

HIGHLIGHTS

- Georgia to Slightly Ease COVID Restrictions for New Year
- Persons with UK Travel History to Undergo Mandatory Quarantine
- Legal Stay Period for Foreign Nationals, Stateless Persons Extended
- StopCov fund has accumulated GEL 138 346 141 as of 25 December 2020

196,220
Total recovered

218,724
Confirmed cases

2,313
Total deaths

396
People in quarantine

Source: www.stopcov.ge 25 December 2020

Georgia Situation Overview

- 22 Dec - The Government of Georgia announced on December 22 that it will lift several coronavirus lockdown rules during December 24 to January 2. Full info available at: [Georgia to Slightly Ease COVID Restrictions for New Year](#)
- 21 Dec - Due to the new coronavirus strain discovered in the United Kingdom (UK), the Interagency Coordinating Council has decided that all persons, including Georgian citizens with a history of travel to the UK during the last 14 days, will be subject to a 12-day mandatory quarantine period upon entry into Georgia.
- 17 Dec - Amendments were made to the Government of Georgia Decree N164 due to coronavirus-related restrictions, extending the legal stay period for foreign nationals or stateless persons from December 31, 2020 to July 1, 2021.

Coordination Arrangements

The Prime Minister of Georgia has established and leads an Inter-Governmental Coordination Council to combat the COVID-19 crisis.

Mitigation and Response

Mitigation measures taken by the Government of Georgia

Detailed report on measures taken by the GoG is translated in English and can be accessed at: http://gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=41&info_id=76497

Response by the UN agencies, funds and programmes (AFPs)

WHO is coordinating the work on strengthening the role of primary healthcare centers in management of mild COVID-19 cases through trainings and development of protocols, also those for post-discharge monitoring of former COVID-19 patients.

- High-level visit of the Director of WHO Regional Office for Europe took place on 18-23 December, with technical meetings and side visits related to COVID-19 response.
- On-site trainings sessions with WHO participation and using WHO materials are continued for the primary case physicians in regions of Georgia.
- Data analysis is ongoing for the 6th round of the COVID-18 Behavioral Insights study conducted in partnership with UNICEF and with EU support, with final report due at the end of the year.

UNICEF rehabilitated WASH facilities in 5 schools in Abkhazia, supporting the safe re-opening of the targeted schools by providing proper handwashing points and toilet facilities for over 500 students.

- UNICEF delivered PPE and hygiene materials to schools and kindergartens, Special Penitentiary Services and Small Group Homes in Georgia.
- 15 Tablets were delivered to Tbilisi-based Small Group Homes to improve accessibility to online services/education.
- The National Statistics Office of Georgia, with technical support from UNICEF, started the first wave of the Real Time Monitoring (RTM) survey to examine the impact of COVID-19 on employment, income, education etc.



Sigrid Brettel, Head of Cooperation, EU Delegation to Georgia and UNICEF Representative in Georgia, Ghassan Khalil

- UNICEF and the European Union signed a [Joint Initiative](#) for Children's Rights: European Union and UNICEF have launched a Joint Initiative for Children's Rights in Georgia. The new three-year project supported by the European Union will strengthen capacities of child protection and justice systems to protect the rights of children. An agreement on the new initiative to improve child protection national system in Georgia was signed by Sigrid Brettel, Head of Cooperation, EU Delegation to Georgia and UNICEF Representative in Georgia, Ghassan Khalil. The project "Strengthening Systems and Services for Child Protection in Georgia" will be implemented by UNICEF, in partnership with the Government of Georgia,

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with financial support from the European Union, over the next three years with a total budget of over Euro 2 million.

