Who are learning and what they are learning: Distance learning solutions of Armenia

Zhanna Andreasyan
Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport
Republic of Armenia

COVID-19 Education Response Webinar 5
Distance Learning Strategies What do we know about effectiveness?
Friday 17 April 2020
Weblink: http://www.unesco.org/covid19EDwebinar
Armenia: Distance Learning in General Education: Snapshot

- **Number of schools** – 1400
- **Student population** – about 383,000
- **Number of teachers** – 38,040
- **Prior distance learning experience** – pilot in two remote communities started in 2019-2020 academic year to address the need for teachers for particular subjects
- **Legal framework** – General Education Law
- **Institutional capacities** – National Center for Education Technologies under the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport
- **Distance learning platform and courses available from 2010s** (Moodle)
COVID-19. Ensuring continuity of education: Technological preparedness:

Challenges:

- Lack of computers among 25% of student population, according to the official statistics
- Lack of any other devices (including smartphones) – 6.2% according to the data received by schools
- Non affordable costs for internet for low income families
COVID-19. Ensuring continuity of education: Technological preparedness:

Strategy:
- Public campaign to provide devices for students from low income families—launched in March, ongoing, about 5000 devices are expected.
- Negotiations with telecommunication companies – all major companies set affordable tariffs for internet with no limited use of main education platforms.
- Using alternative channels to provide online lessons: public lessons on Public Television of Armenia every day.
- Broadcasting of online lessons via channels provided by major telecommunication companies with no cost.
- Broadcasting of online lessons through regional TV stations.
COVID-19. Ensuring continuity of education: Content preparedness:

Challenges:
- Issues with availability of teaching and learning materials aligned with national curricula that can be delivered through online platforms, TV or radio programmes, or used for print-based home learning

Strategy
• Joining efforts for the resources: creating united platform for resources on distance learning: heravar.armedu.am, more than 35 sources with diverse resources are available on the website
• Intensive preparation of video lessons aligned with national curricula for all grades and subjects – more than 200 lessons are available on YouTube channel, more than 150 thousand views, classified in playlists by grades
• Promoting dissemination of distance learning tools and platforms: Microsoft Office 365, ETwinning, etc.
COVID-19. Ensuring continuity of education: Pedagogical preparedness:

Challenges:
- About **47.5% of teachers** reported that never used IT for distance learning and never provided lessons in distance learning mode (survey, 2018)
- **23% of teachers** reported the lack of computers in their homes (survey, 2018)

Strategy
• Creating **database of mentor teachers** trained and experienced in distance learning – more than 2500 teachers around the country, assisting their colleagues
• Organizing **rapid online courses** on distance learning – first stage completed, more than 400 participants, second stage is started for other 400 participants
• Creating **video guidelines** on how to use different resources, etc.
• Developing **methodological guidelines** on how effectively organize distance learning
• **Providing computers available in schools to teachers** to use at home during the state of emergency.
COVID-19. Ensuring continuity of education: Monitoring and evaluation:

Challenges:
- Lack of comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system for distance learning process

Strategy
• Creating new tools – **Electronic book for teachers and diary for parents**, launched in March 26, already **more than 95%** of teachers are involved
• Reporting **samples developed** and **data submitted weekly** by the regional administrations
• **Evaluation surveys** are initiated together with different partners.
• **Online public hearings** at the Parliament, regular online webinars planned together with teachers and parents.
COVID-19. Ensuring continuity of education: Main facts and lessons learnt

In average about 85% of student population is involved in distance learning.

- **Positioning of the situation** from the viewpoint of new opportunities, not only challenges.
- **Trust** towards schools and teachers.
- **Quick response** - transition to the distance learning announced on the same day of announcement of the state of emergency.
- **Joint efforts** of the Government, communities, business sector, CSOs, international partners is key.
- **Teachers**: High motivation and creativity, but still need for psycho-social support and methodological guidance.
- **Parents**: Active engagement, but still need for psycho-social support and guidance how to balance.
- **Strong solidarity among schools and parents** to ensure the continuity of education.
- **Students**: Active engagement, but still need for psycho-social support, importance of continuity not only lessons, but also socialization.
- New challenges for **cyber security**.
Thank you!