

## HIGHLIGHTS

- 25 Mar - Georgia receives Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccines
- 19 Mar - Vaccination with AstraZeneca/Oxford would continue only in full-fledged medical centres
- 15 Mar – Georgia received AstraZeneca Oxford vaccine and starts vaccination
- 5 Mar - List of Nationals who can enter Georgia Expanded

271,585	279,446	3,738	271
Total recovered	Confirmed cases	Total deaths	People in quarantine

Source: [www.stopcov.ge](http://www.stopcov.ge) 26 March 2021

## Georgia Situation Overview

- 25 Mar - Georgia received 29,250 doses of Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine that became available through COVAX facility, a United Nations-backed vaccine-sharing scheme, the Ministry of Health reported. Georgian citizens will now be able to choose between the two available Pfizer and AstraZeneca jabs. It is noteworthy that starting today senior citizens over the age of 65 will be able to register to receive COVID-19 jabs. Registration was previously only available for medical personnel.
- 19 Mar – Georgia's Health Ministry said after the death of a 27-year-old nurse that coronavirus vaccinations with the AstraZeneca shot would continue only in full-fledged medical centres.
- 15 Mar – After receiving its first batch of 43,200 doses of AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine on March 13, Georgia began vaccine rollout in 29 facilities in Tbilisi and every regional municipal center. As per the national vaccination plan, medical personnel are first in line to receive the jabs.
- 5 Mar – Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have been added to the list of countries whose nationals or residents can enter Georgia by providing a negative PCR test result at the airport upon arrival. The list previously included visitors from the EU, the U.S., Israel, Switzerland, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Kazakstan, Russia, and Belarus.
- **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](http://gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=41&info_id=76497)

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

### WHO

- Implementation stage of Cohort study to measure COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness among health workers in Georgia has started. Approximately 1500 HCWs will be enrolled in the study. Additional resources are mobilized by WHO RO; an epidemiologist with WHO/Europe who arrived in Georgia for two weeks to support the planning and implementation of the health worker Covid VE study in Georgia. In addition, identified an Epiet fellow, based in Portugal, who will also travel to Georgia for 5-6 weeks beginning in the end of March. Evaluating the real-world COVID-19 vaccine performance is critical for understanding the risks and benefits of vaccination programs. Many factors impact real-world vaccine effectiveness (VE), including vaccine transportation and storage and how patients are vaccinated.



- WHO, through generous support from the EU is collaborating with Georgian authorities in strengthening the process of vaccine deployment and vaccination capacities, and supporting with implementation of vaccine communication plan.

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- The World Health Organization, the Embassy of Israel in Georgia and Mashav Center (Israel International Development Agency), granted a compact tent systems to the Center for Emergency Coordination and Emergency Assistance. The ceremony was attended by Director of the Center for Emergency Coordination and Emergency Assistance, Head of the World Health Organization Country Office in Georgia and Ambassador of Israel to Georgia. This gift is important in the fight against COVID-19. In the field tent could be used for multiple purposes including for testing for or suspected patients, as well as isolated management of COVID -19 suspicious patients.
- Field works for 7th wave of the COVID-19 Behavioral Insights Study has been conducted last week. Presentation of the results is scheduled for 25 March 2021.
- Completed IPC capacity and readiness assessment of 41 hospital in all regions of the country jointly with MoH assessor team. Visited selected number of former COVID designated clinics that now become so called "hybrid facilities". This are multi-profile hospitals which will also provide services to those patients that will be diagnosed as Covid positive while treated in the facility.
- Coordinated purchase and delivery of 35,000 PCR test kits (both Thermofisher and BGI); 110 Pulse oximeters and 15 O2 concentrators. The BGI tests will be delivered to Abkhazia. Other items will be handed over to Georgian government to be utilized based on needs assessment.

## UNICEF

- On 13 March, the first batch of COVID-19 vaccines arrived in Georgia. UNICEF supported the Government of Georgia to procure 43,200 doses of the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine produced by AstraZeneca-SKBio (Republic of Korea) through the COVAX Facility. On 15 March, vaccinations against COVID-19 started across the country with the priority groups identified by the Government.



*Amiran Gamkrelidze, Head of NCDC and Amy Clancy, UNICEF Deputy Representative receive COVID-19 vaccines.*

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- UNICEF, in partnership with Parents for Education and USAID, continues to support parents amid the COVID-19 pandemic including through a webinar on [how to motivate children to study better](#), which reached 138,000 parents.
- Youth Health Ambassadors reached 730,000 social media users on COVID-19 prevention measures.
- With UNICEF's support, the Public Defender's Office studied the effect of COVID-19 on child labour.
- UNICEF launched a project to provide technical assistance to the Public Defender's Office to undertake and complete a Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) related to COVID-19.
- A joint EU-UNICEF project 'Strengthening Systems and Services for Child Protection in Georgia' was launched to support the Government in the implementation of the newly adopted Code on the Rights of the Child.



*Minister of Education and Science Mikheil Chkhenkeli and UNICEF Representative Ghassan Khalil at the launch of the project*

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- UNICEF visited a school in Kutaisi, Imereti region, to continue advocating for all schools to adhere to the safety measures and stay open for the children to fully enjoy their right to education.



