



UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund

Final Report - Georgia

1. Summary

On April 14, 2020 the Administration of the Government approached the UNRC with a request to support national efforts to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The RC and UNCT decided on this intervention together and the proposal was drafted by several agencies and three entities implemented this project which aimed to respond to the Government's need for sustained assistance in the immediate healthcare response and in shielding vulnerable groups from negative social and economic consequences of the shutdown of the national economy. A focus was put on enabling the Georgian national as well as municipal authorities and local communities to tackle the COVID-19 emergency with the "leaving no one behind" principle in the center.

Specific threats to women and girls were identified and mitigated. In the Georgian context, the beneficiary groups focused on: healthcare and public-sector workers, pregnant women, children, and the vulnerable elderly (who are women to a large extent).

The joint project aimed at informing the wider public, as well as women and older persons specifically, about the COVID-19 pandemic through public awareness and risk communication activities. Overall more than 1,1million individuals were reached. Supplementing depleted supplies of PPE and restoring healthcare services for women and children, including immunization, prenatal and postnatal care were in the focus of the project. The public health response was supported through the training of 1,200 healthcare workers and equipping of the Georgian emergency services to be able to receive and map calls, facilitating rapid health assistance. The provision of technical assistance and training of the MoH staff and the State Care Agency for elaboration and operationalization of the Standards for prevention and management of COVID-19 in residential institutions is another highlight. Key personnel of all eleven state funded LTC (Long Term Care) centres were provided with PPE, disinfectants and info-materials in two rounds to enable the continuity of services. The programme reached 2,749 impoverished older persons living alone in rural and semi-rural areas to address their specific vulnerabilities and contribute to infection prevention.

This project also supported the restoration of learning processes and assisting children in distance learning .

Finally, at risk members of rural population including in Abkhazia were enabled to re-engage in agriculture.



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The immediate results of the joint project are increased capacities of central and local governments as well as preparedness and resilience of community members with regard to Covid19. This joint initiative also contributed to newly established options of distance learning and supported information for people's behavior change amid the COVID19 crisis. The significant impact of the project was in particular seen in fall 2020 when Georgia was at the peak of the pandemic.

2. Factual, evidence-based reporting against the outcome and output.

OUTCOME level

Capacities of central and local governments as well as preparedness and resilience of community members enhanced through improved facilities and safer environment for civil servants; assistance to elderly group, better knowledge and access to basic farming inputs for self-subsistence farming, particularly for women-headed households, support to ensure continuity of health, education and social services for children and families.

OUTPUT level

a) preparedness of local population groups enhanced to avert negative health and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic through addressing specific vulnerabilities of older persons

b) The 144-emergency center has been equipped with specialized GPS-equipped dashboards to handle large call volumes. The 144 center is the focal point for the COVID-19 emergency response in Georgia, handling 4,500 calls per day and operating 330 ambulance crews. The new technology was designated by the Government of Georgia as an urgent need to ensure the provision of effective emergency services nationwide and to prepare for a possible second wave of the pandemic. The new GPS dashboards allow the 144 operators to pinpoint the locations of callers and emergency crews, ensuring that assistance reaches those who need it as fast as possible. The dashboards also determine which medical facility is closest and offers the appropriate care.

In addition, UNDP has provided ICT packages to 126 Mayor's Representatives to Administrative Units (Villages) to improve the delivery of public services to rural population under pandemic conditions. The procurement process for the packages is completed, but the supplier company encountered a pandemic-driven delays on the global market. Therefore, the purchased equipment is expected to be delivered no later than February 2021. The equipment will facilitate communication between villages and municipal centers so that villagers do not need to travel to the municipal centers and response times can be reduced.



