



# AZERBAIJAN COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT

DECEMBER 2019



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On the cover: ADB promotes women empowerment and gender equality in Azerbaijan by supporting government’s national development programs (ADB Photo Library; Azerbaijan Resident Mission).

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# Abbreviations

AAY	State Agency of Azerbaijan Automobile Roads
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADY	Azerbaijan Railway Company
ANC	antenatal care
ASAN	Azerbaijan Service and Assessment Network
CAREC	Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CGA	Country Gender Assessment
CRPWD	Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CPS	country partnership strategy
CSO	civil society organization
CWRD	Central and West Asia Department
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ECE	early childhood education
FGD	focus group discussion
GAP	gender action plan
GDP	gross domestic product
GFP	gender focal point
GGGI	Global Gender Gap Index
GCI	Global Competitiveness Index
GII	gender inequality index
GNI	gross national income
GRB	gender-responsive budgeting
HDI	human development index
ICT	information and communication technology
IDP	internally displaced persons (or people)
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMAGES	International Men and Gender Equality Survey
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KII	key informant interview
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MFF	multitranches financing facility
MICS	multiple indicator cluster survey
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MSMEs	micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises
NAP	national action plan
NGO	nongovernment organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OJSC	open joint-stock company
PPP	purchasing power parity
PWD	persons with disabilities

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SAWMC	State Amelioration and Water Management Committee
SCFWCA	State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs
SCWI	State Committee on Women's Issues
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SMEs	small and medium-sized enterprises
SMS	short messaging service
SOCAR	State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic
SOE	state-owned enterprise
SPPREAD	State Program on Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development
SSC	State Statistical Committee
TA	technical assistance
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN Women	United Nations Women
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States dollar
VAW	Violence Against Women
WARD	Women's Association for Rational Development
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organization
WSS	water supply and sanitation
WSSIP	Water Supply and Sanitation Investment Program
WTO	World Trade Organization
WWD	women with disabilities

# Executive Summary

The purpose of the Azerbaijan Country Gender Assessment (CGA) is to develop a strategic focus for integrating gender concerns into ADB programs and operations in the country. The assessment covers the following:

1. a review of the status of gender equality and women's empowerment in the country based on a literature review, key statistics, policy documents, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews;
2. an analysis of the achievements and challenges in mainstreaming gender equality in ADB's programs and operations and provides conclusions; and
3. recommendations on the way forward to improve gender equality outcomes.

**Country situation.** Since independence, Azerbaijan has gradually emerged as a middle-income country. From 2001 to 2017, extreme poverty was eliminated, and absolute poverty declined from 49.0% to 5.4%. The country developed a global vision and road maps on selected sectors to continue its path of inclusive growth. The country is committed to integrating gender equality goals into these national action plans to ensure that women benefit from future initiatives to diversify and grow the economy.

**Key indicators on gender equality.** Human development is steadily improving in Azerbaijan and women benefit from this trend. Thus, according to the 2017–2018 Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) of the World Economic Forum (WEF), which covers 137 economies, in measuring its national competitiveness, Azerbaijan progressed its position from 37th to 35th place. Under the 2018 Inclusive Development Index of the WEF, which was designed as an alternative to gross domestic product (GDP), Azerbaijan ranks third among the countries with emerging economies. Azerbaijan's score in the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index also increased between 2000 and 2015. However, key international indicators suggest that women benefit less than men. For example, the Gender Development Index score for the same period decreased. According to the WEF's Global Gender Gap Index, which ranks 144 countries on gender parity across four thematic dimensions, Azerbaijan's rank fell from 86 in 2016 to 98 in 2017. This rank also illustrates larger gaps in all four dimensions compared with previous years (e.g., economic participation from 38 to 45, educational attainment from 83 to 91, health and survival from 138 to 142, and political empowerment from 124 to 131). Azerbaijan is the lowest-ranked country, after Armenia and the People's Republic of China, in terms of failing the gender parity on sex ratio at birth. The international comparisons show that more progress is needed in key areas of gender equality, including improving maternal and child health, reducing the gender wage gap, and increasing women's political representation.

**National laws, policies, institutions, and international commitments on gender quality.**

The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan (12 November 1995) prohibits discrimination based on sex and states that the rights of husband and wife are equal. Azerbaijan has signed international conventions on gender equality and passed a Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights for Women and Men in 2006 that set the legal foundation for gender equality. Gender equality goals were articulated in recent national development policies, and in economic strategies. A national body for gender equality—the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs—is active in mainstreaming gender into state policies, programs, and laws and in developing information systems for gender-related monitoring. The country’s state structure for gender equality also includes gender focal persons assigned to each ministry and government agency. The government has demonstrated efforts to establish a more gender-sensitive mechanism to address gender-related challenges, including (i) conducting meetings among government agencies and nongovernment organizations to create an effective response mechanism in the fight against domestic violence, (ii) preparing proposals for the establishment of an Inter-Agency Coordination Council on Combating Gender-Based Violence, and (iii) undertaking related trainings for judges and lawyers. Still, there is a need for better articulation of the gender policy and gender-related action plans to define the vision, key issues, priority measures, and activity plan to bring about transformative change for gender equality and women’s empowerment.

**Women’s economic empowerment.** Women’s share in the labor force is 48.1% compared to 51.9% for men. Of the 82% employed women who work in five sectors, 42.1% are in agriculture, 18.2% in trade, 11.7% in education, 6.1% in health-care and social sphere, 3.5% in food processing, however, their contribution to GDP is just 27% in these five sectors, which is an evidence that women are mostly concentrated in the low-paid sectors, according to the *Democracy Monitor*. Government statistics also noted that women face a higher unemployment rate at 2.9%, compared to 2.1% for men. Occupational patterns are highly gender segregated with 73.8% of women working in the field of education, and 76.5% working in health and social services. Overall, women earn only 50.6% of what men earn in the labor market. Women are underrepresented as business owners with only 21.5% of registered businesses being operated by women. Promoting women’s economic empowerment requires (i) expanding perceptions of the range of occupational choices available to women, (ii) improving parental leave provisions, and (iii) having measures for better work–family balance to facilitate women’s entry into nontraditional or progressively senior career paths.

**Gender equality in human development.** Azerbaijan is in the high human development category. Significant progress has been made in improving health and education outcomes in some areas, such that infant mortality was 16.4 per 1,000 live births in 2000 and 11.1 in 2017; while maternal mortality was 37.6 per 100,000 live births in 2000 and 14.7 in 2017, as shown in government data. Azerbaijan has also progressed in universal primary education and life expectancy, making it close to the average for Europe and Central Asia. Both women and men have benefited from these improvements. However, challenges remain in other key indicators for maternal and infant health, such as access to contraceptives, which remains a challenge for family planning. There is also the traditional norm of favoring sons in sex selection abortions. Both the state and international reports in a United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) report reflect alarming sex ratio of 116–114 boys to 100 girls in 2014–2017. The adolescent birth rate has increased in the following years in tandem with decreasing levels of female secondary school completion. The level of admission to higher education is almost the same for women and men—48.6% for women, 51.4% for men—but fields of study are highly

segregated by gender resulting in women mainly preparing for careers in lower-paid fields of education, health and social services. A law was passed to prevent violence against women. Workshops were organized and recommendations were given to improve the quality of work of local monitoring authorities in the field of gender-based violence and child abuse. Since October 2018, online information on domestic violence has been operational. According to the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, there are 11 regional children and families support centers and eight women's resource centers. However, support systems need to be further strengthened as many cases continue to go unreported due mainly to the social stigma and the practice of attributing fault to women survivors of violence.

**Gender equality in leadership and decision-making.** Women's representation in the Parliament is gradually increasing, and women candidates have been increasingly successful in municipal elections. However, Azerbaijan still needs to increase its international rankings for women's political representation. Women are present in the civil service but are underrepresented at all levels, especially senior levels. Women are also underrepresented in judicial positions. To increase women's participation in decision-making, key measures toward greater decentralization at the municipal levels, more efforts to draw women into national politics, and a proactive approach to increase women's representation in senior civil service positions and the judiciary will be needed.

**Reduced time poverty of women.** Gender norms have been evolving for the past years as more women work outside the home, although Azerbaijanis continue to attribute primary responsibility for domestic matters to women. According to the Swiss Cooperation Office and the United Nations Development Programme (2018), women spend a large share of their time and energy for household responsibilities and this is not altered if a woman engages in income-generating activities. At the same time, men are most often designated as household heads. On average, women allocate 6 hours per day for unpaid labor while men allocate only 2 hours, and differences in increased workload are greater for rural women. This difference in time allocation for paid work is economically disadvantages for women. Meanwhile, women working in the private sector, which suggests better financial conditions, also enjoy lesser benefits, particularly working mothers who choose lower-paid public jobs to allow them to combine domestic tasks with their work duties. Based on the same report, when it comes to getting promotions, women are at a disadvantage compared to men colleagues, as their chances to enroll in after-work professional education and networking are also slim.

**Women's resilience to external shocks.** Due to a protracted territorial conflict with Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, Azerbaijan has a high population of internally displaced persons (IDPs), the majority of whom are women and children. IDPs received significant international aid in the first decade since the start of the conflict. However, in recent years, the Government of Azerbaijan has predominantly provided decent conditions for IDPs—in terms of social, educational, employment, housing, and medical services. Despite the significant progress in this area, the IDPs remain most vulnerable to socioeconomic risks and shocks as they continue to face the constraints of inadequate housing, precarious livelihoods, and limited participation in decisions that affect them. Climate-induced disasters are causing water scarcity, soil degradation, salinization, rising temperatures, sea level fluctuation, and other conditions that are expected to worsen with climate change. Women are affected by disasters in different ways than men but have less opportunity to get involved in disaster risk reduction initiatives. Integrating measures to address gender equality into peace efforts, conflict resolution, disaster risk reduction programs, and climate change policy and planning

are essential to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of these plans in meeting the needs of the whole population.

**Mainstreaming gender in key sectors.** ADB has the potential to advance gender equality goals due to its strategic positioning in key economic and social sectors. Enhancing women's voice and economic activity in critical areas of infrastructure investment—transport, energy, water, public sector management, and other urban infrastructure and services—would greatly enhance their participation in development decisions that affect them. Such measures are necessary to ensure that women fully benefit from project interventions.

**Transport.** Positioning the country as a regional transport hub is a key element of the government's strategy for inclusive economic growth. ADB's project portfolio includes financing plans to expand road and railway transport that will improve rural access to service centers as well as connectivity with other countries in the region. Transport is key to enhancing women's economic participation and supporting them in accessing social services. Women have different transport needs than men. However, women are often underrepresented in forums where transport decisions are made and are less likely to be employed in transport-related jobs or businesses. Identifying and applying measures to fully engage women in transport decisions will be critical in ensuring that investments are effective and contribute to gender equality outcomes.

**Energy.** Energy continues to have a leading role in the economy, but women are underrepresented in energy-related jobs. Women's choices of educational fields indicate this trend is likely to continue. The country has achieved 100% electricity access, but power generation, transmission, and distribution networks are aging, resulting in some service disruptions. Women have a higher share of tasks in the home and are more affected by poor heating systems or the inability to use time-saving appliances. Women's domestic role also means that they are the main household energy consumers and have more influence over energy decisions in the home. Effective investments in energy reform and infrastructure development need to consider the perspectives of women. As a key partner in the energy sector, ADB has an opportunity to introduce gender equality measures in this important area of the economy.

**Water and other urban infrastructure and services.** The government has greatly improved water supply and sanitation service for the population over the past decade. Further investments to upgrade infrastructure and services are planned as the government works toward the Sustainable Development Goal definitions of safely managed water and sanitation systems. By investing in water supply and sanitation, the government is directing resources to a sector that will benefit women, ease the burdens on their time, and contribute to improved health outcomes for women and children—and ADB has been a key partner in supporting these improvements. The government's plans and programs for the water and sanitation, however, do not specifically mention or set targets related to gender equality. More efforts will be needed to mainstream gender into the water supply and sanitation sector to achieve gender equality outcomes, such as a greater role for women in decision-making or increased employment opportunities.

**Public sector management.** The government is undertaking new initiatives to ensure it maintains a civil service that is composed of qualified, professional staff selected on merit. While supporting the government to reform its hiring, training, and promotion systems, ADB

can introduce new measures to address the underrepresentation of women in the civil service especially at higher levels. By strengthening the capacity of the government to stimulate private sector development, facilitate trade, and strengthen the banking sector, ADB can also support the government in promoting more opportunities for women in business.

**Information and communication technology.** The government has set out a strategy to build a knowledge society through improved information and communication technology (ICT) access. However, women have less access to ICT and filling this gap will be important for women's economic empowerment and inclusive growth. Supporting enhanced gender analysis and introducing measures for integrating gender equality into the government's ICT strategy is a potential gender mainstreaming entry point.

**Gender-based budgeting.** The Ministry of Finance in Azerbaijan is seeking to implement public financial management reforms, including results-based budgeting, which is an approach that seeks to achieve social impact through fiscal policy. This budgeting reform creates an opportunity to introduce gender-responsive budgeting—a tool that integrates gender and other social dimensions into decision-making in public resource allocation. ADB could initiate a knowledge building initiative to introduce gender-based budgeting to the Ministry of Finance.

Azerbaijan has steadily advanced gender equality outcomes as it pursues its goal to become a highly developed country. More focused efforts are essential to identify and address remaining gaps and ensure continued progress on gender equality and women's empowerment.



# Introduction

## A. Purpose of the Country Gender Assessment

The operational plan of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for gender equality and women's empowerment sets the strategic directions to advance gender equality across its country partnerships by 2020.<sup>1</sup> ADB's concept of gender equality recognizes that women and men may require different treatment to achieve similar results because of differences in life conditions or sociocultural and economic circumstances. The country gender assessment (CGA) considers the extent to which women and men enjoy the same rights and opportunities to contribute to and benefit from national, political, economic, social, and cultural development. It also assesses the level of women's political, social, and economic empowerment (footnote 1).<sup>2</sup>

ADB initiated the preparation of the new country partnership strategy (CPS) for Azerbaijan for 2019–2023. The CPS will assist the government to achieve the objectives of the Strategic Roadmaps on National Economy and Selected Sectors and fulfil its global obligations under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>3</sup>

The Azerbaijan CGA is being undertaken to update ADB's knowledge of the key gender equality issues in the country. This information will be used to mainstream gender concerns into the next CPS. Given its importance in the economic diversification and non-oil economy growth, the CPS will focus on transport, energy, public sector management, and information and communication technology (ICT). The CGA reviews these sectors and recommends measures to promote gender equality in ADB's portfolio. This assessment also examines potential and new entry points for ADB's future engagement to advance gender equality outcomes in Azerbaijan.

The coverage of the Azerbaijan CGA includes the following:

- a review of the status of gender equality and women's empowerment in the country based on literature review, key statistics, policy documents, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews;
- an analysis of the achievements and challenges in mainstreaming gender equality in ADB's programs and operations, and provide conclusions; and
- recommendations on the way forward to improve gender equality outcomes.

<sup>1</sup> Asian Development Bank (ADB). 2013. *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Operational Plan, 2013–2020: Moving the Agenda Forward in Asia and the Pacific*. Manila.

<sup>2</sup> Empowerment pertains to women's sense of self-worth, and their right to determine choices, access opportunities and resources, control their own lives, and the ability to influence social change.

<sup>3</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan. 2016. *President's Decree No. 1138 on the Approval of the Strategic Roadmaps on National Economy and Selected Sectors*. Baku.

## B. Assessment Methodology

This assessment gathered data, reviewed literature, and analyzed information from various sources to identify the policy and socioeconomic development issues of concern to ADB's portfolio.

The assessment methods used were (1) desk research, (2) focus group discussions (FGDs), and (3) key informant interviews (KIIs).

1. The **desk research** was based on a review of documents and data on the status of gender equality and women's empowerment in Azerbaijan. These covered the following types of information:
  - 1.1 national demographic, socioeconomic, and human development statistics for the whole country and for each ADB sector;
  - 1.2 international and regional comparative statistics and indexes on gender equality and women's empowerment;
  - 1.3 documents on laws, policies, strategies, and programs relevant to gender equality and to ADB's sector of operations; and
  - 1.4 research studies, surveys, best practices, case studies, and lessons learned on gender equality on a national and sector basis.
2. Six FGDs were conducted with (i) rural women both employed and unemployed, (ii) urban women both employed and unemployed, and (iii) male and female youth groups based on adjusted questionnaires, as part of the research methodology. It was from the FGDs where the perspectives of employed and unemployed women were collected and these were compared with the trends in rural and urban contexts.
3. A total of 23 KIIs were conducted with a select number of national government representatives, ADB staff, civil society organizations, gender experts, development partners, and medical practitioners to (i) collect insights on the policy context for promoting gender equality, (ii) discuss the opportunities and constraints identified under national programs and initiatives, and (iii) recommend gender equality entry points and measures for intervention in ADB's sectors of operation. Among those interviewed were representatives from development partners that are also providing significant financing in ADB's sectors of operation, as well as agencies with experience in promoting gender equality in these sectors.

ADB's country program was analyzed through a review of project documents and discussions with team members in the country. The project documents included gender action plans (GAPs) and gender and development monitoring reports from ongoing and/or completed ADB-financed projects. The purpose of the portfolio and/or project review was to assess the following:

- key gender issues identified at the design and planning stage;
- how identified gender issues were translated into steps and/or measures for gender integration;
- any gaps in identifying relevant gender issues at the design and planning stage;
- successes and challenges in implementing gender equality measures and GAPs;
- contributions of the GAP in strengthening overall project results;
- trends and emerging opportunities and constraints for addressing gender equality in each sector; and

- recommendations to improve gender mainstreaming in existing, new, or planned projects in the future.

Thus, the data collected were duly synchronized, analyzed, and verified to present the Azerbaijan CGA in the form of (i) a comprehensive review of the status of gender equality and women's empowerment; (ii) an analysis of the achievements and challenges in mainstreaming gender equality in ADB's programs and operations, and as conclusions; (iii) recommendations on the way forward to improve gender equality outcomes in the country; and (iv) strengthening of ADB's programs and projects to advance women's inclusion, equality, and empowerment in ADB's sphere of operations.

# Context

## A. Country Situation

Azerbaijan, situated in the South Caucasus on the Caspian Sea, was the first democratic, parliamentary, and secular republic in the Islamic East, that proclaimed its independence in 1918. By 1920, Azerbaijan was incorporated into the newly formed Soviet Union. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, it again became an independent state. Since the late 1980s, Azerbaijan has been in a protracted territorial war with Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

**Table 1: Population Demographics, 2018**

	No. of Population
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,898,100</b>
Female	50.1 %
Male	49.9%
Rural	47.1%
Urban	52.9%

Source: Republic of Azerbaijan. 2018. *State Statistical Committee*. Baku.

Table 1 shows Azerbaijan’s population is 9.9 million where 49.9% is male and 50.1% is female.<sup>4</sup> More than half (52.9%) of this population live in urban areas, compared to 47.1% who live in rural areas. Since independence, Azerbaijan has gradually emerged as a middle-income country, largely driven by exploitation of hydrocarbon resources, with high levels of public expenditure, and substantial reforms supporting a market-based economy.<sup>5</sup> From 2001 to 2015, the country’s GDP increased 4.5 times at an annual average of 10.6%.

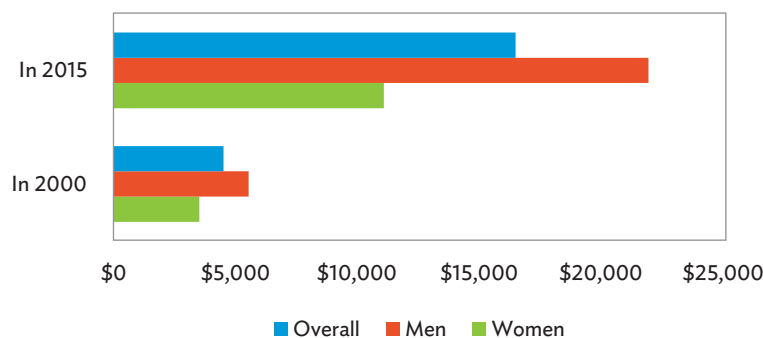
The Human Development Index (HDI) of the Government of Azerbaijan illustrates the progress of the last decade, tracking 0.772 in 2007 to 0.916 in 2017.<sup>6</sup> Women are active in the labor force and gain from overall economic growth. Still, data show that women may derive less benefits from economic growth than men. The overall per capita gross national income (GNI) based on purchasing power parity (PPP) increased from \$4,492 in 2000 to \$16,413 in 2015, but the gap in GNI (PPP) between women and men widened. The GNI (PPP) for women in 2000 was \$3,508 compared to \$5,221 for men, making women’s GNI (PPP) 67% of that for

<sup>4</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan, State Statistical Committee. 2018. *Population*. Baku. <https://www.stat.gov.az/source/demography/ap/>.

