

Eastern Europe and Central Asia Region

COVID-19 Situation Report No. 10

United Nations Population Fund



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Reporting Period: 1-30 November 2020

Regional Highlights

- All countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, except Turkmenistan, have officially reported COVID-19 cases, with more than 4 million confirmed cases, out of which 55 per cent were recorded in Turkey and Ukraine. Armenia and Georgia are now the most affected countries relative to the size of their population.
- In partnership with partners from the private sector and national and local authorities, UNFPA has strengthened the skills of health care providers and developed mobile apps to enable the delivery of e-health services in the context of COVID-19, in countries such as Kosovo* and Azerbaijan.
- A new partnership with the Moldcell Foundation, associated with one of Moldova's biggest telecommunication companies, will provide mobile phones to older persons from disadvantaged regions. Young people will train them on how to use the phones, as a means to support older people during social isolation, imposed by COVID-19, and strengthen intergenerational dialogue.
- UNFPA launched its 16 Days of Activism Against GBV campaign in all countries in the region, focusing on protecting women and girls who have become more vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic and the counter-measures, such as home confinement.
- In cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina's national TV, a series of exercise videos were developed and broadcast aimed at improving the physical and mental health of older persons during the pandemic.

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

Situation in Numbers

 **4,042,182** Confirmed COVID-19 Cases

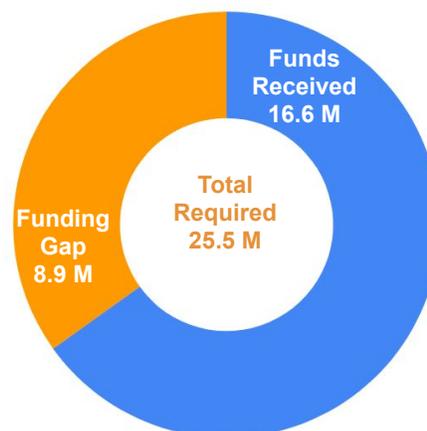
 **62,275** COVID-19 Deaths

Source: WHO, 22 December 2020

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 offices are well integrated within the joint UN and government responses in countries, helping to coordinate between UN, civil society and non-governmental organizations (CSO and NGOs) and governments for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and social services, particularly for vulnerable populations like women at risk of gender-based violence (GBV) and older people. UNFPA continues to identify new public and private partners who can help expand COVID-19 response and recovery.

Country examples:

- **Albania:** UNFPA is engaged in a strong partnership with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and National Health Care Operator for the implementation of a comprehensive program aimed at strengthening skills of primary health care (PHC) providers in the delivery of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services in the context of COVID-19. UNFPA is an active member of UN Albania Crisis Management Team.
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** UNFPA is in partnership with the Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina to broadcast gymnastics for older persons. National broadcast has helped to reach a larger group of older persons who do not have access and knowledge to use modern technologies.
- **Georgia:** UNFPA continues its partnership with the Public Broadcaster of Georgia in support of distance education. So far, five episodes have been prepared and aired on the national TV School platform on sexually transmitted infections and teenage pregnancy, addiction, GBV and the harmful practices of early and child marriage.
- **Kosovo:** UNFPA and the Ministry of Health and Pristina Municipality are partnering to initiate a comprehensive program to strengthen skills of primary health care providers in the delivery of e-health services in the context of COVID-19. UNFPA is partnering with the Municipalities of Kosovo to support coordination, harmonization and better implementation of COVID-19 measures and messages between the central and local level. UNFPA is an active member of the National Council for prevention of COVID-19.
- **Moldova:** UNFPA has engaged in partnership with the private Moldcell Foundation, one of the biggest telecommunication companies in Moldova. UNFPA and Moldcell will donate 100 internet-connected mobile phones to older persons from vulnerable regions, with trainings provided by young people on how to use the phones for communication, online payments, searching for useful information, etc. This project will support older people during social isolation imposed by COVID-19 and strengthen the intergenerational dialogue between older and young generations.
- **North Macedonia:** Start of the joint project on migration financed by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF), implemented by UNFPA, IOM and UNHCR, and in coordination with the Resident Coordinator office (establishment of Steering Committee, technical-level body, organization of the official kick-off meeting of the joint project and development of communications plan).
- **Serbia:** UNFPA organized the kick-off meeting of the Joint Programme on Ageing in Serbia with the UN Country Team to confirm partnership and facilitate and frame our COVID-19 recovery work and Socio-Economic Impact Assessment regarding older persons.
- **Tajikistan:** UNFPA, as a lead agency of the MEDEVAC and Medical Doctors group, coordinated the move of the dedicated medical premises and equipment for UN staff and dependents to the new premises of Zaravshon Infectious Hospital.
- **Turkey:** UNFPA is an active member of the UN Turkey COVID-19 Emergency Response and Preparedness Working Group and the Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 Task Force, as well as the COVID-19 communication task force. An assessment is being conducted with Sabancı University (the Business Against Domestic Violence Platform) to identify the impact of COVID-19 on domestic violence and worklife of women. Preliminary results are ready.
- **Uzbekistan:** The first census field activity – a pretest of the census questionnaire – was conducted by the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan from 3 to 6 November in the Donishmand Mahalla, Yashnabad district, Tashkent City. UNFPA equipped staff involved in the operation as well as the visited households with PPE, thanks to financial support from the Government of Switzerland and UNHCR.

