

# UNICEF Georgia COVID-19 Situation Report

24 April 2020

## HIGHLIGHTS

- A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Parliament, the State Care Agency and UNICEF for the creation of a child helpline.
- UNICEF's 15-day challenge aimed to help parents in the care and early learning of their children, and associated with hashtags #Learningathome #havefunathome, reached an estimated 191,296 people and actively engaged 16,358. A second phase was launched with another 15-day challenge, in partnership with an online news media source On.Ge and an independent TV broadcaster Mtavari.
- UNICEF reached out to young people on TikTok videos on COVID-19 safety and mental wellbeing generating 11,000 views and 1,000+ engagements within the first week.
- UNICEF partner, Children of Georgia, provided psychological support to 100 children and caregivers in alternative care.
- A specialized Facebook page was launched by UNICEF in support of parents of children with disabilities.
- In Abkhazia, Georgia, positive parenting videos were shared on social media and television. The videos reached 18,000 people.
- UNICEF launched a Shock Responsive Social Protection Feasibility Assessment.

## SITUATION IN NUMBERS

**444**

Confirmed cases

**5**

Confirmed deaths

**24**

Confirmed cases among children (under 18 years)

**5,888**

Quarantined

**592,000**

Children out of school

**UNICEF funding needs**

US\$ 3.74 million

**UNICEF funding gap**

US\$ 3.37 million (90%)



The Family in need receives the humanitarian package

## Situation Overview and Humanitarian Needs

On 26 February 2020, the first case of COVID-19 was identified in Georgia. In the following days, several more cases emerged, which prompted the Government to institute the first phase of restrictions on land and air movement and closure of schools, effective 2 March. The Government mobilized hospitals for confirmed cases of COVID-19, as well as quarantine spaces for suspected cases in different regions of Georgia. Despite the early actions of the Government, the number of confirmed and suspected cases continued to grow triggering the Government to declare a state of emergency on 21 March – closing all borders and airports, restricting movement inside the country, banning mass gatherings and maintaining closure of all schools, kindergartens, universities. Two regions, Bolnisi and Dmanisi, were declared as quarantine zones after detecting community spread on 22 March. More cases of community spread were detected on March 28 in Georgia proper, spurring the Government to introduce a curfew, halt movement of public transport, and introduce checkpoints on city crossings administered by police and military units. On 15 April, a lockdown was imposed on the country's four largest cities, Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi, and Rustavi, to avoid further spread during the period of Easter Holiday. The Government Administration prolonged the restriction on car travel until April 27 and announced the extension of the State of Emergency until 22 May.

The first case of COVID-19 was identified in Abkhazia, Georgia on 30 March.

A state of emergency was in place in Abkhazia from 28 March however it was lifted as of 21 April. Despite this, restrictions on movement remain in place and the administrative boundary line remains closed. All schools have been closed and end of year exams have been cancelled. It is also noted that Russia banned all exports to countries other than member states of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), which jeopardizes food supplies in Abkhazia due to its dependency on imported products.

## Humanitarian Strategy

UNICEF continues to work closely with the Government, WHO and other United Nations and humanitarian team 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 protection and education group.



The UNICEF representative, Ghassan Khalil, while loading the humanitarian packages

## Communication for Social Change (C4SC) and External Communications

- Through media and digital platforms, UNICEF continues to carry out a risk communication campaign for children and parents on COVID-19 prevention, safety measures, and adaptive strategy on how to cope with stress and anxiety.
- UNICEF and WHO are partnering to monitor public knowledge, risk perceptions, behaviors, and trust, linked to COVID-19 outbreak and response activities.
- UNICEF partnered with the national broadcaster Rustavi-2's "Midday Show" for a 15-day challenge aimed to help parents in the care and early learning of their children, and associated with hashtags #Learningathome #havefunathome, reaching an estimated 191,296 people and actively engaging 16,358. This challenge was extended to a second phase with another 15-day challenge which focuses on relaxation and mental health tips for parents with young kids, along with information on positive parenting. Phase 2 was launched by UNICEF, in partnership with an online news [media source On.ge](#) and an independent TV broadcaster Mtavari.
- UNICEF reached out to young people on [TikTok videos on COVID-19](#) safety and mental wellbeing. In partnership with three social media influencers, three videos were posted with reference to UNICEF and generated 11,000 views and 1,000+ engagements within the first week.
- UNICEF provided opportunities to children to reflect on COVID-19. A corresponding [video](#) was produced and shared on social networks, in which a 10-year-old child from the Imereti region shares his knowledge and ideas on COVID-19.
- Two [advocacy videos](#) were filmed. The UNICEF Representative addresses in the 1<sup>st</sup> video young people and in the 2<sup>nd</sup> video he specifically addresses Abkhazia region.
- UNICEF's [webpage on COVID-19](#) related topics reached 50,068 unique users and 66,111 page views.

