

## **Transforming education through digital connectivity of schools: experience of Uzbekistan**

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Dear Moderator, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity to share the experience of Uzbekistan at this session of the United Nations Transforming Education Summit. Our organization is not only responsible for supervision but also monitors education, conducts research and makes proposals for improving the system of continuous education. Under the leadership of President all resources have been mobilized to enhance the quality of education and building human capital.

One of the important steps in achieving these goals was the approval of the "Digital Uzbekistan-2030" strategy, which includes the digitalization of the lifelong education system. After providing all universities of the country with high-speed local area network and Internet, the next step was to continue expanding the network in schools, colleges and kindergartens.

In accordance with the development strategy, by the end of 2022, all schools in the country should be connected to a single fiber-optic network, provided with ICT infrastructure and high-speed Internet.

I would like to note that in 2018 only 7% of schools in Uzbekistan were connected to this network. Already today, the number of schools with high-speed Internet connection (at least 10 Mbps per school) has reached 95% and active work is underway to equip schools with modern computers. Over the past two years, more than 10,000 schools have been laid about 20,000 kilometers of fiber optic cable to connect to the Internet.

The outbreak of the Pandemic made us think about how to maintain the quality of education, continue learning using digital resources, distance learning. It was necessary to take urgent measures to fill the network with content and educational platforms. We have re-evaluated our work on digitalization. Not all school students had the skills to use them successfully. There was no Internet access at home. Problems in the use of information technologies were also identified in the country's universities.

The country's government has taken concrete steps to further digitalization and the creation of new educational resources. In particular, in cooperation with UNICEF, the Giga initiative implemented a project to develop a map of the location of schools and their connection to the Internet. As a result of the joint work, data on the exact location and state of the Internet connection of 10,000 schools in Uzbekistan were collected and visualized for the first time on an open map. With the support of Giga, most schools are now equipped with real-time internet connection monitoring equipment, allowing the Ministry to more frequently monitor the quality of a school 's internet connection.

In the future, mapping and real-time Internet connection monitoring will be integrated into the school EMIS education management information system. This will help the Government of Uzbekistan not only to identify gaps in the provision of services or resources to children, but also to increase the transparency and accountability of school services and the efficiency of resource allocation.

Giga initiative in Uzbekistan is also testing innovative solutions such as extending Internet connectivity from schools to the local community and testing business models to monetize community Internet services to sustainably mobilize resources to ensure continued connectivity.

Uzbekistan is taking steps to ensure inclusive and fair education in the system of continuing education. Based on an analysis of the needs of the State Digitalization Plan in the education sector, the Ministry of Public Education has developed the State Digitalization Plan and is adapting it to improve youth education in Uzbekistan. The digital education platform is currently being replenished with courses in subjects and digital skills, many of which are curated by global digitalization plans , mainly aimed at meeting the learning needs of children from remote areas, educating girls and children with disabilities.

It is expected that connecting schools to the Internet, and students and educators to information, will improve teaching and learning processes, develop human capital in the long term, fulfilling the country's aspiration to be among the upper middle-income countries.

Summing up the above, I would like to note that our efforts to introduce new initiatives and innovations with the technical support of UNICEF and other international organizations under the leadership of UN in Uzbekistan have allowed us to enhance the quality of educational services and to improve the skills of both teaching staff, our children and young people who will become the engine in the future in the implementation of the ambitious plans of Uzbekistan in the achievement of goals of sustainable development, improving the welfare of the people.

Thank you very much for your attention!