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Reporting Period: 1 - 31 December 2020

Eastern Europe and Central Asia Region

COVID-19 Situation Report No. 11

United Nations Population Fund



Regional Highlights

- All countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, except Turkmenistan, have officially reported COVID-19 cases. Armenia, Moldova and North Macedonia are now the most affected countries in the region relative to their population size. Turkey is the most affected country in absolute numbers (making up 32 percent of reported cases in the region).
- Across the region, UNFPA continued to reach out to the general public and vulnerable population groups, through traditional and social media channels as well as through influencers, to provide information and promote responses ensuring health and rights, with particular focus on the most marginalized.
- UNFPA continues to mobilize partnerships towards COVID-19 response and recovery, focusing on partners that can help national and local stakeholders target vulnerable groups, including with organizations from the private sector like socially responsible retail company Violeta in Bosnia and Herzegovina, or the Moldcell Foundation in Moldova, in order to reduce the digital divide and social isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and create bonds between generations in building digital skills of older persons through engagement of young people.
- In Belarus, UNFPA in partnership with the NGO Mama Pro finalized the platform of the online pregnancy school, which will allow pregnant women to avoid having to visit polyclinics and pregnancy schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.




Situation in Numbers

 **4,905,338** Confirmed COVID-19 Cases

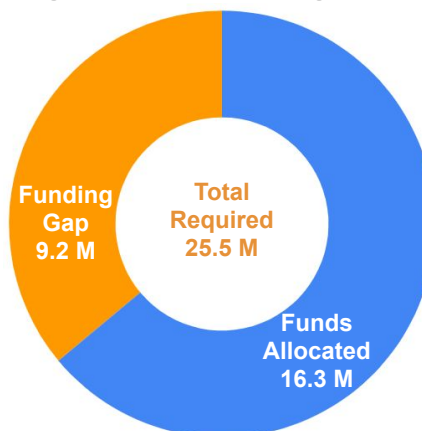
 **78,796** COVID-19 Deaths

Source: WHO, 22 January 2021

Key Population Groups

-  **3 M** Pregnant Women
-  **63 M** Women of Reproductive Age
-  **53 M** Young People (age 10-24)
-  **26 M** Older Persons (age 65+)

Funding Status for Region (US\$)



Regional Response Summary

Coordination and partnerships

UNFPA continues to mobilize partnerships for COVID-19 response and recovery, focusing on partners that can help national and local stakeholders support vulnerable groups. Below are examples of support services, and information and outreach to older persons, youth and vulnerable women and girls via partnerships with NGOs, government agencies, private sector, and broadcasting groups, with funding provided by the UN or by government aid funding.

Country examples:

- **Albania:** UNFPA provided support to the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs to prepare the Fifth State report on the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women. This report makes important reference to measures and response of the Government to GBV during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Armenia:** Emergency support packages were provided by UNFPA and the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women from Shirak, Lori and Tavush regions and Yerevan to 157 women GBV survivors who lost income generation opportunities because of COVID-19. The emergency support package was in the form of monetary individual support for food, medical supplies, rent or utilities.
- **Azerbaijan:** In partnership with the Social Services Agency; the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs; USAID; and the British and German embassies; UNFPA delivered COVID-19-related personal protective equipment (PPE) and dignity kits to women and girls temporarily displaced as a result of the recent conflict. The activity took place within the 16 Days of Activism campaign to end violence against women.
- **Belarus:** UNFPA supported the development of a Volunteer Portal System on the Salesforce platform, which allows the Belarus Red Cross to coordinate up to 16,000 volunteers (recruitment, training, volunteer registration, appraisal) to support activities during emergencies, including the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** UNFPA signed a partnership agreement with the socially responsible retail company Violeta, spurred on by the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to support women's shelters.
- **Georgia:** Three new lessons on SRH and gender equality were prepared and broadcasted on the national TV School by the Georgian Public Broadcaster, as part of the partnership project with UNFPA aimed at ensuring access to critical age-sensitive information in the context of COVID-19.
- **Kosovo*:** UNFPA, funded by the UK Government through the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF), in partnership with UNICEF, WHO and UN Women, is successfully implementing the joint project "Return to (New) Normal in Kosovo: Strengthening resilience through a safe and inclusive return to normality in health and education in the wake of COVID-19".
- **Moldova:** A new partnership with Moldcell Foundation was launched to reduce the digital divide and social isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and create bonds between generations in building digital skills of older persons through engagement of young people. 200 older persons from 10 localities of the Republic of Moldova received a mobile phone and were trained by 50 young people on how to use digital devices and seek social and health assistance.
- **Tajikistan:** UNFPA continues to be an active actor at the COVID-19 UNCT Coordination Team, managing the MEDEVAC component and the hospital for COVID-19-infected UN staff and dependents. In addition, the joint UN MPTF-funded project "Strengthening the National Capacity to Prepare and Respond to COVID-19" is being implemented successfully in partnership with UNICEF.
- **Turkey:** UNFPA is an active member of the UN Turkey COVID-19 Emergency Response and Preparedness (ERP) Working Group and the Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 Task Force, as well as the COVID-19 communication task force. UNFPA's project on mobile health units to respond to COVID-19 was approved for funding by the UN's COVID MPTF, in partnership with WHO and UNHCR.
- **Turkmenistan:** UNFPA continued its support to the national COVID-19 strategic "Country Preparedness and Response Plan and Socio-Economic Response Plan". UNFPA leads the Protection and Vulnerable Population Stream under the UN COVID-19 Crisis Management Team to monitor the rights of the most vulnerable populations. All joint work plans for 2021 and the co-financing agreement with the Government for 2021-2025 include continuous support to COVID-19 vis-a-vis UNFPA's mandate.

