O'ZBEKISTON RESPUBLIKASI VAZIRLAR MAHKAMASI HUZURIDAGI TA'LIM SIFATINI NAZORAT QILISH DAVLAT INSPEKSIYASI

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Education Continuity in COVID-19 Pandemic times: Impressions on Introducing Distance Learning in Basic Education in Uzbekistan

September 2020

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September 2020

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Education Continuity in COVID-19 Pandemic times: Impressions on Introducing Distance Learning in Basic Education in Uzbekistan

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Education Continuity in COVID-19 Pandemic times: Impressions on Introducing Distance Learning in Basic Education in Uzbekistan

A. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has become a global crisis – it has infected more than 34.5 million people worldwide and has resulted in the death of more than a million people so far (October 2, 2020). The COVID-19 crisis has not only affected health and well-being of people, but has also affected the economies, with IMF projecting negative global growth of –4.9% in 2020. It is feared that millions of households will be pushed into poverty due to the resulting global recession. World Bank (based on growth projections from the June 2020 Global Economic Prospects report) estimates that when compared with pre-crisis forecasts, COVID-19 could push 71 million people into extreme poverty in 2020[1]. A recent WIDER (2020) Working Paper[2] estimated that "everything else equal, even a relatively small contraction in per capita income or consumption of 5% as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic could lead to an increase in the incidence of income-based poverty for the first time since 1990". Poverty at household level will affect children in many ways, particularly affecting in terms of reduced availability of nutrition, health and education services.

The COVID-19 outbreak is also a major education crisis as the scale of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education systems and on children and young people's learning and wellbeing is increasing daily. Governments around the world (191 countries) had temporarily closed educational institutions to ensure social distancing and to contain the spread of the pandemic. These nation-wide closures had affected close to 1.6 billion students or 91% of the world's student population (UNESCO). These school closures, though temporary, had resulted in preventing children, adolescents and youth in every country from fulfilling their right to quality, safe and inclusive education. The World Bank's estimates show that globally the closedown of schools have resulted in 0.6 years of learning adjusted schooling, with 25% increase in the number of students falling below minimum proficiency in reading and approximately 7 million children being on the verge of dropping out of education[3]. The COVID-19 crisis has thus pushed the efforts towards realizing the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4 - right to quality education and learning for all children and adolescents by 2030) into jeopardy more than ever before. Girls, children with disabilities and children from poorer backgrounds are more likely to suffer in the process. An analysis by Brookings Institution (2020) shows that if a country closes its schools and universities for even just four months, the loss in future earnings would be 2.5% per year over a student's working life[4]. Such impact and losses may vary across countries, but the losses cannot be entirely mitigated, though can be reduced by emergency response activities.

[1] https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/brief/projected-poverty-impacts-of-COVID-19

[2] Sumner, Andy, Chris Hoy and Eduardo Ortiz-Juarez (2020): "Estimates of the Impact of COVID-19 on Global Poverty", WIDER Working Paper 2020/43; United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research, April 2020. https://www.wider.unu.edu/sites/default/files/Publications/Working-paper/PDF/wp2020-43.pdf

[3] Vawda, Ayesha (2020): "Education in Central Asia: Learning During the Pandemic"; World Bank presentation to Development partners on August 25, 2020

[4] Psacharopoulos, George; Harry Patrinos, Victoria Collis and Emiliana Vegas (2020): "The COVID-19 Costs of School Closures", April 2020. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2020/04/29/the-covid-19-cost-of-school-closures/

Country Context

The first case of Corona Virus (COVID-19) in Uzbekistan was confirmed on March 15, 2020. As in the global case, the pandemic affected the local economy as the country had resorted to lockdown to curb the spread of the infection. The lockdown, which lasted for a few months, had its socio-economic consequences in the form of economic recession, increased poverty, three-fold rise in youth unemployment, malnutrition, loss of learning and psycho-social stress and mental health.

One of the major sectors affected by the COVID-19 emergency is education. The government of Uzbekistan had announced closure of all educational institutions from March 18, 2020 for three weeks initially and then extended it till the end of the academic year (May 25, 2020). The nation-wide lockdown had resulted in more than 13,800 preschools, 9700 general secondary schools, 1500 secondary specialized and professional institutions and 98 higher educational institutions closing down for the time period, and pushing close to 1.4 million preschool children, 5.85 million students in general secondary schools,728,000 students in secondary specialized and professional institutions and 360,000 students in higher education institutions out of school-based instructions. The academic year 2019-2020 has now come to a closure on May 25, 2020. The Government of Uzbekistan decided to re-open schools in a gradual manner, with 3229 general secondary schools opened in the week of September 14, and 6089 schools by September 21, and 9825 schools by September 30, 2020. However, parents are given the discretion of assessing the scenario in their locality and schools and decide to send their children to schools.

In Uzbekistan, the school /academic calendar generally consists of around 165 instructional days spread over 34 weeks, usually starting in September every year and closing in May 25. As per the 2019-2020 academic calendar, the closure of schools as an immediate response to COVID-19 outbreak spanned over the last week of the third term and the fourth (and final term), consisting of 8 weeks (which totals to around 50 instructional days and close to 250 hours. This translates to more than one-fourth of the total instructional time of curriculum in the academic calendar). Moreover, it affected the final high-stake school completion examinations as well as entrance examinations for various higher education institutions.

Government of Uzbekistan and UNICEF's Joint Response to COVID-19 Emergency in Education Sector

Education continuity during such uncertain times of COVID-19 is considered as important because of its potential in providing children and young people with a sense of predictability and routine and making them to feel safe, protected, supported and nurtured in emergencies. During the COVID-19 response, it was felt that education can play a critical role in protecting public health, keeping children safe, ensuring continuity of learning and promoting mental health and psychosocial wellbeing. Therefore, it was important for governments all over the world to formulating adaptive, coherent, effective and equitable education responses to the current crisis and address the challenges that so many children face, including the most marginalized.

UNICEF Uzbekistan was one of the first international organization that got its act together and supported the Government of Uzbekistan's COVID-19 response in education sector. Given its dual humanitarian and development mandates, the organization's extensive experience in addressing issues related to education in emergencies as well as Country Office's strong partnership with the

ministry of education in the country, UNICEF jumped into action to support the government. UNICEF works within the United Nations-led architecture and government systems to ensure that the needs of children and women are included in guidance, response plans and country-level implementation and a leading member of the United Nations Crisis Management Team (CMT). In fact, UNICEF is the designated agency within the UN CMT for monitoring issues and actions of the social impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak, which includes education as a response priority. UNICEF, together with partners, is mitigating the social impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak by ensuring continuity of learning and well-being for children and youth, especially for the most vulnerable affected by the outbreak.

In order to ensure that "learning must go on", UNICEF's global strategy is to support governments (Ministries of education and other education actors) in extending access to continuous education services disrupted by the pandemic. The global strategies include support for providing distance learning and implementing guidelines for safe school operations during the outbreak (e.g., promotion of hand and respiratory hygiene, screening and referral of suspected cases).

UNICEF provided technical and financial support to the Republican Education Centre (REC) under the Ministry of Public Education (MOPE) in designing distance learning (DL) during the COVID-19 pandemic and school closure. The technical support included guidance on: (i) preparing the overall DL planning, including modes and technology for DL; (ii) preparing the content and lesson plans for DL; (iii) preparing teachers for supporting students with didactic inputs, feedback and assessments; and (iv) preparing system for monitoring the process and outputs of DL and using it for course corrections and improvement.

The logical framework for the programme is as follows:

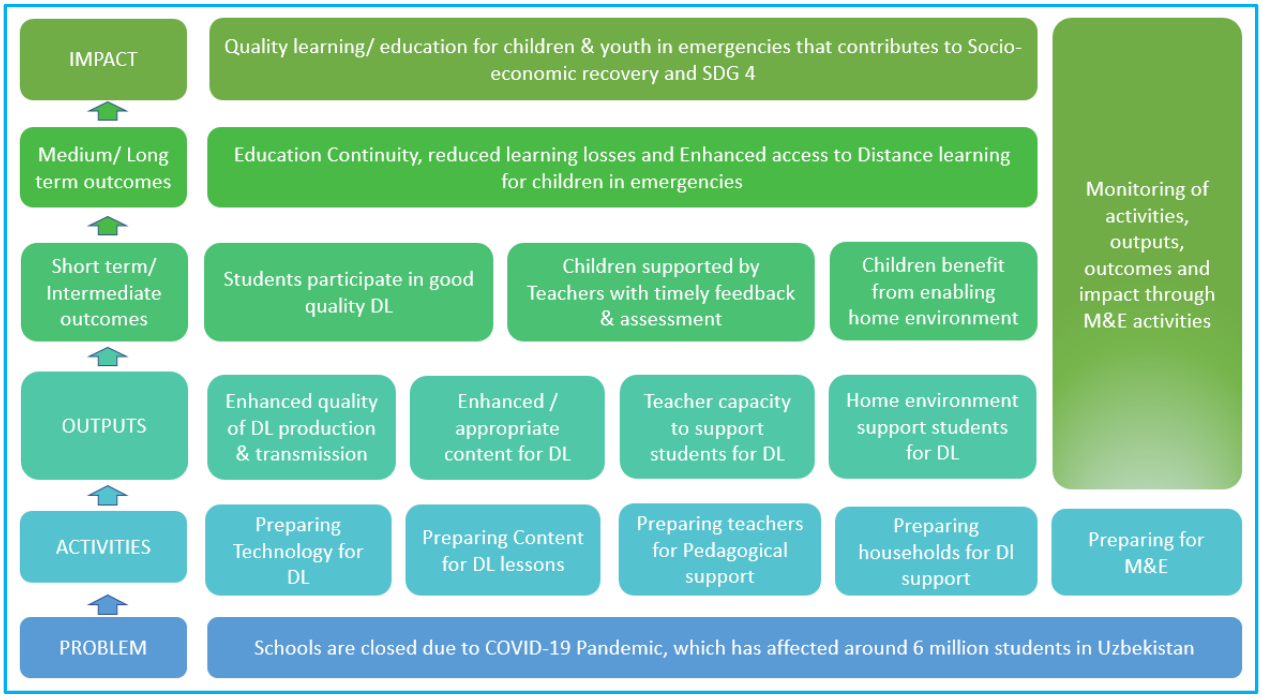

Figure 1: Logical Framework for Education continuity programme during COVID19 lockdown

Global experiences of providing distance learning programmes point towards specific types of distance learning modalities online/offline; one-way or two-way interactive education) which offer different ways to teach and learn. The figure below illustrates these learning modalities. For education continuity during COVID-19 lockdown, different countries have resorted to different modes of distance education, depending on the country's current status in terms of availability of high technology, extent of digital literacy and skills, education decentralization and teacher capacity and involvement.

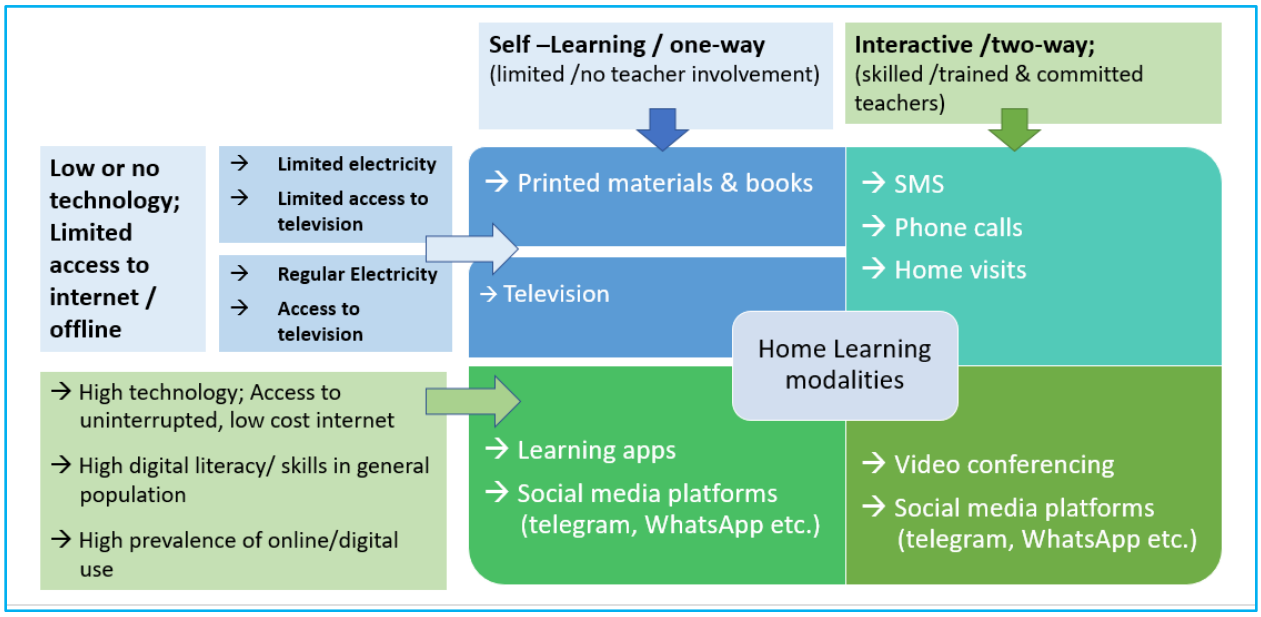

Figure 2. Different ways of Distance Learning

In Uzbekistan, a recent UNICEF study (2019) shows that television is the key media channel with the largest audience among respondents aged from 14 to 30 years. Television also ranks first as the most authoritative source of information for young people. The UNICEF Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) study on the quality of general education and community participation in school-based management (2020) results show that 98% of the households with school going children in the country owns a television. The KAP study also reveals that only around 40% of the school-going children are computer literate (can operate a computer) and only 37% are digital literates. Less than 30% of children in rural areas knew how to use digital devises. This shows that high-tech online based distance learning will leave out a large majority of school going children from accessing education.

Table 1. Access to online / digital resources and knowledge of using online resources

	Rural	Urban	TOTAL
Households with television (ordinary or LCD)	98.4%	97.7%	98.1%
Households with smart phone	70.9%	83.5%	77.2%
Households with computer (desktop / laptop)	19.4%	39.3%	29.3%
Households with Internet (mobile / landline)	30.2%	50.5%	40.2%
School children with computer literacy	37.4%	47.6%	42.2%
School children with digital literacy	29.6%	46.4%	37.6%

Source: UNICEF (2020)

It was obvious from the planning stage that the most appropriate method of providing distance learning in Uzbekistan is through television, through broadcasting video lessons, with two-way interactions ensured through teachers entrusted with supplementing lessons, feedback and assessment mechanism. MOPE has decided to supplement the television lessons with online learning as well, using both the mobile app (telegram) as well as a digital platform.

Implementation of Distance Learning: Outputs

As per the statistics of the Republican Education Centre (REC), a total of 4492 video lessons were created and broadcasted during March 31-May 25, 2020, covering all core subjects for grades 1-11, and curricular areas meant for the last term of the academic year. These lessons were broadcasted through four government-owned channels. Every day, 4 lessons per grade, each of 15-20 minutes duration was telecasted (thus a total of one to one and a half hour lessons), and the broadcasting timetable was announced well in advance for the week.

In addition, the video lessons were also made available for students to access any time through the "*online maktab*" telegram channel (which has around 84,000 subscribers and an estimated 2.6 million views daily) as well as the telegram channel of the MOPE (with 80,000 subscribers and 250,000 views on an average daily). The DL programme through television was targeted at reaching at least 5 million (out of 6.2 million) school going children.

Table 2. Distance Learning programme for General Secondary Education in Uzbekistan: Video lessons produced and broadcasted during the first phase (March – May 2020)

	Uzbek	Russian	Karakalpak	All
# of video lessons planned	2000	2000	1000	5000
# of video lessons broadcasted (March 31- May 25, 2020)	1950	1948	594	4492
Duration of video lessons planned (total in hours)	1000	1000	500	2500
Total duration of broadcasted lessons (in hours)	1462	1461	445	3368
Number of educators trained to prepare video lessons	99	89	42	230

Source: Republican Education Centre (REC) under the Ministry of Public Education

B. Rapid Survey: Objectives and Methodology

While the initial DL programme received wide appreciation in the media and from parents, there were several concerns also expressed by parents, students as well as teachers. Though the initial phase of DL was planned as a "stop-gap" arrangement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, by the end of the academic year (and closure of the term on May 25, 2020), it was clear that the pandemic was going to affect the life of people for more time than originally planned. Besides, it was also realized that the distance learning programmes will have to continue, either as a supplementary learning pathway or as the mainstream education modality even when the new school year starts in September 2020.

To continue DL as a learning modality, it was important to understand the outreach, utility and gaps. Hence, UNICEF, in partnership with the Ministry of Public Education (MOPE) and the State Inspectorate for the Supervision of Education Quality (SISEQ) under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Government of Uzbekistan planned to carry out a rapid survey to understand how people received the DL programmes and what would they like to improve in DL methods.

Objectives

The specific objectives of the survey and poll are as follows:

- To understand the extent of education continuity among school children in Uzbekistan; and why some children did not engage in any learning during the school closures
- To gauge the outreach of remote / distance learning (DL) programmes in Uzbekistan;
- Parental views on DL programmes, its advantages and disadvantages; and support the parental support extended to children during the DL process;
- Students' views on the DL programmes and its usefulness and pitfalls;
- Parental and students' views on the support provided by teachers during the DL process; and
- Parental concerns about school re-opening and their views on continuation of DL programmes

U-Report Poll, SISEQ Online Poll and UNICEF Rapid Survey

For this rapid assessment, data was collected through three different ways: (a) data collected from a sub-sample of households covered under the KAP -SBM study; (b) data collected through the SISEQ's online portal (hereafter referred to as SISEQ-UNICEF online poll) using some of the questions used in the Rapid Assessment; and (c) data collected through the U-Report[5]'s online poll.