*Visit of UNICEF Representative Ghassan Khalil to a school in Kutaisi, Imereti region*

- UNICEF, in partnership with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, is providing continued support to 33 social workers to support the most vulnerable populations in all districts of Abkhazia.
- A 3-year partnership between UNICEF, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Norwegian Government Agency for Special Needs Education (Statped) was launched on 19 March to strengthen the quality and inclusiveness of the national education system.



*UNICEF Representative Ghassan Khalil at the launch event*

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## UNDP

- A visit by UNDP Resident Representative Louisa Vinton to municipalities in the regions of Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti and Guria highlighted the organization's support to local communities in responding to and recovering from the COVID-19 crisis. Vinton delivered IT packages to local authorities in Chiatura, Zestaponi, Kutaisi and Tsageri as part of a UN-funded COVID-response initiative aimed at equip village heads (local officials appointed by municipal mayors) with the technology they need to direct municipal public services to local residents. This approach is designed to save time and spare residents of rural and remote communities often cumbersome travel to municipal centers. In all, the IT packages, including computers and scanners, have been provided to 126 village heads across Georgia.



*UNDP Head Louisa Vinton is visiting Chiatura*

- Vinton's agenda also included settlements and collective centers for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Khoni in Imereti region and Zugdidi in Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region. As part of a broader program to protect vulnerable IDPs from pandemic shocks, UNDP has been delivering sanitary and hygienic supplies to the 100 collective centers with the worst living conditions. UNDP's partner NGO, the Charity Humanitarian Center "Abkhazeti" (CHCA) also provided food packages for at-risk households. In Zugdidi, Vinton visited one of ten

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“e-learning community centers” set up by UNDP in IDP collective centers and equipped with computers and Internet access. Each center also has a designated resident trainer for IT skills. The idea behind the initiative is to provide women IDPs with a tool for learning skills and ultimately finding employment. The Zugdidi collective center is also the site of one of 25 “quick fix” projects undertaken by UNDP to improve IDP living conditions; in most cases, these involve repairing bathrooms and improving water supplies. Funding for UNDP’s work with vulnerable IDPs comes from internal UNDP emergency-response resources.

- Vinton also visited a center for vulnerable elderly persons that CHCA is currently constructing in Zugdidi. The center, the first of its kind in the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region, will provide a residential home for 24 elderly persons and home care services to another 100 persons living nearby. Following an integrated approach, beneficiaries will include IDPs, local residents and at-risk persons from Abkhazia. UNDP is supporting the initiative by providing furniture and equipment for the new care home. As part of a broader effort to raise the standards for care of elderly persons and provide a respite for family caregivers, UNDP signed a MoU with Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi. The university will offer professional training in home care that is expected to improve the employment prospects of the IDP women attending.



*UNDP Head Louisa Vinton and Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure Mzia Giorgobiani deliver IT equipment to local authorities in Chiatura, Zestaponi, Kutaisi and Tsageri as part of a UN-funded COVID-response initiative.*

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- Together with Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure Mzia Giorgobiani, Vinton visited a number of initiatives aimed at increasing local resilience, improving municipal public services and promoting local economic development adapted to the constraints of the pandemic. One such initiative, funded by Denmark and implemented in partnership with the National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG), involved the installation of solar panels on the rooftop of a kindergarten in the mountainous village of Khreiti in Chiatura municipality. Solar energy will ease dependence on mountainous power lines and ensure reliable heat and hot water for 50 kindergarten pupils. Other sites visited by Vinton under the same project included youth initiatives in Chiatura to beautify city walls and a central bridge and to build a climbing wall for aspiring mountain guides; an interactive map developed by Kutaisi municipality to inform the public about road works and enable citizens to report problems; and a garbage-sorting initiative undertaken by schools in Zestaponi, where sorted paper and plastic is swapped for books and prizes.



*UNDP Head Louisa Vinton is visiting the collective centre for IDPs in Zugdidi. The centre is the site of one of 25 “quick fix” projects undertaken by UNDP to improve IDP living condition*

- As part of UNDP's efforts to promote COVID-resilient local economic development (LED) with the support of Switzerland and Austria, Vinton participated in the opening of docks, trails and a center for recreational fishing at Martotskala Lake in Poti municipality; the launch of a new tourism information center in Tsageri municipality; and the inauguration of local crafts pavilions at the Atsaura River in Lanchkhuti municipality. This is part of a broader program covering 29 LED initiatives in four regions with a total value of USD 965,805.

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- Under its EU-funded “Improving Rural Development in Georgia” project (part of ENPARD III), UNDP marked the completion of six projects designed to introduce the „smart villages“ concept in five municipalities as one many measures aimed at building pandemic-era resilience. The projects were proposed and implemented by local NGOs. The results include the creation of a youth hub for education and development in Akhalkalaki; a support program for women entrepreneurs in Kazbegi; improved rural connectivity and mobility in Keda; enhanced digital competences in Tetritskaro; and a mapping of agriculture systems in Dedoplistskaro.