<sup>5</sup> ADB. 2014. *Azerbaijan Country Partnership Strategy, 2014–2018*. Manila.

<sup>6</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan, State Statistical Committee. 2017. *Living Standards and Social Security: The Human Development Index*. Baku. This includes an account of the gender factor.

**Figure 1: Gross National Income by Sex, 2000 and 2015**  
(in PPP)



PPP = purchasing power parity.

Source: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2016. *Human Development Report: Azerbaijan*. Geneva.

men. In 2015, the GNI (PPP) for women was \$11,033 compared to \$21,841 for men, hence, women's GNI (PPP) has gone down to just 50% of that for men (Figure 1).<sup>7</sup>

As with other countries whose national economies are heavily dependent on oil and gas revenues, Azerbaijan has seen a slower growth rate over the past several years. The GNI has declined by 35% between 2013 and 2016 and the 2017 annual GDP growth rate was 0.1%.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the recent economic challenges, the country had several positive achievements in its socioeconomic development. Early in its growth trajectory, the government oriented its development strategies toward building an inclusive economy, including allocating resources to poverty reduction and social protection. From 2001 to 2017, extreme poverty was eliminated, and absolute poverty declined from 49% to 5.4%. The country moved up from medium human development group to high human development group in 2010. The majority of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including those targeting gender equality, were achieved before 2015 and Azerbaijan was recognized by the United Nations as one of the 18 countries that succeeded in halving poverty.<sup>9</sup>

Azerbaijan endorsed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015 and initiated actions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including promoting gender equality. The government took steps to align the goals and targets with the national development agenda, assigned agency responsibilities, built the capacity of state officials to execute related policies, and created working groups for SDG focus areas. The government established the National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Azerbaijan to coordinate the task to nationalize the SDGs and their indicators.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2016. *Human Development Report: Azerbaijan*. Geneva.

<sup>8</sup> ADB. 2017. *Azerbaijan Economy*. <https://www.adb.org/countries/azerbaijan/economy#tabs-0-0>.

<sup>9</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan, National Council for Sustainable Development. 2017. *Azerbaijan 2030: From the Millennium Development Goals towards the Sustainable Development Goals*. Baku.

<sup>10</sup> Footnote 9.

In 2010, the government articulated the strategy “Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future” Concept of Development. This concept sets out the course of action to be taken by the government to diversify the economy and promote inclusive growth. The main aims were to (i) stabilize the economy in the face of external shocks, (ii) diversify the sectors that are stimulating growth, (iii) better integrate the country’s economy into the world economy, and (iv) restore the country’s upward development trends. The main priorities include (i) developing a highly competitive economy, (ii) becoming an information society by upgrading ICT, (iii) investing in human capital development, and (iv) building an effective social security system. The concept articulates the government’s commitment to gender equality and makes specific reference to women’s role in economic development. In 2016, the government adopted the *Roadmap on the National Economy* and 11 strategic road maps to advance the goals and objectives across diverse sectors.

Overall, Azerbaijan’s efforts to build policies that focus not only on growth but also on human development and inclusion have created a policy environment conducive to advancing gender equality. This is especially important since women comprise the majority in low-income segments of the population, account for a higher percentage of those unemployed, and have more responsibilities in family health and social welfare.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, women are active in the labor market and are contributing to the development of both formal and informal businesses. Developing more social and economic strategies aimed at realizing the full potential of women’s skills and entrepreneurial aptitudes will be an important driver of future growth and in building a fair and inclusive society.

## B. Key Indicators on Gender Equality

Azerbaijan is steadily advancing in human development according to international indicators used to measure and compare results across countries. Such progress is positive for both sexes. However, key indicators used for international comparisons suggest that women are benefiting from this progress to a lesser extent than men.

According to the United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) *2016 Human Development Report*, Azerbaijan’s overall HDI value has steadily increased from 0.642 in 2000 to 0.759 in 2015. However, the trends for gender equality have not progressed at the same rate. As shown in Figure 2, the Gender Development Index value decreased from 0.951 in 2000 to 0.940 in 2016. This placed the country in Group 3, signifying medium equality in HDI achievements between women and men. In 2017, the HDI value for women in Azerbaijan is lower than for men—with a female HDI of 0.734 compared to 0.773 for males.<sup>12</sup>

The Gender Inequality Index (GII)<sup>13</sup> is used by the UNDP to measure the extent to which inequality erodes national development achievements.<sup>14</sup> The higher the GII value, the greater

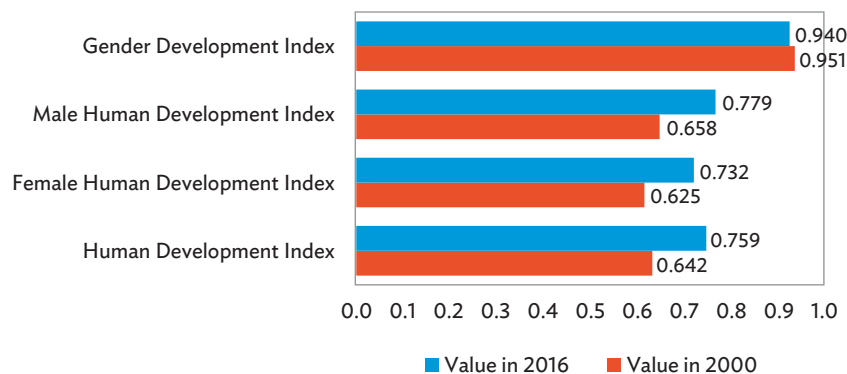
<sup>11</sup> United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNDP. 2015. *Population Situation Analysis: Beyond the Demographic Transition in Azerbaijan*. Baku.

<sup>12</sup> The Gender Development Index shows the ratio of female compared to male achievement in health, education, and command over economic resources.

<sup>13</sup> UNDP. 2016. *Gender Inequality Index*. New York.

<sup>14</sup> The GII is based on five indicators (maternal mortality ratio, adolescent fertility rate, seats in national parliament, population with at least secondary education, and labor force participation).

**Figure 2: Comparison of Human Development Index and Gender Development Index, 2000 and 2016**



Source: United Nations Development Programme. 2016. *Human Development Report: Azerbaijan*. Geneva.

the discrimination. The GII value for Azerbaijan has a minor progress, evolving from 0.319 in 2005 (the first year data were available) to 0.318 in 2017. Azerbaijan is ranked 80 out of 188 countries in this indicator.<sup>15</sup>

The Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI), devised by the World Economic Forum (WEF), is another measure of gender equality used for cross-country comparisons.<sup>16</sup> The GGGI rates gender-based gaps in resources and opportunities independently from a country's level of development.<sup>17</sup> As shown in Table 2, Azerbaijan has a GGGI of 0.676 in 2017 ranking it 98 out of 144 countries. The country's overall GGGI ranking is one of the lowest in the region with only Hungary showing a lower ranking of the 26 countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. In 2012, the GGGI ranking of Azerbaijan was 0.655 (99 out of 135 countries), showing modest progress in reducing gender gaps over the 5-year period.<sup>18</sup>

National scores by subindex are shown in Table 3. It is noted that Azerbaijan's score fell from 86 in 2016 to 98 in 2017,<sup>19</sup> illustrating larger gaps on gender parity across the four thematic dimensions when compared with the previous year (economic participation—from 38 to 45, educational attainment—from 83 to 91, health and survival—from 138 to 142, and political empowerment—from 124 to 131). Azerbaijan is among the lowest-ranked countries, after Armenia and the People's Republic of China (PRC), which failed the gender parity on sex ratio at birth.

<sup>15</sup> UNDP. 2016. *Human Development Report. Gender Inequality Index (GII)*. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/indicators/68606>.

<sup>16</sup> World Economic Forum (WEF). 2017. *The Global Gender Gap Report*. Geneva.

<sup>17</sup> The GGGI considers four basic categories: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.

<sup>18</sup> WEF. 2012. *The Global Gender Gap Report*. Geneva.

<sup>19</sup> Footnote 16.

**Table 2: Gender Gap Rankings for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 2017**

	Country	Overall Rank Out of 144	Overall Score
25	<b>Azerbaijan</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>0.676</b>
1	Slovenia	7	0.805
2	Bulgaria	18	0.756
3	Latvia	20	0.756
4	Belarus	26	0.744
5	Lithuania	28	0.742
6	Moldova	30	0.740
7	Estonia	37	0.731
8	Albania	38	0.728
9	Poland	39	0.728
10	Serbia	40	0.727
11	Kazakhstan	52	0.713
12	Croatia	54	0.711
13	Romania	58	0.708
14	Ukraine	61	0.705
15	Bosnia and Herzegovina	66	0.702
16	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	67	0.702
17	Russian Federation	71	0.696
18	Slovak Republic	74	0.694
19	Montenegro	77	0.693
20	Kyrgyz Republic	85	0.691
21	Czech Republic	88	0.688
22	Georgia	94	0.679
23	Tajikistan	95	0.678
24	Armenia	97	0.677
26	Hungary	103	0.670

Source: World Economic Forum. 2017. *The Global Gender Gap Report*. Geneva.

**Table 3: Values for Global Gender Gap Subindexes, 2017**

2017 GGGI Subindexes	Value	Ranking out of 144
Economic participation and opportunity	0.717	45
Educational attainment	0.984	91
Health and survival	0.941	142
Political empowerment	0.063	131

GGGI = Global Gender Gap Index.

Source: World Economic Forum. 2017. *The Global Gender Gap Report*. Geneva.



These indexes reveal that while national efforts to advance gender equality are yielding some results, more efforts are needed to ensure women benefit equally as the country advances toward higher development status. Accelerating the rate of change will require more strategic and targeted initiatives, particularly in the economic and political spheres.

## C. National Legislation and International Commitments on Gender Equality

The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan guarantees equality among women and men. Azerbaijan has signed international conventions and adopted a law on gender equality. A high-level committee has been set up to oversee the law's implementation. An overarching gender policy and action plan would enhance these efforts to advance gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

The Constitution of Azerbaijan, adopted in 1995, was recognized as “more progressive and egalitarian than that of Iran, Turkey and many Muslim and non-Muslim states alike.”<sup>20</sup> Article 25 of the Constitution declares that “Men and women possess equal rights and liberties,”<sup>21</sup> and prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. Article 34 also states that the rights of husband and wife are equal.<sup>22</sup>

The legal foundation of gender equality was further enhanced in 2006 by the adoption of the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights for Women and Men. This law aims “to guarantee the equal rights status for women and men in the political, economic, social, cultural and other spheres, to ensure equal opportunities in enjoyment of the above listed rights and to prevent gender-based discrimination.”<sup>23</sup> This law bans all forms of gender discrimination. It also defines women's equal rights in terms of property, education, state services, the labor market, and their equal rights as entrepreneurs and consumers.

The law formalizes the state structure for mainstreaming gender equality across laws and state programs. The law requires the state to improve the legal basis of gender equality and implement programs to advance the status of women. It also states that public authorities must review legislation to analyze its implications in gender equality and make amendments, if necessary. The law also requires information dissemination on gender equality, and providing education through the media and other means.

The principle of equality and nondiscrimination is reflected in other legislative documents, including the Criminal Code and the Labor Code.<sup>24</sup> In 2010, Azerbaijan enacted the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence, which addresses domestic physical, psychological, and

<sup>20</sup> N. Tohidi. 1999. Citizenship, Democracy and Women's Rights in Azerbaijan and Central Asia. *Journal of Azerbaijan Studies*. Khazar University. Baku.

<sup>21</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan. 1995. *Constitution of Azerbaijan*. Article 25. Baku.

<sup>22</sup> Footnote 21, Article 34. Baku.

<sup>23</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan. 2006. *Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights of Women and Men*. Baku.

<sup>24</sup> P. Bayramova. 2016. *Barriers, Remedies and Good Practices for Women's Access to Justice in Azerbaijan*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

sexual violence. It establishes the legal foundation to prevent and to prosecute domestic violence committed. It also addresses the negative legal, medical, and social outcomes for survivors. It also includes provisions to provide legal and social assistance for women survivors of violence. In 2011, the government amended its Family Code to set the legal age of marriage at 18 for both women and men. It also updated its criminal code to prohibit early or forced marriage.<sup>25</sup> In May 2018, President Ilham Aliyev underlined the nation's commitment to ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women in a statement to the participants of the 5th Women's Forum, dedicated to the centenary of granting suffrage to Azerbaijani women.<sup>26</sup>

Azerbaijan has joined international conventions to promote gender equality. In 1995, Azerbaijan became a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and signed the Optional Protocol in 2000. Azerbaijan has signed the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers and the revised Maternity Protection Convention. In 2018, the Azerbaijani representative from SCFWCA was elected as a member of the CEDAW Committee for 2019–2022.

According to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Committee),<sup>27</sup> the country is progressively passing, amending, and updating legislation in line with its commitments to international conventions on gender equality. The country is encouraged to further strengthen legal education and capacity-building programs for judges, prosecutors and lawyers on CEDAW and the Optional Protocol. The Academy of Justice under the Ministry of Justice of Azerbaijan is providing training to all justice, law enforcement, and court officials. This training aims to deepen understanding of the broad meaning of “gender-based discrimination” and provides information on how to apply the CEDAW provisions to eliminate discrimination.<sup>28</sup>

Both the Constitution and the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights of Women and Men of Azerbaijan prohibit direct discrimination; however, none specifically contains the clause on the ban of indirect discrimination as required by CEDAW. The government has noted that Article 12 of the Constitution stipulates that all signed international conventions become part of domestic legislation. As a result, the CEDAW antidiscrimination provisions would prevail in any legal case.

The 2016 study by the Council of Europe highlights that the legal framework in Azerbaijan provides real and substantive guarantees of gender equality. However, further progress on access to justice is essential. Women face cultural barriers to seek redress in the courts in cases of divorce, violence against women, discrimination, or sexual harassment in the

<sup>25</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). 2015. *Concluding Observations on the 5th Periodic Report of Azerbaijan*. CEDAW/C/AZE/5. Geneva.

<sup>26</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan. 2018. “Statement of President Ilham Aliyev to the participants of the 5th Women's Forum dedicated to the centenary of granting suffrage to Azerbaijani women.” May 30. Baku Convention Center. <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/2910316.html>.

<sup>27</sup> CEDAW is a body with experts appointed by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Countries such as Azerbaijan, which have become party to the treaty, are obliged to submit regular reports to the CEDAW on how the rights of the Convention are being implemented. More information can be found at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CEDAW/Pages/CEDAWIndex.aspx>.

<sup>28</sup> Footnote 25.

workplace. Although the court provides lawyers to citizens free of charge, these lawyers are predominantly young specialists from the Baku State University; a good quality legal service requires well paid advocates. In general, judicial proceedings are costly, and women often lack the necessary resources to claim their rights in courts. Women would be more strategically positioned to exercise their rights if they had more representation in the policy-making process.<sup>29</sup> To address these issues, the CEDAW Committee recommended in 2015 improving the implementation of the 2014 Law on Public Participation, which stipulates the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) in public councils to monitor the work of central and local state administrations.<sup>30</sup> The Public Committee under the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs (SCFWCA), established in 2017, is regarded as an important step in boosting the participation of women and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) in law formulation, implementation, and monitoring.

## D. Institutions and Mandates

Azerbaijan has a State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs and a network of gender focal persons in key agencies to oversee the mainstreaming of gender equality into state laws, policies, and programs. Capacity-building and additional budget resources would further enhance the committee's work.

Azerbaijan created the State Committee on Women's Issues within the executive arm of government in 1998. The committee's mandate was to mainstream gender concepts into laws, public policy, and state programs and projects. It also initiated the compilation and reporting of sex-disaggregated statistics and information. This committee was replaced by the SCFWCA in 2006. SCFWCA was issued a stronger mandate, which involves implementing and regulating state policy on family, women, and children's affairs (Box 1).

Azerbaijan's state structure for gender equality also includes gender focal points (GFPs) assigned to each ministry and state agency based on Decision No. 176 of the Cabinet of Azerbaijan signed on 26 September 2000. According to key informant interviews (KIIs) conducted for this assessment, all ministries and state agencies have assigned GFPs, but the networks have been largely inactive due to a lack of orientation about their roles and duties. Over the past years, SCFWCA has been addressing this issue to provide clearer guidance to GFPs on how to perform their functions. A training of GFPs in gender equality issues was undertaken in 2017. In addition, the Resource Pack for Gender Focal Points was developed and disseminated in 2018 by an NGO—the Women's Association for Rational Development (WARD)—after a needs assessment was conducted, which was identified during the Forum of GFPs in 2017. The resource pack, containing eight manuals, provides GFPs with reference materials on how to advance their understanding of the gender equality landscape, as well as of their tasks and duties. However, a tailor-made capacity building of GFPs is further required to institutionalize gender and advance gender equality in their sectors.

<sup>29</sup> Footnote 24.

<sup>30</sup> Footnote 25.

### Box 1: Role of the State Committee for Family, Women, and Children Affairs

The committee has 76 staff members and an operational budget. It is mandated to undertake the following:

- propose legal acts,
- review and recommend state policies and programs,
- develop information systems for gender-related monitoring, and
- sign agreements with relevant bodies of foreign countries and international organizations.

The committee performs its role by using the following mechanisms:

- operates family support centers that provide information on services for women and children and to raise awareness on gender and family issues;
- trains relevant professionals within the public service on gender equality issues;
- undertakes or commissions research on gender-related issues;
- oversees the collection of necessary data and sex-disaggregated statistics;
- organizes roundtable discussions, seminars, and conferences on diverse gender equality issues in specific sectors of activity;
- participates in various multidisciplinary committees under other ministries;
- provides gender perspectives in formulating and implementing policies related to family, children, violence against women, employment, and social inclusion; and
- engages with relevant civil society organizations to seek inputs into policy formulation and decision-making concerning women, children, and families.

Source: Data provided by the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs (SCFWCA) on 15 February 2019.

The other institution with jurisdiction over gender equality issues is the Commissioner for Human Rights (or Ombudsperson). Women who face violations of their rights may bring their complaints to the Ombudsperson. The Ombudsperson, who has oversight of the implementation of human rights provisions, can receive and investigate complaints of human rights violations by individuals and legal entities.

The SCFWCA is the key institution to ensuring that gender equality is achieved. Its work could advance even further with more resources and capacity to collaborate closely with other ministries and oversee government-wide gender equality mainstreaming. For example, upgrading the committee's status to that of a full ministry would increase its decision-making power and strengthen its position in promoting legal and policy changes. Adopting the Terms of Reference for GFPs, which is suggested in the Resource Pack for Gender Focal Points produced in 2018 by WARD, will advance their work mandate and allow them to formally propose policy changes within their ministries that would be effective for gender mainstreaming. Having high-level officials assigned as GFP would ensure that the role has the decision-making authority necessary to oversee the implementation of gender equality measures.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Footnote 25.

## E. Policies on Gender Equality

On 6 March 2000, the President signed Decree No. 289 “On Implementation of the National Gender Policy in the Republic of Azerbaijan,” which sets the foundation for the country’s first National Plan of Action on Women’s Issues 2000–2005. This action plan aimed to put in place a number of gender equality measures (Box 2) that were aligned with the global consensus articulated in the Beijing Platform of Action (1995).<sup>32</sup> One outcome of this process was the development of the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights for Women and Men that was adopted in 2006.<sup>33</sup> This law further enhanced the measures for integrating gender equality into state structures, laws, policies, and programs.

### Box 2: Key Policies Promoting Gender Equality

In 2000, the President’s decree “On Implementation of the National Gender Policy in the Republic of Azerbaijan” established the vision for achieving gender equality in the state’s structure by targeting the following key areas:

- Establishing a structure for gender mainstreaming across the government’s entities;
- Promoting equal representation of women and men in all state entities;
- Facilitating the employment of refugee and internally displaced women;
- Reviewing legislation to identify and address gender dimensions; and
- Stipulating that a woman should be appointed as one of the deputy heads of the Executive Power in all districts and regions of the country, a provision that continues today.

The National Plan of Action on Human Rights in the Republic of Azerbaijan, adopted in December 2011, protects women’s rights by

- reviewing legislation to enhance human rights provisions;
- placing women’s rights on an equal footing with other human rights;
- setting out measures that aim to protect these rights;
- requiring that obligations arising from international agreements on human rights and fundamental freedoms be implemented;
- promoting the fight against all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence; and
- recommending the organization of large-scale, awareness raising programs.