- UNICEF contracted the telecommunication company “Skytel” to establish internet connections in 1,000 rural ambulatories to enable a centralized communication platform to equip and support rural primary health care doctors in the COVID-19 response as well as to ensure the continuation of essential health services for mothers and their children.
- Three videos were prepared for parents on protecting children in [social networks](#), [safe web surfing](#) and [cyber hygiene](#) for young users. Overall, with 25 multimedia activities, the “Parenting after the Pandemic” project reached over 1.5 million Facebook users with over 255,000 engagements.
- [“Learn more about “COVID-19” TV program](#) that runs on nine regional TV channels, reached 918,000 viewers in the last week of its activities. With the support from USAID, the program aired 456 editions (266 Georgian and 190 programmes in minority languages) totaling 6,840 minutes of coverage on COVID-19 and reached over 2 million viewers throughout Georgia.
- With support of USAID, a three-day online training program for “Youth Health Ambassadors” on COVID-19 related information and communication skills started on 17 December. A total of 60 young people around Georgia, including from minority areas, were selected for the training sessions. The Youth Health Ambassadors will assist in disseminating information on hygiene and handwashing, facemasks, and physical distancing as part of the COVID-19 awareness-raising campaign online.



UNICEF Representative at International Volunteer Day Award Ceremony with representatives from Youth Agency and Helping Hand

- On International Volunteer Day, the UNICEF Representative participated in the launch of the new National Volunteering Strategy developed by Youth Agency with UNICEF’s support. A ceremony was held to award the “Volunteer of the Year” for helping people during the pandemic. Youth volunteers contributed 3,100 hours to peer education, distance learning, volunteering with homeless children, supporting homeless and elderly citizens, conducting an information campaign on volunteering issues, popularizing the idea of volunteering, organizing entertainment meetings with the involvement of the local community to reduce stress caused by the

pandemic, showing movies, information campaigns to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 infection, sewing and distributing reusable masks, sports activities for young people, online creative competitions, charitable activities, assistance to socially vulnerable families, cognitive activities for people with disabilities etc. Online posters on volunteering prepared and disseminated through Facebook reached 38,319 people.

- In partnership with NCDC, UNICEF completed readiness assessments of all maternity houses on infection prevention and control (IPC). All 84 maternity houses received recommendations, as well as on-job trainings on strengthening the IPC measures to better protect mothers and children.
- UNICEF continues to advocate for safe reopening of schools and kindergartens all over Georgia. With field visits to [Zugdidi](#) and [Batumi](#), while delivering PPEs to the educational institutions, UNICEF Representative emphasized the importance of the return of children to schools and preschools.
- A 6-week online student-centered instruction (SCI) methodology course is underway for education experts in the Abkhazia region.
- UNICEF continues developing [special posters for children](#), to help them understand COVID-19 prevention measures; parents are encouraged to [download the printable version of those posters](#).
- An animation on [“how to properly use face masks”](#) produced in partnership with NCDC, with financial support from USAID, was published on UNICEF’s social media channels and widely shared among different target groups.

UNDP purchased a mobile X-ray machine for the clinic in the village of Nikozi, which is located along the administrative boundary line with the South Ossetia/Tskhinvali region. The new equipment will enable the Nikozi clinic to offer free mobile healthcare services to vulnerable elderly living in surrounding areas. Care and examinations provided at home will ease treatment for conflict-affected and displaced elderly.



- As social services remain under pressure from the pandemic, UNDP completed a second round of deliveries of urgently needed medical supplies to municipal shelters for homeless elderly people in Rustavi and Samtredia. The equipment provided included wheelchairs, stretchers, IV stands, pulse oximeters, digital thermometers, blood pressure monitors, personal protective gear and disinfectants. Medical masks were also provided to the medical personnel of the Central Republican Hospital.
- UNDP continued its regular deliveries of protective gear, healthcare commodities and hygienic supplies to COVID-19 treatment centers and other medical facilities in Abkhazia. This was the eleventh shipment delivered by UNDP this year. With a total value of USD 27,000, the cargo included 100 pulse oximeters; 750 biosafety suits; 1,000 disposable medical gowns; 576 N95 respirator masks; 150 multiple use facemasks;

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175 liters of surface disinfectant; 270 liters of hand sanitizer; and 1,000 COVID-19 rapid tests. The shipment brings the total value of UNDP deliveries on COVID-19 supplies to over USD 690,200.

- Under the Joint EU-UN Programme on improving vocational education and training (VET) in Abkhazia, UNDP organized a training session for construction personnel working on the rehabilitation of the VET college in Gali about incorporating WHO-recommended safety measures into their work. UNDP also distributed plastic protection shields, information packages and T-shirts bearing WHO recommendations.



