

Countermeasures in Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in Armenia (Tentative as of 5 May 2020)

1. Introduction

In order to make informed decisions as well as manage the implementation of COVID-19 countermeasures, the Government of Armenia created a *Special Group of Commandants* headed by the Vice Prime Minister. This group came up with policies to mitigate the spread of the virus (Table 1).

Table 1 Policy to Mitigate the Spread of COVID-19 in Armenia

Mitigation	Policy in Armenia
<i>Staying Home</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lockdown is imposed. Police is mobilized to enforce travel restrictions (See Annex 1 Guidelines on Travel Restrictions) • Staying at Home is mandatory
<i>Social/Physical Distancing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cancellation of Group Events (e.g., church worship, cultural, and sport events) • Limiting Number People in Gatherings (e.g., gathering for funeral is allowed but limited to 20 people with social distance)
<i>Wearing Mask</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wearing face masks in public places is encouraged but not provided for free (it's personal responsibility)
<i>Washing Hands</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent washing of hands is encouraged (on your own)

2. Some Practices Based on DRRM Experiences

Practices in disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) in Armenia are modified and applied in mitigating the spread of the virus, such as the use of mobile apps and automatic fund transfer system to vulnerable groups.

2.1 Mobile App: *Covid-19 Armenia*

To ensure fact-based and official information about COVID-19, the government developed a mobile app, *Covid-19 Armenia* (Figure 1)¹. This app offers guidance on assessing the symptoms and whether the individual needs to visit a medical facility. Additionally, the app offers the following features:

- Statistics on the number of cases, updated daily
- Information of all hospitals of Armenia, emphasizing those treating COVID-19 cases
- Guidance on testing, including diagnosis and testing centers
- Online self-diagnosis based on answers to questions about the symptoms
- Updates on government policies and decisions made by *commandants*

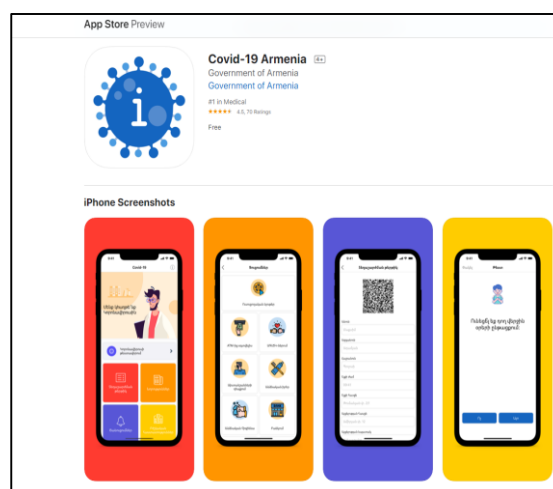


Figure 1 Covid-19 Armenia App

¹ Covid-19 Armenia, <https://apps.apple.com/am/app/covid-19-armenia/id1505830061>

- Online issuance of ‘electronic pass’ from the commandant in case residents want to leave home
- Guidance from World Health Organization (WHO) and other trusted sources

2.2 Automatic Fund Transfer

As part of social protection program following disasters, the Government of Armenia has an existing automatic fund transfer system to most vulnerable groups. This fund transfer system is also utilized in the response to covid-19.

Using the database from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MLSA), retired pensioners and families who are beneficiaries of government subsidies due to poverty will automatically receive the social aid package in relation to covid-19. The aid is sent together with their monthly pensions or monthly subsidies. Therefore, in Armenia, these groups of beneficiaries will automatically receive the social aid *without submitting an application*. Assistance to other groups of people is based on agreed *criteria* (e.g., loss of job due to pandemic, households with children, and others) established by the commandants. In this case, *qualified beneficiaries need to apply* (See [Annex 2 Social Support Programs to Alleviate Impacts of Covid-19](#)). Note that most beneficiaries to social support programs do not need to apply, as money will be automatically transfer using an existing system.