Table 3. Surveys and polls held with UNICEF support for gauging the outreach of Distance Learning

	UNICEF Rapid Assessment (Telephone survey)	**SISEQ-UNICEF online poll (through SISEQ web-portal)**	**U-Report Poll (SMS, Facebook, Telegram, App for smartphones)**
Nature of participation	Selected through a sampling process; sub-sample of a nationally representative sample survey	Voluntary participation; accessing questionnaire through SISEQ web-portal	Voluntary participation; accessing questionnaire through SMS, Facebook, telegram etc.)
Advantages of the survey/ poll	Selected through a rigorous sampling process	Lage number of respondents, which is not possible in a sample survey	Large number of respondents
Disadvantages of the survey/ poll	Limited sampling error; however, aggregation only at national level due to limited # of parents covered;	Could be biased as only those who could access SISEQ portal is answering the questions; no background information available to do disaggregated analysis	Could be biased as only those who are registered with U-Report poll take part, no background information available to facilitate disaggregated analysis
# of parents	340	54270	1600
# Students	290	43339	4262
Scope of Disaggregation	Yes, disaggregation by gender, household wealth status etc.	Disaggregation possible only for region and grade attending	Disaggregation possible only for region, gender and grade attending
Time of survey	June- July 2020	June -July 2020	May 2020
Issues covered	• Education continuity during quarantine • Reasons for non-participation	• Education continuity during quarantine	• Education continuity during quarantine

[5] U-report is launched by UNICEF, in partnership with the Youth Union of Uzbekistan, the Senate of the Oliy Majlis, Ministry of Public Education and U-Cell telecom operator

	• Modalities used for education during quarantine • Language of Distance Learning (DL) • Regularity of attendance in DL • Family support to child during DL • Teacher support to child during DL • Children's reaction to quarantine & DL • Advantages of DL • Disadvantages of DL • Views on assessments and feedback • Views on the continuity of DL in future • Views/concerns and suggestions for school re-opening • Students' views on the content and delivery of lessons through DL	• Reasons for non-participation • Modalities used for education during quarantine • Language of Distance Learning (DL) • Interaction with teachers during DL • Teacher support during DL • Family support during DL • Advantages of DL • Disadvantages of DL • Views on assessment and feedback	• Reasons for non-participation • Modalities used for education during quarantine • Quality and satisfaction with DL • Family support during DL • Teacher support during DL • Views on continuing DL after school re-opening

Source: Compiled by the author

Ethical Considerations:

The UNICEF-SISEQ poll and U-Report polls were based on voluntary participation and hence did not really involved any coercion to provide information, the UNICEF Rapid Survey used a sub-sample of the households from UNICEF study (2020) on KAP – SBM, for which data collection was held in November 2020. The study followed all the principles of conducting research using ethical principles. Besides, for this study as well, parents were asked to give further consent for participating in the survey.

Limitations:

The Rapid Survey and the polls have its value addition as an effort to understand the outreach and efficacy of DL, particularly the potential use of results from these surveys for improving the DL programmes in the immediate future. However, these surveys /polls also have inherent limitations. that in no way diminish their importance. The limitations are listed below.

- As described in table 4 above, the SISEQ as well as U-Report polls are limited due to their "selection bias" whereas the Rapid Survey is also limited by the small sample size.
- The results of these survey may reflect a more positive picture of DL given that this is their first ever experience of DL, and that too in times of an emergency like COVID-19 pandemic and these are their "initial" views. Follow up surveys may reflect a more mature view on the DL process.
- The Rapid Survey and polls did not cover teachers and school administrators, which may bring out additional perspectives on the process and challenges of DL.

C. Participation in learning activities by School Children in Uzbekistan during the COVID-19 lockdown

The Rapid survey (as well as the polls) looked at participation in education in the following manner: as schools closed due to the pandemic, some children did not participate in any education related activities; out of which some students were drop-outs from education programmes. Among those who carried out some studies, many resorted to "self-study" (not using any distance learning programmes offered by government), either self-guided study using only textbooks and, in several cases, supported by teachers. However, in a large majority of cases, children participated in distance learning either using televised lessons or through telegram channels or other official online and youtube channels.

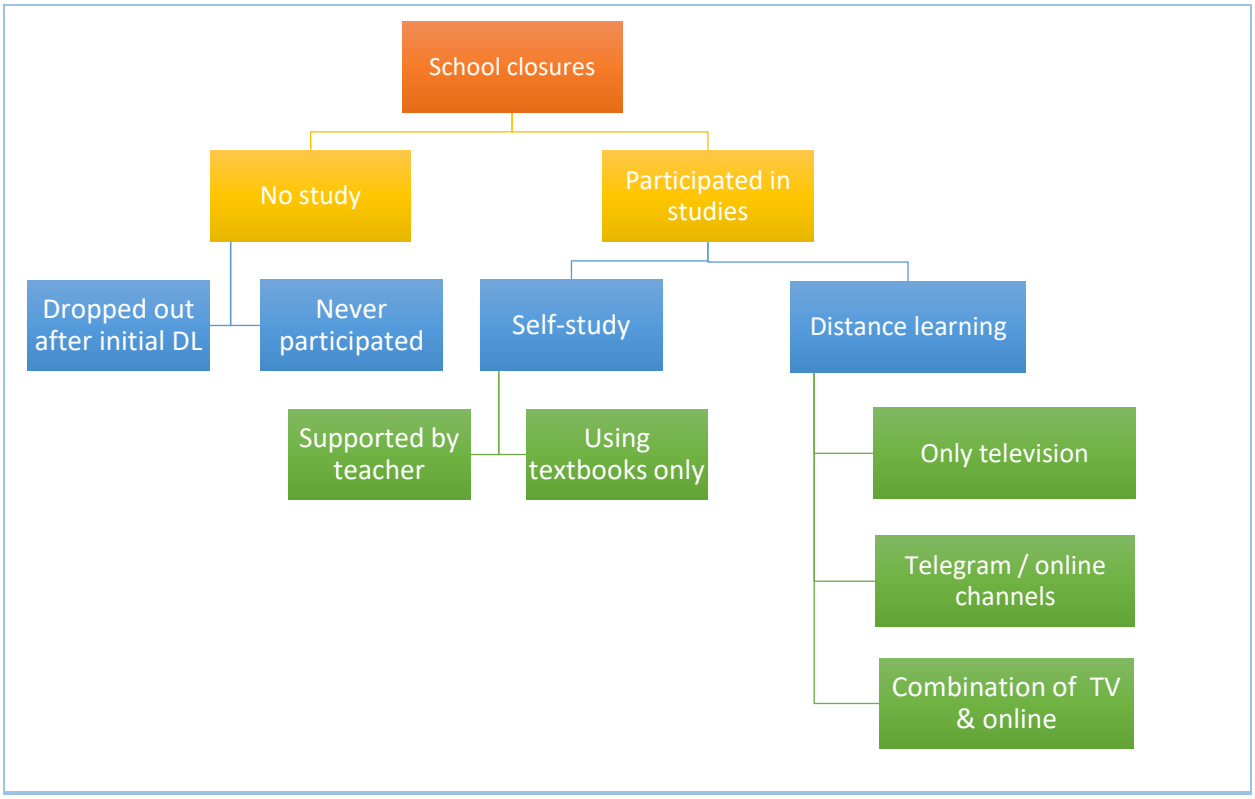

Figure 3. Different aspects of education continuity during the school closure

Did children study during the school closures? *(Participation in any Education)*

The U-Report poll (May 2020) results show that 93% of respondents reported that they studied according to the school curriculum after the schools closed. However, the participants in the U-Report also included young people who are not attending general secondary education, including some parents, and hence the reporting could be somewhat under-reporting. On the other hand, participants of the SISEQ-UNICEF online survey – both parents and students reported that 99% of the students participated in some form of learning during the quarantine. Given that this survey also has a selection bias, it is perhaps those highly motivated parents and students who provided their views through the online survey.

The results of the Rapid Survey show that 98% of the students in Uzbekistan were engaged in some form of study during the last term (April- May) of the academic year 2019-2020. Out of this 2% dropped out later. Hence by the end of the academic term, 96% of students were participating in learning activities during the quarantine associated with COVID-19 pandemic. These results are confirmed by the World Bank's "Listening to the Citizens of Uzbekistan (L2CU) survey of May 2020 results, which reveals that nearly all school-age children were participating in educational or learning activities (97%).

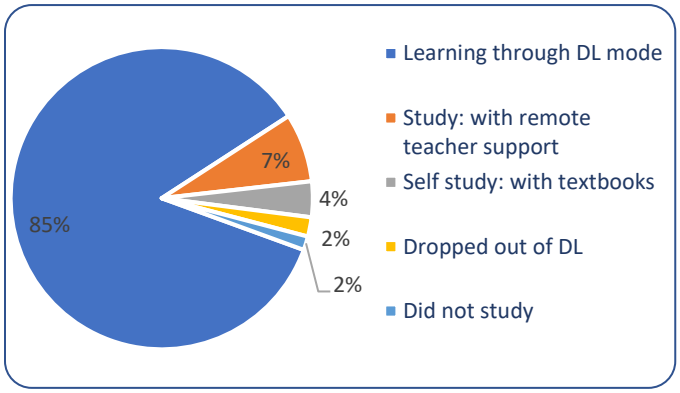

Figure 4: School students' participation in any learning activities during school closures in April-May 2020 (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

How did school children study during the school closures? (Distance learning vs. self-study)

In the U-Report poll, 4% of the respondents reported that they were engaged in self-study using textbooks and another 4% respondents did self-study by watching YouTube and other websites. Around 9% of the parents as well as students who participated in the SISEQ online poll reported that the children were engaged in self-study, using textbooks and in some cases, with teacher support. SISEQ survey shows that almost 90% of students were participating in one or other form of distance learning, thus the results confirm that an overwhelming majority of students continued their education through DL.

The UNICEF Rapid Survey shows that at the beginning of the lockdown, 87% students were participating in distance /remote learning programmes in any form, but with 2% students dropping out of distance learning, at the end of the final term of the academic year, 85% students participated in DL. These results are further confirmed by the World Bank's L2CU survey of May 2020, which shows that distance learning accounted for the bulk of children's learning activities, with 87% reporting televised lessons as the primary mode of learning during April-May 2020. As per the World Bank survey, tutoring at home or following lessons assigned by teachers accounted for 5% of the learning modalities used by children, whereas the UNICEF Rapid Survey shows that 7% students were learning with teachers' support through mobile apps or phone calls, whereas another 4% students were simply engaged in self-study using textbooks.

The results of the UNICEF rapid survey show that in primary grades, 82% students used distance learning modalities for continuing their study while close to 15% resorted to self or teacher supported studies. However, in higher grades, the proportion of students who were using distance learning mode was around 88% while those who depended on self-study declined to 11%. Around 27% of students in Tashkent city were engaged in "self-study" (which also includes online learning without any support) compared to less than a tenth of the children in other locations. Children in the lowest wealth groups (wealth quintile 1) were relatively less engaged in distance learning (89%) compared to children from the highest wealth groups (92%). There was not much gender variations in the way children engaged in distance learning.

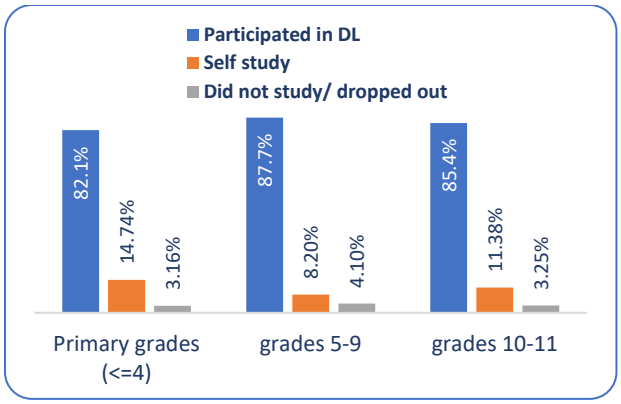

Figure 5: Students participation in learning during April-May 2020 by grades (UNICEF Rapid Survey)

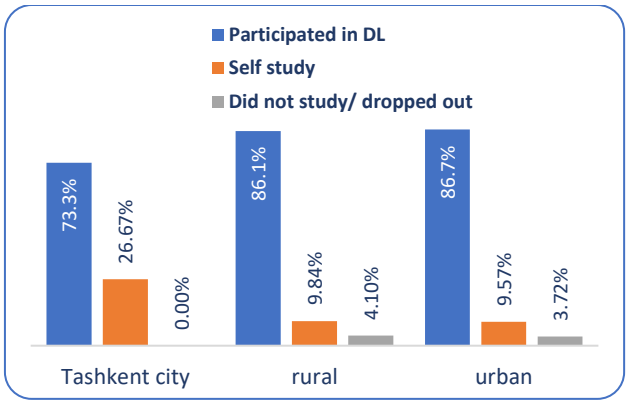

Figure 6: Students participation in learning during April-May 2020 by location (UNICEF Rapid Survey)

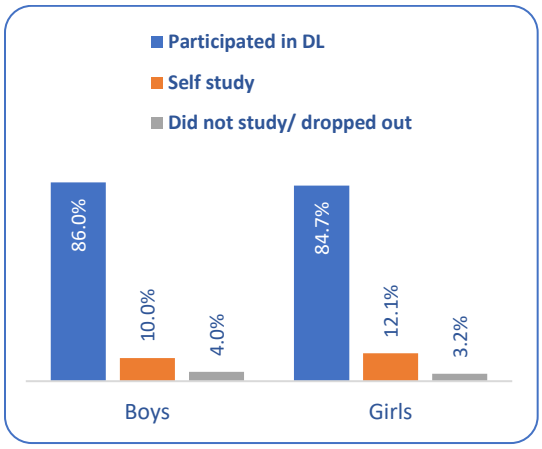

Figure 7: Students participation in learning during April-May 2020 by gender of the student (UNICEF Rapid Survey)

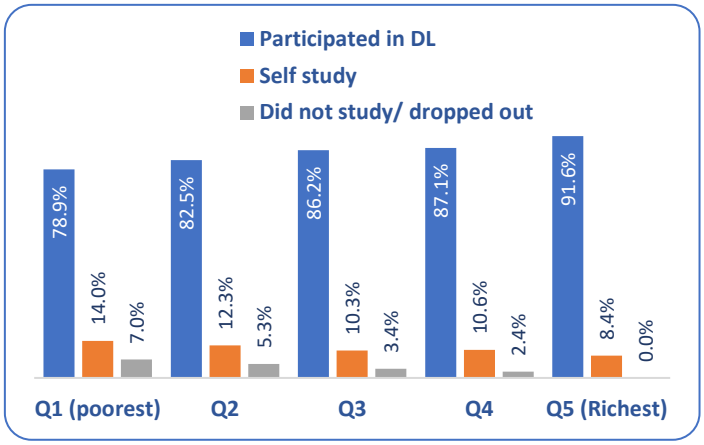

Figure 8: Students participation in learning during April-May 2020 by the wealth quintile of the family (UNICEF Rapid Survey)

Why some children did not study during COVID19 lockdown?

Parents and students cited multiple reasons for not participating in DL programmes, as the different surveys /polls shows. As per the U-Report poll, of the respondents who stated that they did not study after school closures, 26% cited that it was inconvenient for them to study remotely. For 20%, remote learning was not interesting, while 16% did not study since they did not have TV or the Internet. The U-Report poll further shows that while 5% more girls than boys indicated that they were not comfortable learning remotely, 8% more boys than girls said they were not interested in DL.

The SISEQ online poll shows further details. Around 23% of the parents whose children were not studying at all (or those who could not study more often) cited irregular power supply or disruption in electricity supply as the main reason. On the other hand, 21% reported that they could not study because they did not have TV or internet at home and another 10% reported that they don't have the TV channels that broadcast lessons. Around 19% children were not studying because they were not interested in studies.

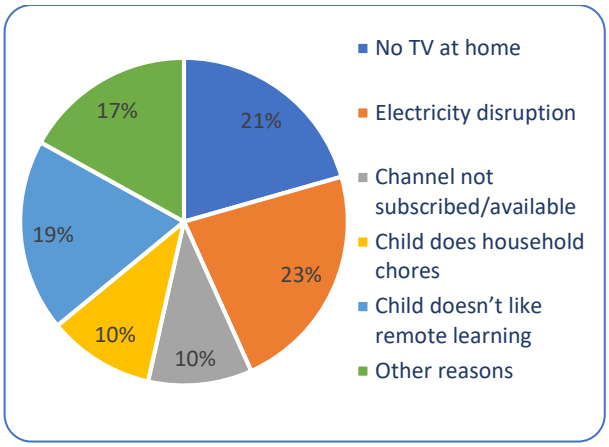

Figure 9: Reasons for students' non-participation in education during the COVID-19 lockdown in April-May 2020 (Source: SISEQ Poll)

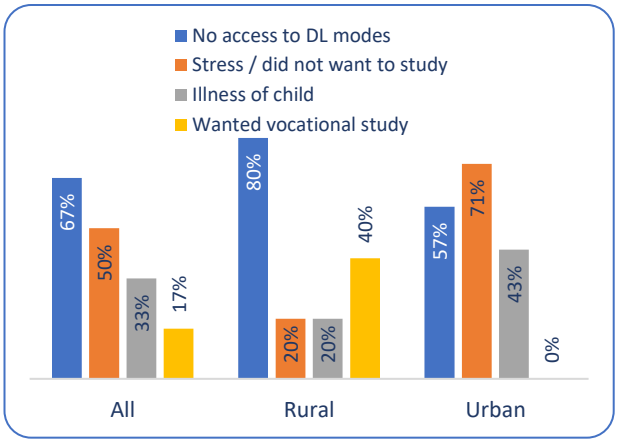

Figure 10: Reasons for students' non-participation in education during the COVID-19 lockdown in April-May 2020: By location (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

The UNICEF Rapid Survey provided parents the opportunity to provide multiple reasons for their children not participating in any study. Close to 67% of parents cited lack of access to television/ digital equipment / internet as one of the main reasons for their children not studying (80% in rural areas compared to 57% in urban areas). In addition, around half of the parents also reported that children were experiencing stress due to DL or they exhibited no interest in studying through DL (20% in rural areas in comparison to 71% in urban areas). A third of the parents reported that the child was sick and hence did not participated in DL – again a major reason pointed out by urban parents than rural ones, whereas children using the time for vocational study (instead of DL) was reported by 40% parents in rural areas, while none in urban areas reported so!