- With UN and Swedish funding, UNDP distributed USD 90,000 worth of basic agriculture supplies and tools to 620 women farmers in 7 different regions. Working in partnership with the Association of Women Farmers, UNDP distributed the support packages to subsistence farmers with many children; single-parent households; women raising children with disabilities; internally displaced women; survivors of domestic violence; and women in ethnic minority communities. The idea is to assist

vulnerable households that are relying on agriculture as a coping strategy to make ends meet during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each package contains an electric-powered backpack sprayer, fertilizer, pesticides and other agricultural tools and inputs along with instructions for use. Included are pesticides aimed at the brown marmorated stinkbug, to prevent the infestations that have devastated harvests in Georgia over the past three years. The assistance is tailored specifically for small subsistence farmers based on recommendations from the Rural Development Agency that operates under the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture.

- Amidst an upsurge in COVID-19 cases among internally displaced persons (IDPs), UNDP launched the distribution of hygienic and sanitary supplies to 100 collective centers for IDPs in Shida Kartli, Imereti and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti regions. The centers were selected on the basis of research conducted by the NGO Charity Humanitarian Center Abkhazeti to identify elderly IDPs and other vulnerable residents. Each package includes masks and face shields, surface disinfectant and disinfection doormats, hand sanitizer with wall dispensers and antibacterial hand soap. The total value of the distributed goods was USD 17,570.
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Agriculture (MEPA) and two business-support entities: the social enterprise “Tbilisi Start-up Bureau” and the Batumi Business Incubator. The joint EU-UNDP initiative aims to use online formats to support youth entrepreneurship in rural areas and promote innovative rural businesses in sectors outside of agriculture and agri-food.

- Under the EU-funded ENPARD III project, UNDP completed a fourth round of business bootcamps on 12-13 December 2020. The 22 young participants were selected from 60 applicants from all over Georgia. The bootcamps are designed to help aspiring young entrepreneurs create and expand rural businesses amidst the COVID-19 crisis. They are organized in partnership with the Rural Development Agency (RDA) that operates under the Ministry of Environmental Protection and
- As part of a UK-funded initiative, a series of activities were organized to familiarize healthcare workers, personnel from the public administration and the general public with the National Risk Communication Strategy that was drafted with UNDP support. The United Nations Association of Georgia (UNAG) and the National Centre for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC) held a series of online trainings on key guidelines of the Strategy for 200 local government and public health representatives from 9 regions and 62 municipalities, including Tbilisi. In addition, the UNAG produced several videos with healthcare workers’ participation to promote the Strategy’s guiding principles among the broader public; these will be disseminated via NCDC channels. Upon finalization of the Strategy, the NCDC decided to create a dedicated in-house unit to focus on implementation of action plans in line with the Strategy.
- As part of an effort to protect rural livelihoods in Abkhazia during the pandemic, UNDP supplied equipment to farmers in three districts who are introducing new cultivars and adopting state-of-the-art cultivation methods. With UNDP support, the first champignon farm was set up in Gudauta district, with the first harvest set to take place early in 2021 amidst high demand for the product. In Gagra district, four different walnut cultivars were planted in a new orchard. Aside from purchasing the walnut seedlings, UNDP financed the fencing of the orchard, the installation of 4 km of irrigation tubing and water tanks, and the purchase of a mini-tractor. And in Ochamchire, farmers established a raspberry orchard and a nursery for micro-greens, with UNDP providing high-quality raspberry seedlings, a drip irrigation system (including well drilling, water tanks and drip lines), orchard fencing and a mini-tractor with attachments.



March 2020 with the participation of 177 medical staff from all districts of Abkhazia and more than 300 representatives of local population.