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

- UNICEF initiated a partnership with the State Medical University to establish a telemedicine center at the University Hospital and enable remote referrals for antenatal and paediatric care.
- UNICEF supported local stakeholders in Abkhazia in developing rapid preparedness and response plans covering risk and awareness communication messages, patient routing, contact tracing, immunization-related interventions, guidelines on pregnant women, and breastfeeding during the COVID-19.

## Child Protection

- UNICEF partner, Children of Georgia, provided psychological support to 100 children and caregivers in alternative care: 76 children and their caregivers in small group homes in Tbilisi, Imereti, Adjara, Shida-Kartli, Kakheti and Guria; and 24 children in foster and reintegrated families in Shida-Kartli, Kakheti, Guria, Samegrelo and Imereti.
- UNICEF partner, Initiative for Social Change, started the development of COVID-19-related guidelines for social workers from child protection and justice systems.
- UNICEF and its partner, MAC Foundation, are producing a specialized TV programme to support children with disabilities and their parents. The first episode of the programme will be aired on 25 April on Channel Education of Georgian Public Broadcaster.
- A specialized Facebook page in support of parents of children with disabilities was launched.
- UNICEF signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Parliament and State Care Agency for the creation of a child helpline. The child helpline became operational as of 24 April 2020.
- Positive parenting videos were produced for the Abkhazia region, that received wide coverage on social media and local TV stations. Each video reached around 18,000 people through social media channels.
- UNICEF-trained social workers are supporting vulnerable families in Abkhazia, Georgia, including through the hotline for providing psychosocial support.

## Education

- UNICEF is supporting the development of response strategies in agreement and close coordination with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia.
- UNICEF is developing communication materials to support the cognitive, emotional, and motoric development of young children using various platforms (social media, TV, radio, preschools/municipalities).
- UNICEF is supporting the development of a brief teachers' guide for organizing effective distant learning that considers the individual needs of children and their families.
- UNICEF is assisting the development of guidelines for caregivers on physical activities for children, given the temporary measures of physical distancing.

## Social Protection

- UNICEF launched a Shock Responsive Social Protection Feasibility Assessment.
- UNICEF is launching the assessment regarding the potential impact of the COVID-19 on the most vulnerable groups, with special attention given to children.

## 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.
- UNICEF entered into a partnership with public broadcasting and other TV and online channels to further amplify risk communication messages and enhance home-based learning and education.
- Partnerships with religious leaders enabled the development of COVID-19 response plans with the Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church of Georgia and the Administration of All Muslims of Georgia.
- 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, will contribute to distance learning efforts of the Government and provide needed support to families with CWDs.

## 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	

## Funding

Programme Areas	Funding Needs	Funds Identified	Funding Gap
<b>Education</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of teaching and learning resources for distance learning</li> <li>Development of resources for parents for early learning and school readiness</li> </ul>	150,000	120,000	30,000
<b>Child Protection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of resources to prevent violence against children</li> <li>Support to service providers within the child protection and justice systems to respond to COVID-19 and enable continued service provision</li> <li>Support continued programming for children with disabilities</li> </ul>	90,000	55,000	35,000
<b>Health, Nutrition and WASH</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Procure essential supplies and equipment including COVID-19 test kits</li> <li>Support telemedicine to enable access to critical health services</li> <li>Training of health professionals through telehealth</li> <li>Development of regulations and standards in all health specialty areas for pregnant women, mothers, new-borns and children</li> <li>Improving access to WASH in schools in Abkhazia</li> </ul>	3,101,399	110,000	2,991,399
<b>Social Policy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct shock-responsive feasibility assessment of the social protection system</li> <li>Conduct assessment of vulnerable and at-risk groups of children</li> </ul>	200,000	61,000	139,000
<b>Risk Communication and Community Engagement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carry out a risk communication campaign</li> <li>Carry out #LearningatHome campaign to help parents in care and early learning opportunities of their children</li> </ul>	200,000	45,000	155,000
<b>Grand Total</b> (Fundraising efforts ongoing to bridge the funding gap)	<b>3,741,399</b>	<b>391,000</b>	<b>3,350,399</b>

Next Situation Report: 1 May 2020

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