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c) More than 8,000 front-line civil servants at both central and local level have been equipped with PPE to keep them safe while performing their duties. The list of recipient public agencies included the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health, the Central Republican Hospital and all municipalities countrywide (excluding Tbilisi). The equipment included protective gowns, gloves, face shields, and masks, disinfection barriers, disinfectants, hand sanitizers, hand rubs and other cleaning solutions. The PPEs were disseminated in cooperation with the Administration of the Government of Georgia and through the offices of the State Governors in the regions.

d) Three municipal shelters housing 200 elderly and homeless persons have been equipped with household and medical equipment, kitchen and laundry appliances and supplies, PPEs, disinfectant and sanitary supplies and, in one case, a cultivator for a communal garden.

e) 480 vulnerable households engaged in small family farming in seven regions have received agricultural inputs, including fertilizers, agrochemicals, agro-equipment backpack sprayers and protective clothing for use while applying plant protection. The beneficiary families included female-headed families, single mothers, large families, women taking care of family members with disabilities, IDPs, minorities, and families under the poverty line from six regions: Imereti, Guria, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Racha-Lechkhumi-Kvemo Svaneti, Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli and Mtskheta-Mtianeti. The content of the basic assistance package for subsistence farming was elaborated in cooperation with the Agriculture and Rural Development Agency (RDA), under the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA).

f) Information materials in Georgian, Armenian and Azeri languages (110,000 flyers) have been produced in partnership with the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC) and disseminated in all regions through the Public Health Centers (local NCDC branches) located in Georgian municipalities.

In Abkhazia, medical personnel of Gudauta Hospital, the designated COVID-19 treatment facility for the region, have also been equipped with a large supply of PPEs and other urgently needed medical commodities.

g) In Abkhazia, where the COVID-19 pandemic has had a dramatic effect on livelihoods in rural areas, and especially for women-led initiatives, the project has financed four businesses (two run by men, and two by women) by purchasing and distributing assets necessary to the implementation of their agricultural projects in Gagra, Gudauta, and Ochamchire districts. The four projects include the first mushroom farm in Abkhazia, one innovative greenhouse complex powered via bio-gas, one raspberry orchard and one walnut grove. The greenhouse complex, raspberry orchards and mushroom farm are already expecting the first harvests in spring 2021. Thanks to the support provided, over the course of the upcoming agricultural season 11 jobs will be created and 60 beneficiaries directly reached, without accounting for the indirect beneficiaries that will benefit from new produce available at affordable price being introduced to the market.



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h) 1,095 people reached with critical WASH supplies; 1,000 frontline workers equipped with PPE; 1,200 healthcare provided trained in IPC and detecting and managing COVID among children, pregnant and breastfeeding women; 52,000 children and women receiving essential healthcare services; 1,000,000 people reached with critical information about COVID-19 prevention measures and/or safe reopening of school

i) All 11 state funded Long-term Care institutions for older persons (LTC) were reached (about 250 beneficiaries) and supported to continue provision of care to older persons. All 11 LTC facilities were provided with protective gear and disinfectants for personnel as well as with informational materials to help in prevention of COVID-19 among personnel and beneficiaries in two (2) rounds.

j) The standards for prevention and management of COVID-19 in residential institutions and community care homes for older persons and persons with disabilities (the Standard) and the monitoring tool to ensure the adherence to this Standards were elaborated, approved by the MoH on 28.09.2020 by Order #01-105/N and operationalized through online introductory training;

k) A total of 2,749 older persons reached by home care visits (up to 70% women) with food and hygiene parcels, and info materials on COVID-19 risk and prevention issued in Georgian, Azeri and Armenian languages in five selected municipalities;

l) Total of 95 beneficiaries, the older people living alone in rural settlements with remote neighborhood and without any communication means, received basic mobile phones with Georgian soft and preinstalled GRCS hotline number.

m) For promotion of health safety and protection measures from COVID 19, three short and one long animated videos in Georgian, Armenian and Azeri languages (Total 16 files) and 3 short Audio files for radio transmission in Georgian, Armenian and Azeri Languages (Total 9 files) were produced; the video and audio productions were aired through the national (3) and regional (4) radio and broadcasted through the regional TV channels (About 14 channels/ 14 spots per day per channel, including 5 spots in prime time.) Materials were also disseminated through social media. Thus, reaching up to as wide auditorium as possible through the country. The Programme and its activities were highlighted on UNFPA social media channels, national media and press, local municipalities and Georgia Red Cross Society Facebook pages. At least, up to 36k people were reached through social media.