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

Due to significant increase in new cases of COVID-19 in EECA countries, UNFPA accelerated its interventions focused on continuity of SRH services and access of vulnerable groups to the services, information and supplies. Increasing the availability and capacity of health workers is a key priority for UNFPA in most countries. Key interventions supported by UNFPA include training of service providers, operationalization of online services, hotlines and mobile applications, supply of personal protective equipment (PPE), development of national guidelines and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for SRH services. UNFPA has widely shared updates and briefs reflecting global evidence and protocols on COVID-19 prevention and management. The regional assessments of the public supply chain maturity piloted in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan were completed and country priority interventions for building integrated supply chains for SRH commodities identified.

UNFPA continued to support the regional assessments of the impact of COVID-19 on access to SRHR for the general population and vulnerable groups, including women living with HIV and/or with disabilities. The survey instruments were finalized and the online survey will be rolled out in December.

Country examples:

- **Albania:** In partnership with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and Health Care Operator, 6 trainings were organized aiming to “[strengthen] national preparedness and response mechanisms in provision of SRH services in the context of COVID-19”. 94 participants (42 medical doctors, 38 nurses and 14 representatives from local health care units) from Kavaja, Gramsh, Puke, Lushnje and Diber attended these trainings. SoPs for the provision of SRH services in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic were also developed.
- **Armenia:** UNFPA provided an additional 620,000 gloves, 300,000 masks, 10,000 respirators to the Ministry of Health (MOH) and 200,000 masks, 100 shields and 100 coveralls to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.
- **Azerbaijan:** In partnership with the MOH, trainings on COVID-19 response were delivered in 10 women consultation (antenatal) centers and one perinatal clinic in the capital city of Baku. UNFPA also contributed to the development and launch of the MOH’s mobile app for counselling women on COVID-19-related issues. UNFPA also supports the ongoing audit on compliance with COVID-19-related sanitary and epidemiological standards at the aforementioned antenatal and perinatal clinics.
- **Belarus:** In partnership with CSOs and state medical institutions, UNFPA has launched the hotline for referral and counselling for key populations. UNFPA funding will complement the Global Fund’s support to the hotline, aiming to increase the quality of COVID-19 counselling services to vulnerable populations.
- **Georgia:** To ensure the continuation of SRH services, UNFPA locally procured and distributed the most needed PPEs (surgical masks, gowns, coveralls, hygiene material) for maternity care providers in three healthcare facilities that have been designated by the MOH to serve pregnant women with suspected and/or confirmed COVID-19 cases and which have special maternity wards – University Hospital #1, Kutaisi & Kobuleti fever centers – thanks to funding from the German government
- **Kazakhstan:** UNFPA supported the MOH to develop the 2021-2025 National Mother and Child Health Strategy and Action Plan, which includes a section on prevention and control of healthcare-associated infections (HAI). This section was identified as the main problem area in the health system response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the country. UNFPA will continue to provide support to HAI prevention and control at the maternities level, both in general and in the context of COVID-19, while the World Health Organization (WHO) will focus its efforts at the national level, using funds recently received from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
- **Kosovo*:** Through its implementing partner Kosova Population Foundation (KOPF), UNFPA delivered peer education training on SRHR to 734 participants (380 teachers and 354 peer educators). The training included an anti-COVID-19 module with basic protection measures.
- **North Macedonia:** Two Clinical Guidelines, on Tromboprophylaxis and Safe Abortion respectively, were finalized in November 2020. In addition, the SRH Action Plan in times of COVID-19 was finalized, in a participatory process with stakeholders from all relevant sectors.