How did children participate in DL? (television lessons / telegram/ online lessons)

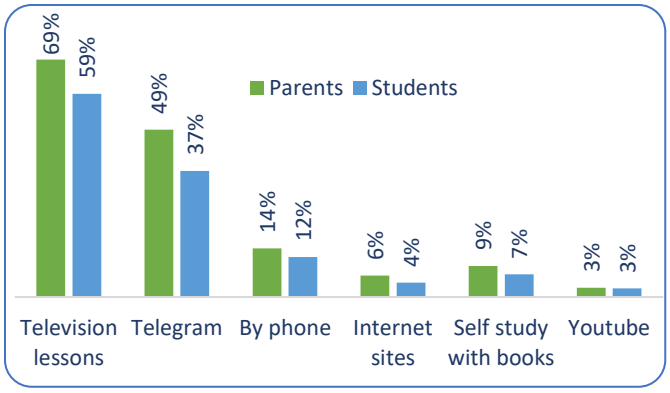

Figure 11: Participation in DL: Modalities used by children as reported by parents and students themselves (Source: SISEQ online poll)

The U-Report poll shows that around a third of the students used television lessons while another 32% used telegram channels for DL. Around a tenth of the respondents also reported using multiple modalities of DL during the lockdown. However, the SISEQ poll as well as the UNICEF Rapid Survey shows that a large proportion of students were using multiple modalities for learning. As per the SISEQ poll, 69% of parents reported that their children were using television lessons while 49% reported use of telegram channels as well.

The UNICEF Rapid Survey confirms the use of multiple modes – mainly television and telegram channels - by students during the COVID-19 quarantine period. As seen earlier, overall 85% of the students continued their education through distance learning (UNICEF Rapid Survey). Out of this, almost 80% children used lessons broadcasted through television. While 31% students depended

entirely on TV lessons for their studies, 49% students used both television lessons as well as the lessons made available through telegram channel and online portals. Only 21% studied entirely through online resources such as MOPE's online *maktab* telegram channel or online lessons and the rest (48%) used both television and telegram/online lessons. In rural areas, 84% children used television lessons compared to only 77% in urban areas. In terms of gender of the child, while 77% boys used television lessons, 82% girls used television lessons.

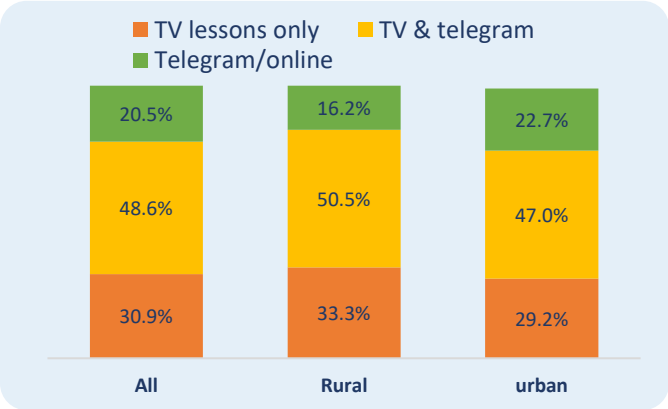

Figure 12: Participation in different modes of DL: By location

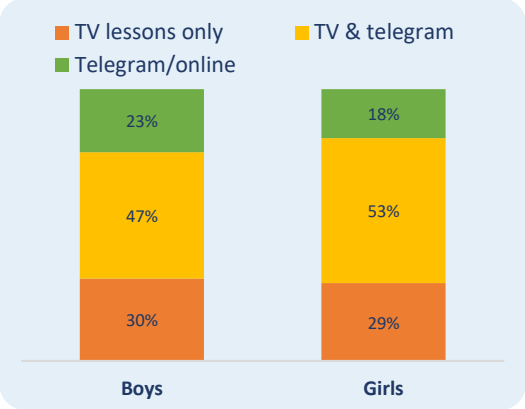

Figure 13: Participation in different modes of DL: By gender of the child

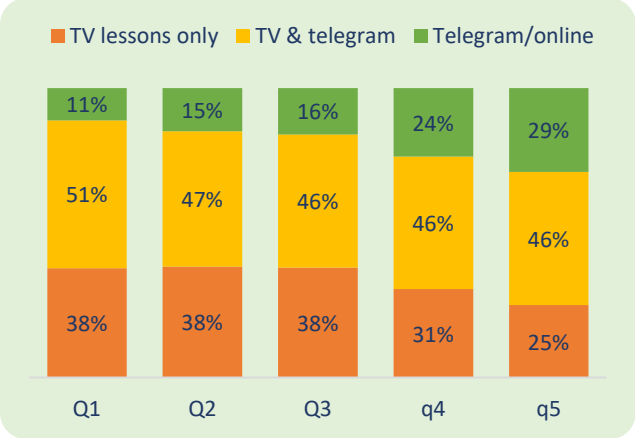

Figure 14: Participation in different modes of DL: By household wealth quintile

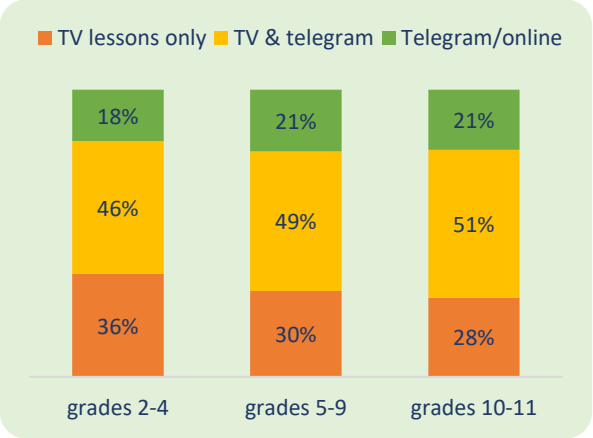

Figure 15: Participation in different modes of DL: By grade child is attending

In terms of household wealth status, 89% of children in the poorest wealth quintile were using television as one of the sources for distance learning (and 38% students solely using television lessons) whereas as wealth status increased, the use of television lessons decreased. Among the children in the richest wealth quintile, only 71% used television lessons (and only 25% entirely relying on television lessons for distance learning), and the rest 29% used only lessons available online or through telegram channel. Similarly, younger children or those who are in the lower /primary grades relied more on television lessons (with 36% only using televised lessons) than those in the secondary or higher secondary levels (with 28% using only televised lessons).

Language used in distance learning

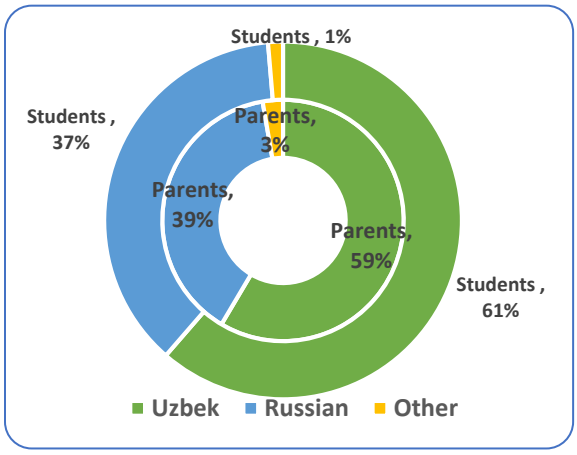

Figure 16: Language of DL programme students attended (Source: SISEQ poll)

As described earlier, the government produced and broadcasted television and other video lessons in three languages - Uzbek, Russian and Karakalpak. Unfortunately, the U-Report poll did not explore the language or the medium of education students used for DL. The results of the SISEQ online poll indicate that around 60% of students studied in Uzbek language (parents reported that 59% students used Uzbek programmes while 61% students reported so) and 37-39% studied in Russian language. Around 1-3% students were studying in Karakalpak language, and these students were mainly concentrated in the Republic of Karakalpakstan.

While SISEQ poll may have a huge selection bias, the UNICEF Rapid Survey provides a more representative national picture. As per the UNICEF Rapid Survey, more than 75% of the students were using lessons available in Uzbek language, particularly students in rural areas, where 90% students used TV lessons in Uzbek language. TV lessons in Karakalpak language was used by 5% people in rural areas, mainly those in Karakalpakstan region. TV lessons in Russian language was used extensively in Tashkent city and by children in primary sections.

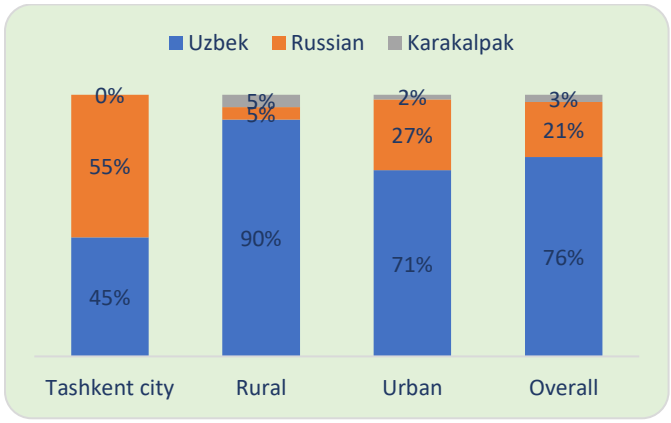

Figure 17: Language of DL programme students attended: By location (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey.)

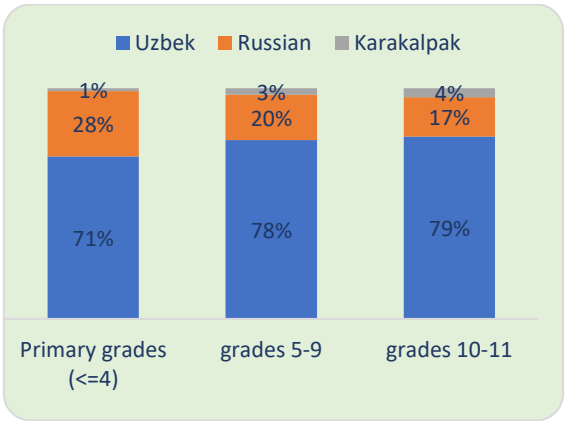

Figure 18: Language of DL programme students attended by grade levels (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

Regular Participation in Distance Learning

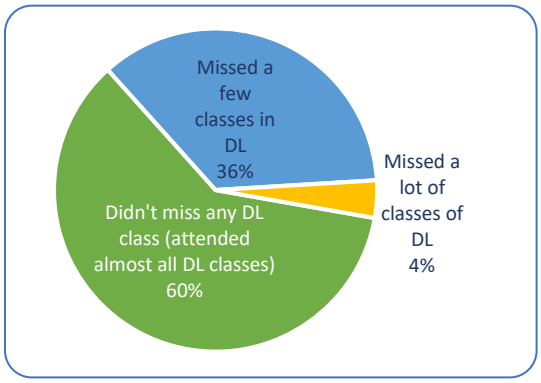

Figure 19: Regular participation in DL (Source: SISEQ poll)

Parents reported in the SISEQ poll that 60% students did not miss any DL – this means these students attended almost all DL lessons through television or online channels. However, 36% missed a few DL lessons and the rest 4% missed several or most of the DL lessons. However, the UNICEF Rapid Survey shows otherwise: 41% parents reported that their children were regular in attending DL classes and did not miss any single lesson that was broadcasted during April-May 2020 whereas around 59% reported that their children did not attend a few lessons.

Further, UNICEF Rapid Survey reveals that the irregular attendance of DL lessons was more in rural areas compared to urban areas - 63% of rural parents mentioned that their children could not attend a few lessons in contrast to urban parents (56%). Similarly, parents also reported that proportionately more boys missed DL lessons (62%) than girls (56%).

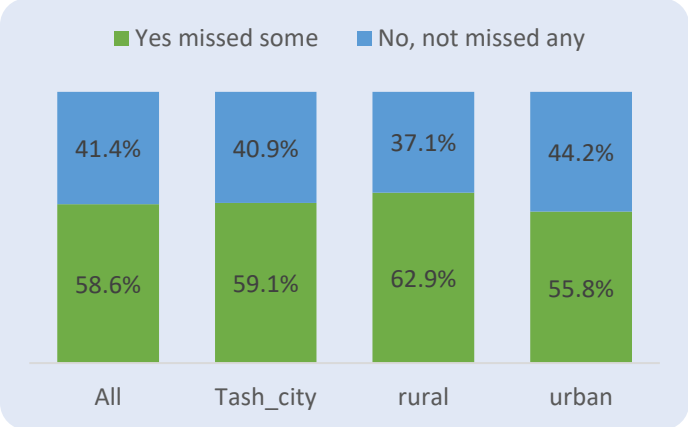

Figure 20: Regularity in attending DL: By location (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey.)

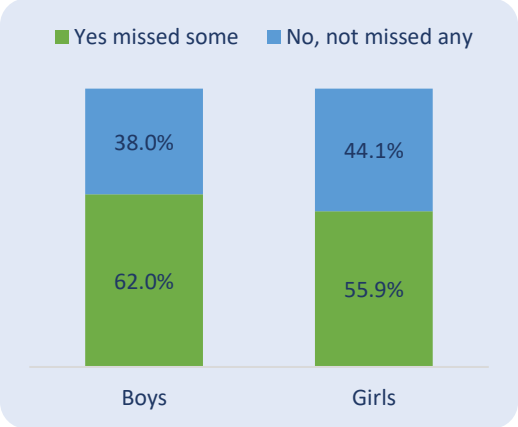

Figure 21: Regularity in attending DL: By gender (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey.)

Reason for missing some DL classes

UNICEF Rapid Survey further tried to explore whether children were participating in the DL lessons regularly. The results show that of the 59% who reported missing some DL lessons, 55% missed DL lessons "very often" – this was a high 58% in rural areas and 55% in urban areas; but at a lesser extent (43%) in Tashkent city. 35% of parents reported that their children missed DL often due to interruptions in the TV /internet availability; electricity failure etc. Such reasons were reported more in rural areas (42%) compared to urban areas (34%) and Tashkent city (13%). 10% parents reported that their children often skipped DL lessons due to their lack of interest in studies. Around 11% students were irregular in attending DL lessons due to various other reasons (home factors – domestic chores, work etc.)

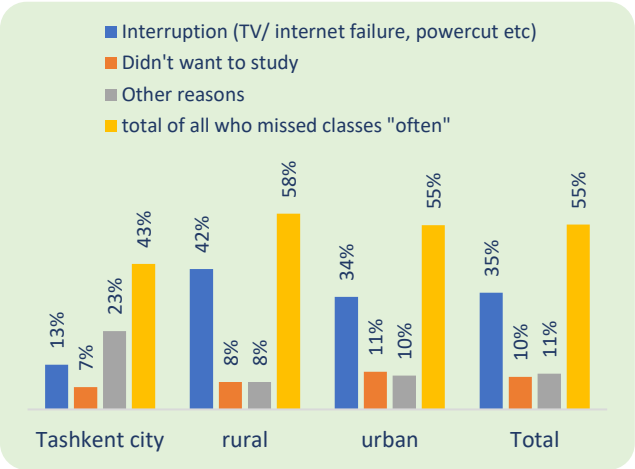

Figure 22: Reasons for missing DL lessons "often": By location (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey.)

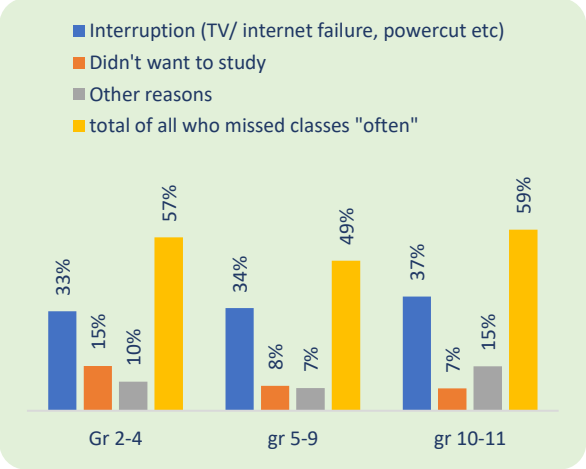

Figure 23: Reasons for missing DL lessons "often": By grades (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey.)

D. Parental /family support to Students during Distance Learning

For students to succeed in home-bound learning, it is important to have parents and other family members support them in various ways. The Rapid Survey and online polls tried to understand how parents supported children in their studies during the lockdown.

Results of the U-Report poll show that 7% more girls (39%) noted that their families always help with lessons than boys (32%). Around 26% of boys and 24% of girls reported that their families always tried to motivate them to learn during the lockdown. On the other hand, the SISEQ poll tried to understand various dimensions of parental/ family support, both from parents and students.