- Under its joint initiative with the EU to promote private sector competitiveness, UNDP



continued to provide support to companies in the packaging value chain to strengthen management capacity to resume growth after the pandemic. In March UNDP launched a series of five workshops for more than 20 companies on enhancing management capacity, improving communication strategies, boosting staff motivation, refining corporate

structure, and understanding the full range of stakeholders beyond investors and customers.

- With funding from USAID under its Horizons project, UNDP continued to support the healthcare response to COVID-19 in Abkhazia. To remedy the lack of any organized system for the management of hazardous medical waste, which has led to the uncontrolled dumping and burning of masks, gowns and other protective gear used in COVID treatment, UNDP installed incinerators at two main designated COVID-19 facilities: Gudauta Central Hospital and the Sanitary and Epidemiological Service (SES) in Sukhumi. UNDP is also working with local partners to prepare guidelines for the management of medical waste and train relevant personnel.
- With pandemic-related economic disruptions hurting incomes in Abkhazia, UNDP organized the delivery of food packages and other humanitarian aid to a total of 1,171 vulnerable persons in many different towns and districts. Working through its partner NGO, the UK-based Conciliation Resources, assistance was provided to 249 vulnerable adults and children in Ochamchire district; 257 in Gagra town, Pitsunda and the villages of Alakhadzy, Bzybi, Psakhara and Gantiadi; 67 in Novi Afon; 243 in Gudauta district; 355 in Sukhumi town and villages in Sukhumi and Gulripshi districts. Through the same initiative, UNDP also supplied medications

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and other medical consumables to the Central District Hospital in Gali for the treatment of 20 patients. Vulnerable families were identified in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and local civil society organizations. With total expenditure of USD 149,920, the initiative was organized under the EU Responsive Resource Fund component of the Joint EU-UNDP COBERM programme.

- To address a persistent shortage of skilled laboratory technicians in Abkhazia, UNDP provided a 20-hour training course on PCR diagnostics to ten employees of SES and other laboratories in Abkhazia. The training took place at the main veterinary laboratory in Sukhumi, which is equipped with PCR systems. The course included both theory and hands-on practice, which was supervised remotely by an international expert who scrutinized videotaped practical exercises and provided feedback. Participants in the training are already working in COVID labs but had previously lacked the skills needed to accomplish a full cycle of diagnostics.
- Under the same USAID-funded project, UNDP provided a full suite of equipment worth USD 86,000 for a new molecular diagnostics laboratory that is being established as part in the Department of Experimental Biology and Medicine at the ASU university in Sukhumi. The lab will provide a proper training space for the molecular diagnostic work that is needed to support advanced treatment of COVID-19 and other patients. UNDP helped ASU to develop the course curriculum and provided training to the faculty who will supervise the coursework.
- As part of its efforts to cushion farm livelihoods threatened by the pandemic in Abkhazia, UNDP awarded seven new grants worth a total of USD 80,000 for projects aimed at improving farm income and creating new jobs. The support is part of a COVID-specific expansion of the EU-funded ENPARD III project. The call for proposals was launched in January 2021 by the UNDP-run Center for Agriculture and Rural Development. Selection of grantees was carried out by a group of experts over three stages, with support from members of the Local Action Groups (LAGs) in five districts. In parallel, and under the same source of funding, the LAGs in Gagra, Gudauta and Ochamchire districts identified social projects to be implemented to support local health and preschool facilities. The total value of these social grants amounts to USD 36,000. For each grantee, the value of the grant will be provided in the form of goods and services procured by UNDP.

## IOM

- IOM provided pre-departure financial assistance to address the immediate needs of 13 vulnerable migrants from Algeria, Bangladesh, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, India, Iran, Jordan, Morocco, Somalia and Turkmenistan and mediated in obtaining consular services for 4 migrants from Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Morocco and Somalia, all stranded in Georgia due to COVID-19.

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- IOM assisted 23 migrants stranded in Georgia due to COVID-19 with voluntary return to Bangladesh, Egypt, Iran, Moldova, Morocco, Pakistan, Somalia and Uzbekistan.



- IOM Georgia continues extending reintegration support to Georgian nationals returning from EU countries and Switzerland. In the period of 23 Feb-23 March 2021, 72 returnees were assisted with post-arrival reintegration. Countries of return – Greece, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium and Poland. In the mentioned period 98 Georgians returned with the help of IOM (67 male, 31 female) including 26 minors. Countries of return were Germany (66 persons), Netherlands (11), Austria (10), Switzerland (4), Czech Republic (2), Belgium (2), Poland (2) and Ireland (1).
- On 4 March, an official of the Athens Airport Police Division met online with 49 colleagues from the Georgian Patrol Police Department to discuss visa-free travel from Georgia to Greece, in particular the current COVID-19 related travel restrictions.
- IOM developed a user-friendly information [video](#) for Georgian nationals, planning to travel to EU in the time of COVID-19

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To mark the International Women's Day, IOM used social media to highlight the stories of migrant women under its COVID-19 and Faces of Migration initiative, aimed at raising awareness against xenophobia and promoting diversity.

## 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>

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