Country examples:

- **Tajikistan:** UNFPA continues building up alternative ([online](#)) SRH, family planning and psychosocial support services, including for people with disabilities, thanks to UNFPA core funds and the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund.
- **Turkey:** UNFPA continued to support the MOH in COVID-19 prevention and response to maintain continuity of essential SRH services, via mobile health teams, hygiene kits, PPE and information, education and communication materials for the most vulnerable groups, including seasonal migrant workers, pregnant and lactating women, people at risk of/living with HIV, elderly persons and persons with disabilities in over 60 service delivery units.
- **Uzbekistan:** Between 2 November and 5 December 2020, UNFPA Uzbekistan launched three six-day trainings on emergency obstetric care for midwives and three five-day trainings for obstetrician-gynecologists in Nukus, Republic of Karakalpakstan. COVID-19 prevention measures were also part of the training program. Trainings are conducted in the framework of the joint UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund-funded project aimed at improving the health status of mothers and newborns in RoK.



UNFPA Turkey and ECHO bringing health services to migrant workers in rural areas amid COVID-19.

Addressing GBV

Support to GBV survivors during the COVID-19 pandemic has been ongoing, through technical support to governments and distribution of key supplies and equipment. Technical guides have been finalized to support countries in their response to GBV, including the 'COVID-19 Remote Essential Services Guide' and the 'Minimum Standards for Response to GBV for Survivors with Disabilities'. Preparation for their launches and roll-out in countries are underway.

UNFPA has prepared and launched 16 Days of Activism Against GBV campaigns in a number of countries, with many countries adapting the global theme to their national contexts, with a focus on the additional challenges posed by COVID-19 in preventing and responding to GBV. UNFPA has also been preparing for regional and global events for the 16 Days of Activism.

Country examples:

- **Albania:** UNFPA, under the Joint Program on Ending Violence Against Women, supported religious institutions in Vlora district to unite in the fight against GBV through a joint declaration. The National Survey on Parenting Norms and the Sexual Violence in Children Analysis have been completed and was launched during the 16 Days of Activism.
- **Azerbaijan:** UNFPA finalized and disseminated the Rapid Gender Analysis on the impact of COVID-19 under the EU-funded regional programme. The analysis was widely distributed among civil society institutions and development partners, and through UNFPA's social media channels. UNFPA launched its 16 Days of Activism Against GBV campaign, focusing on protecting women and girls who have become more vulnerable due to the recent military conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Belarus:** UNFPA distributed PPE sets to 20 state-run "crisis" rooms and four CSOs, to ensure continuity of essential services for survivors of GBV throughout the country during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Kazakhstan:** The 16 Days of Activism against GBV campaign has been launched with a focus on COVID-19. The launch included a joint [video](#), social media [cards](#), a [photo exhibit](#), and a high-level [conference](#) on expanding access to justice for survivors, where UNFPA focused on the needs of women with disabilities and the importance of preventing GBV.
- **Kosovo*:** UNFPA has delivered 25 laptops to the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, which will be distributed to the Centres for Social Work to support social workers in providing a more coordinated response to GBV.
- **Kyrgyzstan:** UNFPA supported the National Gender Council under the Government of Kyrgyz Republic. A high-level meeting was held with members of the Council and other participants, including the Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, to report on progress made on the Plan, ensuring prompt response, report on high-profile GBV cases, and discuss the linkages between COVID-19 and GBV.
- **North Macedonia:** Protocols for safe operation of shelter centers during the COVID-19 pandemic are being developed, in a participatory manner with the involvement of the MOH, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Interior, CSOs and other.
- **Serbia:** Distribution of hygiene items and counselling sessions on prevention against COVID-19, with a focus on GBV prevention, have been on-going in four accommodation facilities across the country, under the UNFPA/Danish Refugee Council (DRC) Project.
- **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.
- **Uzbekistan:** As part of a project funded by the 'UN COVID-19 Multi-Partner Trust Fund', UNFPA supported the revival of a national hotline on GBV. By mid-November, 405 individuals had called the hotline with reports of GBV, and received support from a number of organizations and government institutions.