Sources: United Nations, 2003. *Putting Gender Mainstreaming into Practice*, p. 148. New York.; Republic of Azerbaijan. 2011. Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Approval of the National Program for Action to Raise Effectiveness of the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in the Republic of Azerbaijan. <https://en.president.az/articles/4089>.

The SCFWCA has an active role in reviewing legislation, policies, and state programs to mainstream gender equality. The committee participated in the elaboration of the “Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future” Concept of Development to ensure that gender equality was included as a crosscutting theme.<sup>34</sup> The concept states: “The main direction of

<sup>32</sup> The Beijing Platform of Action is an agenda for advancing gender equality by taking action in 12 areas of concern to women’s empowerment. For more information, see UN Women: <http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/about>.

<sup>33</sup> Footnote 23.

<sup>34</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan, State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs. 2013. *CEDAW: Fifth Periodic Report of States Parties*. Baku.

the state policy in this sphere will be to take measures to prevent gender violence, create equal opportunities for women and men on the labor market, promote women at work and expand their opportunities to occupy leading positions.”<sup>35</sup> Provisions to enhance human rights (Box 2) have also created more legal foundations to address gender equality.

In December 2016, a package of strategic road maps was adopted in 11 areas by the Government of Azerbaijan, which was in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, only two of the 11 road maps, namely the “Strategic Roadmap for Manufacturing and Processing of Agricultural Products in the Republic of Azerbaijan,”<sup>36</sup> and the “Strategic Roadmap for the Production of Consumer Goods at the Level of Small and Medium Entrepreneurship”<sup>37</sup> contained clauses about women and girls.

As noted in Box 3, several advancements have been made in integrating gender equality into national policies and programs. These achievements would be even further enhanced when the SCFWCA takes the lead to formulating a government-wide gender policy and action plan. This policy initiative is important in prioritizing the key gender issues that are still to be addressed in each sector. A gender policy and action plan will contribute to building consensus around a vision on how to bring about transformative change for gender equality and women’s empowerment.<sup>38</sup>

### Box 3: Advancements in Gender Equality

The Government of Azerbaijan has taken steps to integrate gender equality into national policies and programs. Noted achievements were the following:

- Measures were strengthened to prevent the trafficking of persons, particularly women and children, through the adaptation of the National Action Plan on Anti-Trafficking, 2014–2018;
- Measures were implemented to eliminate wrongful gender stereotyping—by disseminating countrywide media campaigns in rural and urban areas. The campaigns were implemented in schools and through mass media using video clips and short movies on topics such as preventing early and forced marriage, and trafficking of persons;
- Policies and state programs were put in place to ensure improved social and economic conditions for internally displaced women and children;
- Ensured the integration of gender equality measures in key policies, including the implementation of the State Program for Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development, 2008–2015; the State Program on Reforms in the Higher Education System of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2009–2013; and the State Program on Azerbaijani Youth in 2011–2015;
- Implemented various projects to promote women’s participation in politics, such as mentorship programs and awareness raising activities; and
- Developed and implemented the National Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan for Combating Domestic Violence.

Source: Republic of Azerbaijan, State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs. 2019. *CEDAW: Sixth Periodic Report of States Parties*. Baku.

<sup>35</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan. 2016. *Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future Concept of Development*. Baku.

<sup>36</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan. 2016. *The Strategic Roadmap for Manufacturing and Processing of Agricultural Products in the Republic of Azerbaijan*. Baku.

<sup>37</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan. 2016. *The Strategic Roadmap for the Production of Consumer Goods at the Level of Small and Medium Entrepreneurship*. Baku.

<sup>38</sup> Footnote 25.

The “Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future” Concept of Development states that the government will adopt a national action plan (NAP) on gender equality. In key informant interviews, the SCFWCA recognized the importance of producing the NAP on gender equality, which started from the development of the conceptual framework and the conduct of consultations in 2018. The NAP on gender equality would be useful in clarifying the country’s gender equality objectives and targets and in setting benchmarks for measuring progress.

The government is also preparing other NAPs, in cooperation with national and international organizations, which will advance the gender equality agenda. The NAP on the prevention of gender-based violence and the NAP on the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security are among them.

## F. Gender Statistics

The State Statistical Committee has started to put in place necessary measures to collect and report on gender statistics. Gender is a specific section of the committee’s website where statistics are published, and data are available on demographics, labor market, education, health, and other sectors. With more sex-disaggregated data for each sector, this will facilitate monitoring of progress on gender equality.

Gender statistics is an essential tool for advancing gender equality. To monitor its progress in meeting its commitments under CEDAW and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), the government will need access to sex-disaggregated data covering diverse economic, social, and political spheres. It will also need quantitative and qualitative data to detect gender-based discrimination. Data to analyze specific issues that are important to gender equality, gender relations, and women’s empowerment are also necessary to monitor how trends are evolving and understand the impact of gender equality initiatives.<sup>39</sup>

The legislation governing the collection of statistics does not include requirements to collect data on gender. However, the statistics master plan contains provisions for gathering and reporting gender statistics.<sup>40</sup> The State Statistical Committee (SSC) has started to put in place necessary measures to collect and report gender statistics. Gender statistics have a specific section in SSC’s website, and data are available on demographics, labor market, education, health, and other sectors. Other sections, such as education and labor market, also have sex-disaggregated data. Since 2004, the SSC also issues an annual publication, *Women and Men in Azerbaijan*, with key sex-disaggregated statistics. Relevant data are collected regularly from administrative records, surveys, and censuses.<sup>41</sup>

The publication *Women and Men in Azerbaijan* includes reproductive health and sex-disaggregated data on the main causes of morbidity for women and men. Every year, the SSC supplements the publication with about 10 new indicators, while a number of indicators for SDG 5 have been nationalized. However, data on disease incidence are still limited to a

<sup>39</sup> ADB. 2012. *Gender Statistics in the Southern Caucasus and Central and West Asia: A Situational Analysis*. Manila.

<sup>40</sup> Footnote 39.

<sup>41</sup> Footnote 39.

few main categories and do not provide detailed information on women and men's health situation. Information about women and men's specific health needs, access to services, and attitudes toward health services is also not available. Information on rural and urban differences is incomplete in the available data. More in-depth information is collected during the Demographic Health Survey, but it was last undertaken in 2011 and needs to be updated.

While key labor market data are available and disaggregated by sex, not all variables allow for analysis of women and men's participation in the workforce separately. Information on women in business is available but also limited in terms of understanding the size and types of enterprises in which women are involved. Data systems do not allow for longitudinal studies to understand differences in women and men's labor force patterns. The government is working to improve its labor market and economic databases. As improvements are made, it will be important that collecting and storing sex-disaggregated data be a key part of these efforts.

Having more regular demographic surveys on economic, health, and social issues is important in understanding gender equality issues, setting goals to align with SDGs, and monitoring their achievement.

The report on the results of Gender Equality and Gender Relations in Azerbaijan: Current Trends and Opportunities, Findings from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) was prepared and presented on 26 November 2018. The IMAGES—created and coordinated by Promundo and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)—is one of the most comprehensive studies ever on men's attitudes and practices as they relate to gender norms, household dynamics, attitudes toward gender policies, and intimate partner violence.<sup>42</sup> It is envisaged to conduct a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) (provision 3.1.15) within the State Program on Development of Official Statistics in Azerbaijan during 2018–2025.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> UNFPA/SCFWCA. 2018. *Gender Equality and Gender Relations in Azerbaijan: Current Trends and Opportunities. Findings from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES)*. Baku.

<sup>43</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan. 2018. Presidential Decree on *the State Program on Development of Official Statistics in Azerbaijan, 2018–2025*. 14 February.





# Crosscutting Gender Equality Issues

## A. Women's Economic Empowerment

Women are active in the labor force. However, they experience higher unemployment and earn less than men as they prefer flexible part-time jobs to be able to manage unpaid household labor. Thus, occupational patterns reveal some gender segregation in career choices. Promoting women's economic empowerment requires expanding perceptions on the range of occupational choices available to women, improved parental leave provisions, and measures for work–family balance that would facilitate women's entry into nontraditional jobs or to progressively take senior career paths.

### 1. Labor Force Participation

**Labor force participation rate.** Women in Azerbaijan are economically active and the difference in labor force participation rate for men and women is not large when compared to international figures. Female labor force participation rate is 68.6% compared to 73.9% for men, which places Azerbaijan in the top three countries for women's economic participation and opportunity in the GGGI in 2018.<sup>44</sup> However, as shown in Table 4, the gap in labor force participation between women and men has remained largely unchanged since 2012.<sup>45</sup>

**Table 4: Labor Force Participation Rate, 2012 and 2018 (%)**

Labor force participation rate	2012	2018	Change
Women	65	68.7	3.7
Men	71	73.9	2.9

Source: World Economic Forum, 2012 and 2017. *Global Gender Gap Index*.

On average, women in Azerbaijan spend three times the amount of time as men doing unpaid domestic work. Men, on the other hand, perform paid work for three times longer compared to women. Azerbaijan echoes a globally prevalent pattern: the workload of unpaid domestic work is unequally distributed between women and men. The data reflect a gendered division of responsibilities. However, this allocation of time dedicated to paid and unpaid work by women and men maintains and reproduces gender-unequal access to financial resources, public spaces, social networks, opportunities, and decision-making. The insufficiency of

<sup>44</sup> WEF, 2018. *The Global Gender Gap Report*. Geneva.

<sup>45</sup> Footnote 18.

public infrastructure supporting family life in Azerbaijan (mainly public kindergartens) is among the key barriers for women seeking employment in the well paid private sector.<sup>46</sup>

Employment statistics provide some indications on the reasons for the difference in labor force participation among women and men. Table 5 shows that the percentage of those who are not actively employed due responsibilities such as keeping house, taking care of children, and caring for other family members 96.6% are women whereas only 3.4% are men. In total, 42.7% of women who are not active in employment state these domestic tasks as their reason for being non-active. More men are likely to be not economically active than women because they are either studying or having a pension due to a disability.<sup>47</sup>

**Table 5: Distribution of Population Not Economically Active by Categories and Sex, 2017 (%)**

Categories	Women	Men
Studying in educational institutions	47.8	52.2
Pensioners by age or due to long service	65.2	34.8
Pensioners with disability	42.3	57.7
Persons receiving income from property	30.1	69.9
Persons keeping house, taking care of children, and other family members	96.6	3.4

Source: Republic of Azerbaijan, State Statistical Committee.

**Unemployment.** Women are more likely to face unemployment. In 2017, women's unemployment rate was higher at 5.9% compared to 4.1% for men. Women comprise 57.8% of the unemployed population, almost the same proportion as in 2012. As Azerbaijan is experiencing a slower growth rate, unemployment could increase.<sup>48</sup> Programs aimed at creating jobs should target specific measures to increase women's employment considering their higher levels of unemployment.

**Informal employment.** Official labor force statistics do not give a complete picture of the country's employment situation, including gender differences, as the high number of jobs in the informal economy are not properly accounted. The precise size and scale of informal activities are difficult to approximate given the hidden nature of the activities and unreliability of official statistics.<sup>49</sup> The informal economy includes jobs where workers have no contracts, are not registered for benefits, do not pay any taxes, and are not officially reported.<sup>50</sup>

Although reliable data are not available, economists estimate that informal economic activity makes up a considerable part of the country's GDP and that the employment rate in the informal sector is high.<sup>51</sup> The last analysis by the International Labour Organization (ILO) of

<sup>46</sup> United Nations Development Programme. 2018. *Gender Assessment Report—Women in the Private Sector of Azerbaijan: Opportunities and Challenges*. Baku.

<sup>47</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan, State Statistical Committee. 2017. *Gender Distribution of Private Entrepreneurs by Towns and Regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan*. Baku.

<sup>48</sup> ADB. 2017. *Asian Development Outlook 2017: Sustaining Development through Public–Private Partnership*. Manila.

<sup>49</sup> F. Guliyev. 2015. *The Informal Economy in Azerbaijan*. *Caucasus Analytical Digest*. No. 75, 17 July 2015. p. 7.

<sup>50</sup> Footnote 49. p. 8.

<sup>51</sup> Footnote 49. p. 7.

the country's informal economy in 2009 showed that informal jobs accounted for 26.5% of the nonagricultural sector.<sup>52</sup> Women are more likely to have informal jobs, with 41.7% of women in the nonagricultural sector estimated to be in informal jobs, compared to just 16.6% of men, as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6: Percentage of Population Employed in Informal Economy, 2009 (%)**

<b>Total share of informal jobs in the nonagricultural sector</b>	<b>26.5</b>
Share of women in the nonagricultural sector	41.7
Share of men in the nonagricultural sector	16.6

Source: International Labour Organization. 2012. *Statistical Update on Employment in the Informal Economy*. Geneva.

More recent data on informal employment are not available. However, if the 2009 trends in informal employment have remained the same, women's participation in paid work may be higher than what labor force participation statistics reveal. At the same time, being employed in the informal sector results in lower job security; and no maternity, pension, and other social benefits. Also, women employed informally would not be able to seek recourse if they are harassed or their rights are infringed.<sup>53</sup> More information on the informal economy and its impact on women in the workforce could guide in framing actions to advance women's economic empowerment. Hence, this is a critical area of research.

## 2. Gender Segregation in Occupational Patterns

Occupational patterns in Azerbaijan are highly gender segregated. As shown in Figure 3, certain fields are dominated by women, including human health and social work (77%); education (73%); and arts, entertainment, and recreation (63%). Education, health, and social services employ 55% of all women participating in the labor force. Women comprise less than 20% of those working in higher-paid sectors, such as mining, construction, and electricity and gas production.<sup>54</sup> As of January 2018, the number of employees in the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR), including those in subsidiaries, was 50,424 people, of which 8,441 (16.7%) were women.<sup>55</sup>

Overall, women are still one-third (or even less) of the total employees in 14 out of 19 sectors of employment. This suggests that women are much more restricted in their occupational choices due to sex stereotypes and to the burdens of household responsibilities.

Based on KIIs conducted with state officials as part of this assessment, the government is not planning any initiatives to address occupational gender segregation. Key informants considered occupational choice as a private matter and the government did not have a role in influencing women's preference for which sectors to work in, even in education and health. On the other hand, a 2018 UNDP study identifies barriers to women, which include "the burden of unpaid domestic labor, poor qualifications, gender stereotypes of what are considered

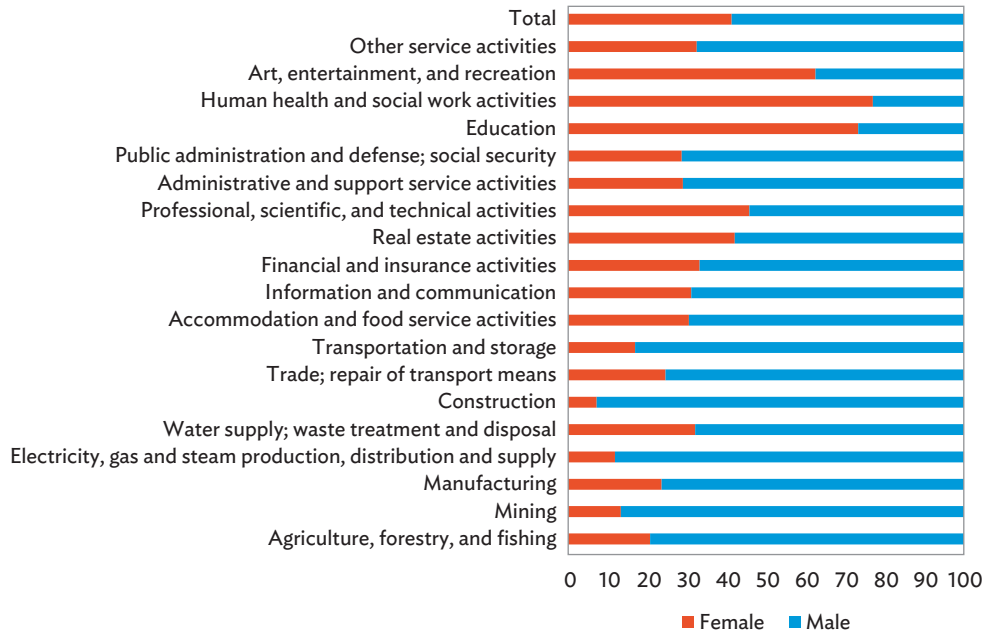
<sup>52</sup> ILO. 2012. *Statistical Update on Employment in the Informal Economy*. Geneva.

<sup>53</sup> ILO. 2012. *Decent Work Profile: Azerbaijan*. Geneva.

<sup>54</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan, State Statistical Committee. 2017. *Women and Men in Azerbaijan*. Baku.

<sup>55</sup> State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR). 2017. *Sustainable Development Report*. Baku.

**Figure 3: Percentage of Female and Male Employees by Economic Activity, 2017 (%)**



Source: Republic of Azerbaijan, State Statistical Committee. 2017. *Women and Men in Azerbaijan*. Baku.

‘women’s work,’ age and appearance-based discrimination, and fear of harassment push women away from better-paying private sector jobs or limit them to informal and unstable employment.<sup>56</sup>

The same conclusion was shared by FGD participants, who indicated that women were drawn to occupations that offered more flexibility in working hours to accommodate the many demands on their time for domestic work. Rural women identified agriculture jobs as the ones most often taken by women rather than industrial jobs. The views of family members are also a constraint to women entering nontraditional occupations. Women were perceived as needing family support or affirmation from family members for employment or business decisions when entering male-dominated professions. Occupational stereotyping limits women’s choices. It also reduces the pool of talent available for jobs that are in demand by the economy and can be a constraint to diversifying toward a knowledge-based economy.

Although sex discrimination in hiring is illegal, women are legally restricted from working in certain occupations. The Labor Code of Azerbaijan prohibits women’s employment in labor-intensive jobs, and in hazardous workplaces such as tunnels or mines. A decree issued in 1999 (No. 170) specifies 678 banned occupations for women inherited from the Russian Federation, which originally intended to protect women’s reproductive health and ensure that they are

<sup>56</sup> Footnote 46, p. 51.

not subject to unsafe conditions.<sup>57</sup> The bans were introduced for reasons of safety, women's health, the danger of these professions, and the burden of work. However, experts reckon that bans on a third of professions and jobs for women, such as bans on work in bakeries, confectioneries, canned food, fish and meat processing, in certain sectors of transport and communications, leatherwork, production of musical instruments, are unfounded.<sup>58</sup>

In addition, employers may not require women who are pregnant or have children under 3 years of age to work on night shifts, overtime shifts, weekends, holidays, or to undertake job-related travel.<sup>59</sup>

According to numerous accounts, women's decisions concerning employment are strongly influenced by cultural norms regarding the types of labor and places of work suitable and appropriate for men and women. Working hours, the nature of responsibilities, the presence of men work colleagues and proximity to men customers are only a few of the many factors cited by families and communities to mark an employment opportunity or promotion as "unsuitable for women." This influences the educational choices of girls as they become limited to choosing jobs considered "(a) 'appropriate for women' ('teacher' being the most common), and (b) allows women to perform a full workload of family responsibilities."<sup>60</sup>

Overcoming gender-based occupational stereotyping will require expanding women's perceptions of the range of occupational choices available to them. It will also require changing societal attitudes of the roles of women and men so that women are able to have broader community and familial support as they take on the demands of entering nontraditional education and career paths. It echoes the CEDAW Committee's recommendation for Azerbaijan to step up career guidance activities to encourage girls and young women to choose nontraditional fields of study and career paths.<sup>61</sup>

#### Areas of employment in which women are not permitted:

- metal processing,
- construction and repair work,
- mining,
- drilling,
- oil and gas extraction,
- work in power plants,
- the manufacture and repair of aircraft,
- shipbuilding,
- chemical production,
- furniture making,
- cement making, and
- the manufacture of glass products.

Source: P. Bayramova. 2016. *Barriers, Remedies and Good Practices for Women's Access to Justice in Azerbaijan*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

<sup>57</sup> Decree No. 170 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 1999. The decree covers the list of industries, professions (positions), and underground work with harsh and harmful work conditions, hence, prohibits the employment of women.

<sup>58</sup> Lawyer Hafiz Hasanov. Prohibited areas for women: whether the time has come to eliminate bans. Conference on 25 June 2019, organized by the Foundation for the Development of a Market Economy and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Baku. <https://www.turan.az/ext/news/2019/6/free/Social/en/81923.htm>.