- Through its USAID-funded Horizons project, UNDP continued supporting the organization of regular consultations between Abkhaz and Georgian medical professionals, and between doctors and the local population, to share COVID-19 information. In December 2020, the CSO “Association Peaceful and Business Caucasus” organized two online consultations with medical staff from various clinics in Abkhazia. In all, 48 similar consultation meetings have been organized since March 2020 with the participation of 177 medical staff from all districts of Abkhazia and more than 300 representatives of local population.
- Through its EU-funded COBERM programme, UNDP supported the Tbilisi-based CSO “Caucasian Mosaic” in organizing training for Georgian and Ossetian teachers on how to conduct distance learning in pandemic conditions. Participants in the training included nine Georgian and 14 Ossetian teachers and covered topics such as how to adapt visual materials for distance learning and how to engage the audience during online lessons. The same CSO is finalizing a full year of audio lessons in Ossetian language and literature for 10th and 11th grade pupils from South Ossetia. The audio lessons will ensure that South Ossetian and Georgian pupils who study Ossetian language and literature have uninterrupted access to the education process despite pandemic restrictions and are duly prepared for academic exams.



UNFPA, in partnership with the Georgia Red Cross Society (GRCS), in 2020 has reached in total 5,461 vulnerable older people living alone in 10 poorest municipalities of the country. Older people received food and hygiene parcels, including personal protection gear and information materials on COVID-19 risks and prevention.

- 11 state funded care homes for older people received protective gear for personnel and disinfectants for the continuation of services; as well as informational materials for beneficiaries to help in prevention of COVID-19 among personnel and beneficiaries, in two rounds. The distribution has been completed in all 11 state funded institutions in two rounds - during 1st and 2nd waves of the pandemic hits.
- About 635 priority beneficiaries among older persons were identified, who have no means of communication with the outer world, the ones living in rural settings, with distant neighborhoods, where in case of need it's physically hard to call for help without means of communication. Therefore they are being supplied with mobile phones. This work became possible thanks to funding from the COVID-19 MPTF and German Government.

- UNFPA successfully continued cooperation with the Public broadcaster of Georgia in support of distance education. In total, 12 episodes were prepared and aired in support of the Biology and Civic Education subject standards: (1) puberty and sports; (2) HIV/AIDs; (3) tuberculosis; (4) healthy lifestyle (diet, anorexia, bulimia) (5) healthy lifestyle and harmful behavior (narcotic substances, tobacco, alcohol, gambling, internet addiction); (6) STIs, (7) early pregnancies and early sexual intercourse; (7) harmful practices of Child Marriage; (8) gender equality: a way for youth sustainable development; (9) gender-based violence; (10) gender stereotypes: myth and reality; (11) Equality under Sustainable Development – No-one Left Behind; (12) bullying and cyberbullying. All the episodes were aired on TV, as well as shared on social media platform generating substantial interest of the public.



FAO, under the EU-Funded ENPARD programme provided number of on-site and online consultations to farmers. Field visits were organized to lettuce demo plots and no-till plots in Akhmeta, broccoli and cauliflower demo plots in Lagodekhi, no-till wheat and burley demo farms in Gori and Kareli. Besides giving on-site technical consultations, online technical assistance was provided to farmers in Akhmeta (Lettuce), Lagodekhi (Broccoli and Cauliflower) and Tskaltubo (Lettuce plot). Online consultation provided to 8 female farmers - discussed crops they produce and the possibility of delivering certain amount of seeds to them. First Farmers Field School meeting was arranged in Pankisi with 9 female participants.

- Since 18th of November 2020, FAO, under the EU-Funded ENPARD programme, delivered grants for capital agricultural investments to 12 farmers, for the total value of \$ 143,592.79. Of these 12 grants: 6 payments were for medium projects and remaining 6 payments for the amount of \$ 21,833.26, for small projects.



- Gender trainings have been conducted by FAO under the National Animal Identification and Traceability System (NAITS). The training were designed for the National Food Agency (NFA) employees. Topics of the discussion included: gender inequality in rural areas, gender-based salary gap, social injustice, unfair labor distribution, etc.

IOM provided direct humanitarian assistance - accommodation, food, medical assistance, legal assistance - to 36 vulnerable migrants from Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, South Africa, Syria, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Yemen to support them during the time of COVID-19.

- IOM assisted 23 migrants stranded in Georgia due to COVID-19 with voluntary return to Bangladesh, India, Iran, Moldova and Uzbekistan and mediated in obtaining consular services for 11 migrants from Algeria, Guinea, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, stranded in Georgia due to COVID-19.



