

# UNICEF Georgia COVID-19 Situation Report

18 October 2021

## HIGHLIGHTS

- On 23-24 September, UNICEF hosted the Second International Conference on Incorporation of Child Rights into University Educational Programmes and Curricula in Batumi; UNICEF Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, Ms Afshan Khan, also participated in the Conference – *please see MONTHLY FOCUS on page 5.*
- Child Rights Centres, the knowledge hubs of six state universities started activities to create and disseminate knowledge on child rights, including during emergencies.
- UNICEF and GeoStat presented the findings of the fourth wave of the Real Time Monitoring Survey on the effects of COVID-19 on Georgian households.
- UNICEF, together with the Association of Young Economists of Georgia (AYEG), has launched a study on goods and services required for social inclusion of children with disabilities.
- In its partnership with the Government on combatting lead exposure, UNICEF supported a 5-day capacity building workshop for staff of the Chemical Risk-Factor Research Laboratory on operating the Atomic Absorption Spectrometer.
- UNICEF, together with the Global Initiative on Psychiatry, marked the World Mental Health Day and launched a project “Supporting Adolescents Mental Health as they Return to School During COVID-19” in Batumi.
- With UNICEF’s support, the Public Defender's Office, under the initiative of the European Network of Ombudspersons of Children (ENOC), completed a Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) related to COVID-19.
- UNICEF, together with the Embassy of France, organised a 2-day meeting for judges to initiate dialogue on the introduction of the concept of a child judge in the Georgian judicial system and to familiarise with the French model.
- As part of its advocacy campaign to reduce the digital divide and the learning crisis, UNICEF is piloting a model of use of computer laboratories for two public schools for children without internet access and/or electronic devices so they can continue their education.

## SITUATION IN NUMBERS

<b>664,813</b>	<b>9,510</b>	<b>82,545</b>	<b>Abkhazia</b>	<b>UNICEF funding gap</b>
Confirmed cases (8.47% 14-day positivity rate)	Confirmed deaths	Child (<18 years) cases Boys: 42,371 and Girls: 40,174	Confirmed cases – 29,821 Confirmed deaths – 431	US\$2,272,750

## 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.
- In partnership with the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MoIDPOTLHSA), the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (MoES) and the National Centre for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC), UNICEF continues information sessions for teachers across the country. The information sessions were held for teachers from Gori, Khashuri, Zestaphoni, Tkibuli, Chiatura, Terjola and Tkibuli municipalities, where prominent health experts met with teachers to provide them with information on COVID-19 vaccination and answered their questions. The majority of participant teachers were vaccinated against COVID-19 after the meeting.
- UNICEF’s campaign #აიცვროთმასწო to engage teachers and school administrators in the national vaccination programme continued in [Guria](#), [Shida Kartli](#) and Imereti regions. More than 500 teachers attended the information sessions led by prominent health experts and were provided with the latest evidence-based information about COVID-19 vaccination. The meetings are organized in partnership with MoIDPOTLHSA, MoES and NCDC.