<sup>59</sup> Footnote 53.

<sup>60</sup> Footnote 46, p. 33.

<sup>61</sup> Footnote 25.

### 3. Wage Gaps

Azerbaijani legislation ensures equal pay for the same labor, position and profession for both women and men. The salary for the same job may vary only based on the work experience and academic degree. However, the country still has a relatively high gender wage gap, as Table 7 illustrates. Overall, women earn only 48% of what men earn, ranking the country at 117 out of 144 according to the GGGI. The wage gap has increased since 2012 when women earned 52% of what men earned and the country ranked 88 out of 135. In similar occupations, women earn 73% of what men earn.<sup>62</sup> This figure has changed little since 2012 when women in similar occupations earned 71% of what men earned.<sup>63</sup>

**Table 7: Key Data on Wage Gaps from the Global Gender Gap Index, 2012 and 2017**

2012		2017	
% women's earnings compared to men's earnings	52%	% women's earnings compared to men's earnings	48%
% women's earnings compared to men's in similar occupations	71%	% women earnings compared to men's in similar occupations	73%
GGGI ranking on wage gap	88 out of 135	GGGI ranking on wage gap	117 out of 144

GGGI = Global Gender Gap Index.

Source: World Economic Forum. 2012 and 2017. *Global Gender Gap Index*. Geneva.

Several reasons explain the difference in earnings between women and men. The concentration of women in lower-paying occupations in health, education, and services is one of the factors. Mining is the highest-paid occupation where women are only 11% of the total employees.<sup>64</sup> The underrepresentation of women in management positions is another potential contributing factor.<sup>65</sup> FGD participants indicated that although women's entry to the workforce is accepted, women are less accepted in higher-level management positions. Officially, women should not face discrimination in their advancement but often biases about women in leadership make women reluctant to take on senior roles. Family obligations were also cited as reason why women were less likely to obtain higher-level positions.

As shown in Figure 4, women working in the mining sector earn only 50% of what men earn. Finance and insurance are the next highest-paying occupations where women are only one-third of those employed in the sector, earning just 66% of what men earn. The wage gap varies by sector—women earn more than men in agriculture, but less than men in all other sectors. Under the work categories of professional, scientific, and technical, women earn only 34% of what men generally earn.

As described in Box 4, a longitudinal study on young women and men in the workforce found that women taking time out for maternity leave was another factor contributing to the wage gap.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Footnote 16, p. 72.

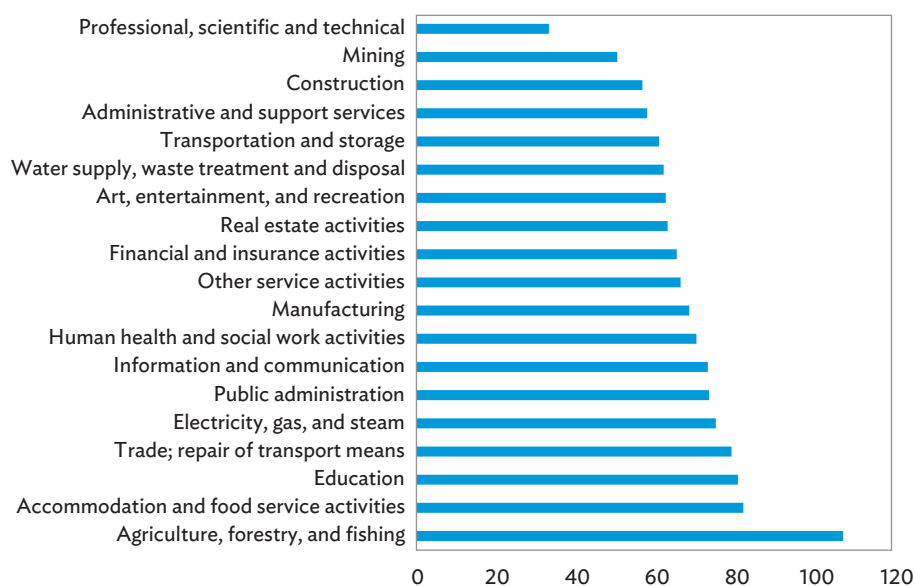
<sup>63</sup> Footnote 18, p. 104.

<sup>64</sup> Footnote 54.

<sup>65</sup> F. Pastore et al. 2016. When Do Gender Wage Differences Emerge? A Study of Azerbaijan's Labor Market. *Policy Research Paper 7613*. Washington, DC: The World Bank Group.

<sup>66</sup> M. Guluzade. 2015. *Human Factor and Acceleration of Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Azerbaijan*. Baku: Economic University Publishing House.

**Figure 4: Women's Average Monthly Earnings as Percentage of Men's, 2017**  
(%)



Source: Republic of Azerbaijan, State Statistical Committee. 2017. *Women and Men in Azerbaijan*. Baku.

#### Box 4: Longitudinal Study on Young Women and Men in the Workforce

A longitudinal study of youth in the workforce who leave secondary school at the age range of 15–29 identified a number of factors affecting the wages of women and men in this age group.

Findings show that greater responsibility for child-raising and domestic tasks are some of the problems limiting women's economic empowerment. Although women and men enter the workforce at similar ages, the years of work experience missed, when women take time out for maternity, generates a wage penalty. Women are often reentering at lower-paid jobs, have fewer opportunities for advancement, and are often unable to catch up with their male counterparts that did not take a time out.

The same study showed that as workers enter their 20s, the number of hours worked is higher for men than for women, with married women working significantly fewer hours in a paid employment. Young women tend to opt for work in jobs that provide better maternity benefits, such as large firms and those covered by formal contracts. However, women may be settling for lower salaries to have stability and benefits during their child-bearing years. Women may remain unemployed longer until they find such opportunities. Focus group discussions with young women and men, undertaken as part of this assessment, confirmed that youth perceived women's family obligation as a constraint to career advancement. While participants considered that attitudes constraining women's roles were starting to change, the lack of role models made it difficult for women to move into nontraditional areas or to aim for senior positions.

Source: M. Guluzade. 2015. *Human Factor and Acceleration of Socio-Economic Development in the Republic of Azerbaijan*. Baku: Economic University Publishing House.

Overall, unpaid domestic labor and care for family members are considered the main barriers for engaging in income-generating work for women. Thus, even with small income, women tend to prefer flexible part-time jobs that allow them to simultaneously perform their household responsibilities, or prefer public jobs for stability, regulation, and safety.<sup>67</sup>

**Maternity and parental leave.** Azerbaijan has a paid maternity leave in its parental leave legislations, which allow women from the workforce to take out leaves for pregnancy and childbirth. Female employees are entitled to a base maternity leave with full pay of 126 days (70 days before and 56 days after). Women who work in the agriculture sector are given longer maternity leave with 70 days before and 70 days after. Men are entitled to only 14 days of unpaid paternity leave. These provisions provide a minimum of support for families having children.

On the other hand, this legislative protection of working women's rights may pose more challenges to married women because private companies would prefer not to “provide paid maternity leave (formal employment), look for a substitute (informal employment) or allow mothers of small children to take time off work if a child gets sick.”<sup>68</sup>

Such discriminatory approach, which is common in the public sector, restricts women's chances for equal employment opportunities. The relatively short leave duration after childbirth—just under 2 months—could cause women to leave their jobs if they needed to stay longer with their infants due to health issues or because they prefer to do so. The very limited extent of paternity leave reinforces the perspective that childcare is mainly women's responsibility. A longer period of entitlement to paid and unpaid maternity leave, and more time for paternity leave that includes some paid leave, would better support young families to have children and still both participate in the labor force.

## 4. Women and Entrepreneurship

Globally, the development of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) is considered an important area not only for diversifying the economy but also for advancing women's economic empowerment. At present, women are underrepresented as business owners in Azerbaijan with only 25% of registered businesses being owned by women.<sup>69</sup> Women represent only 21% of small enterprise owners. This figure varies from 25.5% in the Ganja–Gazakh Economic Region to as low as 15.0% in the Daghlig Shirvan Economic Region.<sup>70</sup>

In the agriculture sector, half of the respondents, employed as farm owners, were women. However, women comprised only one-quarter among those operating farms that received credit or used equipment. Women farm operators were also less likely to be involved in processing and commercialization of products.<sup>71</sup> Rural women interviewed in FGDs noted the following constraints for women to develop farm-related enterprises: (i) lack of financial support, (ii) lack of knowledge of rules on trade and commercialization, and (iii) limited training opportunities to acquire these skills. All these were identified as barriers to rural women's business development.

<sup>67</sup> Footnote 46, p. 26.

<sup>68</sup> Footnote 46, pp. 31–32.

<sup>69</sup> Footnote 9.

<sup>70</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan, State Statistical Committee. 2017. *Gender Indicators*. Baku.

<sup>71</sup> Footnote 54.



SME development is critical to diversifying the national economy yet it is also facing challenges in the current economic and financial environment. During 2002–2015, over 3,500 women received AZN55.5 million (manats) for their entrepreneurial activities, which boosted the development of new jobs and income-generating initiatives. However, the two waves of currency devaluation in 2015 led to decreased available credit for businesses of all sizes, and credit that is available has a high interest rate. After experiencing losses in capital, banks are less risk tolerant in their lending. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) were more affected as they generally carried more risk and require short-term loans, which are less available. Banks began requiring immovable property to secure loans making borrowing difficult.<sup>72</sup>

These conditions create constraints to starting a business for women and men. Women may be unable to start a business on their own as they may not have registered property or only have properties registered under another family member. As women often face family resistance to their starting a business, they may also find it difficult to get agreement on using family property as collateral. Often, women micro and small entrepreneurs will turn to microfinance to access small, short-term loans. However, even microfinance institutions interviewed as part of this assessment reported that in the current environment of currency devaluation and limited capital, they are more focused on loan recovery rather than taking on new loans.

Qualitative studies have shown that women are interested in entrepreneurship. A case study for a project on women's business development support found that women gave several reasons for starting their own business, including wanting to have their own income, to become their own boss, for personal growth and satisfaction, and also due to difficulty in finding a regular job.

Specific barriers that women faced when starting a business include (i) lack of family support for their decision, (ii) lack of access to capital, and (iii) lack of information about the steps in developing a business plan and in operating a business.<sup>73</sup>

During the FGDs, urban women identified the lack of knowledge about product demand, marketing, human resource management, and financial support as constraints to starting or growing businesses.

According to key informants, the official figure on the percentage of women entrepreneurs is likely lower than actual numbers as many women may be operating unregistered businesses, particularly micro and small enterprises. Although the government is improving the procedures to register businesses, women are less accustomed to dealing with government officials. Key informant interview reports noted that women worry about the difficulties in dealing with officials after they have registered.

An enabling environment that promotes women's needs will help them succeed in private sector employment and entrepreneurship. This involves "family support, relevant educational

<sup>72</sup> V. Bayramov et al. 2017. *A Comparative Study on Development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Azerbaijan*. Baku: Centre for Economic and Social Development.

<sup>73</sup> Azerbaijan Microfinance Association. 2016. *Developing Women's Entrepreneurship in Azerbaijan: Case Study*. Baku.

### Box 5. Gender Differences in Financial Inclusion

Limited access to finance is one of the barriers women face in putting up or expanding their own business. An ADB-supported financial inclusion survey completed in 2016 found that women are in a more precarious financial position than men, as shown below:

- Financial literacy levels are higher among men (68% average financial literacy scores) than women (48%).
- Men use insurance services (28%) considerably more than women (6%).
- More men have checking or savings accounts (5.1%) than women (2.5%).

To improve financial inclusion, a key recommendation in the survey is to provide unbiased information, especially to women, on the costs and benefits of savings accounts, payment, credit, and insurance services.

Source: ADB. 2016. *Technical Assistance Consultant's Report: TA-8621—Azerbaijan: Microfinance Sector Development (Financial Inclusion Survey Component)*. Manila.

opportunities, the redistribution of domestic labor, greater mobility in public space, and gender-equal treatment by employers.”<sup>74</sup>

Efforts to promote women’s entrepreneurship is one way of increasing women’s labor force participation and enhancing their share of growth to be generated by efforts to diversify the economy. Starting a business requires multiple registration and setup procedures but Azerbaijan had also been making efforts to improve its business environment. The government has introduced a single-service window for company registration and a best practice e-government portal with information for entrepreneurs. As a result, the time and cost for starting a business is less than in many other countries in Europe and Central Asia.<sup>75</sup>

The government has also created a learning space for rural women on entrepreneurship skills and vocational education training through 11 regional children and families support centers and eight women’s resource centers. These centers provided training courses for over 5,500 women and young people during 2011–2018.

However, the demand for entrepreneurship skills still exceed the current supply manifold. Therefore, the comparatively lower percentage of women in business compared to men indicates that women may not be taking advantage of these administrative reforms designed to promote entrepreneurship.

The Strategic Roadmap for SME Development (2016) proposes financial and institutional support measures to build SME capacity and facilitate business growth in more sectors of the economy. The SME road map identifies as one of the priorities the development of female entrepreneurship. It also proposes to (i) increase their access to credit, taxation services, and other benefits for women entrepreneurs, especially rural women; (ii) enhance their access to information, (iii) create women business incubators; and (iv) establish associations and

<sup>74</sup> Footnote 46, p. 10.

<sup>75</sup> World Bank. 2018. *Doing Business: Azerbaijan*. <https://www.doingbusiness.org/en/data/exploreconomies/azerbaijan#starting-a-business>.

professional organizations of women entrepreneurs. However, it does not allocate a specific budget to these activities, stating rather that they will be integrated into other projects listed in the road map.<sup>76</sup>

## B. Gender Equality in Human Development

Azerbaijan is in the high human development category. Progress has been made in improving health and education outcomes, such as having close to universal primary education, increasing life expectancy, and reducing maternal and infant mortality.<sup>77</sup> However, the rate of change is slowing, and more efforts are needed to ensure that positive trends in human development indicators will continue.

### 1. Access to Education

**Early childhood education.** According to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), research on children’s learning shows that early childhood education has a positive impact on child development and later performance in school.<sup>78</sup> In addition, as women have the main child-raising responsibilities, state-funded preschool also facilitates higher female labor force participation. Increasing access to preschool education is a challenge that the government is currently addressing. As shown in Table 8, only 13.8% of children aged 1–5 were enrolled in preschool education institutions in 2017. This figure has declined since 2010 when it was 16.8%. In 2017, slightly more girls were enrolled, with girls comprising 46.2% of children enrolled in preschool from 45.7% in 2010.<sup>79</sup>

**Table 8: Key Data on Early Childhood Education (%)**

% of children aged 1–5 enrolled in preschool education in 2017	13.8
% of children aged 1–5 enrolled in preschool education in 2010	16.8
Girls aged 1–5 were enrolled in preschool education in 2017	46.2
Girls aged 1–5 were enrolled in preschool education institutions in 2010	45.7
Children aged 5 enrolled in school preparatory groups in 2017	65.0

Source: Republic of Azerbaijan, State Committee for Statistics. Various years. *Education, Science and Culture Statistics*. Baku.

<sup>76</sup> Footnote 37.

<sup>77</sup> The education system in Azerbaijan has the following levels: preschool education (up to 6 years), primary education (1–4 grades), general secondary (5–9 grades), and complete secondary (10–11 grades). Primary vocational education starts upon completion of general secondary education after which graduates receive a diploma of completion of secondary education. After secondary education, students can advance to secondary vocational education or higher education. Higher education has three stages: bachelor, masters, and doctorate.

<sup>78</sup> United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). 2017. *Early Childhood Development*. <https://www.unicef.org/eca/what-we-do/early-childhood-development>.

<sup>79</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan, State Committee for Statistics. 2017. *Education, Science and Culture Statistics*. Baku.

To target higher preschool attendance, the President signed on 19 June 2017 a decree on the Implementation of the New Law on Preschool Education. With support from UNICEF, the Ministry of Education conducted a 9-month pilot project to introduce community-based preschool education in 10 regions and 50 communities of Baku. This project expanded in 2018 with support from the European Union and UNICEF. Starting in 2015, the Ministry of Education introduced preparatory groups for 5-year-old children. Groups operate for 3 hours, 4 times a week from October through May at public schools. During school year 2017–2018, 65% of 5-year-old children were covered by this program, and by 2019–2020, the coverage will be up to 90%.

**Primary education.** Azerbaijan has free, compulsory primary and secondary education and has achieved almost universal adult literacy (99.7% for men and 99.2% for women in 2015). The Law on Education adopted in 2009 highlights one of the key principles of the policy on education, which is to create equal opportunities for all citizens to exercise their right to education on an equal basis.

Over the past 15 years, the country has achieved a high level of primary education enrollment for both girls and boys. From 2000 to 2015, the ratio of primary education finalization increased from 92.8% to 100%. This indicator increased to 100% among boys and to 99.9% among girls.<sup>80</sup>

**Secondary education.** As with primary, secondary level education rates are high with a total of 87.2% lower secondary enrollment rate in 2016.<sup>81</sup> However, some gender equality issues still need to be addressed for secondary education. The lower secondary enrollment rate was 85.7% for girls in 2016 compared to 88.8% for boys.<sup>82</sup>

**Table 9: Lower Secondary Enrollment by Sex (%)**

School Enrollment	
<b>Total</b>	<b>87.2</b>
Female	85.7
Male	88.8

Source: World Bank. 2017. *Databank. Education Statistics, Azerbaijan*. Washington, DC.

According to the Ministry of Education, students in general secondary education comprised 46% female and 54% male during the 2016–2017 academic year. Female students were 46% of those receiving a general secondary education certificate and 44% of those receiving a full secondary certificate.<sup>83</sup>

The completion rate of girls in secondary education is showing a downward trend.

<sup>80</sup> Footnote 9.

<sup>81</sup> World Bank. 2017. *Gender Data Portal: Azerbaijan*. <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/gender/country/azerbaijan>.

<sup>82</sup> Footnote 81.

<sup>83</sup> Data provided by the Ministry of Education, 26 February 2018.

**Table 10: Attainment and Completion of Secondary Education by Sex**  
(%)

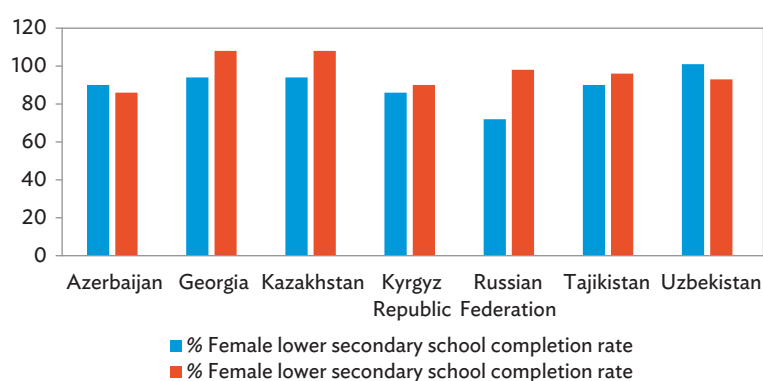
Academic Year 2016–2017	Male	Female
Pupils studying at general education schools	54	46
Graduates who received general secondary education certificate	54	46
Graduates who received full secondary education certificate	56	44

Source: Data provided by the Ministry of Education, 26 February 2018.

Figure 5 shows that lower secondary school completion rate of girls dropped from 90% in 2007 to 86% in 2015.<sup>84</sup> Early marriage may be a contributing factor. Data show that as girls' enrollment in secondary school declines, adolescent fertility was on the rise. Figure 6 reveals that during the same 2007–2015 period, adolescent birth ratio increased from 36.14 per 1,000 women aged 15–19 in 2005 to 51.70 in 2015, which is the highest figure over the last few decades. This trend is in contrast with other countries in the region where adolescent fertility rates declined, and female lower secondary school completion rates increased.<sup>85</sup> Meanwhile, the number of children from adolescent girls 15–17 years old dropped by almost twice, i.e., from 4,392 in 2011 to 2,421 in 2017.