3. The provision of credible evidence to substantiate claims of achievement)

1,122,749 general public

10,000 vulnerable and disadvantage individuals

1,200 healthcare workers

26,000 pregnant women and 26,000 newborns



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414,000 school-aged children
1,000,000 people through messaging and/or feedback mechanisms
2,749 vulnerable older people living alone in 5 targeted municipalities
250 older people and their care-givers at the LTCs

In Abkhazia, Georgia:

250 medical staff
100 pregnant/postpartum women and 50 newborns
80 frontline workers
615 school-aged children
620 households

As for \$50K RC Project Allocation, it was used for (1) Public information Campaign, (2) Strengthening the capacity of health care workers in hospitals, (3) Supporting the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, and (4) Supporting the accessibility to all in education sector by making sure that the Azerbaijani, Armenian and Russian-language schools and pre-school institutions in Georgia have Covid-19 guidebooks in the local languages. A separate report on the utilization of these funds will be sent to the MPTF Secretariat.

4. An honest analysis of challenges faced, the responses to these challenges

The challenges during the implementation of activities were related to COVID-19 related restrictive measures that slightly delayed the process and required extra measures for planning things safely. These challenges have been addressed by advance planning in full compliance with the safety guidelines. Highly polarized parliamentary elections (October 2020) should be mentioned as a challenge too. Even COVID-19 response activities, such as support to GRCS distribution of food and hygiene parcels to older persons were put on hold about 3-4 weeks prior to elections. As such challenges have been anticipated, the programme workplans have been designed and updated in such a manner to ensure achieving the planned results.

The situation analysis conducted during the design phase of the project revealed there is a need for ICT solutions at the local level to deliver public services smoothly during the pandemic. This finding was reinforced during the implementation phase. Consequently, it informed a new intervention that was implemented by UNDP during Dec 2020-May 2022 that envisages support to the roll-out of a new Unified Electronic System (UES) at the local level to serve as a single digital platform that



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provides a standardized set of locally rendered public services. The resources for these new interventions were mobilized through the UNDP Rapid Financing Facility.

The rehabilitation of WASH facilities in schools took more time than expected due to limited capacities of contractors. A dedicated WASH Specialist provided intensive follow up and ensured the rehabilitation of WASH facilities on time. Continued school closures made it difficult to carry out the hygiene promotion activities in Abkhazia, Georgia. The implementation modality was changed to reach children at the household level, with follow up phone calls by hygiene promoters.

5. A thoughtful examination of innovative practices, lessons learned and knowledge generated in the context of development emergency programming

The lessons learned under the rehabilitation of the WASH facilities are being applied in works contracted with other donor funding.

The programme has been successful due to UN's long-term partnership with the Government of Georgia and state institutions including MoH, NCDC, Ministry of Education and Science, and the newly established State Care Agency.

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

The PUNOs were part of a large-scale research project initiated by the Government of Georgia to analyze how Georgia managed the pandemic-related crisis, identify areas for improvement, assess the actions of state institutions and provide recommendations on how to enhance their capacities for more effective management of the projected next waves of the pandemic. Looking beyond the COVID-19 challenge, the research has recommended longer-term structural adjustments to build the resilience of Georgian institutions, economy and society to future crises.

The partnership established by UNFPA with the Georgian Red Cross Society (GRCS) has been instrumental in reaching out to target groups of beneficiaries in target municipalities based on the well-developed GRCS branches and its network of volunteers across the country. Effectiveness of the programme prompted UNFPA Georgia to expand the project in additional municipalities with funding from the UNFPA core resources through contributions from the Government of Germany, which allowed reaching out to 2,715 vulnerable older persons in additional five municipalities. Close partnership and collaboration with the State Care Agency under



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the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MoH) the project has been able to cover all 11 LTC facilities to ensure improved infection prevention and the quality of care.

UNDP partnered, exchanged expertise and coordinated work with the various government agencies and non-governmental organizations throughout the duration of the project. The list of government agencies included the Administration of the Government of Georgia and the offices of State Governors in the regions, the Agriculture and Rural Development Agency (RDA) under the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA), the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC), local self-governments and the Association of Women Farmers. Through this coordinated and synchronized action of all parties engaged, the project has been able to maximize the effect of interventions.

UNICEF continued its partnerships with the Education for All Coalition, an alliance of CSOs working on education which is contributing to distance learning efforts of the Government, and a network of organizations working with children with disabilities and their families which provided needed support to families with children with disabilities.

UNICEF has 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.