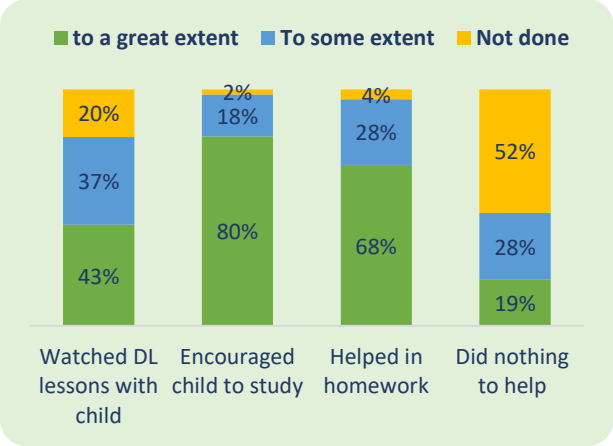

Figure 24: Parental /family support to child for DL: As reported by Parents (Source: SISEQ poll)

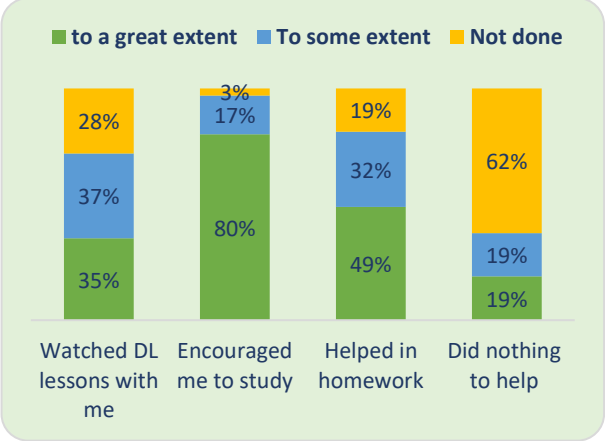

Figure 25: Parental /family support to child for DL: As reported by Students (Source: SISEQ poll)

A large majority of parents and students confirmed that the biggest support was in the form of encouraging children and supporting them to study. While a large proportion of parents (68%) reported that they helped the child in homework to a great extent, less than half of the students

(49%) reported so. While 43% of parents reported that they attended the DL programmes with the child on a regular basis while only 35% of students reported that their parents watched DL programmes with them.

UNICEF Rapid Survey explored the nature and extent of parental / family support only through the reporting of parents but analyzed it in a more disaggregated manner.

Parents participating /watching DL programmes with children: Around 43% of the parents reported that they *"always"* watched the DL programme with the child, while another 33% parents reported watching DL programmes with child *"often"*. Only 13% of parents reported that they *"never"* watched the DL programme with the child. In Tashkent, 40% of parents reported they never watched / monitored the DL programmes with children. In terms of the age and grades children attend, 62% of parents of younger children (primary grades) *"always"* attended DL programmes with the child whereas only 22% of parents of senior secondary grades (older children in grades 10-11) reported monitoring DL programmes.

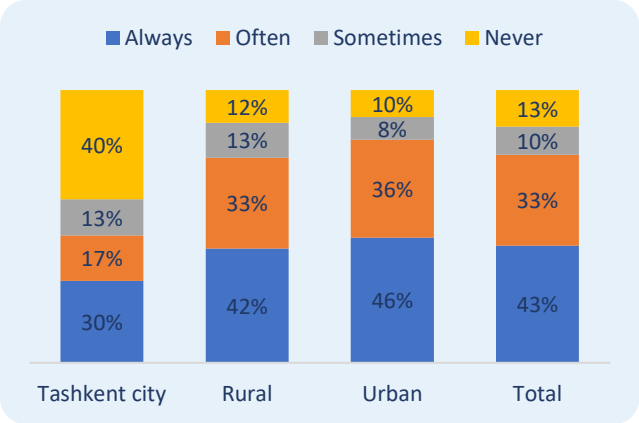

Figure 26: Parents attending /watching DL programmes with the child: By location (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

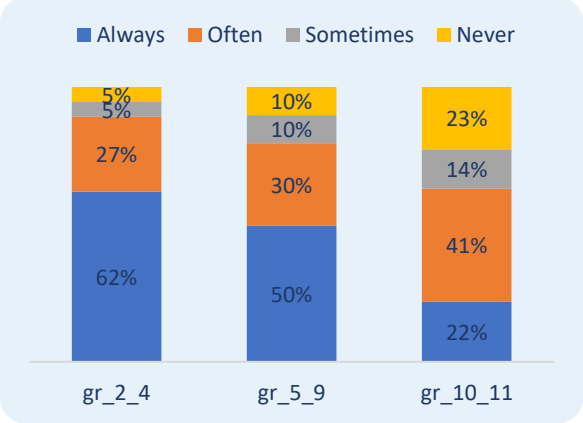

Figure 27: Parents attending /watching DL programmes with the child: By grades (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

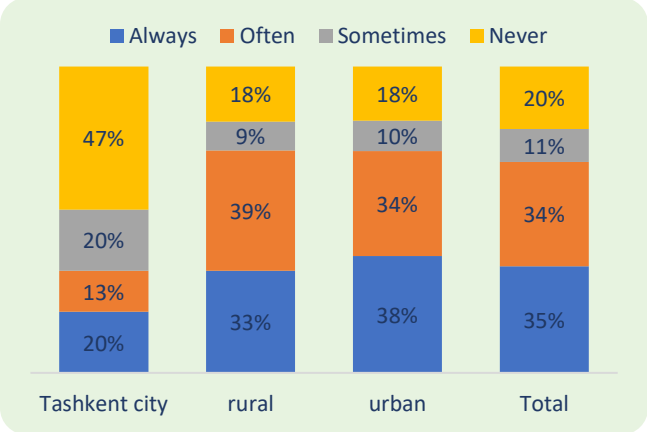

Figure 28: Parents helping the child in doing homework during DL: By location (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

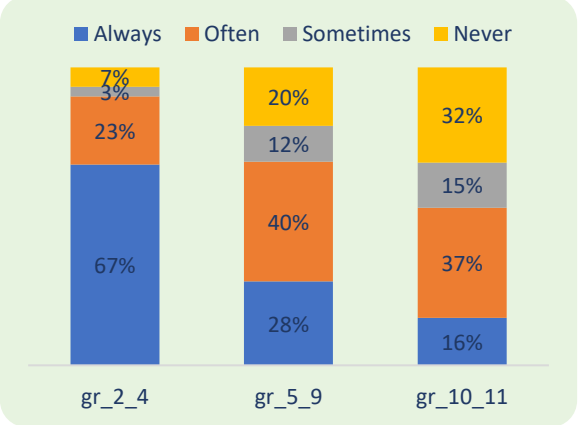

Figure 29: Parents helping the child in doing homework during DL: By grade (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

Parents helping the child in doing homework: 35% of all parents reported that they "*always*" helped the child to do homework during the DL. As expected, parents of children in lower grades (primary grades) reported that they *"always"* helped children to do homework during the lockdown and DL, compared to only 16% for the oldest children. 32% parents of children attending grades 10-11 reported that they "never" helped children to do homework during DL (they expected the older children to complete homework themselves).

Parents discussing DL lessons with the child: Overall, 48% of the parents reported that they had "*always*" discussed lessons with the child as part of DL process, while another 33% reported they discussed DL lessons with children "*very often*". Only 4% parents reported that they had *"never"* discussed matters related to DL with the child. As expected, parents take more efforts to engage younger children in learning, and DL process and discussed lessons all the time or more often in comparison with parents of older students.

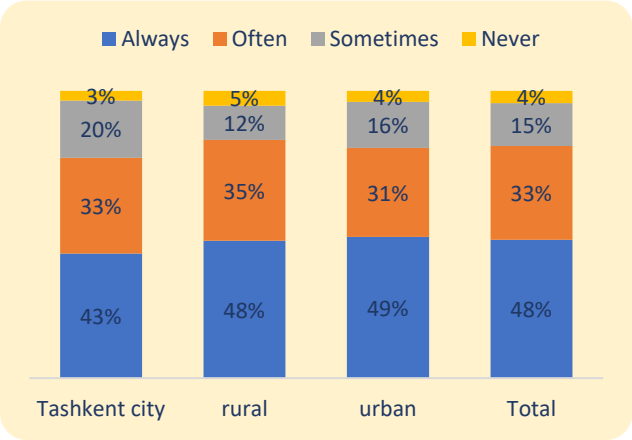

Figure 30: Parents discussing DL lessons with the child: By location (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

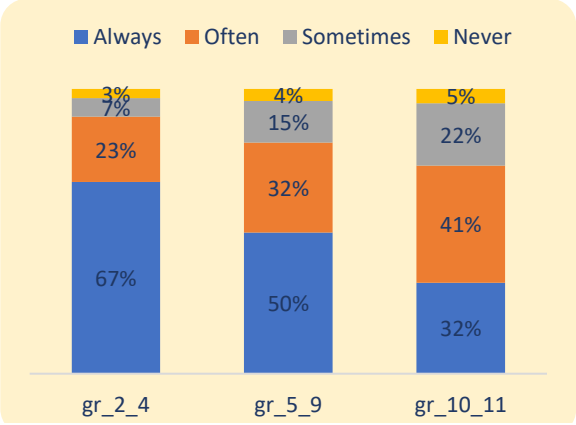

Figure 31: Parents discussing DL lessons with the child: By grades (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

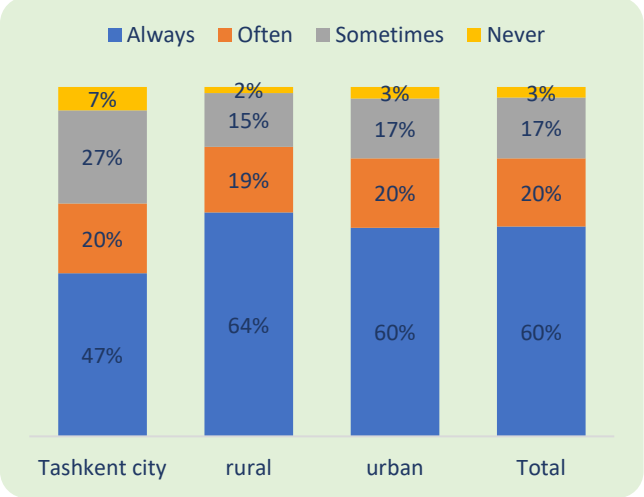

Figure 32: Parents motivating the child during DL: By location (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

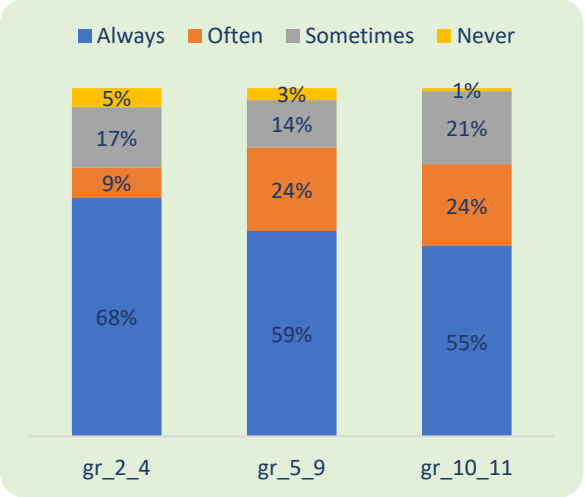

Figure 33: Parents motivating the child during DL: By grade (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

Parents motivating the child to study during DL: As in the normal scenario, children need not only support, but a lot of encouragement and motivation to study during the quarantine and DL process. 60% of the parents reported that they always tried to motivate /encourage children to learn during DL lessons. While there were not much rural-urban differences in this behaviour of parents, parents of younger children were more engaged with children by motivating or encouraging them than parents of the older children.

Parents reprimanding the child for not doing DL properly: Overall, only 22% of the parents reported that they *"never"* scolded/ reprimanded the child during the DL lessons – mostly for missing lessons or not attending DL lessons properly. Around 38% parents reported that they had to reprimand the children most of the time for not doing DL properly. Parents of older students were more often resorting to reprimanding children than those of younger children. A fourth of the parents of younger students (primary grades) reported that they never had to resort to reprimanding the child during the DL lessons whereas only a fifth of the parents of older children reported so!

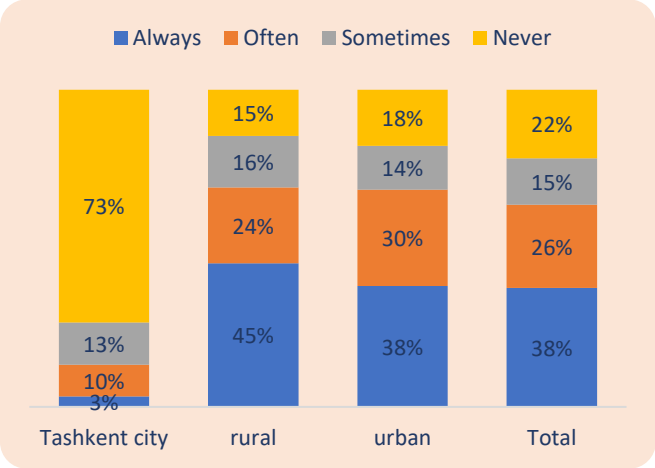

Figure 34: Parents reprimanding the child for not doing DL properly: By location (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

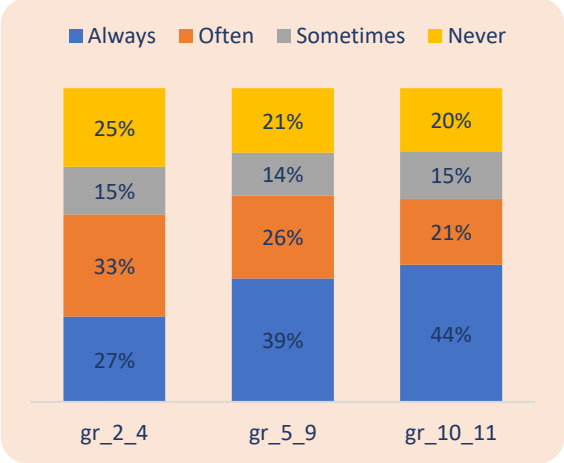

Figure 35: Parents reprimanding the child for not doing DL properly: By grade (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

E. Teacher Support for students during Distance Learning

The nature of teacher support for students during the DL process was an area explored by the two polls as well as the Rapid Survey.

The U-Report poll: 26% of U-Reporters conveyed that the only support they received from the teachers is the evaluation of their homework. Another 24% of the respondents confirmed that the teachers not only evaluated their homework, but additionally helped by explaining some lessons online. Another 22% of the respondents reported that the teachers also motivated them during the quarantine. Only 8% respondents complained that they did not receive any support from teachers.

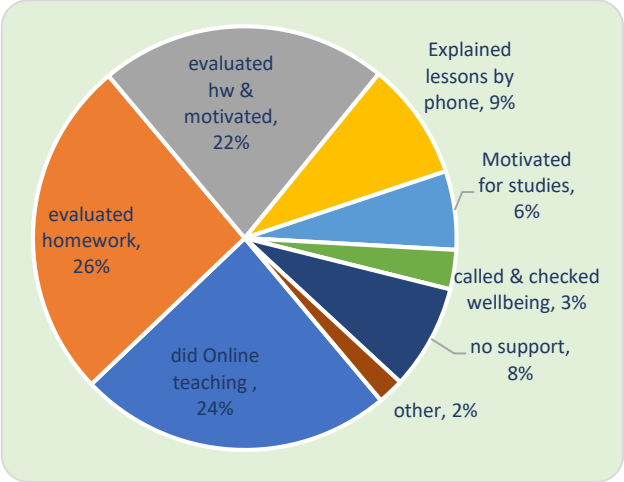

Figure 36: Teacher support during DL (Source: U-Report poll)

The SISEQ poll where more than 54,000 parents and more than 43,000 students participated provided more details about the perceived support from teachers to students during COVID19 lockdown and education continuity through DL.

The SISEQ poll shows that around 22-23% of parents and students "fully agreed" that the teachers were not providing any meaningful support for DL during the quarantine, another 25% -30% respondents felt that the statement is somewhat true, and they hence partially agree to the proposition. This information also means that a sizeable share of respondents – 46% of parents and 53% of students appreciated that the teachers were helping them in some form or other during the DL. However, around 46% of parents and 43% of students maintained that the only form of help that they received from teachers were in the form of involvement in homework, mainly correcting and providing feedback on homework.

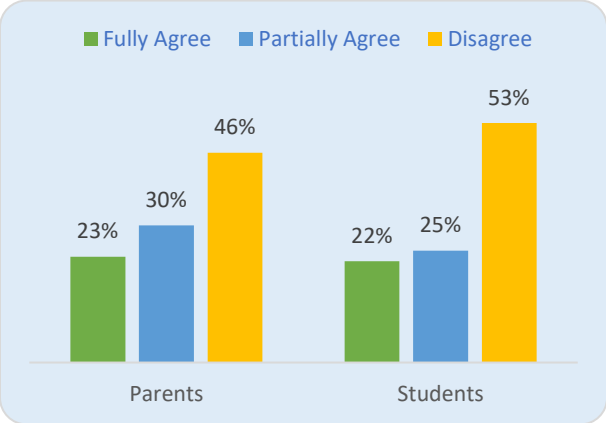

Figure 37: Parents and students who reported that Teachers did not provide any support during the DL process (Source: SISEQ poll)

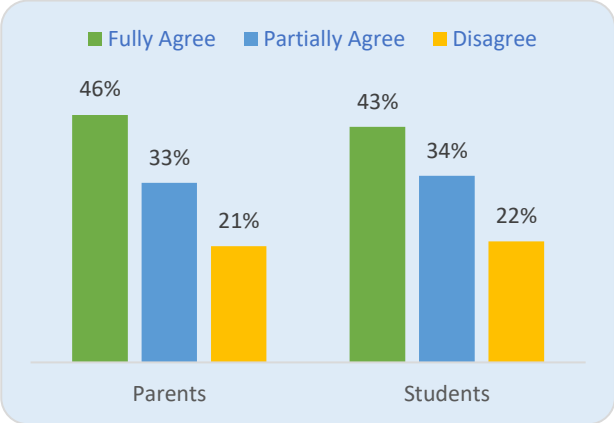

Figure 38: Parents and students who reported that the Teachers were engaged mainly for homework evaluation during the DL process (Source: SISEQ poll)

During the DL, parents and students testified that the teachers supported students extensively despite several constraints, as the results of the SISEQ poll reveals. Teachers provided additional explanations to lessons through telegram and phone, they followed up with students on their studies and helped in doing homework. Students also reported that teachers motivated them to study during the quarantine phase.