* All references to Kosovo should be understood to be in the context of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

Country examples (continued):

- **Uzbekistan:** More than 800 manuals on "Basics of healthy lifestyle and family" for teachers were delivered to secondary schools of Karakalpakstan within the UNDP-UNFPA joint project funded by the Government of Japan. The manual was updated in 2020 and includes information on COVID-19 for further knowledge-sharing with the youth of Karakalpakstan.

Continuity of SRH Services and interventions, including protection of health workforce

UNFPA continued to support the EECA region through technical assistance and contributing to regional assessments of the impact of COVID-19 on access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for the general population and vulnerable populations, including women living with HIV and/or with disabilities. Plans to assess the region's readiness and capacity to implement the global strategy for the elimination of cervical cancer were initiated, and the assessment tool was finalized for roll-out in January of 2021. Regional webinars on supply chain management during COVID-19 and on cervical cancer were organized.

Country examples:

- **Albania:** The procedures on the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for SRH and guidelines for provision of SRH services in the time of COVID-19 were endorsed by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MoHSP) as part of the Primary Health Care Package.
- **Armenia:** PPE was purchased and provided to the beneficiaries of the Coalition to Stop Violence against Women, in particular to the "Domestic Violence" shelters to ensure the safety and security of key social workers and of GBV survivors. Overall, 450 beneficiaries received PPEs.
- **Azerbaijan:** UNFPA joined efforts with the Public Health and Reforms Center (PHRC) and OBGYN Institute under the MoH to conduct a series of online courses for obstetricians on how to deliver obstetrical services during the COVID-19 pandemic. UNFPA and PHRC also developed a [booklet](#) including COVID-19-related recommendations for pregnant women.
- **Belarus:** UNFPA in partnership with the NGO Mama Pro has finalized newly developed comprehensive content and the structure of the online [pregnancy school](#). The platform, designed to allow pregnant women to avoid having to visit polyclinics and pregnancy schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, is now functional and ready for the official launch in cooperation with the MoH. The course will fully substitute face-to-face forms of health education during pregnancy.
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** UNFPA supported the Ministry of Health of Federation BiH working groups to finalize the draft of the COVID-19-SoP-COVID RoadMap for patients in the Federation BiH. A beta version of the Health Sector app was also developed to relay information about COVID-19 and other health-related issues.
- **Kosovo*:** As part of UNFPA's response to COVID-19 with particular focus on maternal health, UNFPA delivered 3 ventilators and over 30,000 PPE items to the gynecology clinic in Pristina at the University Clinical Center of Kosovo. The equipment and PPE will protect the Maternity service providers, including doctors, midwives and all other health care workers providing care for mothers and newborns.
- **North Macedonia:** A three-day training on MISP and a two-day training on SRHR of People living with Disabilities were held in December 2020. In addition, another round of online trainings for gynecologists on treatment of pregnant women in times of COVID-19 was delivered. Surgical masks, gloves and disinfectants for SRH facilities with the aim to ensure continuation of essential SRH services in times of COVID-19, were also delivered.
- **Serbia:** With the implementing partner PIN, UNFPA supported 160 sessions of psychological support and counselling to COVID-19 patients and their families, focusing on older persons, pregnant women and mothers. In addition, the project team provided trainings for 95 people on mental health protection, burnout and secondary traumatization prevention, and psychological first aid for formal and informal caregivers.
- **Tajikistan:** The UN-MPTF-funded joint project on "Strengthening the National Capacity to Prepare and Respond to Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)" through alternative online SRH and psychosocial support services has already allowed over 4,000 women to benefit from direct teleconsultations. Over 2 million people were informed on available services through TV channels, leaflets and posters. This project is developed as part of the UNFPA COVID-19 Global Response Plan ensuring SRH and psychosocial support services during pandemic.

