development of online educational programmes and resources for children.
- The UNICEF-supported COVID-19 hotline “111” continues to provide assistance to children and their families, supporting 551 cases to date, of which more than 50% have received assistance and were closed accordingly.
- UNICEF’s pilot “Direct-to-Consumer” virtual antenatal care is expanding, increasing its reach to 3,900 pregnant women. All 3,900 women were later invited for virtual shared medical consultations, out of whom 32% participated.
- With technical support of UNICEF, Georgia received 3,500 diagnostic test kits for detection of COVID-19 virus.
- Almost 280 online homework assignments have been developed as part of the iSchool [Platform](#), making it easier for teachers to access and use it during the teaching process. As of May, about 40,000 unique users accessed the materials. EMIS praised the project as “one of the most successful ones for years”.
- UNICEF received a donation from the Bulgarian Embassy of 50 sets of PPE which will be distributed to small group homes and institutions for children with disabilities.
- UNICEF partnered with the Association of Regional Media to carry out a media campaign on COVID-19 safety and protection measures via regional TV broadcasters, with a focus on developing messages for ethnic minorities.
- A [multimedia package](#) was prepared to document how children with disabilities and their parents have coped with COVID-19-related challenges and the disruption of existing services, as well as UNICEF’s support through specialized TV programmes and online platforms.

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

843

Confirmed cases

697

Recovered cases

13

Confirmed deaths

59

Confirmed cases among children (under 18 years)

3,026

Quarantined

592,000

Children out of school

UNICEF funding needs

US\$ 4,415,399

UNICEF funding gap

US\$ 1,841,399 (42%)

Situation Overview and Humanitarian Needs

The first patient with COVID-19 was diagnosed in Georgia on 26 February 2020. Despite early actions of the Government, the number of confirmed and suspected cases continued to grow. The Government declared a state of emergency on 21 March, closing borders and airports, restricting movement inside the country, banning mass gatherings and maintaining closure of all schools, kindergartens and universities. The state of emergency ended on May 23 however several restrictions remain in place. In addition, the Parliament of Georgia has passed a bill which allows the government to impose movement, labor, migration, economic and other restrictions without the declaration of a state of emergency. Several new cases have emerged which have been classified as local transmission as the source cannot be identified.

To date, Abkhazia, Georgia reported 36 cases, with 27 recoveries and one death. A state of emergency was put in place on 28 March and was lifted as of 21 April, however, restrictions on movement remain in place, and the Administrative Border Line and the border with Russia remain closed.

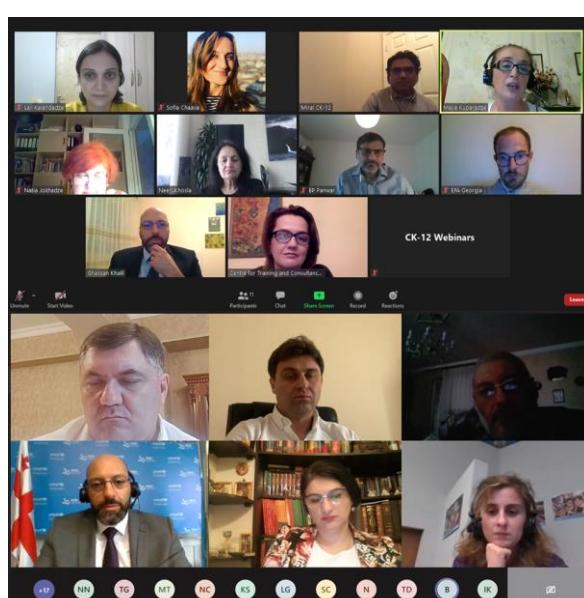


Photo 1: Signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation between Coalition for Education, CK-12, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia and UNICEF.

Photo 2: The webinar led by UNICEF Representative on the importance of incorporation of child rights in university curricula and upholding children's rights during COVID-19.

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 limiting human-to-human transmission and mitigating the impact of the outbreak on the health system and communities.

UNICEF's mix of response and preparedness activities include:

1. Facilitating risk communication as well as learning, play, and positive parenting communications;
2. Provisioning critical hygiene and medical supplies for healthcare;
3. Ensuring children, pregnant, and lactating women are supported with adequate healthcare despite the outbreak;
4. Mitigating secondary effects of the outbreak by facilitating continued access to education, child protection needs, including prevention of violence against children, and advocating for continued access to social protection programmes.

UNICEF's Response

UNICEF is supporting COVID-19 coordination mechanisms nationally, and in regions, with technical expertise, planning, and communications, including participating in UN coordination groups for health procurement and socio-economic/early recovery and chairing the social protection and education group.