6. A meaningful review of risks anticipated and if they materialized;

To better understand the needs of older persons living alone under the poverty line, UNFPA conducted an assessment on *The Situation of Retired Older Persons Living Alone Under the Poverty Line During the Covid-19 Pandemic* (<https://georgia.unfpa.org/en/publications/situation-retired-older-persons-living-alone-under-poverty-line-during-covid-19>) in four initially targeted municipalities. Based on the research findings, the recommendations were elaborated for improved protection of older persons, among those:

- to continue regularly informing older persons about COVID-19 and the epidemiological situation in the country. Particular emphasis should be placed on the regions populated by ethnic minorities,
- the central as well as local authorities should continue to prioritize timely detection and response to the medical needs of the older persons. It is also important to develop effective infection prevention mechanisms and to improve access to medical services, and medications, for older persons.



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- to increase access of older persons to services such as psychological consultations, which is crucial for their mental health.
- Local authorities should continue supporting older persons during the pandemic. Owing to the dire social and economic hardship faced by many older persons and their main problems being related to the lack of finances, it is important to develop additional financial assistance mechanisms tailored to the needs of older persons.

UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA are 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.

7. The provision, where relevant and possible, of human stories through pictures or videos that speak to the real COVID-19 related challenges and successes you are witnessing in your host countries

UNDP Georgia **human story** - Caring for the most vulnerable in pandemic times: <https://undpgeorgia.medium.com/caring-for-the-most-vulnerable-in-times-of-pandemic-a81442d1a990>

UNDP Georgia **human story** - Support rural women to repair household budgets: <https://www.ge.undp.org/content/georgia/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2020/covid-aid.html>

UNFPA Georgia **human story** - For the Health and Safety of the Older People in the Times of Pandemic: <https://georgia.unfpa.org/en/news/health-and-safety-older-people-times-pandemic>

UNFPA Georgia **photographs** showing the activities and beneficiaries with descriptions and copyright info included in each folder: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1cSlc4LiUtUqABxD4bVPgO-ZrDhL-iq8u?usp=sharing>

UNICEF Georgia **human story** - Rural doctors in Georgia improve management of COVID-19 cases: <https://uni.cf/34IWNlQ>

UNICEF Georgia **video stories**:

Visit to Geguti rural clinic - <https://youtu.be/iy8ZuapJImU>

Online platform and internet for rural doctors - <https://youtu.be/x1sL0WVeGuM>



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8. Document how partnerships and collaboration have contributed to achieving results, in concrete terms.

The program was complemented by the Danish government funded project "Fostering Decentralization and Good Governance," which covered the management and operational costs of the activities. UNDP has also used parallel funding from Sida to expand the reach of the program and provide agricultural inputs to additional 140 vulnerable families through partnership with the Women Farmers Association.

In Abkhazia, project activities were implemented in conjunction with the activities of the "Joint EU-UNDP Programme for Rural Development." Specifically, grantee selection and technical support in the areas of agronomy and business planning were provided to the grantees through the Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development, established and fully financed under the joint EU-UNDP programme. Procurement activities were also implemented through the structures of the joint programme.

UNFPA share of resources utilized by 100%. UNFPA expanded this project through core funding from the German Government received in August 2020; thus reaching up to 5,500 vulnerable older persons living alone in 10 targeted municipalities (out of which 2,749 in five (5) municipalities were reached through the UN COVID-19 Fund funding within the frames of the present project).

9. Overall brevity, by using of language that remains accessible, free of jargon and to the point, to help the readers visualize the successes, the challenges and the risks.

One of the main successes of this JP is that it managed to effectively and quickly support the local authorities and communities in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic with the "leaving no one behind" principle in the center. It also ensured that specific threats to women and girls were understood and mitigated. It is noteworthy that the beneficiary groups focused on – healthcare workers; public-sector workers; pregnant women, children and the vulnerable elderly (who are women to a large extent).

This JP strengthened the capacities of central and local governments as well as the preparedness and resilience of local community. It contributed greatly to newly established options of distance learning and supported information for people's behavior change amid the COVID19 crisis.



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Another important success factors of this JP has been the UN's long-term valued partnership with the Government of Georgia and state institutions including MoH, NCDC, Ministry of Education and Science, and the newly established State Care Agency.

The challenges and risks in the implementation phase were mostly associated with COVID-19 related restrictive measures. Those slightly delayed the process and required extra measures for planning things safely.