Country examples (continued):

- **Turkey:** UNFPA continued to support the MoH in COVID-19 prevention and response to maintain the continuation of essential SRH services, via provision of mobile health teams, hygiene kits, PPE, and information, education and communication (IEC) materials, with a focus on the most vulnerable groups, including seasonal migrant workers, pregnant/lactating women, people at risk of/living with HIV, older persons and persons with disabilities through over 60 service delivery units. Through Turkey Cross Border operations, life-saving SRH services have continued to be provided to women and girls in Northern Syria with strict adherence to COVID-19 precaution measures. Awareness raising campaigns on COVID-19-related risks and safeguards have continued both online and in offline media. Telemedicine continues to be used to overcome access challenges and UNFPA has designated midwives at health facilities to assist pregnant women who miss their appointments as a result of the lockdown.
- **Ukraine:** UNFPA delivered 1,700 Female Health Workers Sanitary kits to frontline professionals in 25 health facilities located in the six regions most affected by COVID-19 in Ukraine.
- **Uzbekistan:** UNFPA purchased 600,000 disposable three-layer masks and handed these over to maternity hospitals in Tashkent city to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in medical institutions.

Addressing GBV

UNFPA has continued to support countries to respond to and prevent GBV, despite the additional challenges posed by the pandemic, through distribution of supplies, training of frontline staff, establishment and management of crisis center and shelters, and provision of information on available GBV services. UNFPA has also been supporting the development of various plans, procedures and standards to ensure commitment and quality in the response and prevention of GBV in the region. UNFPA developed the regional guidelines for provision of remote-based essential services to survivors of GBV, including survivors with disability in the COVID-19 context. These were presented through a regional webinar, and are also available in Russian.

Country examples:

- **Albania:** Trained 41 health and social care providers (6 men and 35 women) on the Standard Operating Procedures for GBV (including the SoP in Civil Emergencies) and informed on provisions of sheltering services during COVID-19 based on approved protocols.
- **Armenia:** UNFPA enhanced SafeYou mobile application for prevention and reporting of DV/GBV cases, which are on the increase due to the pandemic. Users can send free alert SMS with location to Police and/or NGOs, record audio messages, anonymously discuss issues in forums, and get contacts of NGOs.
- **Azerbaijan:** As part of the 16 Days of Activism, UNFPA distributed around 400 dignity kits to women and girls temporarily displaced by the recent war. The kits included COVID-19 related PPEs and information on available GBV services. UNFPA produced [video stories](#) on the impact of the conflict and the pandemic on women and girls and held a virtual conference to present the findings of the COVID-19 Rapid Gender Assessment.
- **Belarus:** 60 health and social care service providers received online trainings on providing counselling and assistance to survivors of domestic violence and on referral mechanisms, with a focus on older people, during COVID-19.
- **Kazakhstan:** A full training package including COVID-19-related content on family values, reproductive health including family planning, gender equality, prevention of GBV and early marriages was finalized and submitted for approval to the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Kazakhstan for introduction into the education system of madrasas.
- **North Macedonia:** Protocols for the safe operation of Sexual Assault Referral Centers during COVID-19 were developed in a participatory manner. Surgical masks and gloves were provided to shelters for GBV survivors in Skopje and Tetovo, to ensure safe continuation of GBV support and referral services.
- **Serbia:** In 6 state asylum and reception/transit centers, 511 girls and women from refugee and migrant population were provided with hygienic items, and 289 women received counselling on prevention against COVID-19 and on prevention and protection against GBV.