- On 3 December IOM Georgia donated thermal screening solutions and personal protective equipment (PPE) to the Migration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. The donation included 10 000 face masks, 10 000 gloves and 500 medical gowns, as well as two sets of thermal screening solution with a total value of 11 000 CHF (GEL 40 000). The thermal screening devices will be deployed at entrance points of MIA Migration Department and its Temporary Accommodation Centre, to ensure safety of migrants, as well as the staff and visitors of the Centre.



- On 4 December IOM Georgia has donated personal protective equipment (PPE) with a total value of 100 000 CHF (370 000 GEL) to the Revenue Service. The equipment will greatly benefit the frontline officials (epidemiologists and Customs Officers) deployed at BCPs who are personally implementing epidemiological procedures and are facing the risk of contracting COVID-19 on a daily basis. According to the existing regulations in Georgia, the Customs is tasked to perform epidemiological control and COVID-19 related preventive measures on the Border Crossing Points (BCPs).
- IOM supported return of 261 Georgian nationals from Greece, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium, Austria, Poland and Estonia and provided post-arrival assistance - reception/secondary transportation, starting income-generating projects, training/job placement, medical assistance and housing/livelihood assistance - for 57 persons returning from Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium and the Czech Republic. Travel and reception / immediate follow-up procedures were organized for 12 medical cases arriving from Germany and the Netherlands. Feedback was provided to 11 pre-departure information requests (medical and COVID related) from Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Greece, Austria and Finland.

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- To mark the International Migrants Day on 18 December and highlight the challenges faced by foreign nationals and Georgian returnees in the time of COVID-19, IOM Georgia organized an [outdoor exhibition](#) “COVID-19 and Faces of Migration” in front of Vake Park, Tbilisi.



Response by international development partners

17 Dec - The EU Commits a Further €55m for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas in Georgia

The EU Ambassador to Georgia, Carl Hartzell and the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, David Zalkaliani signed an agreement to kick off the fourth phase of the European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD IV) worth €55 million. Programme will provide extended assistance in the food safety and SPS sector to enhance consumer protection and promote EU exports of Georgian products. It will also continue to support rural development to further improve living conditions for a larger proportion of the rural population in Georgia.

Dec 7 - U.S. Gov't to Promote Investment Opportunities in Georgia

According to the U.S Embassy in Georgia, the U.S. Government, in collaboration with Enterprise Georgia, will fund foreign investment advisory firm OCO Global “to identify and promote high-value investment opportunities in the Georgian economy.” The financial assistance aims to support the Georgian private sector in post-pandemic recovery by facilitating foreign direct investment in the country’s economy.

Important Links to Follow

General:

- <https://hr.un.org/page/coronavirus-disease-covid-19>
- <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>
- <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>
- <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>
- <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/covid-19-outbreak-readiness-and-response>
- <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/strategic-preparedness-and-response-plan-for-the-new-coronavirus>
- Disaster management and contingency planning: <https://www.preventionweb.net/publications/view/2527>
- WHO Whatsapp Thread for Q&A: <http://bit.ly/who-covid19-whatsapp>
- UNIDO COVID-19 Industrial Recovery Programme, <https://www.unido.org/news/unido-launches-covid-19-industrial-recovery-programme>
- UNIDO's publication "COVID-19: Digital Transformation and Industrial Recovery" <https://hub.unido.org/sites/default/files/publications/UNIDO-COVID-Digital%20Transformation.pdf>.

Georgia:

- Government of Georgia website on COVID-19 <https://stopcov.ge/en>
- National Centre for Disease Control and Public Health [COVID-19 related information, including epidemiology, education materials and regulations: <https://www.ncdc.ge/Pages/User/News.aspx?ID=66254a4e-6c23-49ef-9157-4fcc247db00c>
- Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia hotline: 1505 U
- UNICEF Georgia supported COVID-19 hotline to provide assistance to children and their families: **111**
- Government of Georgia hotline: **144**
- Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs, Emergency and Operative Response Centre: **112**
- COVID-19 Georgia live blog: <https://civil.ge/archives/342486>