Photo 3: UNICEF Representative and the Ambassador of Bulgaria during the handover of full-body protection suits as part of the humanitarian initiative from the Bulgarian Government.

Communication for Social Change (C4SC) and External Communications

- The fourth wave of the Behavioral Insight Study conducted by UNICEF and WHO to monitor public knowledge, risk perceptions, behaviors, and trust was carried out in Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti regions. The study aimed to understand public perceptions in these ethnic minority regions and to address existing misconceptions in risk communication and community engagement activities.
- UNICEF partnered with the Association of Regional Media to carry out a media campaign on COVID-19 safety and protection measures through regional TV broadcasters. Relevant messages for ethnic minorities in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Qvemo Kartli regions will be developed and distributed as news packages, talk shows, and public service announcements (PSAs).
- A [multimedia package](#) was prepared to document how children with disabilities and their parents have coped with COVID-19-related challenges and the disruption of existing services, as well as how UNICEF continued to support parents through specialized TV programmes and online platforms.
- Voices of youth were shared through [short stories](#) and videos ([video 1](#), [video 2](#)). The children from the Imereti region shared their views on how staying at home had a positive impact on their lives, despite the stress caused by COVID-19 pandemic.
- With the consideration that children spend more time online during the COVID-19 pandemic, an [animated video](#) was prepared to raise awareness about the increased risks of cyber-bullying and violence. The video focuses on the alarming signs, and the steps that parents can take to stay alert.
- A Facebook group for young people – Debates for Education – hosted a [photo/video contest](#) to allow group members to visualize COVID-19 through their point of view. Young people shared posters, animations, TikTok videos on their lives in quarantine, distance learning experiences and funny moments. [Best works](#) were voted in the group, receiving 100s of “likes” from their peers.
- Digital campaign for young people continued through [entertainment platforms](#) with the renewed message – after #stayingathome. The focus of the campaign shifted to staying careful in the post-lockdown period, stressing the importance of wearing masks and frequent hand-washing.

- The [article countering fake news](#) on the causes of COVID-19 was prepared for a youth-generated website - imitom.ge.
- [Social media content](#) about parenting during COVID-19 was created and shared as part of the global parenting month campaign.
- During this reporting week, UNICEF Georgia reached 640,000 people and engaged 10,000 people through its social media channel.

Health, Nutrition and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

- UNICEF's pilot "Direct-to-Consumer" virtual antenatal care is expanding, increasing its reach to 3,900 pregnant women (including the pilot phase). All 3,900 women were later invited for virtual shared medical consultations, out of whom 32% participated.
- With technical support from UNICEF, Georgia received 3,500 diagnostic test kits for detection of COVID-19.

Adolescents/youth

- In partnership with Kant's Academy, UNICEF initiated an online survey for adolescents. The survey aims to monitor adolescents' wellbeing, identify their concerns and challenges, as well as their usage of internet resources, and engagement in online gaming. The survey data is to be used in the preparation to aid the needs of adolescents.
- UNICEF is in the process of developing an online session for adolescents to help them build resilience to cope with the challenges caused by COVID-19 lockdown.

Child Protection

- On 1 June, the Parliament of Georgia announced the expansion of the child hotline "111" to cover issues related to adolescents and young people's mental health and psychosocial wellbeing, with a focus on substance abuse and gambling. The child hotline "111" continues to provide assistance to children and their families with over 551 cases received to date, of which more than 50% have received assistance and were closed accordingly.
- UNICEF partner, Initiative for Social Change, conducted online supervision meetings for more than 80 statutory social workers from the child protection and justice system during the reporting week.
- A [Facebook page to support parents of children with disabilities](#) continues to provide practical information, one-to-one counseling with specialists, and chats for parents and caregivers, reaching more than 60,000 people.
- Online psychological support was provided to 171 children and 103 caregivers in small group homes and foster care by UNICEF partner Children of Georgia.
- Consultations and technical assistance are provided to service providers in daycare centres, (re)habilitation programmes, and home visitation services to support remote service provision for children with disabilities. Additionally, face-to-face work resumed in compliance with NCDC's hygiene standards.
- UNICEF received the donation from the Bulgarian Embassy of 50 sets of PPE, which will be distributed to small group homes and institutions for children with disabilities.
- A four-day remote training was conducted for 29 social workers in Abkhazia. The training covered various aspects of social work and the provision of psychosocial support to children and their families in the context of COVID-19.
- Two videos on internet security for children are being broadcasted on the local TV of the Abkhazia region. The same videos have reached 31,000 people through social media platforms.