Country examples (continued):

- **Tajikistan:** Psychosocial support services to survivors of violence, including persons with disabilities, was provided through online consultations, referrals and direct services provision. Referrals to specialized psychosocial support and health care services were done through survivors support rooms established and expanded throughout the country within the Spotlight Initiative.
- **Turkey:** GBV case management services adjusted to COVID-19 continued to be provided to refugee women, men and key groups through women and girls' safe spaces, key refugee group units and social service centres. Through Turkey Cross Border operations, the distribution of dignity kits to 3,735 women and girls throughout northwest Syria in December has continued to provide an effective access point for lifesaving GBV services. The dignity kit content has been updated and tailored to COVID-19 needs, now including hand sanitizers and bleach.
- **Turkmenistan:** The second National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2021-2025, developed with UNFPA's support, was approved. The plan includes gender-responsive healthcare, GBV, and COVID-19 socio-economic measures, and outlines measures for girls and women with disabilities. Standard Operating Procedures on multi-sectoral response to GBV by healthcare, police and psychosocial support services were shared for piloting in select regions.
- **Ukraine:** Helped establish crisis rooms for GBV survivors in Kyiv, which have the capacity to provide quality assistance to 7 women and 2 children at the same time. Offering flexibility of admission and protection from COVID-19, the crisis rooms will be a life-saving option for women and girls seeking refuge from abusers during and after quarantine measures.
- **Uzbekistan:** The first Women Parliamentarian Forum was organized jointly by UNFPA and other government and non-government partners on December 14th. It focused on increasing the impact of female parliamentarians' work on greater gender equality and facilitating the development processes, as well as on the COVID-19 impact on the lives of women in the country.



Risk communication and community engagement (including with young people)

Online tools and social media channels are used in different ways for reaching young people, including online trainings, online apps, developing video materials. Information and support for young people during Covid-19 have been provided through youth centers, while SRH for young people as part of youth-friendly health services was provided via websites and online apps, a “self-help” guide providing psychological counselling, video materials and posters were also used for covid-19 related work supporting young people. Many activities are carried out in close partnership with Y-Peer.

Country examples:

- **Albania:** Implemented community health model in 13 municipalities, reaching the most vulnerable with information on SRHR in the context of COVID-19, including Roma and Egyptian groups, and young key populations and groups in prison settings.
- **Armenia:** Provided 24 computers, through "Agate" NGO, within the framework of the EU4GE project, to ensure participation of women with disabilities in online courses.
- **Georgia:** Produced and distributed special video on COVID-19 risk communication and coping tips for older persons through regional TV and radio channels and social media.
- **Kazakhstan:** Launched a website with the Ministry of Health, along with an app and a chatbox on young people's SRH, as part of a comprehensive support to youth-friendly health services, and developed an online certified training course for Y-Peers including a “self-help” guide providing psychological counselling during COVID-19 with a focus on family planning, unintended pregnancy, domestic violence, etc..
- **Kosovo*:** Launched an informational video to raise awareness of the continuous threat posed by COVID-19 particularly to pregnant women, including danger signs during pregnancy, how to access SRHR services, safe delivery, breastfeeding etc. The video was aired by 3 national TV stations.
- **Kyrgyzstan:** Provided technical leadership to a Volunteer Forum organized by the Red Crescent society to thank volunteers for their active participation in the COVID-19 response. Nine active volunteers shared their stories in TEDx format.
- **North Macedonia:** Printed 14,000 posters and leaflets in different languages on reporting GBV during COVID-19. With Y-Peer, prepared and distributed 200 packages of informative and educational material on GBV, CSE, SRH, and Covid-19 preventive measures for youth from the vulnerable groups.
- **Serbia:** 11 pairs of younger and older persons prepared 11 online and offline local activities and reached other young and older people from the community, encouraging solidarity and further transferring of the knowledge and skills acquired in these online trainings.
- **Tajikistan:** Produced and disseminated more than 60,000 leaflets on alternative online SRH and psychosocial support during pandemic services along with 200 posters and a PSA broadcast 150 times on TV. Over 12,000 leaflets and publications on social networks about the provision of SRH and psychosocial support services during Covid-19 pandemic were posted to reach people with disabilities.
- **Turkey:** Provided information on COVID-19 prevention and services through over 60 service delivery points in youth centres, women/girls' safe spaces, mobile health services, and other service centers
- **Turkmenistan:** Operationalized a hotline for vulnerable women and girls to supply information on reproductive health services and rights, domestic violence, and psychological consultation. A publication on RH of women and adolescent girls, and GBV was developed.