3. Challenges

Flattening the covid-19 curve in Armenia is a major challenge, as the government lack sufficient capacity to administer mass testing. Although many activities are implemented to restrict people’s movement, absence of mass testing can compromise these efforts. Moreover, the following challenges are also observed:

- While the commandants encouraged “work from home” arrangement, the support of private sector (businesses and companies) is essential in allowing their employees to telework during the specified period of time.
- Many small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as well as other businesses stopped operating since March 2020. Most of them badly need economic aid packages to restart after easing the lockdown.
- Schools and universities temporarily stopped students from going to school. The online learning system is new to most teachers and students, and so there are issues concerning access and methodologies of teaching.

4. Insights

The Government of Armenia, particularly the Ministry of Emergency Situations, has put in place systems to manage disaster risks, and these systems are activated through the Declaration of State of Emergency. Hence, in preventing the spread of covid-19, the government has activated DRRM system. Unlike other countries (e.g., Japan and Korea), Armenia strictly enforced “stay at home” orders by mobilizing the police and other enforcement agencies. One of the reasons strictly restricting people’s movement is that Armenia does not have strong health system. It has limited hospital beds, ventilators, and even health care insurance of citizens.

5. References

Government of Armenia, <https://www.gov.am/am/covid-travel-restrictions/>

NCDC Armenia, <https://ncdc.am/coronavirus/>

Covid-19 Armenia App, <https://apps.apple.com/am/app/covid-19-armenia/id1505830061>

Ministry of Emergency Situations Armenia, <http://mes.am/en/news/item/2020/03/18/covid19/>

Annex1

Guidelines on Travel Restrictions

Background

On March 16, 2020, Armenia declared a state of emergency, allowing the government to take steps to minimize risk of infection during the outbreak of COVID-19. This State of Emergency was extended until May 14, 2020. Actions include closure of schools and universities, prohibition of events with more than 20 persons in attendance, restrictions on movement within the country, screening and quarantine measures, and restriction of entry into Armenia.

- Individuals must always carry passports and self-declaration forms. Violations of movement restrictions of quarantine are punishable by law.
- Mandatory closure of non-essential establishments.

Individuals Who Can Enter Armenia

- All citizens of the Republic of Armenia
- Their family members who are not citizens of the Republic of Armenia
- Individuals who are not citizens of the Republic of Armenia but have the legal right to reside in the Republic of Armenia
- Individuals who are not citizens of the Republic of Armenia except those who have arrived from the list of countries with tense epidemic situation or have been in those countries within the previous 14 days
- Diplomatic representatives, representatives of consulates and international organizations and their family members from the countries (territories) with tense epidemic situation
- A driver and one replacing driver for a cargo transportation from the Russian Federation, Islamic Republic of Iran or Georgia, as well as entry and exit of personnel of cargo planes who do not have detected symptoms of virus
- With the special permission of the Border Guard Commander of the Republic of Armenia, individuals with justified health, economic or manufacturing emergency needs to enter the Republic of Armenia
- Relatives (parents, spouse, children, sister and brother) of the deceased who are scheduled to attend a memorial or a burial ceremony
- One driver and one substitute driver for a freight carrier coming from the Russian Federation, Iran or Georgia
- Aircraft personnel performing passenger or cargo transportations, as well as military or sanitary flights
- In other special occasions, determined by the Commandant

Individuals Who Cannot Enter Armenia

- Non-citizens of the Republic of Armenia arriving from the Russian Federation or Georgia
- Non-citizens of the Republic of Armenia who have arrived from the list of countries with tense epidemic situation or have been in those countries during the previous 14 days

Annex 2

Social Support Programs to Alleviate Impacts of Covid-19

The following are qualified beneficiaries of the government's economic support.