The factors contributing to the declining secondary school education completion rates for girls' and higher adolescent fertility have not been comprehensively studied and so it is difficult to state the cause. The legal age of marriage for girls increased from 17 to 18 years in 2011 and a formal certificate is required before anyone, including religious leaders, can

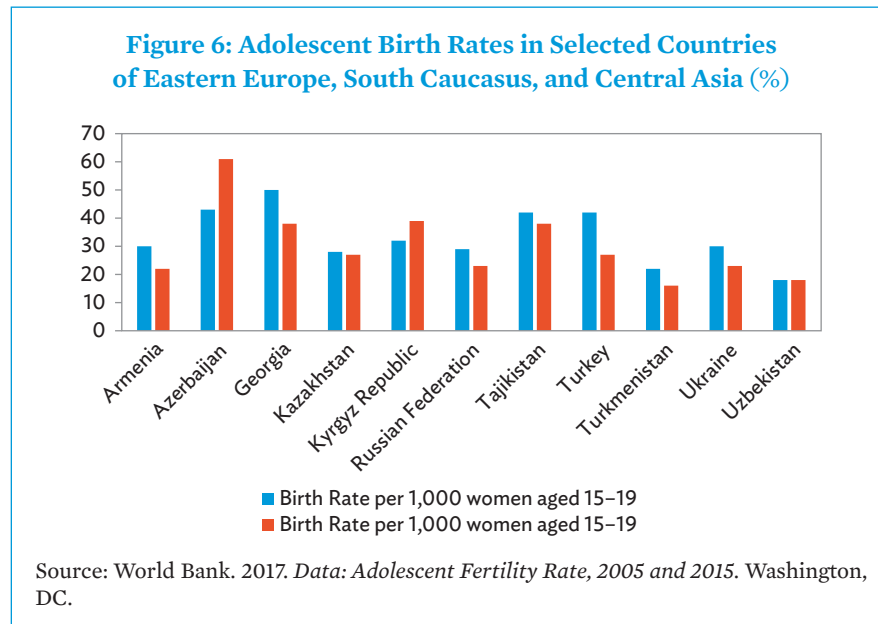
**Figure 5: Female Lower Secondary Completion Rate in Selected Countries of South Caucasus and Central Asia (%)**



Source: World Bank. 2017. *Data: Female Lower Secondary Completion Rate, 2007 and 2015*. Washington, DC.

<sup>84</sup> World Bank. 2017. *Data: Girls Lower Secondary Completion, 2007 and 2015*. Washington, DC. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.CMPT.LO.ZS?end=2015&start=2007>.

<sup>85</sup> World Bank. 2017. *Data: Adolescent Fertility Rates, 2005 and 2015*. Washington, DC. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT?view=map>. Comparative data for same years is not available for all countries.



perform a marriage rite. However, limited access to higher education and jobs can lead girls to leave secondary school and marry early. Families that are poor or socially and economically disadvantaged marry off girls in their family to relieve their economic burden. In some cases, traditional outlooks may influence families to arrange marriage of girls at an early age to ensure that they are settled.<sup>86</sup>

However, due to the legal amendment in the Family Code, that increased the legal age of marriage for girls from 17 to 18 years, along with the continuous efforts of the SCFWCA in conducting a wide range of awareness raising and advocacy projects over the last few years, the situation in the area improved—the number of girls married under the age of 18 dropped from 5,138 in 2011 to 317 in 2017.<sup>87</sup>

**Tertiary education.** As shown in Table 11, the enrollment rate in university and college education is around 20.0% for both sexes, which is low compared to the 33.4% for other upper-middle income countries, and this figure is even lower than the 25.5% for all middle-income countries. This lower-than-average tertiary education enrollment rate corresponds to past economic patterns where Azerbaijan generated employment mainly from natural resources. In the future, as Azerbaijan shifts toward a diversified, knowledge-based economy, more promotion of higher education is needed for both women and men.

The percentage of students graduating with a secondary certificate and entering a higher education institution is evenly distributed between women and men—women at 49.8% and men at 50.2%.<sup>88</sup> However, the figures vary greatly by region. In Baku, women (50.9%) admitted to higher education are only slightly higher than men (49.1%). In other economic regions, women's share varies from as high as 54.1% in Absheron to as low as 40.6% in Lankaran. In

<sup>86</sup> Footnote 85. Comparative data for same years not available for all countries.

<sup>87</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan, State Statistical Committee. 2017. *Marriage and Divorces*. Baku.

<sup>88</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan, State Statistical Committee. 2017. *Education, Science, Culture Data*. Baku. <https://www.stat.gov.az/source/education/>.

**Table 11: Enrollment in Tertiary Education by Sex, 2017 (%)**

Enrollment Rate in University and College Institutions	20% of Total Enrollment	
	Women	Men
Secondary graduates admitted to tertiary education—Overall	49.8	50.2
Secondary graduates admitted to tertiary education—Baku	50.9	49.1
Secondary graduates admitted to tertiary education—Absheron Region	54.1	45.9
Secondary graduates admitted to tertiary education—Lankaran Region	40.6	59.4

Source: Republic of Azerbaijan, State Statistical Committee. 2017. *Education, Science, Culture Data*. Baku.

10 administrative regions (districts)—out of the country's total of 75—women account for 40% or less of those admitted to higher education institutions, with as low as 24% in at least one administrative region.<sup>89</sup> The data show that depending on geographic area, women may be less likely to attend higher education.

Table 12 shows that female representation varies across the options for tertiary education. Female students are only 27% of those enrolled in primary vocational education. This is where students get a skilled trade after general secondary education. Meanwhile, female students are 66% of those enrolled in secondary vocational level.<sup>90</sup> Secondary vocational education allows secondary school graduates to qualify for a technical diploma and enter the labor market or qualify for admission to higher education.<sup>91</sup> Female students represent over 60% of those enrolled in the universities and colleges.<sup>92</sup>

Choices in the fields of study that will determine occupational paths are highly gender-segregated. In secondary vocational education, women comprise over 80% of education and public health fields but less than 15% in technical fields such as construction, energy and energy machinery, mining, and transport.<sup>93</sup>

**Table 12: Share of Female Students by Type of Education Institution, 2017 (%)**

Type of Education Institution	Female Students
Primary vocational education	27
Secondary vocational education	66
Tertiary education: university and college	60
<b>Vocational Fields of Study</b>	
Secondary vocational education—education and public health	80
Construction, energy and energy machinery, mining, and transport	15

Source: Republic of Azerbaijan, State Statistical Committee. 2017. *Education, Science, Culture Data*. Baku.

<sup>89</sup> Footnote 88.

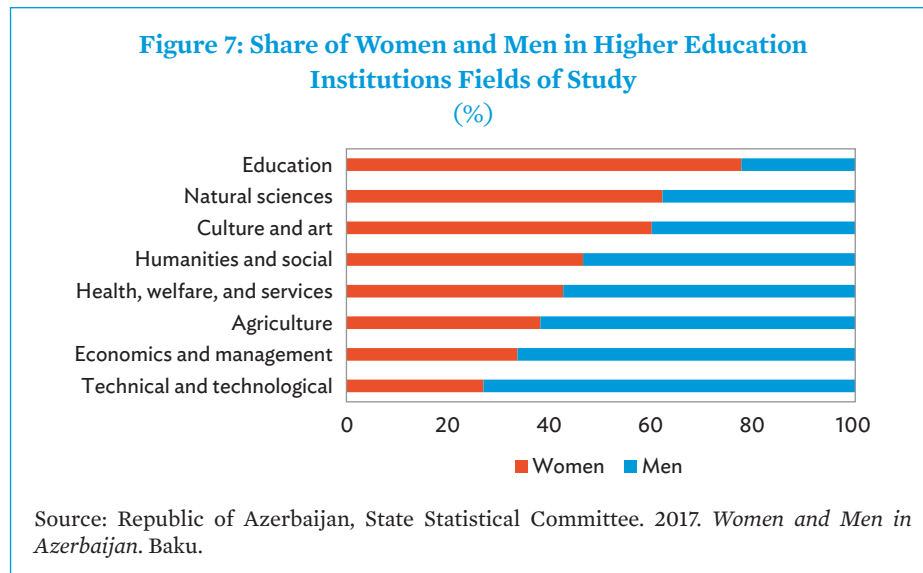
<sup>90</sup> Footnote 88.

<sup>91</sup> Baku Education Information Center. 2017. *Education System in Azerbaijan*. Baku.

<sup>92</sup> Footnote 88.

<sup>93</sup> Footnote 88.

As shown in Figure 7, the field of education dominates women’s choice when getting higher education (bachelor’s degree). Women comprise 77% of education students compared to 23% of men. By contrast, women comprise only 26% in technical and technological fields compared to 73% of men.



For women who have to combine paid labor and unpaid domestic work, chances to enrolling in after-work professional education and networking are also slim. As a result, women are at a disadvantage compared to men colleagues when it comes to upgrading education and getting promotions.<sup>94</sup>

To modernize the education system and create the skilled workforce needed for a knowledge-based and diversified economy, the government has put in place the “State Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan.” In addressing the high degree of gender segregation in the educational choices of women and men, the government has set the modernizing of the education system as a key priority. With the share of women across nontraditional fields of study increasing every year, the chair of the SCFWCA noted that the elimination of gender stereotypes and the correct regulation of professional segregation remains a key issue.<sup>95</sup>

Women account for a large share of the workforce, hence, a study on women across more diverse fields will contribute to providing the economy with a more skilled workforce and to women’s economic empowerment.

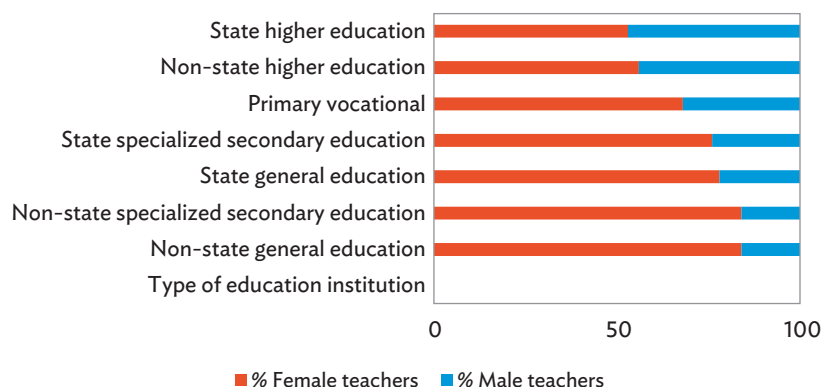
**Teachers.** Women comprise the majority of teachers in most levels of education. As shown in Figure 8, the concentration of women as teachers is quite marked in general education level

<sup>94</sup> Footnote 46.

<sup>95</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan. 2018. Statement of Hijran Huseynova, chair of SCFWCA, to the participants of the 5th Women’s Forum dedicated to the centenary of granting suffrage to Azerbaijani women held in May 30 at the Baku Convention Center. <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/2910316.html>.



**Figure 8: Percentage of Teachers in Education Institutions by Sex (%)**



Source: Republic of Azerbaijan, State Statistical Committee. 2017. *Women and Men in Azerbaijan*. Baku.

(78% for state and 84% for non-state), and at secondary vocational education level (76% for state and 84% for non-state). More men are teachers in higher education levels at 47% (for state) compared to 53% for women, and 56% men (for non-state) compared to 44% women teachers.

## 2. Access to Health

### *Reproductive Health*

**Maternal and child mortality.** There is progress in improving maternal and child health. As shown in Table 13, the maternal mortality level and infant mortality rate were more than halved during 2000–2015. The mortality rate of children under 5 years was also substantially decreased.

**Table 13: Trends in Maternal and Child Health Indicators**

Indicator	2000	2010	2015	2018
Maternal mortality (for every 100,000 live births)	37.6	15.7	14.4	12.2
Infant mortality (for every 1,000 live births)	16.4	11.2	11.0	11.1
Mortality rate of children under 5 (for every 1,000 live births)	30.5	14.2	13.3	13.1

Source: Republic of Azerbaijan, State Statistical Committee. 2018. *Health, Social Protection, Sport–General Information*. <https://www.stat.gov.az/source/healthcare/?lang=en>.

However, the reduction in maternal mortality has slowed down. Only a reduction of 2 deaths per 100,000 live births was achieved between 2010 and 2015.<sup>96</sup>

As shown in Table 14, Azerbaijan's maternal mortality ratio is the same level as in the Russian Federation and lower than Georgia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. However, the rate is higher than Turkey and Kazakhstan. The infant mortality rate is higher than most other countries in the region except for Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

**Table 14: Comparison of Health Indicators for Caucasus and Central Asian Countries**

Country	Maternal Mortality per 100,000 Live Births	Infant Mortality per 1,000 Live Births
Armenia	25	12.6
Azerbaijan	25	27.9
Georgia	36	10.6
Kazakhstan	12	12.6
Kyrgyz Republic	76	19.0
Russian Federation	25	8.2
Tajikistan	32	38.5
Turkey	16	11.6
Uzbekistan	36	33.9

Source: UNDP. 2016. *Human Development Report*. Geneva.

The government is further improving its performance on maternal and child health under the State Program on Improvement of Maternal and Child Health for 2014–2020. The program aims to enhance the quality of treatment and preventive care provided to women and children to improve their health status. Since 2000, the participation of qualified medical professionals during childbirths increased from 92.1% to 99.8% and almost all deliveries occur at hospitals or other health institutions.<sup>97</sup>

**Antenatal care.** The most recent Demographic Health Survey (2011) found that overall, 91.7% of women received antenatal care (ANC) from a trained health-care provider during their most recent pregnancy between 2006 and 2011.<sup>98</sup> However, some rural and urban discrepancies exist: 94.6% of urban women received ANC from a trained provider compared with 86.9% of rural women. On average, 66.1% of all women had four or more ANC visits during a pregnancy, however, it is much higher in urban areas (77.2%) compared to women in the rural areas (48.3%).<sup>99</sup> The number of ANC clinics declined from 317 in 2000 to 130 in 2017.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Footnote 7.

<sup>97</sup> Footnote 9.

<sup>98</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan, Ministry of Health. 2011. *Demographic and Health Survey*. Baku. Respondents were only counted for one pregnancy during the most recent 5-year period.

<sup>99</sup> Footnote 98.

<sup>100</sup> Footnote 54.

**Table 15: Data on Reproductive Health—Antenatal Care**

Demographic Health Survey Findings: 2006–2011	All	Rural	Urban
Women who had a live birth received antenatal care from a trained health-care provider during their most recent pregnancy	91.7%	86.9%	94.6%
Women had four or more ANC visits during a pregnancy	66.1%	48.3%	77.2%
	In 2000	In 2017	
Number of antenatal clinics	313	130	

Sources: The Republic of Azerbaijan, Ministry of Health. 2011. Demographic and Health Survey. pp. 111–113: [https://www.isim.az/upload/File/docs/Demographic\\_and\\_Health\\_Survey-2011\\_Azerbaijan\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](https://www.isim.az/upload/File/docs/Demographic_and_Health_Survey-2011_Azerbaijan_Final_Report.pdf); Republic of Azerbaijan, State Statistical Committee. 2017. *Women and Men in Azerbaijan*. Baku.

**Use of contraceptives.** Azerbaijan has a long record of low use of contraceptives. This has resulted in the frequent practice of induced abortion, which is commonly accessible, as a method to limit or space births.<sup>101</sup>

Among women aged 15–49, 58% use contraceptives but the rate drops to 28% when only modern methods are counted. The unmet need for family planning is estimated at 13%.<sup>102</sup> Similar to other post-Soviet republics, abortion is frequently used as a method of contraception. Almost half of pregnancies (52.7%) end in a live birth, while the rest (40.9%) are terminated mainly due to induced abortions. The main reasons are limited availability of family planning services and the high cost of contraceptives.<sup>103</sup> As many as 46.7% of all abortions happened to women who became pregnant despite the use of contraception, in most cases using traditional methods.<sup>104</sup> Overall, the rate of abortion is increasing at 13.8 per 1,000 women aged 15–49 in 2016 compared to 7.8 in 2005.<sup>105</sup> It is not possible to identify the cause of this increase without further study but lack of access to contraceptives could be a contributing factor.

**Table 16: Data on Reproductive Health—Abortions**

Category	Value
% pregnancies end in a live birth	52.7%
% pregnancies end in abortion	40.9%
% of abortions among women who used contraceptives	46.7%
Abortion rate per 1,000 women aged 15–49 in 2005	7.8
Abortion per 1,000 women aged 15–49 in 2016	13.8

Sources: İCTİMAİ SƏHİYYƏ VƏ İSLAHATLAR MƏRKƏZİ (ISIM). 2011. Demographic and Health Survey Azerbaijan. *Final report 2011*. Baku. [https://www.isim.az/upload/File/docs/Demographic\\_and\\_Health\\_Survey-2011\\_Azerbaijan\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](https://www.isim.az/upload/File/docs/Demographic_and_Health_Survey-2011_Azerbaijan_Final_Report.pdf); Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan. 2017. *Health, Social Protection, Sport–Morbidity of population–Births and abortions*. [https://www.stat.gov.az/source/healthcare/en/001\\_2\\_21en.xls](https://www.stat.gov.az/source/healthcare/en/001_2_21en.xls).

<sup>101</sup> UNFPA. 2014. *Mechanisms Behind the Skewed Sex-Ratio at Birth in Azerbaijan: Qualitative and Quantitative Analyses*. Baku.

<sup>102</sup> UNFPA. 2018. *World Population Dashboard: Azerbaijan*. New York. <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population/AZ>.

<sup>103</sup> G. Rzayeva. 2016. Medical Abortions in Azerbaijan. Presented during a conference at the Scientific Research Institute of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Baku on 01 June 2016.

<sup>104</sup> Footnote 98.

<sup>105</sup> Footnote 54.

### Life Expectancy and Disease Incidence

As in the majority of countries, women in Azerbaijan have a higher life expectancy than men at 75.2 years compared to 69.1 years for men.<sup>106</sup> The overall life expectancy at birth of 72.1 years, just below the average for Europe and Central Asia at 72.6, is indicative of gradually improving health outcomes.<sup>107</sup> Overall, the gains are equally shared by women and men with life expectancy for both sexes increasing by 5 years since 2000.

**Table 17: Data on Life Expectancy (in years)**

Category	All	Women	Men
Life expectancy (2016)—Europe and Central Asia	72.6		
Life expectancy (2017)—Azerbaijan	72.1	75.2	69.1
Life expectancy (2000)—Azerbaijan	66.8	69.9	63.6

Source: UNDP. 2017. *Human Development Index*. New York.

**Communicable diseases.** The World Health Organization (WHO) ranks tuberculosis as one of the top 10 causes of premature death in the world and ending the epidemic by 2030 is among the health targets of the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>108</sup> Azerbaijan is one of 18 high-priority countries to combat tuberculosis. Among active cases, men are likely to die from tuberculosis twice as more than women, hence, more efforts are needed to target its prevention among men.<sup>109</sup>

According to official statistics, new cases of HIV are slightly declining with 495 cases detected in 2011 compared to 477 in 2017 among the population aged 15–49 years old. Men face greater risk of getting HIV than women. However, more women are becoming affected, with new HIV cases involving women increasing from 24.4% in 2011 to 37.1% in 2017.<sup>110</sup> This trend shows that more efforts are needed to prevent HIV among women. A key strategy needed is to raise awareness of HIV risks among women. According to the Demographic and Health Survey 2011, only one in five women (19.3%) demonstrated a comprehensive knowledge of the behaviors necessary for preventing HIV/AIDS transmission.<sup>111</sup>

**Table 18: Key Data on HIV/AIDS Cases, 2011 and 2017**

Category	2011	2017
No. of firstly recognized HIV-infected population aged of 15–49 years old	495	477
% of new female cases	24.4%	37.1%
% of women with comprehensive knowledge of how to prevent HIV/AIDS	19.3%	N/A

Source: Republic of Azerbaijan, State Statistical Committee. 2011 and 2017. *Sex Distribution of HIV-Infected Population Aged of 15–49 Years Old*. [https://www.stat.gov.az/source/gender/en/qk/002\\_5en.xls](https://www.stat.gov.az/source/gender/en/qk/002_5en.xls). Baku.

<sup>106</sup> Footnote 7.

<sup>107</sup> World Health Organization (WHO). 2017. *Azerbaijan: Country Profile*. Geneva.

<sup>108</sup> WHO. 2018. *Tuberculosis Fact Sheet*. Geneva.

<sup>109</sup> Footnote 54.

<sup>110</sup> Footnote 54.

<sup>111</sup> Footnote 98. Comprehensive knowledge is defined as (i) knowing that both—condom use and limiting sex partners to one uninfected person—are HIV/AIDS prevention methods; (ii) being aware that a healthy-looking person can have HIV; and (iii) rejecting common misconceptions about transmission.

Key informants also pointed to other sexually transmitted diseases and to hepatitis B and C as other causes of concern. However, data on the incidence of communicable diseases are very limited. The last survey was in 2011 and annual health statistics track causes of death but not overall disease incidence. Services for the prevention and treatment of communicable diseases, including sexually transmitted diseases, are limited especially in rural areas. The lack of services affects both women and men. Resources and better epidemiological information are needed to develop effective health programs to prevent and treat communicable diseases.