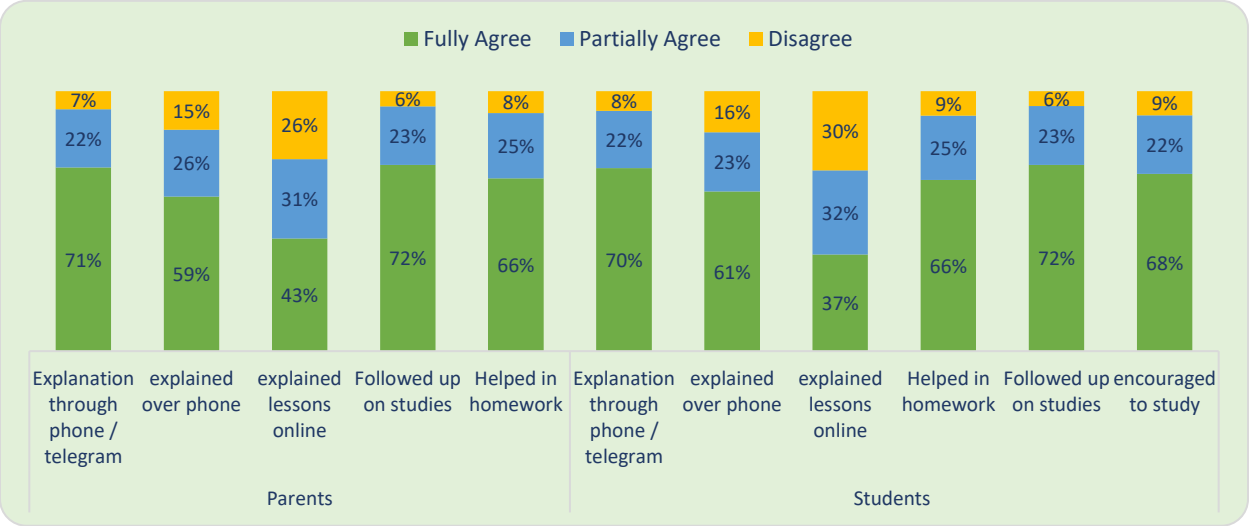

Figure 39: Parents and students who reported that Teachers did not provide any support during the DL process (Source: SISEQ poll)

In the UNICEF Rapid Survey, 42% of the parents reported that teachers "always" provided additional lessons and explanations, another 32% reported that teachers provided additional lessons and explanations "often". However, 12% parents reported that teachers did not provide any additional information or lessons, and 15% reported teachers provided such help only occasionally. Parents were more sceptic about teacher support on this matter in Tashkent city, and parents of children in secondary grades (grades 5-9) reported not receiving enough support from teachers.

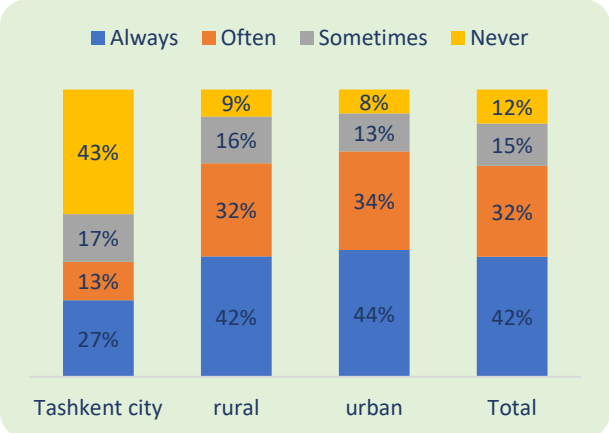

Figure 40: Parents reporting on Teachers support during DL: Provided additional lessons /information to child: By location (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

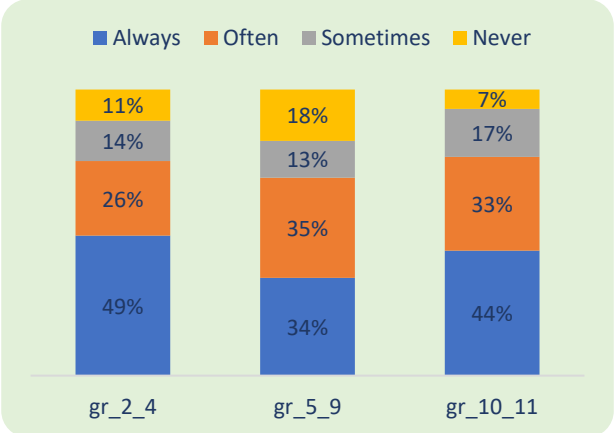

Figure 41: Parents reporting on Teachers support during DL: Provided additional lessons /information to child: By grade (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

In terms of teacher support for homework, 70% of the parents reported that teachers were always supporting children in homework and another 13% reported teachers doing so often, if not always. Less parents in rural areas reported receiving teacher support for children doing homework compared to parents in urban areas or in Tashkent city. Parents of adolescents attending grades 10-11 also reported less support from teachers in doing homework than parents of younger children.

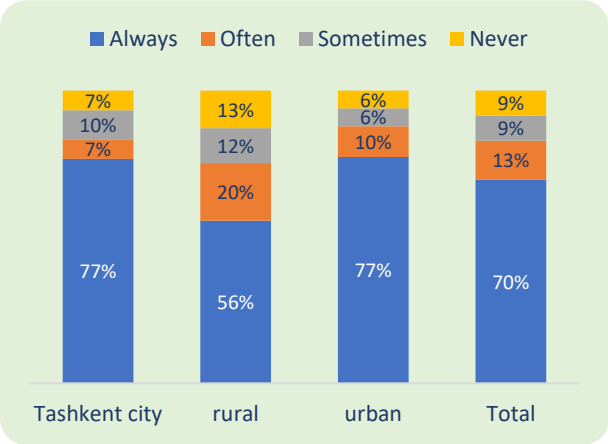

Figure 42: Parents reporting on Teachers support during DL: Support for homework: By location (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

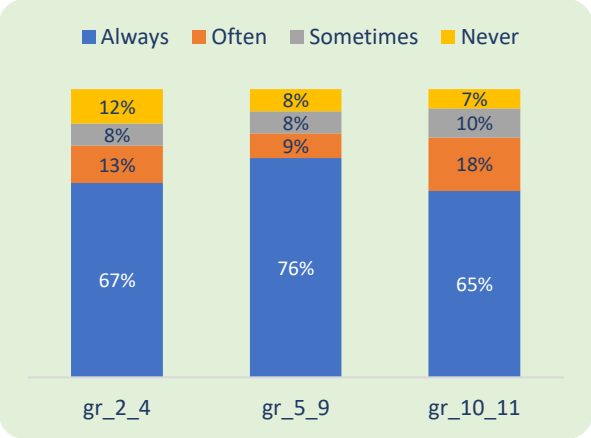

Figure 43: Parents reporting on Teachers support during DL: Support for homework: By grade (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

Parents reported that an overwhelming majority of teachers were supporting children in doing homework, but also were providing doing timely assessment and feedback on homework. Here again, parents in rural areas and parents of adolescents in higher secondary education reported teachers doing so less often or never.

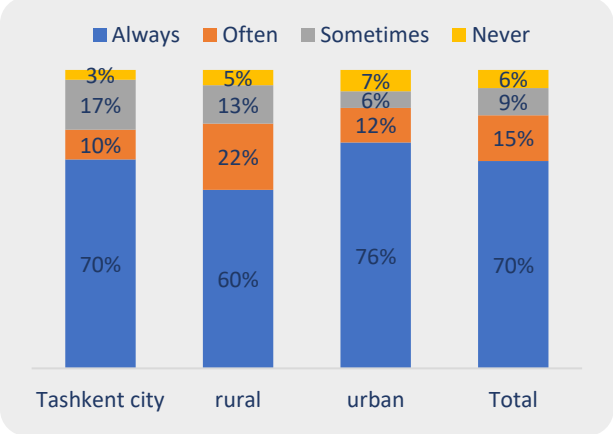

Figure 44: Parents reporting on Teachers support during DL: Assessment and feedback: By location (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

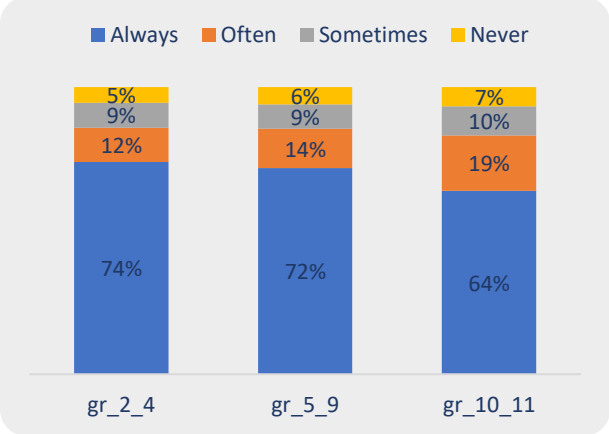

Figure 45: Parents reporting on Teachers support during DL: Assessment and feedback: By grades (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

In terms of the medium through which teacher supports students in additional lessons and homework, 63% of U-Reporters indicated that teachers used “telegram” chat to evaluate the students’ work. Another 26% U-Reporters mentioned that teachers used the official learning portal “kundalik.uz” for the same purpose. Around 5% U-Reporters mentioned a range of media for teacher support and interaction, including Google Classroom, Dingtalk, Eba, EduPage, ElektronJurnal, Excel (teachers put marks there), yaklass.ru, K12NetMobile, masofaviy ta'lim platformasi (a platform for remote learning), Moodle, Zoom, and own sites.

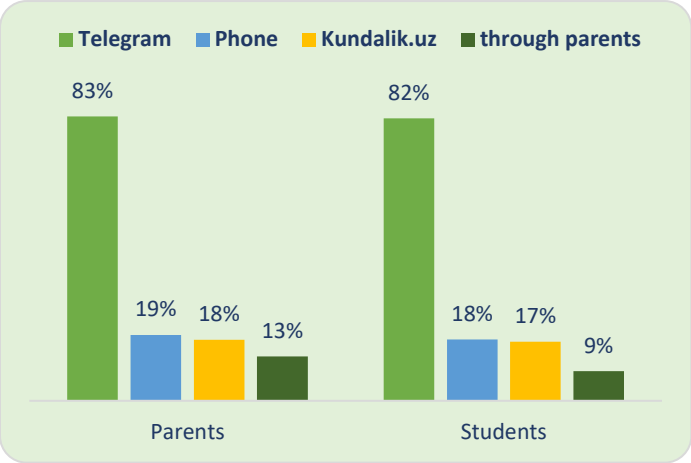

Figure 46: Means of Interaction between teachers and students during DL, as reported by Parents and students (Source: SISEQ poll)

The results of the SISEQ poll shows that in a large majority of case, teachers and students were connected through the telegram app – 83% of parents and 82% of students mentioned used of telegram for interacting with teachers. Less than a fifth of the parents and students mentioned use of phone or kundalik.uz platform. In several cases, teachers got in touch with students through parents -13% of parents and 9% of students mentioned this in the SISEQ poll. In any case, several teachers and students used more than one means to communicate during the DL process.

The results of UNICEF Rapid Survey confirm the results SISEQ poll: around 84% of the parents reported that telegram is the main medium for teachers providing evaluation and feedback on homework. The use of “kundalik.uz” platform is largely limited to Tashkent city (57% of parents in Tashkent city reported the use of this platform along with other means). In rural areas, 16% of parents reported phone as a medium for communication between students and teachers. Interestingly around 7% parents reported that there was no such interaction or evaluation.

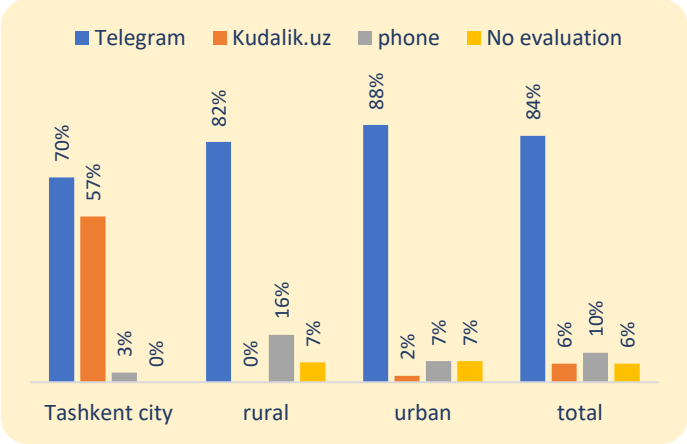

Figure 47: Means of Interaction between teachers and students during DL, as reported by Parents and students (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

During the testing times of COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges imposed by studying in distance mode, it is important that children are motivated by parents and teachers to carry on their studies. The UNICEF Rapid Survey shows that while 80% of the parents reported that they were encouraging children to study either always or often, close to similar number of parents reported that the teachers were also motivating children.

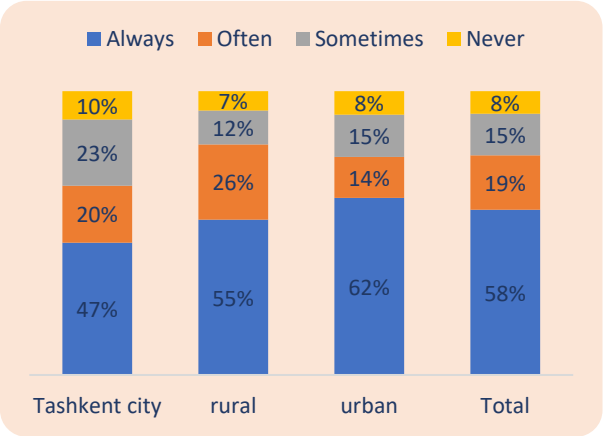

Figure 48: Parents reporting on Teachers support during DL: Motivating students to study: By location (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

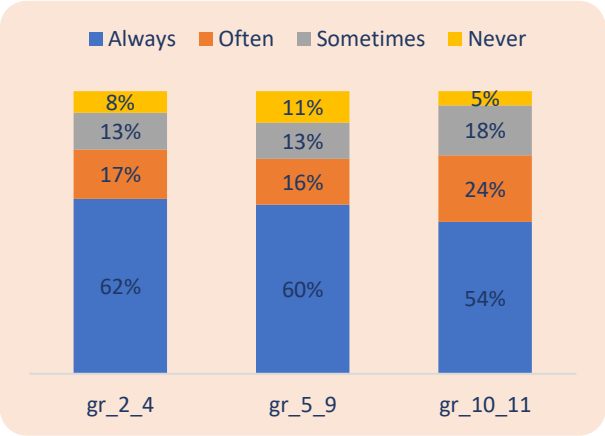

Figure 49: Parents reporting on Teachers support during DL: Motivating students to study: By grade (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

F. Experience of Distance Learning Programme: Student views

As DL was used for the first time in the country as a means for transmitting education, it is important to know how students felt about the content, quality, duration and timing of broadcasting video lessons for remote learning.

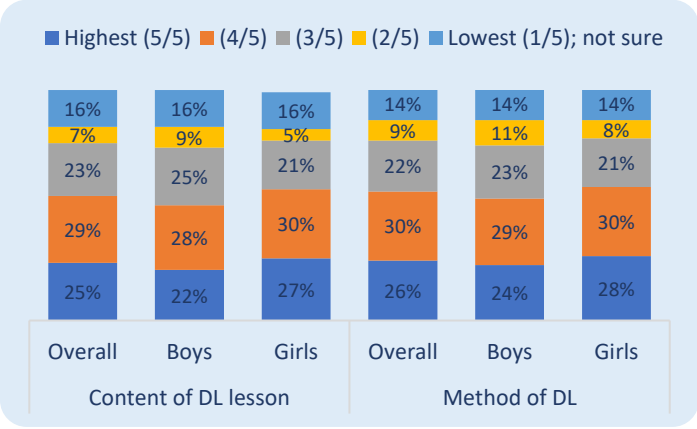

Figure 50: U-Reporters rating the DL programmes for its content and pedagogy: By gender (Source: U-Report poll)

In the U-Report poll, respondents were asked to rate the content and methodology used in video lessons on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. Regarding the content of video lessons (or information imparted), 25% of the U-Reporters rated the content of the DL lessons at the highest level and 26% rated the methodology of DL lessons at the highest level. Around 23% of respondents rated the DL programmes below average. Boys in general rated the content and pedagogy of DL lower than girls.