Risk communication and community engagement (including with young people)

UNFPA conducted several surveys on the specificities of the needs of young people during the COVID-19 pandemics. Trainings and workshops with the participation of different youth groups were organized. Collaborations with local NGOs, youth networks and government bodies such as Ministries of Education and Ministries of Labor and Social Welfare continued. UNFPA and Y-PEER led national campaigns to fight GBV, with a focus on young people with disabilities, LGBT and Roma girls, through different channels such as TV and radio channels, videographics, and social medias.

Country examples:

- **Albania:** Reached more than 9,000 young people with information on SRH and COVID-19 via online channels. Continued support to the most vulnerable older people in Tirana by providing information and integrated social and health care. Organized trainings for prison staff on HIV and COVID-19 management in prison settings. Y-Peer network continued the “Safe Peer” initiative focusing on strengthening capacities of young people as peer educators to address SRH topic areas in the context of COVID-19, including for Roma and in rural communities.
- **Armenia:** UNFPA providing 150 tablets to the Ministry of Education, Sciences Culture and Sports to enhance opportunities for adolescents living in poverty or with disabilities to participate in distance education, launched as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- **Belarus:** Finalised a survey on youth needs during COVID-19. Results will be presented to stakeholders in December.
- **Georgia:** To mitigate the risks the pandemic poses to older persons, UNFPA prepared short animated videos and audio clips on the protection of vulnerable older persons in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Georgian, Armenian and Azeri versions of the videos and audio clips aired on TV and radio channels in the region.
- **Kosovo*:** UNFPA provided 40,000 PPE items to the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare for use in residential institutions for elderly people, people with disabilities and community homes.
- **Kyrgyzstan:** UNFPA, together with the Ministry of Labor and Social Development and Social Fund, created a [website](#) to facilitate access to information on how to receive social allowances and pensions during the pandemic and beyond.
- **Moldova:** UNFPA in Moldova launched the second phase of an online psychosocial support program for young people - “My Choice is to be OK”, in the context of COVID-19, consisting of ten interactive videos promoted on social media, which feature young people who ask questions about their wellbeing and answers from qualified specialists (teachers, psychologists, doctors).
- **North Macedonia:** A [video](#) which reached over 50,000 people and a [billboard](#) were launched, as part of the campaign ‘We are all their children’, as part of UNFPA’s support to the Red Cross’ activities for older persons during COVID-19. Together with Y-PEER, UNFPA [launched a campaign](#) on fighting GBV, especially among young people with disabilities, LGBT and Roma girls. Posters and flyers for older people on COVID-19 preventive measures were published.
- **Serbia:** UNFPA continued to promote intergenerational cooperation and community engagement in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic by organizing thematic workshops involving young and older persons, to support older persons with using technology and searching for information, and to promote intergenerational cooperation.
- **Tajikistan:** Over 70,000 leaflets and 200 posters were distributed to raise awareness of available services during the pandemic.
- **Turkey:** UNFPA provided information on COVID-19 prevention and services through over 60 service delivery points in youth centres, women and girls’ safe spaces, mobile health clinics, and other service centers.
- **Turkmenistan:** The hotline on reproductive health, rights and COVID-19 continues to provide anonymous and professional consultation and referral services for women and girls’ reproductive health, GBV and COVID-19. It was launched in October, jointly with the UK and the NGO Keyik Okara.