Leaving no one behind (with a focus on older people and people living with disabilities or with HIV/AIDS)

Young refugees and the refugee women who have been affected by Covid-19 were supported through the youth centers in Turkey. A new partnership for adolescent girls' reproductive rights and health during Covid-19 was established in Turkmenistan.

Country examples:

- **Albania:** With Tirana and Vlora municipalities and other partners, produced and disseminated a booklet on healthy lifestyles for older persons and carried out a mapping of the most vulnerable older persons living alone.
- **Azerbaijan:** Released a [video](#) highlighting activities implemented for elderly during the pandemic. Conducted online sessions to help older people better cope with the pandemic. 90 dignity kits containing PPEs and sanitizing liquids were delivered to temporarily displaced elderly people in conflict-affected territories.
- **Belarus:** Signed MoU with Belarusian Red Cross to scale up joint efforts at national and local levels in the areas of emergency response and recovery, including strengthening volunteers' management for COVID-19 response with the focus on the most vulnerable populations.
- **Georgia:** Conducted 2nd round of distribution of protective gear and sanitizers for personnel in all 11 state funded care homes for older people. About 2,130 vulnerable older persons living alone received food and hygiene parcels, and personal protection gear and info materials. 685 mobile phones were purchased for vulnerable older people living alone in rural settlements without means of communication.
- **Kazakhstan:** Launched a video for people with disabilities in [Russian](#) and [Kazakh](#) during the 16 days of activism on GBV. Developed, including in Braille and sign language, a basic package of materials for persons with disabilities containing information on maternal and reproductive health, reproductive rights, family planning and prevention of unintended pregnancies and STIs including HIV.
- **Kyrgyzstan:** Raised awareness through various communication activities about the unmet need for FP during COVID-19 and about RH services which are critical amidst the COVID19 pandemic response and ensure women's basic health needs are met. Key messages and health education materials on information about COVID-19 risks for women and female health workers were shared.
- **Serbia:** With Serbian Red Cross, provided telephone-based peer support targeting 250 older persons in five communities to increase psychological resilience and encourage social participation. 170 older persons received direct digital coaching. Video tutorials were developed with a famous Serbian actress explaining how to use social media.
- **Tajikistan:** Provided 12,000 people with disabilities access to quality information on SRH and referrals to more qualified psychosocial support services during COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Turkey:** Continued to provide protection services to male and female survivors of violence, people at risk of living with HIV and people living with disabilities. Health services were provided to seasonal migrant workers and rural refugees via mobile health teams. A new protection center was established in Ankara. The center aims to reach out to most vulnerable refugee women and youth that have also been affected by Covid19.
- **Ukraine:** Delivered PPE, WASH products and informational posters to 15 nursing homes in the six regions most affected by COVID-19. 20 staff from nursing homes and social services were trained on social protection in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, covering over 2000 older persons.

Across the region, UNFPA has reached out to the public, through traditional and social media, to raise awareness of COVID-19 related information and guidance and showcase achievements in assisting people during the pandemic.

Story highlights:

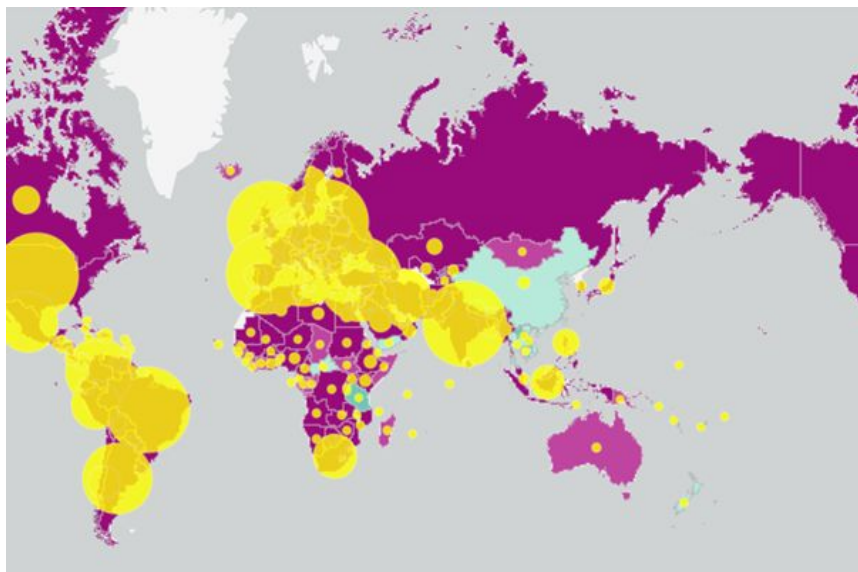
- [Ensuring access to lifesaving information and services in Kazakhstan for persons with disabilities during COVID-19](#)