**Noncommunicable diseases.** Most premature deaths in the country are attributable to four noncommunicable diseases—cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and chronic respiratory disease.<sup>112</sup> For deaths between the ages of 30 and 70, cardiovascular disease is a more frequent cause of death for men than for women. Between 2000 and 2012, the portion of women dying from cardiovascular disease has shown a downward trend compared to men, which has remained steady. While the number of cardiovascular deaths among women declined, gender differences in health risks show that women are more at risk of obesity than men, a factor that can cause health problems. Men’s health is more at risk from tobacco use.<sup>113</sup> Public health programs are needed to address health risk factors with a focus on improving diet and nutrition for women and reducing tobacco use among men.

Cancer is a health concern for women and men with rates of premature death for men and women from cancer remaining steady since 2012 even as other health outcomes have improved. Cancer is as likely to cause death in women aged 30–70 as cardiovascular disease.<sup>114</sup> These patterns reveal the need to target the differing health needs of women and men to further increase life expectancy for both sexes. More efforts are needed to target men with health information and services to reduce their risk of premature death from cardiovascular disease. At the same time, allocating more research and services to prevent cancer will have an impact on women’s health outcomes.

These differences in health patterns shows that monitoring sex-disaggregated data and developing programs and services to target the differing health needs of women and men is a priority for further improving overall health outcomes. In 2017, Azerbaijan started to implement the WHO STEPS approach to noncommunicable disease risk factor surveillance. This technique promotes a more comprehensive monitoring of the risk factors contributing to noncommunicable diseases so that health programs and services can more effectively target the risks.<sup>115</sup> Once completed, results from this survey should be reported and analyzed according to gender. Developing a sex-disaggregated profile of disease risk factors would create a better understanding of health priorities for women and men and facilitate a gender-balanced allocation of resources for preventive health-care programs and services.

## Health Services

Azerbaijan is characterized by relatively low levels of public health expenditure, with only 1.0% (2017) of GDP allocated to public health—a very slight increase from the 0.8% figure in 2000. The total per capita health expenditure is \$471 compared to \$636 across European Bank

<sup>112</sup> Footnote 107. Premature deaths are those between 30 and 70 years of age.

<sup>113</sup> Footnote 107.

<sup>114</sup> Footnote 107.

<sup>115</sup> WHO. 2017. *Azerbaijan Preparing for Nationwide Survey to Assess Risk Factors for NCDs*. Geneva.

for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) countries of operation (2014).<sup>116</sup> In the years following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan's extensive health system deteriorated due a declining budget, the transition of management systems, and difficulties in allocating limited resources according to needs. Reforms have since been made to improve the health system. However, the organizational structure remains centralized and the main services are concentrated in large hospitals that tend to be in urban centers. The number of doctors per capita at 344 per 100,000 (2014) is insufficient and geographical distribution of both doctors and nurses is uneven, with a higher proportion in urban areas.<sup>117</sup> The majority of the doctors are women and their salaries are low particularly for those working in public hospitals.<sup>118</sup>

Expenditures are concentrated on hospital centers and curative care whereas some of the most serious health problems—cardiovascular diseases, diarrhea, lower respiratory problems, and common infectious diseases<sup>119</sup>—are best addressed through less costly primary health-care and public health prevention initiatives. In 2010, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that the key mechanisms of a public health system were not in place.<sup>120</sup> Women, in particular pregnant women and new mothers, are entitled to free health services such as antenatal care, delivery assistance, neonatal and pediatric services, immunizations, and family planning. However, rural women must travel distances to access facilities that are mainly concentrated in urban areas or district centers.<sup>121</sup>

Due to the low levels of government expenditure on health as a proportion of GDP, patients are obliged to finance health-care through user fees. An EBRD study estimates that health-care financing is 80% private and 20% public—compared to an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average of 27% private and 73% public.<sup>122</sup> Out-of-pocket payments account for almost 90% of the private share of financing. This situation creates serious problems in access to health-care, especially for poor and vulnerable households.<sup>123</sup>

According to the Demographic Health Survey, women confront various constraints to accessing health services. As shown in Table 19, the survey of women aged 15–49 cited affordability, distance, quality of service, and family situation as the reasons that could prevent women from accessing health-care. Affordability of services was the reason cited most often, along with the perceived lack of available medical staff.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>116</sup> European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). 2016. *The Health Care Sector in EBRD Countries of Operations*. Brussels.

<sup>117</sup> WHO. 2016. *Data and Statistics*. Geneva.

<sup>118</sup> Footnote 11.

<sup>119</sup> Health Grove. 2017. *Azerbaijan: Statistics on Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors*. Baku.

<sup>120</sup> F. Ibrahimov et al. 2010. *Azerbaijan: Health System Review*. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe.

<sup>121</sup> Footnote 120.

<sup>122</sup> Footnote 120.

<sup>123</sup> Footnote 120.

<sup>124</sup> Footnote 98.

**Table 19: Situations Cited by Women as a Potential Problem Preventing Access to Health Care, 2011**

Situations	% of Respondents That Indicated This is a Big Problem for Them+
Not able to get the money for treatment	50.3
Concern about insufficient medical staff available in the area	50.3
Anxiety about going to a doctor alone	43.4
Concern about the absence of any female medical staff	35.7
Long distance to travel when going to a medical institution	26.1
Need for transport support	25.6
Need to have family permission to go to a doctor	10.4

Note: Total respondents N=9,381 women; +alternative response was to cite the situation as not a big problem.  
Source: Republic of Azerbaijan, Ministry of Health. 2011. *Demographic Health Survey*. Baku.

Women interviewed for FGDs highlighted the low quality of care as one of the main barriers to accessing health services. Rural women were concerned that doctors serving them were not sufficiently skilled and they had to travel to larger centers to receive adequate care for themselves and their children. Urban women indicated that public health services did not offer good quality services and that it was necessary to use private services. The cost of private services was a barrier to accessing health-care. The low salaries and lack of training of medical professionals in the public system were identified as the main reasons for this problem.

Doctors interviewed as key informants noted that low salaries can result in low motivation in the health profession, which affects quality of care. To address some of the barriers, the government introduced the Medical Personnel Development Program for health-care institutions of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2010–2014.<sup>125</sup> This initiative partially remedied the problem of inadequately staffed rural services over the long term but the government still practices placing personnel in larger institutions. Few measures yet are in place to develop more extensive primary health-care centers by combining private and public investments.

The State Agency for Compulsory Health Care Insurance was established in February 2016 as part of the health sector reforms to improve access to health services. The system for mandatory health insurance is currently being piloted. This system is expected to increase affordability and improve overall access to health services for the population.<sup>126</sup> If this pilot program leads to an affordable health insurance scheme, this initiative should have a positive impact on women's access to affordable health-care in the future.

<sup>125</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan, Ministry of Health. 2010. *Development Program for Medical Certification of the Personnel in Healthcare Institutions of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2010–2014*. Baku.

<sup>126</sup> S. Israfilbayova. 2017. Country Can Improve Basic Package of Mandatory Health Insurance. *Azernews* (27 November).

### 3. Population Dynamics

In Azerbaijan, fertility declined dramatically over the past 50 years. The total fertility rate (average number of births per women) decreased from 5.60 in 1961 to a minimum level of 1.80 in 2001. In 2010, the rate was 2.3 children per woman.<sup>127</sup>

In 2017, Azerbaijan had a fertility rate of 1.9—lower than that of most less developed countries—and its average annual rate of population change is 0.9%.<sup>128</sup> At 41.4%, the country has a lower- than-average age dependency ratio compared to the world average of 52.5%. This measure indicates that the country’s economically active population and the overall economy face lower burden to support and provide the social services needed by children and by older persons, creating positive conditions to invest in human development, including education, childcare services, and senior care.

**Table 20: Demographic Data, 2017**

Category	Value
Fertility rate	1.9
Rate of population change	0.9%
Average age dependency ratio (world average 52.5%)	41.4%
No. of male births for every 100 female births—All	114
No. of male births for every 100 female births—Urban	113
No. of male births for every 100 female births—Rural	114

Sources: Republic of Azerbaijan, State Statistical Committee. 2017. *Rate of population change: Population–Political division, population size and structure–Population change*. <https://www.stat.gov.az/source/demography/?lang=en>; *Total fertility rate by urban and rural places*; *Population–General indicators of population reproduction–Total fertility rate by urban and rural places*. <https://www.stat.gov.az/source/demography/?lang=en>; *Sex ratio at birth in urban and rural areas 1990–2018*. [https://www.stat.gov.az/source/gender/en/qk/001\\_16en.xls](https://www.stat.gov.az/source/gender/en/qk/001_16en.xls).

Fertility preferences are directly related to a skewed sex ratio at birth. According to a 2014 study by UNFPA, the desire to limit fertility increases with the number of living children, but the sex composition of living children is also an important factor. This can be viewed as an indicator of sex preference. Among women with only two male children, 81.4% want no more children. In contrast, among women with only two female children, the desire to stop childbearing decreases to 62.1%. The gap decreases between women with three male children (92.4%) and those with three female children 83.7%).<sup>129</sup>

Population trends show that the country has a highly skewed sex-at-birth ratio with 114 male births to every 100 female births,<sup>130</sup> the second most skewed rate in the world after the PRC.<sup>131</sup> The figure is 113 male births to 100 female births in urban areas and up to 114 in rural areas. The ratio of male to female births increased from 107 male births to 100 female births in

<sup>127</sup> Footnote 101.

<sup>128</sup> UNFPA. 2017. *World Population Dashboard: Azerbaijan*. New York.

<sup>129</sup> Footnote 101.

<sup>130</sup> Footnote 54.

<sup>131</sup> I. Koc and M. Eryut. 2015. *Population Projections, 2015–2050: Different Sex Ratio at Birth Scenarios in Azerbaijan*. New York: UNFPA.



1990 to 116 in 2000 and has since remained relatively unchanged.<sup>132</sup> The high ratio of male to female births is indicative of sex selection that is biased toward female births.<sup>133</sup> The increase of sex-selective abortions is attributed to the development and use of reproductive health technologies.<sup>134</sup>

A preference for a son is associated with beliefs that sons are essential to protect the family and country and are more likely to care for older parents.<sup>135</sup> “Son preference” is a form of gender discrimination as it devalues girls and women. It can lead to the neglect of daughters’ health and nutrition. It also causes huge pressure on women to produce sons. The population gender imbalances due to son preference has been associated with increased trafficking of girls and women as men seek marriage partners from outside their community. Also, the difference in the male–female population ratio in the same age group results in more pressure on women to marry at an early age to men who may be significantly older than them.<sup>136</sup>

If the existing trend is not reversed, demographic balance in the country will reach a phase defined as *demographic masculinization* in the medium and long term—a point where return to gender balance will be difficult if not impossible.<sup>137</sup> The government has not yet adopted a specific action plan for addressing sex selection at birth. However, more attention is being given to this issue. For example, the government is participating in initiatives to raise awareness of the negative societal impacts of a sex-skewed ratio at birth in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the European Union.<sup>138</sup>

#### 4. Social Protection

Azerbaijan has developed social assistance programs to ensure social protection of the population. Social transfers include measures to ensure subsistence for low-income households, pension systems, transfers to internally displaced persons (IDPs), and refugees. Maternal benefits such as child allowance, childcare benefits, and birth and adoption grants are also available.<sup>139</sup>

Over the past decade, Azerbaijan has targeted reductions in poverty through economic growth while at the same time providing social transfers aimed at alleviating poverty.<sup>140</sup> Official poverty data reveal that poverty is declining from 29.3% in 2005 to 13.2 % in 2008 and 5.4% in 2017.<sup>141</sup> In May 2018, First Vice President Mehriban Aliyeva remarked that poverty rate has been reduced to 5.4%.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>132</sup> Footnote 54.

<sup>133</sup> Footnote 11.

<sup>134</sup> UNFPA. 2018. *Population Projections, 2014–2050: Different Sex Ratio at Birth Scenarios in Azerbaijan*. Baku.

<sup>135</sup> N. Dudwick. 2014. “Missing Women” in the South Caucasus: Local Perceptions and Proposed Solutions. Washington, DC: World Bank.

<sup>136</sup> UNFPA. 2018. *Gender-Biased Sex Selection*. New York.

<sup>137</sup> Footnote 131.

<sup>138</sup> UNFPA. 2017. *Theatre Play against Gender Biased Sex Selection Took Place in Baku*. Baku. <https://azerbaijan.unfpa.org/en/news/theatre-play-against-gender-biased-sex-selection-took-place-baku>.

<sup>139</sup> L. Sayfutdinova. 2014. Negotiating Welfare with the Informalizing State: Formal and Informal Practices among Engineers in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan. *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 6 (2015). pp. 24–33.

<sup>140</sup> World Bank. 2012. *Azerbaijan Partnership Programme Snapshot*. Washington, DC.

<sup>141</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan, State Statistical Committee. 2017. *Budget of Households. Poverty Line and Poverty Level*. Baku.

<sup>142</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan. 2018. *Congratulatory letter of Azerbaijan First Vice President Mehriban Aliyeva to the participants of the 5th Women’s Forum dedicated to the centenary of granting suffrage to Azerbaijani women*. Baku Convention Center (30 May). <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/2910316.html>.

However, the recent trends show a slight increase in poverty from 2015 when the rate was 4.9%. Although sex-disaggregated data on poverty are not available, a report on social protection and social inclusion in Azerbaijan reveals that the categories of people who are more vulnerable to poverty are people over the age of 65, single-parent households, and IDPs.<sup>143</sup> These categories are also ones that have higher percentages of women. Lifting more households out of poverty will have a direct benefit on women in poor households who struggle to secure their families' food and other basic needs.

Social assistance programs provide an important safety net for poor households, ensuring that their income is raised to at least subsistence level. However, the social assistance scheme is not sufficient to provide adequate living standards for the poor.<sup>144</sup>

Pensions are available for women aged 60 and men aged 65. These were adjusted in 2016—from 59 to 60 years old for women and from 63 to 65 years old for men. Azerbaijan has been gradually increasing its pension benefits to cover a higher percentage of preretirement earnings and is now one of the highest in Caucasus and Central Asia after Kazakhstan. However, the pension system faces challenges. Despite the favorable comparison with other countries in the region, the amounts are inadequate to assure a decent standard of living for beneficiaries who, thus, must rely on other sources of income. In addition, the decline in formal employment levels has reduced the level of ongoing contributions, undermining the system's sustainability.<sup>145</sup>

The structure of the pension system rates, which is based on years of service and earnings, creates some inequities for women. The lower average earnings of women compared to men during employment years will follow women into retirement. Women will be entitled, on average, to a lower monthly pension. Women's pension rate will also be lower due to fewer years of service from paid labor in exchange for taking care of family responsibilities. Also, assigning a lower pension eligibility age to women means they leave the labor market sooner. As a result, women have fewer years of service for pension entitlement, and fewer years to save for retirement. Women have a higher life expectancy and so the lower retirement age means they are, on average, dependent on pension income that alone cannot guarantee a decent living, putting them in a more precarious financial situation.

## 5. Preventing Gender-Based Violence

**Domestic violence.** Azerbaijan passed the Law on Domestic Violence in 2010 that provides recourse for women to seek justice when facing violence from their husband or others in a close relationship. However, women confront a number of cultural, social, and economic barriers to exercise their right to live free of violence and take steps to remove themselves, and their children, from such situations.

An estimated 14% of Azerbaijani women between 15 and 49 years of age experience intimate partner violence (physical and/or sexual) at least once in their lifetime.<sup>146</sup> Data in 2017 show 1,031 cases of domestic violence reported with 807 (78%) by women and 224 by men (22%).

<sup>143</sup> European Commission. 2011. *Social Protection and Social Inclusion in Azerbaijan*. Brussels.

<sup>144</sup> Footnote 139, p. 27.

<sup>145</sup> Footnote 139.

<sup>146</sup> UN Women. 2010. *Global Database on Violence Against Women*. <http://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries/asia/azerbaijan> (accessed 15 October 2019).

A total of 110 women were murdered in 2016 of which 48 were by their husbands and 35 by a close male relative such as father, brother, son, or other close relative. Thus, murders of women as a result of “domestic violence” accounted for 75% of all murders of women in 2016. Of the 97 attempts on women’s lives in 2016, 56 were by their husband or former husband, and 28 were by a close male relative.<sup>147</sup>

The number of suicides is also rising in Azerbaijan—121 women committed suicide and 69 women attempted to commit suicide in 2016, which is significantly higher than in 2010, when the figures were 89 and 37 correspondingly. There is evidence that many instances of suicide and attempted suicide take place as a result of being continuously subjected to violence.<sup>148</sup>

As shown in Box 6, the government and other researchers have undertaken comprehensive studies to better understand the reasons and impacts of domestic violence. However, measuring the extent of domestic violence is challenging as it is not always reported by victims or witnesses of violence.

### Box 6: Violence against Women

The last comprehensive study covering domestic violence was conducted in 2009 and up-to-date data on the incidence of domestic violence are limited. The study “Violence against Persons” by the State Statistical Committee was a survey about experiences of violence covering a random sample of 18,000 households throughout the country. This study found that 18.3% of all respondents reported facing violence during their lifetime. The majority of those reporting experiences of violence were female respondents with only 0.5% of males reporting experiencing violence.

Source: Republic of Azerbaijan, State Statistical Committee. 2009. *Results of the Survey on Violence Against Persons*. Baku. <https://www.stat.gov.az/news/?id=641?lang=en>.

Cases are referred to legal institutions only when the consequences are very severe, such as when serious physical injury, hospitalization, or death occurs. Repeated physical violence, intimidation and threats, forced sexual relationships, economic constraints, and other forms of violence are kept hidden by victims who are afraid of either stigma or reprisal from their abuser or family members.<sup>149</sup>

Few shelters for women victims exist. Only 10 shelters exist, run by civil society groups with some also serving as refuges for victims of trafficking. Women also face social and cultural challenges in reporting sexual violence and few programs are in place to sensitize the police and legal system on how to support women who are victims of violence.

The government can strengthen its violence against women (VAW) response by ensuring more safe spaces for VAW victims, such as shelters that also provide counselling, legal advice, and other services from gender-sensitive and well-trained service providers. The shelters

<sup>147</sup> Women’s Association for Rational Development (WARD). 2017. *Violence Scale: Femicide in Azerbaijan*. Baku.

<sup>148</sup> Footnote 147.

<sup>149</sup> Gender Equality and Women’s Initiatives (GEWI) Public Union. 2009. *GEWI Quarterly Bulletin No. 1* (July, August, September). p. 6.

can also provide skills training and support for employment or livelihood activities to enable women to become economically independent from their abusers.

Women are reluctant to report violence in the criminal justice system.<sup>150</sup> The Ministry of Internal Affairs has been making efforts to increase the number of women officers. However, the number of women working in senior management positions is low and fewer women officers are posted in rural areas.<sup>151</sup>

As presented in Box 7, SCFWCA is pursuing policies to strengthen implementation of the Law on Domestic Violence. It also announced that an online database had been developed to ensure improved collection and monitoring of statistics on VAW.<sup>152</sup>

### Box 7: Current Policies Pursued by the SCFWCA to Strengthen Implementation of the Law on Domestic Violence

- Conduct training courses in the Academy of Public Administration of the Republic of Azerbaijan for representatives of relevant government offices of the regions, law enforcement agencies, municipalities, executive and public organizations, and from the Monitoring Groups on Gender Violence and Violence against Children.
- Strengthen the role of public authorities and civil society in eliminating harmful ideological beliefs, combating gender stereotypes, and promoting services to provide psychological and social support to families.
- Create an institute on family psychology mandated to strengthen the education of psychologists to address these issues and increase the level of services to families affected by domestic violence.
- Provide regular training for television and radio broadcasters and print media people to improve the frequency and quality of reporting on domestic violence.

Source: Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). 2015. *From the reports submitted by state parties under Article 18 of the Convention. Fifth Periodic Report of State Parties: Azerbaijan*. CEDAW/C/AZE/5. New York.

However, SCFWCA has inadequate resources to deal with the extent and complexity of violence against women. SCFWCA's budget is insufficient to fund shelters and its actions are largely limited to awareness raising rather than providing actual services to victims of violence. Women are often referred to nongovernment organization (NGOs) to seek assistance, but NGOs do not receive state funds to provide these services.<sup>153</sup> Development partners that support SCFWCA in addressing gender-based violence include the UNFPA and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in IDP communities. More initiatives are needed across all elements of this issue, such as reducing incidence of violence, increasing

<sup>150</sup> P. Bayramova. 2017. *Barriers, Remedies and Good Practices for Women's Access to Justice in Azerbaijan*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

<sup>151</sup> E. Gasimova. 2010. *Gender Mainstreaming: The Role of Civil Society Monitoring of the National Gender Mechanism. Gender Equality and Women Initiatives Public Union*. Baku.