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

Findings and recommendations of a community-led study “Women, HIV and COVID-19 in Eastern Europe and Central Asia” were presented during a webinar. The study was conducted by the Eurasian Women’s Network on AIDS (EWNA), with technical and financial support from UNFPA, UNDP and UNAIDS. The aim of the study was to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown measures on access to SRHR, HIV treatment and protection against GBV among women living with HIV and women from key populations in the region. It was conducted among women from community-led organizations in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

Country examples:

- **Albania:** Health mediators organized nine awareness sessions on SRH in the context of COVID-19 in three regions; four awareness/community-based activities with Roma and Egyptian community representatives (60 participants) and five awareness sessions with people with disabilities and their parents (75 participants).
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** In partnership with the NGO Partnership for Public Health and the Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a series of videos were developed and broadcast, aimed at improving physical and mental health of older persons during COVID-19, through corrective gymnastics.
- **Georgia:** In partnership with the Georgia Red Cross Society, psychosocial training was conducted to strengthen community-based care services for older persons and people with disabilities.
- **Kazakhstan:** A comprehensive national sociological (quantitative and qualitative) survey on socio-economic status and needs of older persons in Kazakhstan, including their needs during COVID-19, was conducted to provide data for further monitoring of the implementation of the "Active Longevity" National Plan of Action.
- **Kosovo*:** Together with the Red Cross, UNFPA supported 275 older persons with food, hygiene items, medication, clothing, and psychosocial support. Through IP Balkans Sunflower, volunteers were engaged to read COVID-19 brochures to illiterate Roma families in four municipalities, explaining how they can protect themselves and what to do in case of symptoms.
- **Kyrgyzstan:** In a community-led process, guidelines on psychosocial support to address emotional burnout among key populations in crisis situations, including the COVID-19 pandemic, were developed with engagement of key populations representing LGBT, persons who inject drugs (PWID) and sex workers and involvement of two psychologists.
- **Moldova:** In collaboration with Help Age, UNFPA continued the donation of personal protection kits, including hygiene and food products, to the most vulnerable older persons. 400 people receive the packages every month.
- **North Macedonia:** Over two tons of PPE (sanitary items, medical masks and medical gloves) were distributed to state nursing homes in five cities across the country. Educational workshops and webinars on active and healthy aging, mental health, psychosocial support etc. for older persons were held.
- **Serbia:** The country office supported peer networking and telephone-based peer support services for 50 older persons in five communities to ensure their psychological resilience and social participation. 170 older persons were engaged in digital coaching. UNFPA also continued supporting the provision of psychosocial support to mitigate burnout among care providers and to support COVID-19 patients through individual online and telephone sessions.
- **Ukraine:** The country office completed the needs assessment of fifteen geriatric facilities in six regions on infection prevention control and COVID-19 preparedness.
- **Uzbekistan:** UNFPA supported the NGO ‘Opa-Singillar’ with distribution of food to women with disabilities.

Media & Communications

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:

- [Helping the most vulnerable survive the double pandemic of HIV and COVID-19 in Eastern Europe and Central Asia](#)
- [Employed women in Serbia more likely to have lost jobs than men during the coronavirus pandemic, new study reveals](#)
- [Ukraine steadfast in tackling gender-based violence, despite pandemic-related increases](#)