Country examples:

- **Albania:** With Euronews Albania, continued "[Jo Tabu](#)" series, conversations among parents and adolescents and their siblings on topics such as puberty, sexual education, relationships, violence and bullying, internet benefits and risks, and COVID19 pandemic impact.
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** With UK Embassy, brought diplomatic community to [COOK4GOOD](#) event, a call for philanthropic action to help women's shelters in the country, which are facing a spike in admissions as violence against women has increased due to the effects of the pandemic.
- **Kazakhstan:** Distributed photos, videos and [stories](#) of the exhibition "Women on the frontline of the response to COVID-19", including through [social media](#).
- **North Macedonia:** Produced and disseminated a series of [posts](#) on UNFPA's donation to maternity hospitals and shelters were shared on social media, a [video](#) with the UK ambassador on GBV and Covid-19, a [video](#) on youth and volunteering safely during Covid-19, produced with Y-Peer, and an [interview](#) with TV Alfa about GBV and Covid-19.
- **Serbia:** Premiered short movies promoting intergenerational cooperation and exchange during COVID 19 featuring celebrity and non-celebrity older people in Serbia mastering special skills. A virtual film festival was [organized](#), together with GIZ, with more than 500 visitors from UN, diplomatic community, general public in Serbia.
- **Tajikistan:** A competition to select the secondary schools with the best record in promoting healthy lifestyles during COVID-19 was covered in the national [media](#). In total 390 secondary schools took part in the initiative.
- **Turkey:** In scope of 16 Days of Activism "Enough" campaign, 5 celebrity videos on GBV (total reach of 500K and 85K views) were posted on social media (e.g. [Turkish News Anchors](#), [Ece Yaşar](#), [Beyza Sekerci](#), [Rojda Demirer](#)), also discussing the impact of COVID-19. A [Digital Youth Panel](#) was organized on December 5, Int. Volunteer Day.
- **Turkmenistan:** Launched the campaign [#erkeklerhem](#) ([#menengage](#)) to encourage men engagement in fatherhood and caregiving, in family planning and in advancing positive social norms and ending violence. UNFPA-run youth online platform [Yashlyk.info](#) now has rubric on COVID-19. TV and radio PSAs on youth, pregnant women and elderly amid global pandemic prevention measures were aired.
- **Ukraine:** Published a [press release](#) on dissemination of medical kits for female medical staff in Kyiv on the frontlines of the fight against COVID-19. Dissemination of these kits in Bukovyna region was covered by the [media](#), as was the [Healthy Challenge 2020](#).

Confirmed COVID-19 Cases and Deaths (UNFPA programme countries) WHO, 22 January 2021

Country	Confirmed Cases	Deaths
Albania	69,238	1,291
Armenia	165,528	3,021
Azerbaijan	228,028	3,044
Belarus	230,494	1,610
Bosnia and Herzegovina	118,717	4,521
Georgia	251,071	2,998
Kazakhstan	219,527	2,956
Kosovo*	56,692	1,416
Kyrgyzstan	83,585	1,394
Republic of Moldova	154,118	3,299
North Macedonia	89,463	2,739
Serbia	377,445	3,810
Tajikistan	13,714	91
Turkey	1,591,878	24,487
Turkmenistan	0	0
Ukraine	1,177,621	21,499
Uzbekistan	78,219	620
TOTAL	4,905,338	78,796



See UNFPA's [COVID-19 Population Vulnerability Dashboard](#) for real-time updates