- UNICEF engaged nurses in the COVID-19 vaccination programme. More than 4,500 nurses and non-medical personnel of the 8 regions/65 clinics throughout Georgia are [learning about the latest evidence based information](#) on COVID-19 information/education and communication sessions organised by UNICEF in partnership with the Nursing Association Numane. The information sessions were held in Tbilisi, Mtskheta, Dusheti, Telavi, Keda and Shuakhevi municipalities. The launch of the programme [was publicised on social media platforms](#).
- Following the third phase of UNICEF’s back-to-school advocacy campaign, face-to-face learning resumed in all schools on October 4. UNICEF Representative congratulated all students and teachers, [focusing on the importance of in-person learning](#) for children and young people. An extensive media and social media campaign highlighting the negative impact that school closures have on children’s academic, social and mental wellbeing triggered a wide public discussion on safe school reopening and amplified voices of young people ([Nikoloz, Marta, youngsters from Akhaltsikhe](#).) parents and teachers who shared their challenges with distance learning. An 18-hour global [social media freeze](#) was dedicated to send one message to the world: #ReopenSchools as soon as possible.
- As part of its advocacy campaign to reduce the digital divide and the learning crisis, UNICEF finalised a new model of use of computer laboratories for public schools. [The pilot labs are being established](#) in two schools in villages Makhuntseti, Adjara and Bakhvi, Guria. The labs will serve as a model for other schools in the country to create hubs for children with no internet access to get connected and use the digital resources in their learning. 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.
- UNICEF organised a hands-on training for young people in mountainous Adjara to improve their advocacy and digital skills. The participants identified challenging issues, including lack of access to quality internet and the need for youth centres, and developed their own advocacy plans. The training is the third of the series, after the similar sessions for young people in Pankisi and Svaneti, with a slogan #Reimagineyourfuture and was organised as part of UNICEF’s 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary activities. [The youngsters presented their ideas and solutions](#) to the school management, UNICEF Representative and the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Adjara AR.
- The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on mental health of children and young people was highlighted through social media campaign in line with the launch of [The State of the World's Children Report 2021](#). Even before COVID-19, children and young people carried the burden of mental health conditions without significant investment in addressing them, but the pandemic will impact their mental health and well-being for many years to come.
- UNICEF has reached over 1,028,176 people through its social media platforms with information about how COVID-19 affects children, young people and their families.

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

- In its partnership with the Government on combatting lead exposure, UNICEF supported a 5-day capacity building workshop for staff of the Chemical Risk-Factor Research Laboratory on operating the Atomic Absorption Spectrometer.
- UNICEF, with financial assistance from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and in partnership with Action Against Hunger (AAH), continues rehabilitation of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities in 25 schools in Abkhazia. The first phase of construction and rehabilitation of WASH facilities in 8 schools have been completed, the second phase of rehabilitation of 9 schools is underway and the third phase of rehabilitation of 9 schools has started.
- UNICEF together with partner organisation Global Initiative on Psychiatry-Tbilisi marked the World Mental Health Day as well as launched a new project “Supporting Adolescents Mental Health as they Return to School During COVID-19” in Batumi. The event was attended by representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science of Adjara, school directors, parents and adolescents. The adolescents were engaged in interactive activities facilitated by the psychologist of psychosocial service centre “Synergy”. The new project aims to promote emotional and behavioural wellbeing of school students, living in Tbilisi and Adjara region, to support their return to schools. The project will engage 40 selected peer educators from Adjara region and Tbilisi schools to participate in intensive training sessions on various themes such as managing stress, time management, healthy sleep and healthy lifestyle, resilience, coping, sense of coherence, etc. The trained peer educators will continue education of their peers in their schools and communities on mental health issues. In addition, approximately 1,600 schools’ students of 14-18 years old will be engaged in online seminars with peer educators and psychologists. The seminars will be recorded and disseminated via social media and GIP-T platforms throughout Georgia.



*Celebration of the Global Mental Health Day, 10 October 2021.*

## CHILD PROTECTION

- Together with the Embassy of France in Georgia, UNICEF organised a two-day working meeting for judges to initiate dialogue on the introduction of the concept of child judge. With the leadership of the Chairperson of the Supreme Court, Ambassador of France in Georgia and the UNICEF Representative, the main accents of the meeting were to familiarise with the French model and to start discussions on introducing of a concept of Child Judge in Georgian Judicial system. These judges would be dedicated to reviewing only cases involving minors and will contribute to the establishment of a child-friendly approach to justice and fulfilment of the obligations set by the Code on the Rights of the Child and the Juvenile Justice Code of Georgia. The judges of the first, second and third instance courts, representatives of the High Council of Justice and the High School of Justice participated in the workshop.