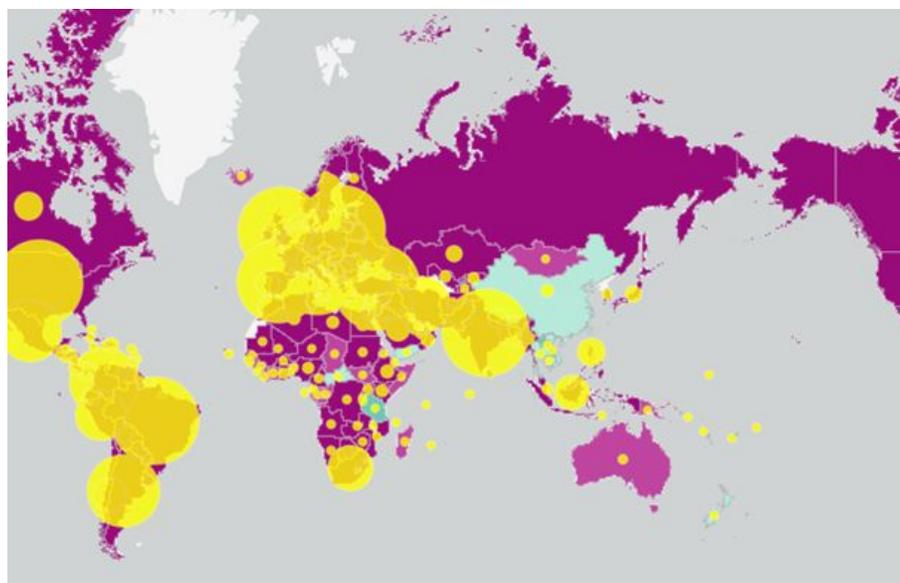


Country examples:

- **Azerbaijan:** Results of Rapid Gender Assessment on the lives of women and men published on [social media](#). [TV](#) appearance on conflict- and COVID-related vulnerabilities of women and girls and plans for 16 Days campaign.
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** Five at-home exercise videos for older people to promote them to stay active and take care of their mental and physical health were aired on national television.
- **Kazakhstan:** Social media [posts](#) on ways to protect oneself from COVID-19 were circulated on Facebook and Instagram.
- **Kyrgyzstan:** A [National Youth Day](#) event with over 650 youth participating online served to celebrate and recognize the role of youth during the COVID-19 response.
- **Moldova:** The launch of a new psychological support [program](#) for young people was covered by [Vocea Poporului](#), [Radio Sputnik](#), [Radio Chisinau](#). Three [videos](#) produced under this program were promoted on social media. A [press release](#) about UNFPA-Moldcell Foundation [partnership](#) to build intergenerational dialogue during Covid-19 was covered by [TVR Moldova](#), [PROTV](#), [Unimedia](#), and [TV8](#), [Agora](#). A social media campaign, including a series of [infographics](#) on young people and Covid-19, were produced and promoted.
- **North Macedonia:** A [series of posts](#) on workshops with local authorities in two municipalities on multisectorial response to GBV during COVID-19; [series of posts](#) on support to Red Cross mobile teams helping older persons during Covid-19 with over 40K reach, and [promoting](#) donation of over 2 tons PPE to state nursing homes. [Kick-off video](#) on #16days activism campaign.
- **Serbia:** Digital inclusion and intergenerational exchange promoted through tutorial [developed](#) with older influencer (reach of over 100K). Mental health support for COVID patients had reach of over 230K. Several interviews for print and digital media on MICS, implications of COVID on reproductive health, Nairobi anniversary and demographic resilience. [TV](#) interview on COVID effects on men and women.
- **Tajikistan:** [UNMPTF-funded project](#) on alternative (online) SRH, FP and psychosocial support services during Covid-19 pandemic by Sogd Oblast RH Center service providers.
- **Turkmenistan:** UNFPA-run Yashlyk.info youth portal continued to publish and promote [articles](#) on COVID-19 prevention, dealing with anxiety, and existing services for women and girls in the context of the pandemic. UNFPA-produced PSAs for TV and radio on virus prevention and safe behaviour with a focus on pregnant and breastfeeding women, youth and older persons continue to air on all national channels every two hours.
- **Uzbekistan:** Launched #16Days campaign with a high-level meeting involving government and civil society to discuss country's experience in addressing women's issues, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and raise awareness on preventing violence against women among general public and national partners.

Confirmed COVID-19 Cases and Deaths (UNFPA programme countries) WHO, 22 December 2020

Country	Confirmed Cases	Deaths
Albania	53,425	1,098
Armenia	154,602	2,673
Azerbaijan	203,593	2,253
Belarus	175,416	1,333
Bosnia and Herzegovina	106,222	3,706
Georgia	212,526	2,182
Kazakhstan	191,650	2,669
Kosovo*	49,126	1,252
Kyrgyzstan	79,429	1,335
Republic of Moldova	135,910	2,778
North Macedonia	78,434	2,314
Serbia	303,747	2,733
Tajikistan	13,182	89
Turkey	1,229,366	18,351
Turkmenistan	0	0
Ukraine	979,506	16,897
Uzbekistan	76,048	612
TOTAL	4,042,182	62,275



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