In the UNICEF Rapid Survey, students were specifically interviewed about their views on the DL lessons. In terms of content of the DL (information, adequacy etc.), 24% reported that the content of lessons was excellent, while 54% reported that it was good. Around 6% students were explicit in

their dis-satisfaction with the information provided in the DL lessons. Interestingly, more students in Tashkent city found the content not adequate /unsatisfactory than those in rural and other urban areas. There were no gender differences in the levels of satisfaction on the content of DL, hence not reported here. In terms of the pedagogy or method of teaching/ presentations, 37% of students rated DL lessons as excellent and another 45%, as good. Only a miniscule minority of students found the presentation unsatisfactory.

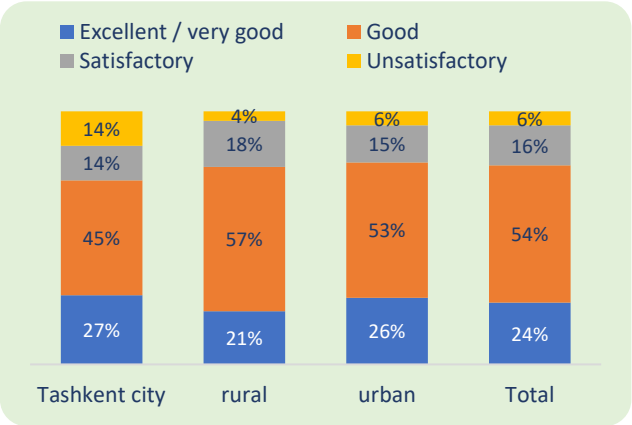

Figure 51: Students' satisfaction/ rating about the content of DL lessons: By location (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

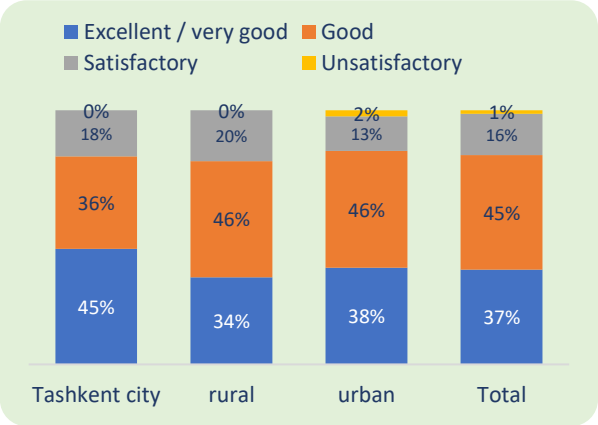

Figure 52: Students' satisfaction/ rating about the pedagogy of DL lessons: By location (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

Each video lessons included in the DL programme was, on an average, of 15-20 minutes and four such lessons were broadcasted for each grade, thus making the DL programme for each grade of an hour or slightly more in terms of duration. While half of the students surveyed expressed their satisfaction that the lessons were of appropriate and enough duration to keep the child interested, slightly more than a tenth of the students found the duration too long, but enough to keep them engaged. However, 39% of students felt that the duration of lessons was too insufficient for them to learn properly. Children in rural areas were more concerned about insufficient and short duration of the video lessons.

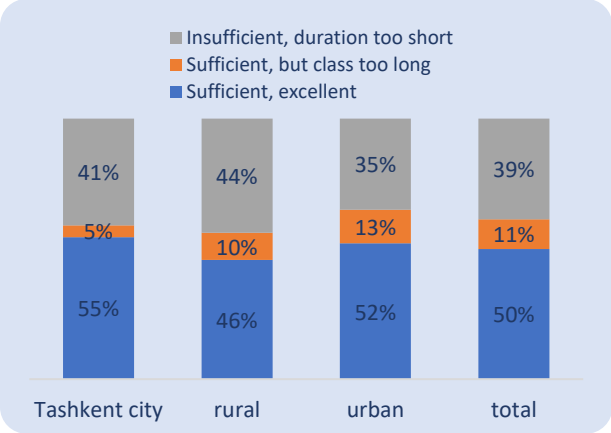

Figure 53: Students' views on the duration of DL lessons: By location (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

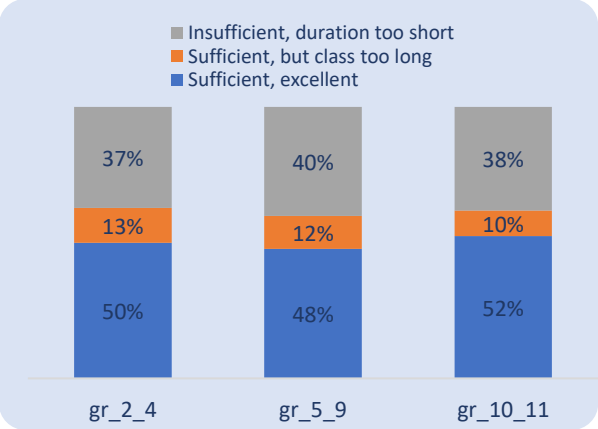

Figure 54: Students' views on the duration of DL lessons: By grade (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

On the broadcasting time, 60% of students found it “always” convenient and another 17% felt in general, the timing was fine. Less than a fourth of the students found the timing not so convenient. More students in higher grades found the timing not so convenient compared to students in primary grades.

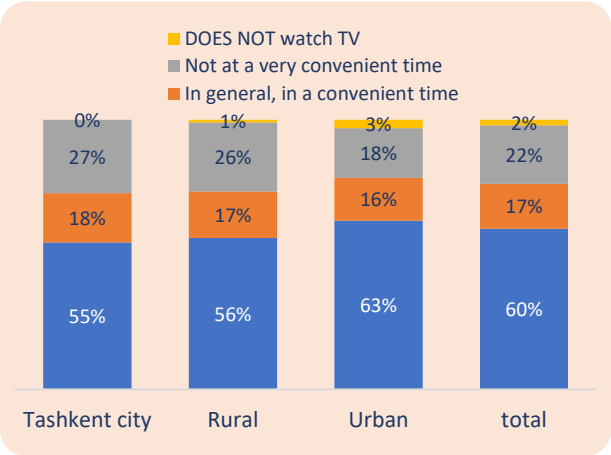

Figure 55: Students’ views on the timing of broadcasting DL lessons on TV: By location (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

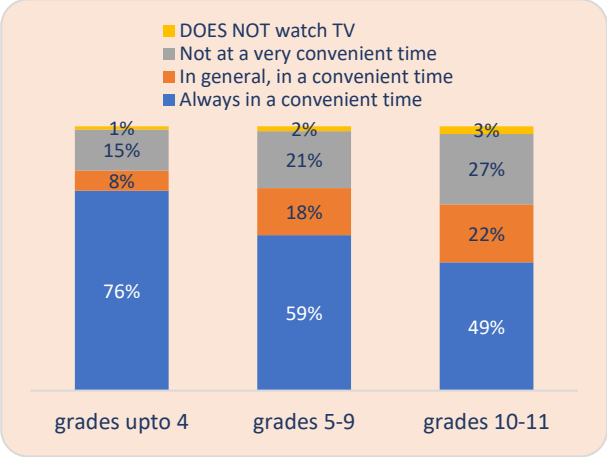

Figure 56: Students’ views on the timing of broadcasting DL lessons on TV: By grades (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

G. Views on the overall Distance Learning Experience: The Positive and not-so positive aspects

Given that this was the first time parents and children in Uzbekistan was studying through the DL mode, the experience left some positive as well as “no-so positive” impressions about the DL mode on them. Unlike in a normal scenario where the DL would have been more of a “supplementary” or “complementary” learning tool, during the pandemic and associated closures and quarantine, in the Uzbekistan scenario, the first DL experience is more as a substitute for face-to-face education in school. Nevertheless, it is important to understand how parents and students felt about their DL experience.

Parents’ views on the DL programme: During the UNICEF Rapid Survey, parents were asked to list their views on DL programme – both positive and negative aspects. They were given an opportunity to express multiple views.

Overall, half of the parents appreciated the fact that the DL programmes have facilitated the children to study during the school closures even while sitting at home. Parents also considered the fact that they were able to observe children while they study (49%) and help them during the process (41%) as important positive aspects of DL programmes. These features were less appealing to parents in Tashkent city while in other urban areas, these causes were found more appreciation. Around 38% of parents felt that the DL programmes give their children an opportunity to listen to the “best teachers” in the country or teachers who were better than those in the children’s schools. In Tashkent city, very few parents considered this as the case while in rural areas, 45% of parents highlighted this as an important positive aspect of DL so far. 24% of parents also highlighted the short duration of lessons that are convenient to children for studies as a positive feature of DL.

However, around 26% of parents were of the view that DL did not offer any specific advantages to children and such parents were much more in Tashkent city (37%) compared to other areas in the country.

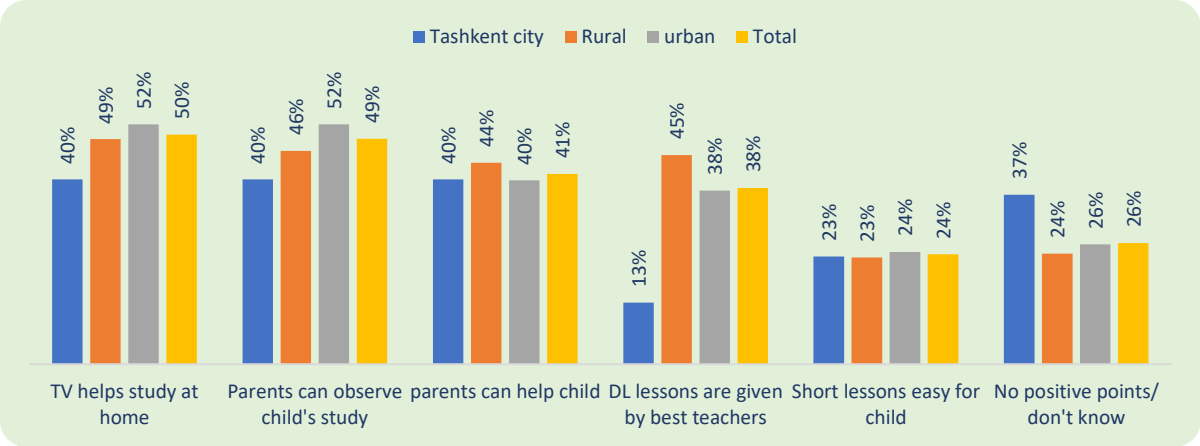

Figure 57: Parents' views about the positive features of Distance Learning (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

On the other hand, parents had their concerns too about DL programmes. While slightly less than a fourth of the parents mentioned that they could not find any apparent flaws in the DL process, another 11% parents reported that they have not tried to observe any disadvantages. Despite that 86% parents reported that the duration of the DL classes was too short. While some felt that the short lessons were good for children to some extent, they had also concerns about lessons being too short, hence concern over the coverage of all relevant curricular areas and topics as well as children's ability to grasp the lessons in such short duration without additional support. Parents in rural areas were more concerned about this (almost 91% mentioned this as a disadvantage) while parents in Tashkent city were relatively less worried about it. Around 47% parents also felt the quality and presentation of DL programmes were not up to their satisfaction. Around 37% parents reported that the absence of school teachers in the process is a big disadvantage. There were also other concerns: timing of broadcast, lack of supporting materials, language issues, and issues related to internet connection and electricity cuts as challenges while studying through DL mode.

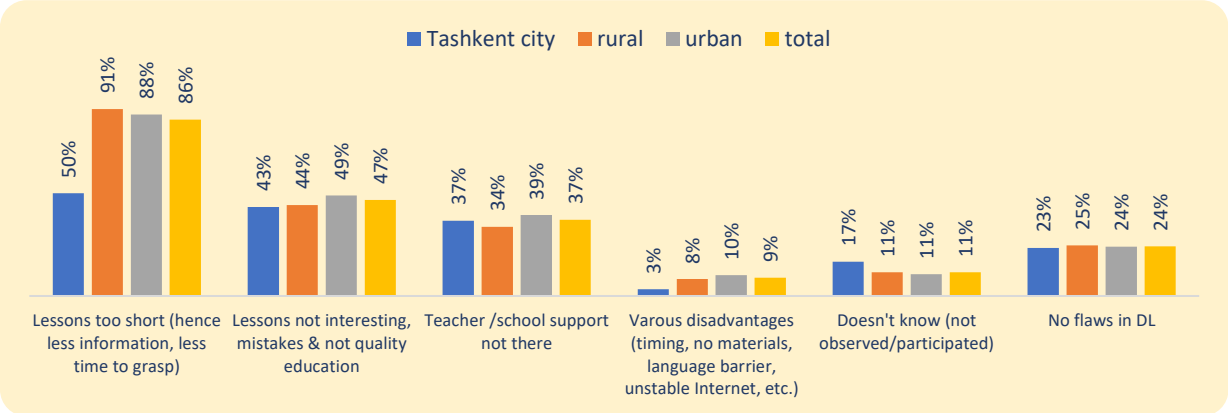

Figure 58: Parents' views /concerns about the "not-so-positive" features of Distance Learning (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

Students' views on Distance Learning: Students were also requested to express their varied views on the advantages and disadvantages of DL programmes, from their short experience during April-May 2020.

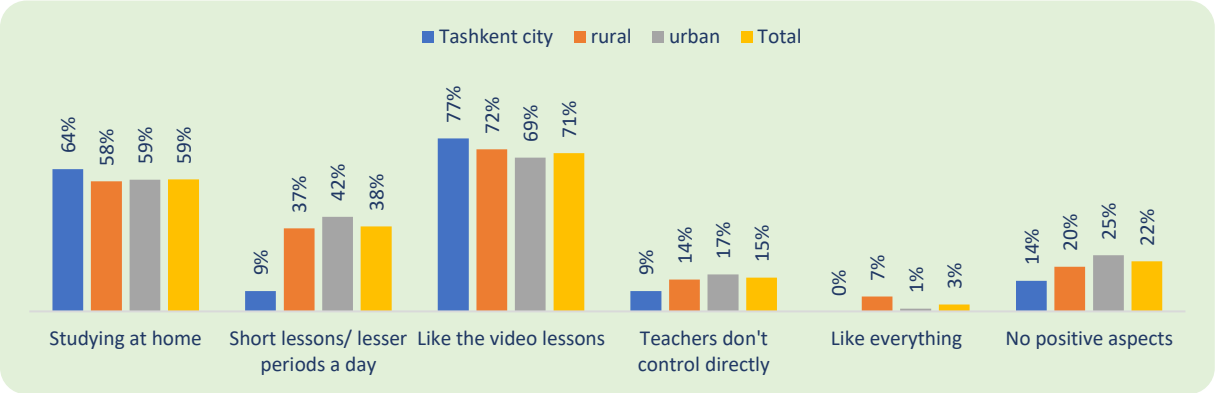

Figure 59: Students' views about the positive features of Distance Learning (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

Around 22% students did not find any specific advantages of DL (compared to face-to-face learning at school), around 3% students mentioned that they liked everything about DL programme – the short lessons, the quality and method, freedom of studying on one's own, and studying at home. 71% students emphasized that they liked the video lessons for its visual appeal and experience. 59% students liked DL for the convenience it offers in studying at home. 38% students liked the shorter lessons and lesser number of classes per day in DL. Around 15% of students liked DL because teachers were not controlling them, as in a classroom during the learning process.

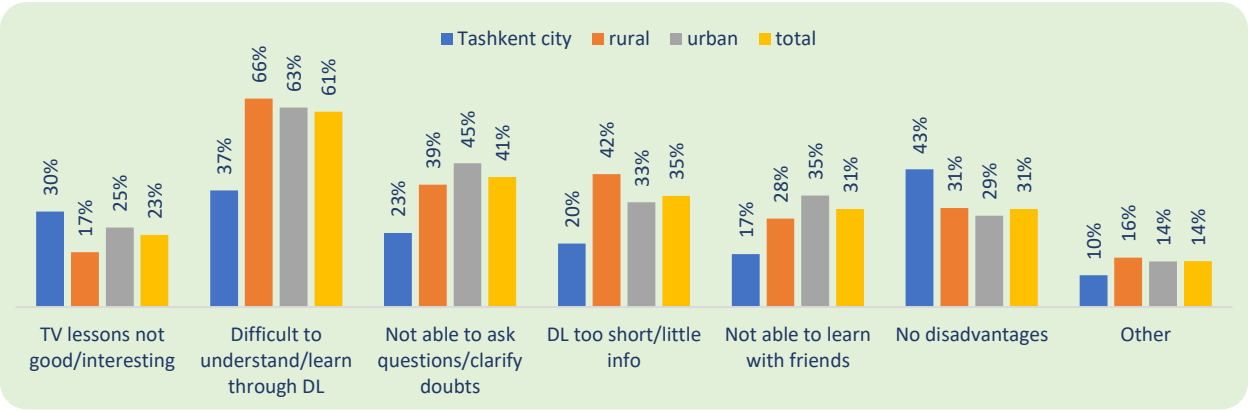

Figure 60: Students' take on the "not-so-positive" features of Distance Learning (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

While 31% of students reported that they did not find any negative aspects in DL programmes or processes (particularly 43% of students in Tashkent city), 61% of students reported that they found it difficult to fully understand lessons or learning through DL, as compared to studying at school. Such concerns were less among students in Tashkent city (only 37%) but were very high among students in rural areas (2/3rds of students in rural areas raised this as a concern). Around 41%

mentioned the “one-way” process and lack of teacher support during the DL as a disadvantage – absence of provisions for asking questions and getting clarifications or discussing the lessons during the DL programmes, especially those lessons broadcasted through television. 31% students also raised the challenge of not being with friends and learning not being a collective process due to that. A sizeable number of students (23%) mentioned that the lessons were not interesting in terms of content and presentation, with 30% students in Tashkent city felt so compared to only 17% in rural areas.