*Estonia-UNICEF partnership meeting with the Administration of the Government Administration on Effective Prevention and Response to Crime and Violence Committed against Children.*

- Within the framework of Estonia-UNICEF partnership to support the Government of Georgia to strengthen the system for effective prevention and response to crime and violence committed against children and with the close collaboration with Government Administration of Georgia, a meeting was organised for the delegation from the Division for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid, Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ambassador of Estonia to Georgia. The overall objective of the meeting was to share progress and discuss the next steps on strengthening the system for Effective Prevention and Response to Crime and Violence Committed against Children.
- UNICEF continues supporting the MoIDPOTLHSA and the State Care Agency to provide assessment and crisis intervention for children who left the Ninotsminda boarding school. A multidisciplinary team of social workers and psychologists are working countrywide to assess and provide crisis intervention for children from the Ninotsminda boarding school and their families, with 38 children assessed and supported so far.
- UNICEF is supporting the State Care Agency to strengthen the quality of social work. This support entails strengthening and institutionalising the case management, supervision, specialisation models for social workers, as well as formulation of suicide prevention protocol and instruments. Additionally, UNICEF will strengthen the SCA capacity to address sexual violence cases and develop internal training capacity as well as career development system for social workers.
- UNICEF, together with Columbia University, is finalising the training module for the social service workforce on interpersonal communication and community engagement. Consultations have been conducted with the key stakeholders.

## SOCIAL PROTECTION

- UNICEF, together with the Europe Foundation, organised an online meeting with organisations of persons with disabilities on the issue of their meaningful participation in the social protection system reform.

- UNICEF, together with the Association of Young Economists of Georgia (AYEG), launched a study on goods and services required for social inclusion of children with disabilities. The innovative study seeks to estimate extra costs for families striving to integrate their children with disabilities (CWD) in the society. An expert panel for the study, uniting persons with different fictional limitations, parents of CWD and field professionals, was created and trained to support and oversee the study. The findings will inform Government to optimise social protection measures for CWD.
- UNICEF, together with the National Statistics Office of Georgia, presented the findings of the fourth wave of the Real Time Monitoring Survey. The survey investigates effects of COVID-19 on Georgian households. Material deprivation of households and children, their subjective feeling of happiness, readiness for vaccination, attitude towards persons with disabilities and children’s gaming habits were analysed and presented. Findings are available on the GeoStat and UNICEF websites.

## EDUCATION

- UNICEF continues supporting nine state universities in developing Bachelor’s (BA) programmes for prospective preschool educators. Alongside the thematic training sessions launched in September, academic staff are supported to finalise the BA programmes and course syllabi as part of series of eight workshops that are underway from 4 to 27 October.
- With the support of the Government of Norway, UNICEF continues to improve quality and inclusion in preschool education through capacity building of municipal representatives in 11 target municipalities across Georgia. A training module and two brochures have been developed in partnership with MoES on good governance in early childhood education (ECE) and establishing an inclusive education system at municipal level. The respective trainings and coaching for municipal representatives will be launched in January 2022.
- UNICEF, with the support of the Government of Norway and in partnership with National Centre for Teacher Professional Development (TPDC), continues to support pilot preschools for improving quality and inclusion in ECE. Educational resources (toys, open-ended materials, children’s books, art materials) have been acquired for 20 preschools throughout Georgia and outdoor equipment were installed in 11 Pankisi preschools. In September, 120 educators and managers of pilot preschools were trained on the mandatory module for educator’s in-service training (adopted by MoES). UNICEF, in partnership with TPDC, will continue supporting 12 preschools through regular practice-based coaching of staff on quality standards and inclusion of children with special needs.
- In cooperation with the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria and MoES, UNICEF is implementing a project “Including the most vulnerable out-of-school children and adolescents to access quality education in Georgia”. Catch-up and accelerated learning curriculum with standards and educational resources that are fully complied with the National Curriculum have been developed in the frame of the project.
- UNICEF, with the support of the Embassy of Norway, started conducting a series of trainings for academic staff of nine state universities to introduce the content and structure of the above-mentioned curriculum, resources on universal design of learning, safe learning environment, CK-12 platform, and positive parenting. These courses aim to help the universities incorporate the developed educational resources into the syllabi of various subject areas of teacher pre-education programmes, for BA and MA levels, as well as 60-credit teacher training. MoES expressed its appreciation for the initiative and welcomed the readiness of the universities to participate in the training. Exploring these issues, future teachers will learn more about the challenges of implementing a national curriculum, become aware of the needs of the most vulnerable out-of-school children and children at risk of school dropout and guide the teaching-learning process accordingly.