Families with Children

- Family with a child under 14 years of age, where the parents or one of the parents has lost his/her registered work in the period from March 13 to 25 and none of the parents has a job as of March 25
- Support type: one-time support for each minor child in the amount of AMD 100,000
- Basic terms and conditions: The average monthly salary did not exceed 500,000 drams during the two months prior to dismissal
- There is no need to apply, the system automatically identifies beneficiaries and transfers the money

Individuals who Lost Jobs

- Those who lost their job on March 13-30, 2020
- Support: lump-sum assistance in the amount of 68,000 AMD
- Basic terms and conditions:
 - Availability of a registered job in the period from January 1 to March 13, 2020
 - Average monthly salary did not exceed 500,000 drams in the two months prior to dismissal
 - The beneficiary did not work in financial organizations or in gambling establishments
- There is no need to apply, the system automatically identifies the beneficiaries and transfers the money

Pregnant Women without Job

- Pregnant woman who does not have a job as of March 30, and whose husband lost his job between March 13-30, or the pregnant woman who does not have a husband
- Support type: one-time assistance in the amount of AMD 100,000
- There is no need to apply, the system decides the beneficiaries on its own and transfers the money

Individuals whose works relate to Tourism

- Those individuals who were employed in the spheres listed below or were self-employed on March 13-30, 2020
 - Hotel services
 - Public catering services
 - Tourism services
 - Hairdressing and beauty salon services
 - Retail services (except for food and drug dealers)
 - Ground transport operations (route transport)
 - Preschool institutions (private kindergartens)
 - Sporting activities (sports clubs, swimming pools)
 - Entertainment and other leisure activities
- Support type: lump-sum assistance: 50% of the average salary of an employee in January-February, but not more than AMD 136,000, if the beneficiary worked full time, not less than 68,000 AMD

Individuals who are Self-Employed

- Those self-employed shall be supported at the rate of 10% of the turnover posted in the 4th quarter of 2019, but not more than 136,000 drams
- Basic terms and conditions: Beneficiaries were employed in the affected sectors in the period from March 13-30, 2020
- Where to apply: online at the following website www.ssa.am

Parents who don't have jobs

- Those families with a child aged 0-18, where both parents do not have a registered job
- Support type: lump-sum assistance for each child in the amount of AMD 26,500
- Basic terms and conditions: The children and at least one of the parents are residents of the Republic of Armenia; the family is not eligible for a family benefit; in case one of the parents had a job before March 1, 2020, his or her monthly salary did not exceed 500,000 drams.
- Where to apply: online at the following website www.ssa.am

Subscribers to Natural Gas and Electricity

- Those who are subscribers to natural gas and electricity supply contracts whose consumer bills did not exceed 10,000 drams for natural gas consumption, 5,000 drams for electricity consumption in February 2020
- Support: lump-sum assistance to the amount of 50% of natural gas and electricity consumed in February 2020, respectively
- Basic terms and conditions: Natural gas and electricity consumption in February 2020 did not exceed the amount specified in the decision
- There is no need to apply: the money is automatically transferred to the utility operator to settle the overdue debt of customers eligible under this Action 11 or as an advance payment in the absence of overdue payments.

Socially disadvantaged families

- Those considered socially disadvantaged families
- Form of assistance: one-time assistance at the rate of 50% of the amount of the social benefit, of which:
 - 70% is provided in cash along with the benefit for April
 - 30% is available as a payment for the energy consumed by the subscriber
- Basic terms and conditions: eligible are those households entitled to family and social benefits as of April 2020
- There is no need to apply: 70% of the proceeds of assistance is available as a cash payment in addition to the amount of the family allowance for April; the balance of 30% is transferred to the utility operator on behalf of the subscriber of electricity.
- If the beneficiary has a debt, the funds will be used to settle the arrears.
- In the absence of overdue bills, they will come as a prepayment for services.
- If the beneficiary is not an electricity subscriber, this part of the funds shall be offered to the beneficiary as a cash payment.

Disclaimer

This report was compiled by an ADRC visiting researcher (VR) from ADRC member countries based on the personal observation.

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