<sup>152</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan. 2018. *Statement of Hijran Huseynova, chair of SCFWCA, to the participants of the 5th Women's Forum dedicated to the centenary of granting suffrage to Azerbaijani women*. Baku Convention Center (30 May). <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/2910316.html>.

<sup>153</sup> Footnote 147.

reporting, ensuring access to social services and shelter, and improving the capacity of the criminal justice system to prosecute violence against women. The national action plan for implementing the Law on Domestic Violence and the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) can be serious steps in this direction and is also in line with the recommendations of the CEDAW Committee.<sup>154</sup>

**Sexual assault.** Azerbaijan’s Criminal Code covers rape and violent actions of a sexual nature and has a maximum penalty of 15 years.<sup>155</sup> Sexual assault is considered a crime based on the use of physical force contrary to international norms where sexual assault should be based on a lack of consent. Prosecution of a sexual assault places the burden of proof on the victim while at the same time the victim’s testimony alone is not sufficient as evidence. This discriminates against the victim because sexual assaults often happen in private. In contrast, prosecution of other offenses, such as common assault, may rely only on victim’s testimony.<sup>156</sup>

This difference suggests that victims in trials of sexual offenses are viewed as a particularly unreliable class of witness. Such a provision discriminates against women and reduces the likelihood of victims of sexual assault coming forward to report the crime. To better protect women from sexual violence, provisions on the burden of proof that increase the likelihood of women reporting sexual assaults are needed, including allowing persecutions based on the victim’s testimony. The criminal code also needs to be updated by creating statutory definitions on what constitutes consent or lack of consent to sexual intercourse and by adding definitions that explicitly recognize marital rape.<sup>157</sup>

**Sexual harassment.** Sexual harassment is defined under the Law on Gender Equality as “immoral behavior humiliating and abusing a person of the opposite gender, comprising physical acts (touching, hand touching), offensive remarks, gestures, threats, dishonorable advances and offers of employment in exchange for sexual acts.”<sup>158</sup> However, this provision is not often applied. When reporting to the CEDAW Committee, SCFWCA notes that women come to them directly to complain about sexual harassment in the workplace. However, most employers lack policies for addressing the issue and women rarely want to take such cases to court. Cultural stereotypes inhibit women from going to the courts and sharing information about their sexual harassment experience, which risk damaging their reputations. More systematic attention is needed to combat sexual harassment through labor law, human rights provisions, and human resource policies of public and private sector employers. Ensuring that women victims of sexual harassment can have recourse in the legal system requires better definitions of what constitutes sexual harassment and the consequences, and more training of lawyers and judges on this issue.<sup>159</sup>

**Trafficking of persons.** Azerbaijan is a source, transit, and a destination country for human trafficking. In 2017, the government identified 71 trafficking victims of which 66 were

<sup>154</sup> CEDAW. 2015. *Concluding Observations on the 5th Periodic Report of Azerbaijan*. CEDAW/C/AZE/5. Geneva.

<sup>155</sup> United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. 2015. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*. Washington, DC.

<sup>156</sup> Footnote 150, p. 18.

<sup>157</sup> Footnote 150, p. 29.

<sup>158</sup> Footnote 23.

<sup>159</sup> Footnote 154.

women.<sup>160</sup> Women and children from Azerbaijan are subjected to sex trafficking within the country and in Turkey, the Russian Federation, and the United Arab Emirates. Azerbaijan is a destination country for sex and labor trafficking victims from Turkey, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and in previous years, the PRC and the Russian Federation.<sup>161</sup>

The government recognized the need to address forced labor and sex trafficking by adopting a Law on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in 2005. Five-year action plans for anti-trafficking have been developed since 2004. The National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking for 2014–2018 seeks to introduce measures to protect individuals and the public from all forms of human trafficking. It includes measures to (i) raise awareness and reduce the risk for individuals to becoming victims, (ii) detect and prevent human trafficking, and (iii) restore the rights and quality of life of victims. Actions are also listed to more effectively prosecute those profiting from trafficking.

The government increased the number of investigations and prosecution rates and sentences are increasingly severe. Despite these efforts, the country does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. For example, NGO partners that provide rehabilitation and reintegration services to victims are underfunded. No formal standard operating procedures for supporting victims are in place and coordination of services is insufficient.<sup>162</sup> While the number of cases is low, detection of trafficking is limited and so the extent of the problem is unknown. Increased efforts to raise awareness and prevent trafficking are needed to reduce the vulnerability of women and girls to sexual exploitation. More services are also needed to support victims in restoring their lives, regardless of whether they participate in prosecutions of those who exploited them.

## 6. Inclusion of Women with Disabilities

Azerbaijan has 613,645 disabled persons (6% of the population).<sup>163</sup> Official statistics do not indicate the number of women with disabilities, but the Union of Disabled People's Organizations estimates the number to be 200,000 or approximately one-third of all disabled persons.<sup>164</sup> A total of 383,590 people receive a disability pension of which 161,500 are women.

The country ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol in January 2009. The country has measures to meet these commitments including enhancing access to equipment, services, and housing for persons with disabilities. There are also actions to deinstitutionalize adults and children with disabilities and promote inclusive education. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population also convened a working group with NGO representatives to implement the provisions of the convention.<sup>165</sup>

<sup>160</sup> United States Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. 2018. *Azerbaijan: Trafficking in Persons Report*. Washington, DC.

<sup>161</sup> United States Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. 2017. *Azerbaijan: Trafficking in Persons Report*. Washington.

<sup>162</sup> Footnote 161.

<sup>163</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan, State Statistical Committee. 2017. *Healthcare, Social Protection and Housing Conditions in Azerbaijan*. Baku.

<sup>164</sup> V. Zeynalova. 2017. *The Invisible—Living with Disability in Azerbaijan*. Baku: OC Media.

<sup>165</sup> United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. 2014. *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Concluding Observations on the Initial Report of Azerbaijan*. Geneva.

However, further actions are needed for the country to meet the requirements of the convention, including (i) adopting a human rights based model of disability, (ii) eliminating disparaging references to persons with disabilities (PWDs) in state documents, and (iii) implementing laws to prohibit discrimination based on disability. While recognizing that measures to promote gender equality, such as enacting the Law on Domestic Violence, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPWD) is concerned that such measures do not specifically address issues for women with disabilities noting that “The Committee encourages the State party to adopt a twin-track approach to mainstreaming a disability perspective into its gender legislation and policy, including with respect to addressing violence against women and ensuring effective access to information and services on sexual and reproductive health; and to facilitate advocacy by and on behalf of women and girls with disabilities.”<sup>166</sup>

The CRPWD also expresses concern for the lack of (i) accessibility plan as public transport and buildings remain largely inaccessible to PWDs, and (ii) statistics to disaggregate the rate of infant mortality for boys and girls with disabilities. The committee also recommends putting in place measures to ensure that PWDs have access to support during humanitarian emergencies. The official classification of people with disabilities often classifies people as unable to work, which is contrary to international standards. This is not based upon any ability test and keeps able PWDs out of work and dependent upon benefits.<sup>167</sup>

Aside from legal and physical constraints, PWDs in Azerbaijan also face attitudinal barriers from employers and society at large, which hinder their full and effective participation in society. The CRPWD recommends more awareness raising programs and enhanced services for PWDs to pursue employment opportunities. Increasing accessibility of services and places of employment are high-priority actions. Raising public’s awareness on PWDs and their rights to full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others were identified as key to improving the lives of PWDs.<sup>168</sup>

As shown in Box 8, research into the situation of women with disabilities (WWD) found they confronted a number of constraints to accessing employment and services. Hence, more advocacy through media is needed to combat the stigmatization of people with disabilities while proactive measures such as wider information and improving mobility options will make vocational training and employment opportunities available to WWDs. Developing more social networks for WWDs to support one another is needed so they could see themselves as capable of being productive members of the society, in the community, and in the workforce.

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<sup>166</sup> Footnote 165.

<sup>167</sup> G. Burchell. 2016. *Women with Disabilities in the E&E Region: Report on Research Findings: Azerbaijan*. Washington, DC: USAID.

<sup>168</sup> UNDP. 2011. *Situation Assessment for People with Disabilities in Azerbaijan*. Baku.

### Box 8: Situation of Women with Disabilities

Women with disabilities (WWDs) face specific constraints in fully participating in society. Research on their situation revealed the following:

- An action plan specifically addressing WWDs has not been developed. This creates a gap between legislation guaranteeing equal rights and proactive measures to make these a reality. Few of the programs or services for people with disabilities distinguish between the needs of women and men.
- WWDs face numerous barriers to employment and yet there is no official recognition of these barriers nor programs aimed to address these gaps.
- WWDs do have access to state programs for vocational training, skills development, and creation of new jobs through specific outreach quotas for this group. However, disabled women and organizations supporting them lack information about these programs and how to access them.
- Not all groups of disability can access vocational training. For example, the main vocational training center in Baku is inaccessible for those in a wheelchair.
- Housing is mainly provided to war veterans and blind people, the majority of whom are men injured in the war. Housing is also allocated to the heads of the family who are more likely to be male. WWDs who want to live independently or are divorced or separated may find themselves unable to access housing due to how priorities are set.
- WWDs face additional barriers to mobility and physical security due to gender stereotypes and attitudes that limit their opportunities. WWDs also face greater risk of domestic and sexual violence.

Source: G. Burchell. 2016. *Women with Disabilities in the E&E Region: Report on Research Findings: Azerbaijan*. Washington, DC. USAID.

## C. Gender Equality in Leadership and Decision-Making

While women's representation in the Parliament has gradually increased, Azerbaijan still needs to increase its international rankings for women's political representation. Women are present in the civil service but are underrepresented, especially in senior roles. Recent achievements in electing women to municipal councils show the potential for more women to enter politics and enhance women's voice in decision-making and government planning. Women have a legal guarantee to equality and efforts to increase their representation in the judiciary will further enhance women's access to justice. Societal norms do not favor women to be economically active and this prevents perceiving women as potential business leaders. Changing such perceptions—that domestic tasks are primarily women's role—will promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment.



## 1. Women's Representation in Government

**Parliament and political bodies.** According to its Constitution, Azerbaijan is a democratic, constitutional, secular, and a unitary republic. Power is divided into the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. The President is the head of the state and the executive power is exercised under his/her leadership. The legislative power is vested in the Parliament, and judicial power is vested in the courts.<sup>169</sup> The country has a multiparty system with more than 40 registered parties. The New Azerbaijan Party under the leadership of President Heydar Aliyev followed by President Ilham Aliyev has been in power since 1993.

During the Soviet era, a quota of 33% representation of women in political bodies was in place and in 1989, women represented 40% of the main legislative body at the time. By the time of independence in 1991, women represented only 6% of the parliamentarians. Since then, Azerbaijan has made gradual progress on key gender equality indicators on women's participation in decision-making. However, further improvements are needed.

As shown in Table 21, between 2000 and 2017, women's representation in the Parliament increased from 10.7%<sup>170</sup> to 16%.<sup>171</sup> By 2017, only 2 out of 15 chairs of parliamentary committees were women and no woman was the head of a commission. One of the deputy heads of the Parliament is a woman. Only one woman holds a ministerial position and only five women are deputy ministers.

**Table 21: Women's Political Representation**

Political Entity	Year	Women's Representation
<i>National</i>		
Elected Members of the Parliament	2000	10.7%
	2017	16.1%
Head of committees	2017	2 out of 15 chairs
Civil service employees	2017	28.6%
Civil service managers	2017	9.8%
Head, government divisions	2017	5.0%
<i>Local</i>		
Elected members of municipal councils	2004	4.0%
	2009	27.0%
	2014	35.0%
District/city deputy heads	2017	77 out of 178 positions
District/city executive head	2017	1 out of 80 positions

Source: Republic of Azerbaijan, State Statistical Committee. 2017. *Women and Men in Azerbaijan*. Baku.

<sup>169</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan. 2018. *General Information on the Political System*. Baku. [http://www.azerbaijan.az/\\_GeneralInfo/\\_PoliticalSystem/\\_politicalSystem\\_e.html](http://www.azerbaijan.az/_GeneralInfo/_PoliticalSystem/_politicalSystem_e.html).

<sup>170</sup> Footnote 9.

<sup>171</sup> Footnote 54.

Progress in women's political representation is modest compared to other countries. In the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index 2018, Azerbaijan has a low ranking for women's political representation compared to other countries at 137 out of 149. The main reason is the limited representation of women in the Parliament and in ministerial positions.<sup>172</sup>

**Municipal level.** Compared to the national level, women's representation in elected positions at the municipal level is growing more rapidly. In 2004, women comprised 4% of those elected to municipal councils. By 2009, this increased to 27% and grew further to 35% in 2014.<sup>173</sup> The increase in women's representation is attributed to efforts made by SCFWCA, NGOs, and various development partners to train women in political leadership and promote the advantages of a more gender-balanced local government.

The increased representation of women in local government is important in advancing gender equality. Municipalities have a role in governing local economic, social, cultural, and environmental issues and women's perspectives are more likely to be considered with their increased presence in elected councils. Women representatives will also have more influence in implementing state programs in their local jurisdiction.

The decision-making power of municipalities, compared to state executive bodies, needs some clarification to ensure elected representatives can implement local initiatives. Municipal governments have limited authority to raise revenues and are not allocated a standard annual amount from the state budget. Rather, municipalities must depend on grants and subsidies from state programs that are directed strategically from the central level.<sup>174</sup> More decentralization of decision-making and budget allocations to municipal level would increase women's political influence given their higher representation at this level.

**Civil service.** Despite comprising close to half of the labor force,<sup>175</sup> women are less than a third of civil servants (28.6%). Women comprise only 5% of the head of divisions across government.<sup>176</sup> Overall, the share of women in positions classified as management in the civil service is 9.8%. At the regional level, 77 women are deputy heads across the country's 80 district and/or city administrative divisions compared to 178 men.<sup>177</sup> This is due to the President's 2006 special order that at least one of the deputy heads appointed to each district and/or city must be a woman. However, only one executive head of a district and/or city is a woman.<sup>178</sup>

Key decisions on implementing state policy, planning programs, and determining how to allocate resources are done by the civil service. The civil service is also taking on an increasingly important role in developing infrastructure, communications, and technology to diversify the economy. Having women represented at all levels and sectors in the civil service is important to ensuring that women's perspectives are integrated into government planning.

<sup>172</sup> Footnote 54.

<sup>173</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan, State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs. 2015. *Statement by Professor Hijran Huseynova, chairperson for the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs Republic of Azerbaijan at the 59th Session of the Commission of the Status of Women*. New York.

<sup>174</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). 2016. *Subnational Finance and Regional Development: Azerbaijan Country Profile*. Paris.

<sup>175</sup> Footnote 54.

<sup>176</sup> Footnote 54.

<sup>177</sup> Footnote 54.

<sup>178</sup> Footnote 54.

## 2. Women’s Participation in the Judicial System and Access to Justice

Women are present in the judiciary system but their representation is generally low, hence, more efforts are needed to increase their number. As shown in Table 22, women are present in the court system, including seven women appointed to the Supreme Court.<sup>179</sup> Only 13% of all judges are women.<sup>180</sup> Of the 74 district court presidents, only one is a woman.<sup>181</sup> According to the 2014 data, only 4% of prosecutors are women.<sup>182</sup>

**Table 22: Number of Judiciary Positions Held by Women and Men**

Position	Women	Men	Women (%)
Judge	61	420	13
District court president	1	73	1
Supreme Court judge	7	33	17
Prosecutor	47	1,022	4

Source: Republic of Azerbaijan. 2017. *Unified Judicial Portal of the Republic of Azerbaijan*. Baku.

Women are legally guaranteed equality with men. Despite such guarantees, women face specific barriers to accessing justice and claiming their rights. A study conducted for the Council of Europe found that the lack of women working in the judiciary and in the police is a constraint that hinders women’s access to justice. In 2014, the UN Special Rapporteur noted that the low number of women working in the criminal justice was a constraint to the effective handling of VAW cases.<sup>183</sup>

Women are also constrained by a low awareness of their rights. Women are mostly not aware of relevant administrative bodies or courts where they can go in cases of violation of their rights.<sup>184</sup> Generally, marriages are legally registered. However, when a marriage takes place without a legal certificate, such as early marriages, women may find themselves without any rights or access to property if the marriage is dissolved.<sup>185</sup>

One survey found that the majority of rural women perceived that men had more rights—according to custom and tradition—and that systems in place to defend rights favored men.<sup>186</sup> The CEDAW Committee notes that the small number of cases related to gender discrimination is indicative of women’s lack of knowledge of their rights and how to claim them.<sup>187</sup>

<sup>179</sup> Data provided by the SCFWCA on 15 February 2018 in Baku.

<sup>180</sup> Footnote 179.

<sup>181</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan. 2017. *Unified Judicial Portal of the Republic of Azerbaijan*. Baku. <https://courts.gov.az/en/main/judges>.

<sup>182</sup> Footnote 150.

<sup>183</sup> R. Manjoo. 2014. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Its Causes and Consequences: Addendum, Mission to Azerbaijan*. 25 April. Geneva.

<sup>184</sup> Footnote 150.

<sup>185</sup> UNFPA. 2014. *Child Marriage in Azerbaijan: Overview*. Baku.

<sup>186</sup> Footnote 151.

<sup>187</sup> Footnote 154.

The limited number of lawyers in rural areas restricts women's access to justice in these regions, especially in remote areas. Vulnerable groups such as women, children, and migrants with problems may have difficulty in accessing justice even where their rights or remedies are already guaranteed by legislation. Legal aid services exist but are available only for specific types of cases such as criminal cases, cases involving property, and cases brought to the Supreme Court. Those seeking legal aid need to request it from the court, which can only be done through a lawyer.<sup>188</sup>

Barriers to accessing the court system disadvantage women in cases of divorce. Couples without children may divorce by mutual consent through an administrative procedure rather than going to court. Women may agree to this process due to social pressure or to avoid a court process. However, the administrative procedure does not guarantee women's rights in the same way as court proceedings. Women face a greater risk of missing out on their rights to property or alimony under an administrative procedure, leaving them in a vulnerable position. Women leaving their husband's family home after divorce may feel reluctant to return to their own family but have no resources to rebuild their lives elsewhere.<sup>189</sup>

Women also face constraints in securing their rights to alimony or child support through the court system. Women may apply to the court to enforce alimony or child support payments only in specific instances such as being disabled, pregnant, or having a disabled child or infant children.<sup>190</sup> This provision limits women to a rightful claim for support if their former spouse refuses to pay.

The Ministry of Justice has been training lawyers, police officers, and prosecutors on gender equality provisions and human rights. However, these trainings mainly provide information about existing legal provisions. The training does not cover topics on how to overcome gender stereotypes or transform judicial standards for women's rights. University legal programs have courses on gender and children's rights, but such courses are not mandatory. The initial training course for candidate-judges at the Academy of Justice does not have a module on gender.<sup>191</sup>

### 3. Women's Representation in Civil Society Groups

In 2017, official statistics indicated that Azerbaijan has 4,500 registered NGOs.<sup>192</sup> However, the number of active NGOs may be much less.

An assessment by the UNDP found that only 6.7% of registered NGOs work on women's issues and most of these agencies are based in Baku. The assessment also found that women in regional centers and villages are seldom engaged in community activities and other types of social activism.<sup>193</sup> Tailored capacity-building programs can be organized for women NGOs to increase their participation in monitoring and supporting gender equality agenda in state programs, and in identifying localized needs.

<sup>188</sup> Footnote 150.

<sup>189</sup> Footnote 150.

<sup>190</sup> Footnote 150.

<sup>191</sup> Footnote 150.

<sup>192</sup> United States Agency for International Development (USAID). 2018. *2017 CSO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia*. Washington, DC.