*The launch of a series of trainings for academic staff with MoES participation.*

- UNICEF, together with the Georgian Coalition for Education for All and MoES, distributed computer tablets to eleven public schools that do not have access to computer equipment or have very outdated ones. The initiative will promote involvement of the most vulnerable children in online learning and reduce the digital divide among students.

- With the support of the Government of Norway, Child Rights Centres, knowledge hubs of six state universities started activities to create and disseminate knowledge on child rights, in partnership with UNICEF Georgia. In total 7 state universities in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi, Telavi, Zugdidi, Akhaltsikhe and Gori established child rights centres which started functioning to incorporate child rights issues in their curricula for preparation of future professionals, to disseminate knowledge among teachers, parents, academic staff, students and local communities on child rights and thus to support implementation of CRC and Code on the rights of the child of Georgia for realisation of child rights into everyday practices.
- UNICEF Representative in Georgia met with the school students from Akhalkalaki and Akhaltsikhe to discuss the necessity of school reopening, problems and challenges during distance learning, quality education and the services Samtskhe-Javakheti State university will provide to children via newly established Child Rights Centres. The meeting conducted in Samtskhe-Javakheti State University with participation of the Rector, Professor Maka Beridze and academic staff of the university.



## MONTHLY FOCUS: The Second International Conference on Child Rights



*Ms Afshan Khan, UNICEF Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, at the Second International Conference on Child Rights in Batumi, 23 September.*

UNICEF, in partnership with Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports of Adjara, under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia hosted the Second International Conference on Child Rights, devoted to the incorporation of child rights into university educational programmes and curricula. The two-day conference, held in Batumi on 23 and 24 September, brought together professors and students, Government officials, members of Parliament, the Public Defender's Office, NGOs, the diplomatic corps in Georgia, representatives from the UN agencies, respective international organisations, school teachers, and administrators.

UNICEF Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, Ms Afshan Khan, also participated in the Second International Conference on Child Rights where fifty-five presentations on child rights in education, law, social work, labour and health have been delivered by international and local academia and seven projects on child rights promotion and implementation in schools and communities were presented by seven schools from Tbilisi, Imereti, Kakheti and Shida Kartli regions. Ten academic staff of Akaki Tsereteli State University and Shota Meskhia Zugdidi State Teaching University were granted the Child Rights Specialist Certificate after completion of an intensive 6-months tailored course on child rights during 2021 developed and delivered by UNICEF.



UNICEF Representative, Dr Ghassan Khalil and the participants of the Second International Conference on Child Rights at the final awarding ceremony in Batumi, 24 September.

“Delighted to award students, authors of the best essays, at Batumi 2021 Second International Conference "Incorporation of Child Rights into University Curricula". Always ready to encourage young people to learn and shine. I hope they take new knowledge, skills and experience from this event” - said Dr. Ghassan Khalil, UNICEF Representative in Georgia.

The [second International Conference on Child Rights](#) was also used to highlight the issue of digital divide and provide specific recommendations on how the universities could support children and young people in getting equal access to digital resources. In addition, the conference was widely publicised through social and mass media platforms. Short interviews with [high-ranking government officials](#), ambassadors of [Estonia](#) and [France](#), as well as [academia](#) were transmitted live, as the conference was taking place in Shota Rustaveli Batumi State University.

## FUNDING 2021

Programme Areas	Funding Needs	Funds Identified	Funding Gap
Education	675,000	0	675,000
Child Protection	425,000	0	425,000
Health, Nutrition and WASH	800,000	100,000	700,000
Social Protection	170,000	0	170,000
Risk Communication and Community Engagement	402,750	100,000	302,750
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2,472,750</b>	<b>200,000</b>	<b>2,272,750</b>

## 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 17 November 2021.**

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