Education

- A webinar on the importance of incorporation of child rights in university curricula was delivered by the UNICEF Representative for students and professors of East European Universities (EEU).
- UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia, EMIS¹ and Georgian Coalition for Education for all (EFA) with the development of essential teaching and learning recourses for online education of children during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Through the cooperation of UNICEF and Public Broadcasting TV channel, interactive TV shows continue to be aired every Saturday and Sunday, at 13:20, for parents, educators, and care providers on early childcare and education.

¹ Education Management Information System

- The toolkits have been produced on early childhood development and school readiness and were uploaded at www.el.ge (e.g. [Physical Development](#)) - materials are widely distributed through EFA social media, as well as the Ministry of Education's media channels. These resources have also been translated into national minority languages.
- In the field of general education, almost 280 online homework assignments have been developed as part of the iSchool [Platform](#) for improved access by students and teachers. These resources are closely linked to national school curricula and Microsoft Teams program, making it easier for teachers to access and use it during the teaching process. The early statistics of EMIS showed that about 40,000 unique users accessed and used the materials by May. EMIS representatives praise the project as “one of the most successful ones for years”.
- UNICEF is mediating the partnership between national and international counterparts in promoting interactive, high quality, and customizable digital platforms for online education of children in Georgia. In this regard, on 8 June the Georgian Coalition for Education for All and the International CK-12 Foundation signed a Memorandum of Cooperation aimed at supporting the Ministry of Education with the enhancement of online educational programmes and resources for children's improved performance and learning outcomes.
- UNICEF's bi-weekly episodes of bedtime story-readings continue to be streamed on local media platforms in Abkhazia.

Social Protection

- UNICEF completed a Shock Responsive Social Protection Feasibility Assessment and is preparing to present its findings to the Prime Minister's Office.
- UNICEF is completing the assessment of the potential impact of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable groups, with special attention given to children. Simulations of cash transfer programmes that could be implemented to alleviate the impact of COVID-19 are complete. Data verification and planning of the next steps is ongoing.

Partnerships

UNICEF-

- is collaborating with the Prime Minister's Office to provide needs-based support to the most vulnerable children and their families, including national minorities, and children with disabilities.
- developed and/or strengthened partnerships with public broadcasting and other TV and online channels to further amplify risk communication messages and enhance home-based learning and education.
- continues working with religious leaders to develop and implement COVID-19 response plans.
- continues its partnerships with the Education for All Coalition, an alliance of CSOs working on education, and a network of organizations working with children with disabilities and their families, contributing to distance learning efforts of the Government and provide needed support to families with children with disabilities.
- enhanced its partnership with the National Centre for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC) on responding to COVID-19 pandemic through a Memorandum of Cooperation.
- partnered with UNHCR to improve the access to safe water and adequate hygiene for children and teachers in six schools in the Abkhazia region.
- is partnering with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is partnering with UNICEF to reach selected schools in the Abkhazia region with hygiene materials.
- 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, UKAid, and USAID.

Human Resources

UNICEF Personnel in Georgia CO	Tbilisi	Abkhazia	Total Staff Strength
International Staff	3	1	4
National Staff	24	5	29
Total Staff	27	6	33
Consultants		14	

Results to Date

Indicator	Target	Results
Number of people reached on COVID-19 through messaging on prevention and access to services	3,200,000	3,250,000
Number of people reached with critical WASH supplies (including hygiene items) and services	5,000	2,320
Number of healthcare facilities staff and community health workers provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	800	550
Number of children supported with distance/home-based learning	592,000	300,000
Number of children, parents and primary caregivers provided with community based mental health and psychosocial support	5,350	5,017

Funding

Programme Areas	Funding Needs	Funds Identified	Funding Gap
Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of teaching and learning resources for distance learning Development of resources for parents for early learning and school readiness 	300,000	282,100	17,900
Child Protection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of resources to prevent violence against children Support to service providers within the child protection and justice systems to respond to COVID-19 and enable continued service provision Support continued programming for children with disabilities Support social workers in Abkhazia to provide services to vulnerable families 	514,000	260,650	253,350
Health, Nutrition and WASH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procure essential supplies and equipment including COVID-19 test kits Support telemedicine to enable access to critical health services Training of health professionals through telehealth Development of regulations and standards in all health specialty areas for pregnant women, mothers, newborns and children Improving access to WASH in schools in Abkhazia Adolescent mental health and wellbeing 	3,001,399	732,900	2,268,499
Social Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct shock-responsive feasibility assessment of the social protection system Conduct assessment of vulnerable and at-risk groups of children 	400,000	121,950	278,050
Risk Communication and Community Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out a risk communication campaign Carry out #LearningatHome campaign to help parents in care and early learning opportunities of their children 	200,000	176,400	23,600
Additional Funding Received this week (to be distributed by programme area soon)		1,000,000	
Grand Total (Fundraising efforts ongoing to bridge the funding gap)	4,415,399	2,574,000	1,841,399

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