H. Perceived Impact of DL on Students’ Learning

While any formal assessment of learning (or learning losses) during the COVID19 quarantine period or under DL is yet to be made, the UNICEF Rapid Survey tried to gauge parental views on children’s learning through DL. Overall, 21% of the parents reported that DL had no specific impact on the learning of their child. Another 15% mentioned that DL programmes have helped the child to enhance their curricular knowledge. However, close to 64% of the parents were worried that their children’s knowledge of the subjects has declined either slightly (48%) or significantly (16%).

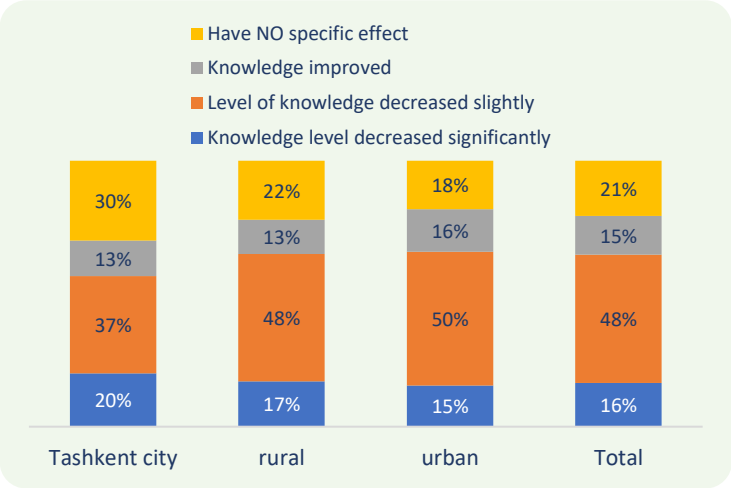

Figure 61: Parents’ perception about the effect of DL on their child’s learning and knowledge (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

I. Challenges envisaged by parents in the new academic year regarding DL

The academic year 2020-2021 commenced in mid-September 2020. The schools are being gradually opened, though education for many children will continue only in either "blended mode" (face-to-face combined with distance mode), and for most children, it will be still in distance mode. With school re-opening and continuation of DL, parents have several concerns.

For several parents, the biggest concerns are related to the lack of access to digital devices, including internet (40%) as well as poor connectivity and power disruptions (45%). While both these issues are of limited concern to parents in Tashkent city, these are big issues in rural areas, particularly power disruption was highlighted as a major concern by 68% of the parents. Parents of children in higher grades were more concerned about these factors than parents of younger children attending primary grades.

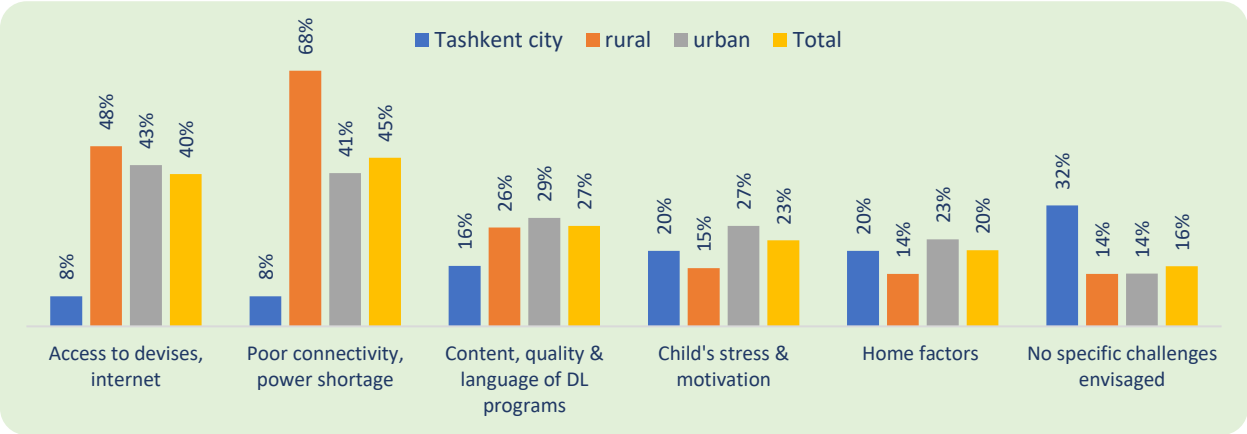

Figure 62: Challenges envisaged by parents in the new academic year in continuing education: By location (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

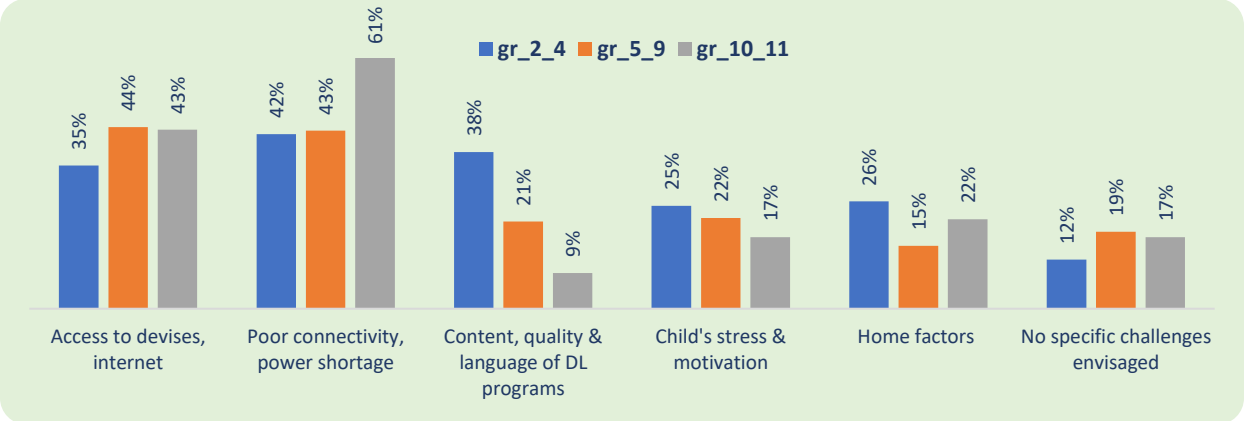

Figure 63: Challenges envisaged by parents in the new academic year in continuing education: By grades children attending (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

Factors such as adequacy of content, quality of pedagogy and language of DL programmes were highlighted as concerns in the new academic year by 27% of parents. Here again, parents in

Tashkent city were less concerned than parents in other parts of Uzbekistan. Interestingly, parents of younger children in primary grades (38%) were more concerned about the quality, content and language of DL programmes than parents of older children (21% of parents of those attending grades 5-9 and 9% among parents whose adolescent children were attending grades 10-11).

The stress that children face while doing studies online or through distance mode or lack of motivation was a concern for around 23% of parents. Such concerns were less among rural parents compared to the ones in urban areas. Here again, parents of younger children were more concerned (22%) than that of older children (17%).

A fifth of the parents highlighted home factors that might put some bottlenecks for education of children in the new academic year – they highlighted issues related economic factors, care substitution needs, lack of or limited facilities and support at home. Interestingly, parents in rural areas were much less concerned about this than parents in urban areas or in Tashkent city. Here again, parents of younger children were more worried about bottlenecks due to home factors than children in secondary grades, though parents whose children were in grades 10-11 were also concerned to a larger extent than those in secondary grades. Around 16% of the parents reported they do not envisage any specific challenges in DL continuation in the new academic year. This was particularly so for parents in Tashkent city.

In the new academic year, if DL is to be continued, 62% of parents reported that their children will be using television lessons (27% of the parents reported that their children will be depending only on lessons broadcasted on televisions while another 35% reported that the children will be using television lessons along with videos available on telegram channels and online portals). Interestingly, more parents in Tashkent city reported that their children will be using television lessons than those in other urban areas. Around 70% parents said that their children will be using telegram apps and other online channels - 35% will study through telegram or online lessons alone while another 35% will be using it along with televised lessons. Only 2% said they will only rely on teachers. Parents of younger children reported that they will be using telegram app or online portals more than parents of older children.

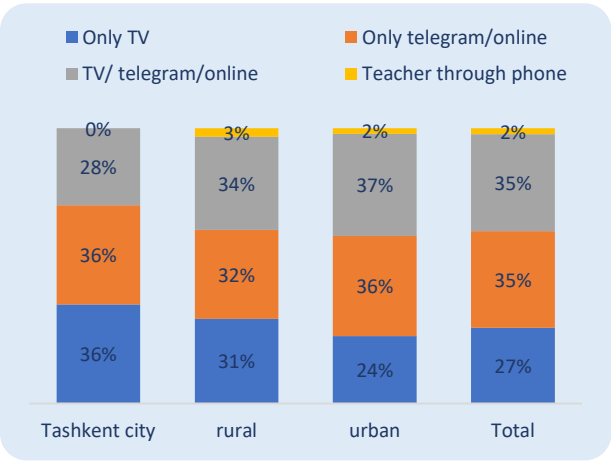

Figure 64: DL in the new academic year: Parents' plans about means of DL by location (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

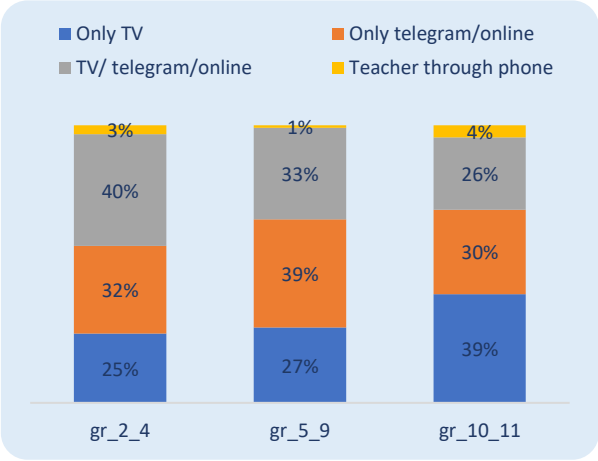

Figure 65: DL in the new academic year: Parents' plans about means of DL by grades (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

J. Parents' Concerns regarding school operations once they are re-opened

More than 2/3ds of the parents reported that they will send their ward to school once schools are re-opened. Another 25% parents reported that they will consider various factors related to health and hygiene preparedness of schools, health of the child, home situation etc. before deciding on whether to send the child to school. However, 9% of the parents were very clear that they will not send the child to school until the COVID19 pandemic is over in the country and it is safe to go out. Such concerns were much less among parents in Tashkent city (4%) but were very high among parents of younger children (12%).

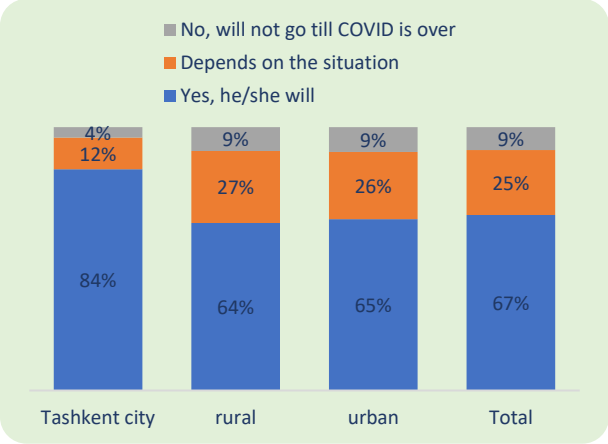

Figure 66: Parents' views on child's school attendance once schools are reopened: By location (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

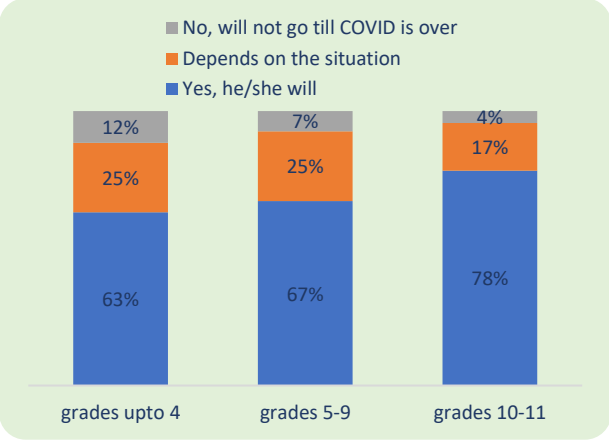

Figure 67: Parents' views on child's school attendance once schools are reopened: By grade (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

During the UNICEF Rapid Survey, parents expressed concerns over several aspects of health and hygience factors in schools in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. Around 48% of the parents reported that they were extremely concerned about the possibility of lack of social/ physical distancing in school. Another 35% parents were somewhat concerned about the issue of social distancing. Similarly, 39% of parents were extremely worried about limited medical facilities available in schools. Less parents were worried about the knowledge and attitude of school staff related to health and hygiene related matters in schools – still they formed a fourth of the respondents, and in addition, 35% parents were still somewhat concerned about school staff's capacity on health and hygiene maintenance in schools. A large number of parents were also worried that even if schools re-open, there will be limited learning happening, and hence their children will suffer "learning losses" – 45% of the parents

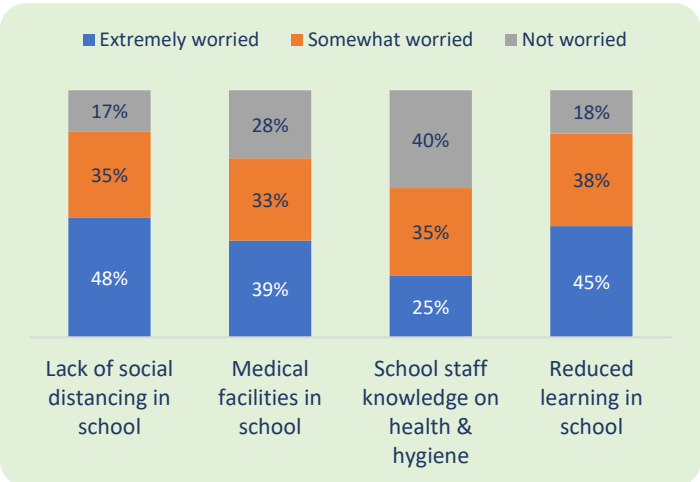

Figure 68: Parental concerns during school re-opening: Summary (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

were “extremely worried” about this and 38% of parents were “somewhat worried” about the learning loss.

Further disaggregated analysis shows that rural parents were more concerned about the scenarios of not maintaining social distancing in schools compared to parents in other locations. Similarly, more parents in rural are also worried about inadequate medical facilities and supplies in schools in the event of any child or staff falling sick.

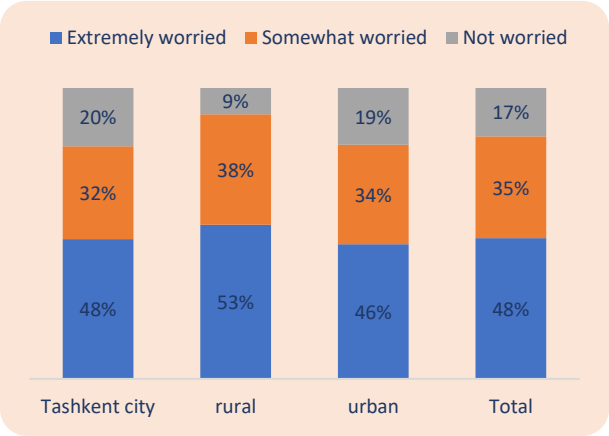

Figure 69: Parents' concern about pandemic when schools re-open & need social distancing (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

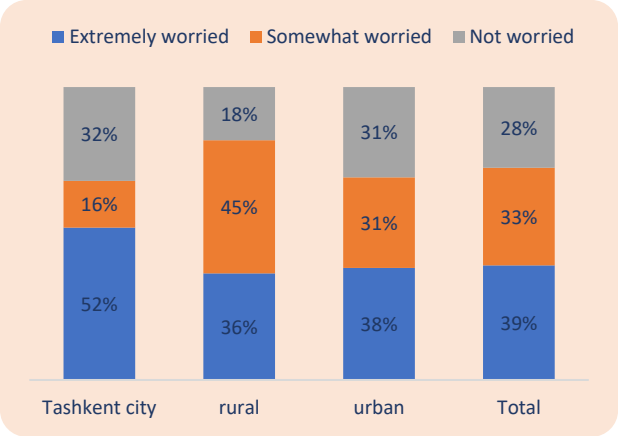

Figure 70: Parents' concern about (in)adequacy medical condition/ supplies in schools (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

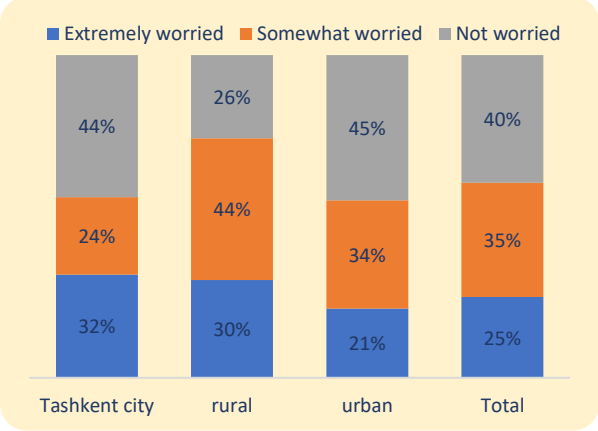

Figure 71: Parents' concern about School staff's knowledge on safe & healthy measures to take care of children (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

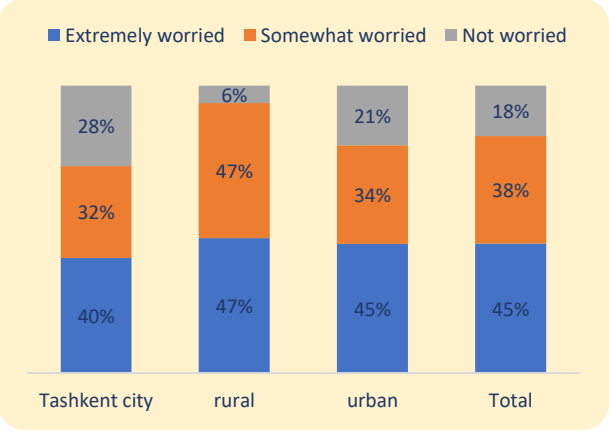

Figure 72: Parents' concerns about learning losses due to school closure & DL (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

Parents in rural areas were more concerned about school staff’s knowledge and capacity to handle any medical emergency or ensure health and hygiene operations in schools. The concerns about learning losses were also high in rural areas. While parents of younger children (primary grades) reported that they were “extremely concerned” about the possible learning losses, parents of children in higher grades (grades 10-11) were overall more concerned (87% parents were either extremely or somewhat concerned) about how learning of their children will be affected.

K. What parents want the education authorities and schools to focus in the new academic year?

Overall, parents wanted the education authorities in school to do the following: (a) assess the learning levels of children so far and identify learning gaps; (b) introduce remedial education to compensate for the lost learning; and (c) focus on learning/ education ahead.

Overall, 56% of the parents wanted schools to do an assessment of their children's learning levels. Parents in rural areas (61%) felt this as important, parents in Tashkent city were less concerned about it (32%). This could be emanating from the more prudent assessment and feedback students in Tashkent city received (along with possible testing of children through kundalik.uz, compared to children in rural areas).

While overall 41% parents wanted schools to introduce remedial education (to compensate for lost learning), more parents in Tashkent city demanded remedial education (52%) compared to parents in rural (39%) or other urban areas (40%). Parents of adolescent students (who were in the critical stage of secondary education in grades 10-11) demanded introduction of remedial education or learning enhancement programmes (48%) than parents of younger children attending primary education (39%). It is obvious that parents of students in final grades wanted more remedial programmes since their school final performance depends on their learning levels.

Around 57% of parents demanded that the schools also focus on the learning in the new academic year. While only 40% parents in Tashkent city felt this as important whereas 60% of parents in other urban locations demanded so. Parents of children in the final years of schooling was more concerned about this as the prospects of their children entering higher education or labour market with adequate skills depended on the learning in the new academic year.

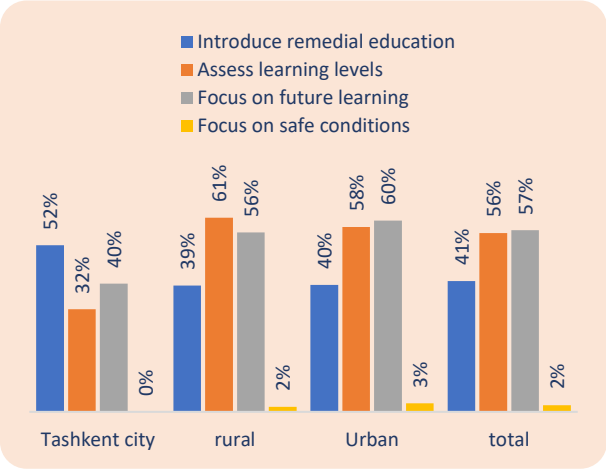

Figure 73: What Parents want schools to focus after school re-opening? Results By location (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

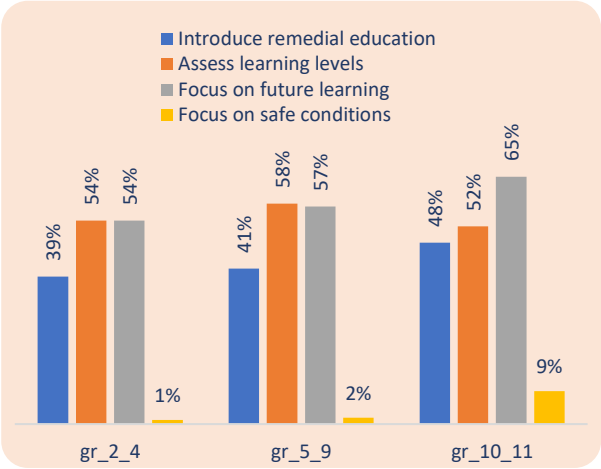

Figure 74: What Parents want schools to focus after school re-opening? Results by grades children attending (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

L. Do parents want DL to continue once normalcy is back?

Both U-Report poll and the UNICEF Rapid Survey sought the views of parents /students about continuation of DL programmes once the COVID19 pandemic is over and schools are fully functional as normal (as in the past). 36% of the U-Reporters were opposed to the Government continuing the DL after the opening of schools. As against this, 19% of the U-Reporters strongly supported continuation of DL while another 17% believed that it is worth continuing DL with some modification of content and modality. As per the U-Report poll results, girls were more opposed DL than boys.

The UNICEF Rapid Survey results show that 28% of parents felt that there is no need for continuing DL if schools are functioning normally. 40% of parents in Tashkent city felt so as against only 21% of parents in rural areas dismissing DL after school re-opening. It must be remembered that parents in rural areas felt that the teachers in DL programme were of better quality than teachers currently working in rural schools. Parents of younger children were more in favour of discarding DL after school re-opening in comparison to parents of older children.

Among the 72% parents who supported the idea of continuing DL, 27% wanted it because they felt that the DL is a means to compensate for the poor-quality learning in the schools whereas 45% parents thought that DL is good for supplementing school lessons. While 36% of parents in rural areas (as well as in Tashkent city) wanted DL as a compensatory measure (compared to only 21% parents in urban areas), 42% parents in rural areas and 50% parents in urban areas felt that DL is a good way of supplementing school lessons (compared to only 24% parents in Tashkent city who thought so).

Relatively lesser number of parents of younger children thought of DL to compensate for poor quality school lessons (20%) in comparison with 30% of parents of children in higher grades. Parents of younger children favored continuation of DL mostly as a supplementary learning mode after school re-opening (45%) vis-à-vis parents of senior students (39%).

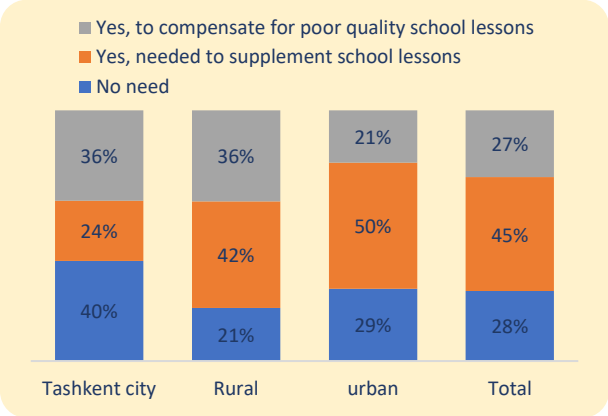

Figure 75: Do parents want DL to continue after school re-opening? Results By location (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

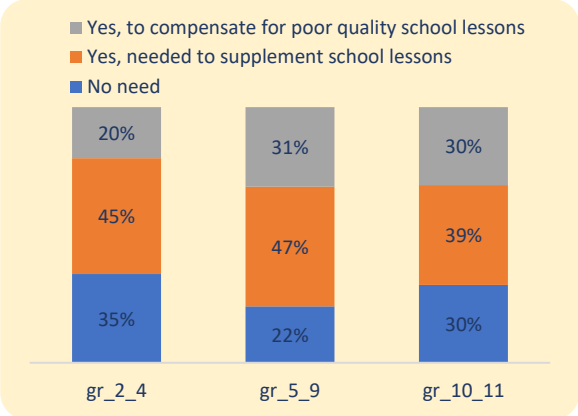

Figure 76: Do parents want DL to continue after school re-opening? Results By grade (Source: UNICEF Rapid Survey)

M. Summary

This report compiles all the evidences collected through U-Report poll, SISEQ online poll as well as the more detailed, nationally representative UNICEF Rapid Survey. The U-Report poll as well as SISEQ poll had large number of people responding to the questions, particularly SISEQ poll attracted more than 50,000 parents and more than 40,000 students to respond. However, they do have some issues due to "self-selection" bias. On the other hand, UNICEF Rapid Survey is more representative at national level, though the number of sample households is limited. However, the good thing is that all the three surveys, despite the differences in the methods of data collection triangulate the findings to a great extent. The results of these three sets of data are summarized below.

Learning Continuity

- A vast majority of children continued their education during the lockdown and school closure – the polls and Rapid Survey show that close to 96% of students continued their education;
- While 85% of students studied through distance learning, around 11% students engaged through self-study, either using textbooks and in some cases, with some additional support from teachers;
- Several children were not studying during the quarantine mainly due to lack of access to DL methods and infrastructure (not having television, internet etc.) as well as children's inability to handle the stress associated with learning in remote mode.
- While video lessons broadcasted on television was one of the main means of DL for children in Uzbekistan, a sizeable number of children also used telegram app and other online facilities as well. Overall, children were using multiple modes for distance learning.
- More than 3/4th of the children learned in Uzbek language during DL. A fifth of the children studied in Russian language. Overall 3% of children used Karakalpak language for DL – they were mainly from the Republic of Karakalpakstan.
- Close to 60% children attended DL lessons regularly and did not skip any lessons while 36% children attended DL only sporadically and the rest missed most of the lessons. Children missed DL lessons mainly due to disruptions in the availability of electricity and internet and lack of interest among children to study.

Parental/family support for students in DL

- A large majority of parents ensured that someone in the family participated actively or passively with children in the DL process. Parents also helped children in doing homework as well as encouraged them to do well during the DL process. Parents also reprimanded children who were irregular with their studies.
- Parents highlighted several positive features of DL programme: they felt that the DL programmes facilitated children to study even during the quarantine, DL lessons facilitated parents to observe and support children during their learning process, video lessons were imparted by some of the best teachers in the country and the short duration of video lessons were highlighted as some of the positive features of DL programme by parents

- However, parents also highlighted some of the limitations of DL programme. They felt the short lessons were perhaps inadequate for children to learn and they observed that some of the video lessons were not of expected quality. There were also concerns about lack of teacher-student and peer interactions and discussions and clarification of doubts in a timely manner in a purely DL process. There were also concerns about the timing of broadcasting, language issues etc.
- While more than a fifth of the parents felt that there was no sizeable effect of DL on children's learning, 15% parents felt that the knowledge of children improved under DL, but a whopping 2/3rds of the parents felt children experienced learning losses during the quarantine period, inspire of attending DL lessons.

Teacher support for students during DL

- The two polls and the Rapid Survey results show that parents and students were quite appreciative of the support provided by teachers in terms of additional support and explanations of DL lessons, support for doing homework as well as evaluation of homework and the encouragement teachers extended to students.
- Teachers reached out to students mostly through telegram channel; and in Tashkent city, teachers were also using kundalik.uz portal as well – most of the time, teachers used telegram, phone as well as kundalik.uk to support children with homework and its evaluation and feedback.

Student views on the experiences of DL

- Students in general, have very positive experience with DL. An overwhelming majority of students were satisfied with the content, pedagogy, duration and timing of broadcasting of lessons in DL.
- Students also highlighted the advantages of DL: the very fact that they can study at home, there were lesser lessons and lessons of shorter duration and the lack of teacher control were some of the main factors that made DL a good experience for students.
- Students also expressed their concerns over some of the "not-so-positive" aspects about DL programme if done as a stand-alone mode of education. Many expressed some problems with the lessons broadcasted, both in terms of content and quality as well as the duration. Lack of interaction with teachers as well as peer students were also highlighted as main drawbacks of DL lessons (if only DL was there as a learning method).

New Academic year: concerns and demands

- Parents largely are worried that in the new academic year, the students may have to be still attending DL, and the lack of access to digital devises, poor electricity and internet connections and the fatigue of engaging in DL in the new academic year may affect the process of learning for children and affect their motivation and cause stress for children.
- A large majority of parents were willing to send their children to schools once they re-open, while some parents wanted to wait and watch the scenario unfolding during the school re-

opening. Less than a tenth of the parents were sure about not sending their children to school till the pandemic fear is out.

- Despite their willingness to send the child to school, there were several concerns about school re-opening itself in the minds of parents. Parents were concerned about the risk of not able to maintain social/physical distancing in schools, there were concerns about the medical facilities and materials available in the school if children fall sick; they were also concerned about school staff's ability and capacity to maintain heath and hygiene practices among students. Many parents were concerned about the actual limited teaching and learning that may take place in school, which might impact children's learning and may result in further learning losses.
- Parents wanted the school authorities to focus on the following once the new academic year starts and possibly schools re-open: (a) assess the learning levels of children to understand learning gaps and needs; (b) design and implement remedial programmes for addressing learning losses and thus enable children to catch up; and (c) focus on the quality of future learning.
- While some parents feel that DL is not needed once schools start functioning, a large majority of parents and students think that it is a good idea to continue DL even after schools re-open. While almost half of the parents see the role of DL in supplementing or complementing the lessons that happens in schools, a sizeable number of parents and students look at DL as a process to compensate for the poor-quality learning that happens in schools. In any case, DL is seen as both a complementary as well as compensating mechanism for school education quality. These are in fact positive feedback for introducing "blended models" of education pathways in the country in the immediate future.

N. Suggestions / Recommendations

On the basis of the results of the assessments of the outreach and effect of DL programme in Uzbekistan during the months of April- May 2020, and the views of parents, teachers and students, it is evident that DL programmes are here to stay. However, given the concerns and challenges in its implementation, this report provides a few suggestions for the government to consider while improving the DL programmes for the new academic year and for long term, where DL would become a part of the regular education process.

Legal provisions to continue DL

- ***Elaborating the legal provisions for establishing a base for DL programmes in future***: Given the current scenario (of continued concerns over COVID19 pandemic and the challenges in opening all schools and ensuring school functioning as before), DL programmes needs to continue in the country. Online and remote learning modalities are also part of modernizing education system in the country. In such a scenario, it is important to establish the legal provisions for distance learning and develop policies in its implementation. Article 16 of the (new) Law on Education (President approved on September 23, 2020) is about "Distance Education". The article says that the "distance education is aimed at providing students with the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities in accordance with the curriculum and using

information and communication technologies (ICT) and the world information network Internet. The procedure for organizing distance education is determined by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan". Further, Article 36 of the Law on Education (2020) on "Experimental and innovative activities in the field of Education" mentions that "educational organizations in experimental and innovative activities can use distance education technologies". Given that the legal basis for providing DL is already there, what is important is *elaborating these laws, making specific policies and provisions for its implementation*.

Designing blended learning programmes

- ***Make DL a part of the "blended learning" approach; Improve the content, quality and presentation of DL programmes***: While parents and students overwhelmingly supported the continuation of DL and highlighted its potential to be both complementary to as well as compensating for current school education systems, there were concerns about the content, quality and the presentation of DL materials. To improve the DL programmes to be of better content, presentation and quality, the Republican Education Centre (REC) may look at international experiences, both led by state systems as well as private online content providers. In this regard:
    - Government needs to develop/ design a blended learning programme, with DL as a major component of the "blended" approach to education; and
    - Design DL in different modes, such as (i) appropriate alternative or additional printed materials; (b) one-way audio, video lessons to be broadcasted through radio and television; and (c) design more interactive online programmes.

Capacity building for improving DL

- ***Capacity building of Teachers and educators in DL***: While teachers have done a tremendous job, as endorsed by parents and students, during the initial phase of DL in the country without any prior training, there were also comments on teachers' role being limited to providing some explanation of DL lessons, supporting homework and its evaluation. Several parents and students were also not happy with the DL lessons, even though DL lessons were imparted by some of the better skilled teachers in the country. In this context, the government may need to do the following:
    - Design specific training programmes for teachers who will be selected to be part of the centrally created video lessons meant for televised lessons; such training programme may incorporate the best practices used by systems elsewhere, and draw from the already available free and open sources of learning from elsewhere;
    - Train adequate number of teachers to be part of such centrally driven initiatives -this is to be determined by a need assessment in terms of subject and grade specific lessons to be produced and in multiple languages.
    - Along with teachers, several creative artists should also be trained in creating content and designing presentation in innovative ways. This could include graphic artists, theatre personalities and people from different spheres of life;

- It is also important to design general training programme for all teachers to be engaged in DL process in a meaningful way and to support students. All teachers must be trained in imparting adequate academic and pedagogic support (including psycho-social support) to students during the DL process and for enhancing the learning outcomes. All teachers should also be trained in conducting assessment (including homework and regular tests) remotely and providing feedback. Several teachers also lack basic ICT skills and they should be trained in that as well since DL also depends in several way on digital literacy and skills of people.

- ***Capacity building of parents and community:*** DL is a tedious process and learning from home require support from parents and other family members. Often, family members with limited education and exposure to technology based or remote learning systems may not have adequate knowledge and skills to support students during the DL process. It is important that the parents and community are provided with some useful tips and methods to support children. Government may focus on developing Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials to target community and enhance their knowledge, attitude and practices towards DL of children.

Strengthening family support systems

- ***Government may strengthen the Social support systems:*** Several students were not able to participate in the DL process due to lack of access to DL related devices. It is important that the social policies of the government target such households where children are left out of education due to such deprivations of materials. There may be some specific targeted programme to ensure that all families with children have the minimum access to needed materials such as television or internet connectivity; and

Improving school infrastructure to support DL

- ***Government may also enhance the school connectivity:*** There are already efforts by government to connect all schools with high-speed internet. The government is targeting to connect at least 70% of general secondary schools to internet by the end of the year. School connectivity may help teachers to design more decentralized or school-based content for DL.