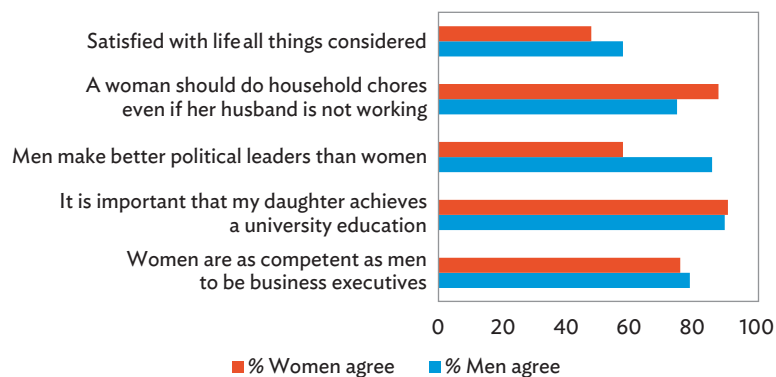
<sup>193</sup> UNDP. 2016. *Promoting Rural Women Participation in the Economic and Social Life: Project Document of the Technical Assistance Project*. Baku.

## 4. Gender Norms and Attitudes

Women continue facing gender-based restrictions and discriminations, deeply rooted in patriarchal attitudes, traditional social norms, and by strict gender roles and stereotypes in Azerbaijan. The male domination and biases based on gender are stronger in rural areas, especially in vulnerable communities, such as IDP communities.<sup>194</sup>

Findings from surveys on social attitudes provide some insights into prevailing attitudes on gender role and norms. In general, women are perceived as having greater responsibilities for domestic matters. At the same time, women having paid work is seen as an economic necessity. The Life in Transition survey shown in Figure 9 found that most respondents of either gender agreed it is important for their daughter to achieve a university education.<sup>195</sup> However, a large proportion of the respondents (77% women and 88% men) agreed that even if the husband is not working, the woman should still do the household work.<sup>196</sup>

**Figure 9: Life Satisfaction and Attitude Towards Women by Sex**  
(%)



Source: European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). 2016. *Life in Transition: Azerbaijan*. pp. 78–79. Brussels.

The same conclusion is made in a 2018 study—the full burden of household responsibilities faced by women consumes a large share of time and energy and is not altered if a woman engages in income-generating activities.<sup>197</sup> However, economic need leads to a greater social flexibility of families in gender-related norms and acceptance of various employment opportunities, thus, confirming that the hierarchy of gender-specific limitations can change with external factors.<sup>198</sup>

<sup>194</sup> UNFPA. 2011. *Qualitative Assessment of Major Causes of Violence Committed Against IDP/Refugee Women in Azerbaijan*. Baku.

<sup>195</sup> European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). 2016. *Life in Transition: Azerbaijan*. Brussels.

<sup>196</sup> K. Aghayeva. 2017. *Gender Issues in the Caucasus*. Baku: Science and Education Publishing. <http://static.bsu.az/w8/Tarix%20ve%20%20problem/2009%20%204/196-206.pdf>.

<sup>197</sup> Footnote 46.

<sup>198</sup> Footnote 46.

Women are more likely to be perceived as decision-makers in the economic than in political sphere. More respondents (76% females and 79% males) believe that women are as competent as men to be business executives. However, many still believe that men make better political leaders than women (58% female and 86% male of respondents).<sup>199</sup>

More Azerbaijani men report being satisfied with the quality of life in the country than women. Close to 60% of men report being satisfied with their quality of life compared to less than 50% of women. The percentage of men reporting being satisfied with the quality of life has increased since 2010 whereas the percentage of women has stayed the same.<sup>200</sup>

The “Caucasus Barometer” data for 2013, which is based on periodic nationwide surveys, provides insights into prevailing social attitudes toward gender roles in Azerbaijan. In this survey, respondents also expressed traditional attitudes about gender roles, with 85% (including both sexes) responding that it is the mother’s obligation to change diapers, feed, and give children a bath. This view is significantly reinforced through the socialization of children.<sup>201</sup>

The majority of the population lives in family households consisting of married couples with children. However, the tradition of young married couples co-residing with parents still exists and shows an increase in recent years. Men are most often indicated as heads of households although women are likely to be the household heads in single-parent families.<sup>202</sup>

Research in rural areas reveals that the norms reinforcing women’s greater responsibility for domestic tasks are strongly entrenched. Rural women usually join their husbands in an extended family home and are expected to take on a number of domestic tasks regardless of whether or not they work outside the home.<sup>203</sup> Women’s domestic role does result in their having a say in household decision-making, including in spending decisions. A World Bank study of rural women found that either women alone or women and men jointly control the household budget and consult each other in decision-making.<sup>204</sup>

Women’s dual roles for domestic and paid work has an impact on their overall well-being. During FGDs undertaken for this assessment, participants expressed concerns that while men have accepted the need for women to work, a woman with a job outside the home does not result in men sharing more domestic responsibilities. In some cases, FGD participants indicated that the situation was starting to change for younger generations where men are more likely to accept shared roles.

Some key informants mentioned this biased attitude toward household responsibilities as a key factor leading to divorces. In Azerbaijan, divorces increased by 1.6% during 2010–2018 with the number of marriages reduced by 1.3% for the same period.<sup>205</sup>

<sup>199</sup> Footnote 195.

<sup>200</sup> Footnote 195.

<sup>201</sup> Caucasus Research Resource Centre. 2014. *Caucasus Barometer*. Tbilisi. <http://www.crrccenters.org/caucasusbarometer>.

<sup>202</sup> UNFPA and UNDP. 2015. *Population Situation Analysis: Beyond the Demographic Transition in Azerbaijan*. Baku.

<sup>203</sup> Footnote 196.

<sup>204</sup> World Bank. 2012. *Enhancing the Role of Women in Water User Associations in Azerbaijan*. Baku.

<sup>205</sup> Footnote 87.

### Box 9: Overview of the Evolution of Gender Norms and Attitudes

Gender norms and attitudes have evolved according to the country's historical developments. While evidence of a matriarchal system was found by historians researching ancient documents, over the centuries, as society became more settled and less nomadic, women became increasingly defined by their domestic roles and less prominent in public life. Despite this trend, at different periods in history, women continued to have a role in defending their home or homeland from external threats, and their participation in public life became more active as a consequence. Islam's establishment as the majority religion did not signify a major shift in how people approached social organization or public life, including in relation to gender norms.

The growing global recognition of women's inherent rights in the early 20th century had an influence on the Azerbaijan's political development. In its first year of existence, the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic became the first majority Muslim country to enfranchise women, and equality of men and women was a topic of discussion in the first session of the Parliament in 1918.

During the period of governance by the then Soviet Union, women's equal participation in the economy and education system was normalized, and female illiteracy was eradicated. Under these changes, women gained new economic roles but maintained their higher responsibility for domestic tasks and family matters. The full recognition of women's equality did not necessarily translate into their representation at senior decision-making levels. In the post-Soviet Union period, labor market transitions caused women to shift away from the production economy to concentrate on domestic tasks. Eventually, women returned to the labor force but without the same conditions for affirmative action that they experienced during the Soviet Union period.

Source: UNDP. 2007. *Azerbaijan Human Development Report. Gender Attitudes in Azerbaijan: Trends and Challenges*. Baku.

Thus, much work should be done to challenge and transform patriarchal assumptions and practices on women's and girls' value and roles in Azerbaijan society.<sup>206</sup> The SCFWCA regularly undertakes campaigns in mass media and through the education system—to raise awareness on women's right to equality, and to challenge stereotypes about women's roles. These campaigns also address attitudes that may contribute to VAW. However, these initiatives are undertaken as part of the State Committee's broad mandate to address family, women, and children's issues and works to reinforce messages that associate women's role with family and children. Campaigns more easily reach urban than rural areas due to the limited capacity for outreach.<sup>207</sup>

## D. Reduced Time Poverty of Women

Women's greater responsibility for domestic tasks is evidenced in how the time of men and women is allocated. A World Bank-financed study shows that the average woman allocates 6 hours per day for unpaid labor while men allocate only 2 hours. This difference in time allocation disadvantages women economically. Gender differences in wages indicate that

<sup>206</sup> Footnote 42.

<sup>207</sup> Footnote 204.

married women with children work fewer paid hours than their male counterparts resulting in reduced income for women.<sup>208</sup>

Women in rural areas are faced with a triple workload as they have greater responsibility in domestic tasks, contribute labor to the farm, and also must earn off-farm income to make ends meet. A study by the World Bank on water user associations (WUAs) revealed that women were interested to participate in WUAs because of their interest in water issues but could not do that due to the heavy burden of other tasks.<sup>209</sup>

The same figures were revealed in another study—on average, women in Azerbaijan spend three times the amount of time as men doing unpaid domestic work. Men, on the other hand, perform paid work for three times longer compared to women.<sup>210</sup>

Since the mid-20th century, urban and rural families in Azerbaijan tended to have just one or two children to allow both parents to work. With a smaller family, women had more time to engage in education and employment opportunities. At the same time, the deterioration of roads, electricity, water and sanitation systems, and other infrastructure meant that many domestic tasks take more time to complete. As a result, women have long days to complete both paid work and domestic tasks.

While the government is working to improve access to preschool and after-school programs, services are currently limited. Services to ease daily domestic tasks (such as inexpensive ready-to-eat food, laundry services, etc.) are only recently developing and mainly in urban areas. As a result, many families must allocate significant time of one parent, generally women, for domestic tasks.<sup>211</sup>

### Box 10: Gender Differences in Time Allocation

In focus group discussions undertaken for this assessment, women participants identified most household tasks—caring for children, cooking, washing clothes, cleaning house, and caring for elderly and/or sick family members—as done always or usually by the wife. Tasks performed by men included repairing the house, gardening, and attending community meetings. In some cases, looking after children was reported as a shared task.

A study on the gender distribution in agriculture production, harvesting, and sales found that tasks related to production and harvesting were equally divided between women and men but almost twice as many men engaged in the sale of agricultural products, showing that men are more associated with the process of making money.

Source: R. Ibrahimbayova. 2016. *Gender Issues in Agriculture in Azerbaijan. Gender Equality, Social Protection and Rural Development in Eastern Europe and Central Asia Insights from the Region*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

<sup>208</sup> Footnote 65.

<sup>209</sup> Footnote 204.

<sup>210</sup> Footnote 46.

<sup>211</sup> ILO. 2014. *Maternity Protection and Childcare Systems in the Republic of Azerbaijan*. Baku.



## E. Women's Resilience to External Shocks

Certain populations of women, such as IDPs and those living in disaster-prone areas, are exposed to a vulnerable socioeconomic situation. Integrating measures to address gender equality into peace efforts, conflict resolution, disaster risk reduction programs, and climate change policy and planning are essential to reducing women's vulnerability to risks and shocks.

**Conflict.** The conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia has resulted in internal displacement that is affecting over 613,000 people, the majority of whom are women and children.<sup>212</sup> The unresolved status of the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the high number of IDPs and refugees have ongoing social impacts in the country. Since 2001, the Government of Azerbaijan has been addressing the housing conditions of IDPs living in the most difficult conditions, but resources are limited and housing remains inadequate in many cases. Despite receiving government and international assistance, IDPs also face constraints, such as precarious livelihoods, gender-based violence, and limited access to education, which depends on the availability and quality of education at their settlement. IDPs also have limited channels to participate in decisions that affect them.

A number of reports indicate higher unemployment and poverty rates within IDP communities and a higher prevalence of intimate partner violence and child marriages compared with the local population.<sup>213</sup> Women IDPs have backgrounds in agriculture work, and when relocated to urban areas, they lack land for their traditional livelihood activities and lack skills to find work in urban areas.<sup>214</sup>

Populations living in the border area with Armenia—where many have households headed by single females—are living in a volatile situation that periodically develops into conflict. Women and children in this area are exposed to ongoing risk of violence and lack of services and livelihood opportunities due to the ongoing conflict. According to key informants working with this population, specific services are set up to address psychosocial support. Key informants report that access to basic services, such as electricity and water, are challenging and subject to disruption due to eruptions of violence. Employment opportunities and financial services for livelihood development are almost nonexistent. While state and NGO programs attempted to introduce income-generating activities, the ongoing tension make it difficult for women to sustain new livelihood activities.<sup>215</sup>

Key informants working with IDPs report that the situation is changing among younger IDPs who had more access to education and skills training opportunities. They also noted that young male IDPs had better access to training and employment opportunities as young women were expected to devote more time to helping with domestic tasks. The government,

<sup>212</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Center. 2014. *Azerbaijan: After 20 Years, IDPS Still Urgently Need Policies to Support Full Integration*. Geneva.

<sup>213</sup> Y. Gureyeva-Aliyeva and T. Huseynov 2011. *Can You Be an IDP for Twenty Years?: A Comparative Field Study on Protection Needs and Attitudes towards Displacement Among IDPs and Host Communities in Azerbaijan*. Baku: Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement.

<sup>214</sup> World Bank. 2016. *IDP Living Standards and Livelihoods Project: Completion Report*. Washington, DC.

<sup>215</sup> Key informant interview with NGO working in the border area on 16 December 2018, Baku.

with support from the World Bank, was trying to involve women in local committees engaged in planning IDP programs and services under the IDP Social Development Fund. This fund was also putting in place more measures to encourage women, including young women, to acquire entrepreneurial skills.

**Climate-induced disasters.** Azerbaijan is also experiencing increased environmental migration and disaster risks. Floods, landslides, and earthquakes are the most frequent sudden-onset events.<sup>216</sup> Climate-induced disasters are affecting several settlements, including water scarcity, soil degradation, salinization, rising temperatures, and sea level fluctuation. There has been an increasing rate of exposure to severe weather events and negative impacts on the population. In 2014, 94 extreme weather occurrences were recorded, while in 2015, 74 were registered. Natural disasters displaced as many as 67,865 people between 2009 and 2014. Women are more responsible for household tasks, a work that increases when a family is displaced. As a result, resettlement of the family creates a heavy work burden on women. It also can result in a loss of social connections on which women depend for mutual support and in caring for their children when they shift to new areas.

Disaster risks will continue to rise with the impacts of climate change. Climate change scenarios show average annual temperature is expected to increase by 1.4–2.8 degrees by 2050. Total precipitation will decrease by 5% but more flooding events are expected from a higher number of heavy rainfall events. The Caspian Sea is expected to rise by 1.5–2.0 meters by 2050. The impacts of climate change will be felt most in the agriculture sector given that 80% of farming takes place in arid or semi-arid areas and is highly dependent on irrigation. Although official statistics show only 20% of women formally employed in agriculture, a research by the World Bank shows that women undertake several tasks related to agriculture in the household, including micro-trade in agriculture products and, thus, will experience these negative impacts.<sup>217</sup> Having higher responsibility for domestic tasks, women and girls will be more negatively affected by increased water scarcity that is expected due to climate change.

In its Third Communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the government sets out the steps taken to meet its commitments. It also identifies its assessment of the country's vulnerability to climate change in key sectors and the planned adaptation measures. However, the document does not address how gender will be mainstreamed in other mitigation or adaptation efforts. As the government develops its climate change strategy, it will be important that gender mainstreaming be adopted as a key theme to ensure that efforts to respond to climate change consider the needs, perspectives, and priorities of women.

Women are also underrepresented in formal disaster risk reduction processes, including policy and decision-making. Thus, it will be essential to integrate measures that address gender equality in disaster risk reduction, climate change policy, and planning. This will ensure the relevance and effectiveness of these plans in reducing risks and meeting the needs of the whole population.

<sup>216</sup> I. Leonardelli. 2016. Environmental Migration and Displacement in Azerbaijan: Highlighting the Need for Research and Policies. *The Migration, Environment and Climate Change Policy Brief Series*. Vol. 2, Issue 4. Brussels: European Union.

<sup>217</sup> Footnote 204.

# Mainstreaming Gender into ADB Operations

ADB's Policy on Gender and Development adopts gender mainstreaming as the key strategy for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. This means that gender equality considerations are addressed across the full range of ADB operations. ADB's long-term strategic framework, the Strategy 2030, identifies gender equity as one of the key drivers of change. It recognizes gender equality and women's empowerment as critical principles for achieving economic growth, reducing poverty, and supporting socially inclusive development. One of the seven operational priorities of Strategy 2030 is "accelerating progress in gender equality."

In Azerbaijan, significant efforts have been made to mainstream gender at both the strategic and operational levels of the country program. Promoting gender equity by mainstreaming gender in projects and programs was included as a key objective in ADB's country partnership strategy with Azerbaijan in 2014.<sup>218</sup> However, more efforts are needed to accelerate progress in achieving gender equality outcomes.

ADB's portfolio in Azerbaijan focuses on four key areas: (i) transport, (ii) energy, (iii) water and other urban infrastructure and services, and (iv) public sector management. The following section (i) identifies the main gender issues in these sectors; (ii) describes the government policies and programs in place; (iii) reviews ADB's existing projects in the sector, experiences to date with gender mainstreaming in ADB interventions, and key lessons; and (iv) explores entry points for improving the integration of gender concerns and enhancing gender equality outcomes in projects and programs. Two new areas of programming—gender-responsive budgeting and information, communications, and technology—are also assessed as areas for potential gender entry points.

## A. Transport

Azerbaijan's strategic geographical position makes it an ideal transit route for international trade. The transport sector is deemed important in enhancing regional cooperation and in supporting the domestic economy by linking the rural population to urban and international markets.<sup>219</sup> Historically, the transport sector was organically interlinked with the energy industry.<sup>220</sup> As one of the world's oldest oil exporters, Azerbaijan's energy strategy included, as an integral part, the creation of a system of transport corridors for energy exports.<sup>221</sup>

<sup>218</sup> Footnote 5.

<sup>219</sup> Footnote 218.

<sup>220</sup> M. Sehlare. 2016. *Azerbaijan as a Regional Economic Driver: Opportunities and Challenges*. Pretoria.

<sup>221</sup> R. Ibrahimov. 2016. *The Development of the Transport Sector in Azerbaijan: The Implementation and Challenges*. <https://collaboration.worldbank.org/docs/DOC-24295>.

The improvement of the transport, transit, and logistic infrastructure remains central to the country's economic development agenda. Azerbaijan 2020 envisions strengthening the country as a regional trade hub by effectively using its favorable location to develop transit and transport services and form logistical centers in the regions.<sup>222</sup> This is reiterated in the strategic road map on national economy and key sectors of the economy.<sup>223</sup>

Transport is the lead sector in the ADB–Azerbaijan partnership, comprising 34.85% of the cumulative lending, grant, and technical assistance (TA) commitments by 2018.<sup>224</sup> ADB helped construct approximately 325 kilometers of new and upgraded highways and rural roads. ADB-supported projects improved road connectivity for 16 villages in the Agstafa and Gazakh districts through rehabilitation of rural roads and reconstruction of bridges. These interventions improved people's mobility and accessibility to markets, jobs, and social services. ADB continues to support the completion of the government's priority transport corridors and road networks. It also provides support for (i) building institutional capacity to undertake sector reforms; (ii) formulating policies, regulations, and operational procedures; and (iii) improving planning and management processes.

This following section aims to help identify strategies to ensure that ADB-supported transport projects could positively impact on women's mobility and access to opportunities and improve their quality of life.

## 1. Key Gender Issues

- **Men and women's transport needs vary due to their differing gender roles.**

Transport is often considered a “gender-neutral” sector given its stimulation of the economy and broad benefits to the whole population. However, due to gender differences in men and women's roles in work and family life, their transport needs differ. Women generally have more domestic tasks (shopping, taking children to schools, etc.) that require short local travel, and are more likely to be pedestrians or public transit users than having a vehicle of their own. Due to their travel patterns and lack of access to a vehicle, rural road linkages and public transit are often greater priorities for women than expressways.

- **Transport improvements have a direct impact on increasing women's access to economic opportunity and reducing women's time poverty.**

Rural women who were interviewed as part of this assessment said that transport access in their area was limited due to poor road quality and lack of a reliable and frequent bus services. Urban women were less critical of transport but also felt that public transit needed to be faster and more reliable.

Women's travel time is reduced by improving public transport services. In Azerbaijan, the rail transport subsector still faces excessive transit times, inadequate service quality, and high operating costs due to old or inadequate infrastructure, operational inefficiencies, and poor management. These result in missed economic opportunities, suboptimal regional trade, and

<sup>222</sup> Footnote 35.

<sup>223</sup> Center for Analysis of Economic Reforms and Communication. 2017. *Azerbaijan Economic Reforms Review*. Baku.

<sup>224</sup> ADB. 2019. *ADB Member Fact Sheet—Azerbaijan*. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/27752/aze-2018.pdf>.

negative environmental impacts. Problems of service efficiency can have a higher impact on women, including women entrepreneurs, who may depend more on public transport for their movements and trading.

- **Women are underrepresented in the transport sector and new measures are needed to ensure their perspectives are integrated into decision-making.**

Women are underrepresented in jobs in the transport sector, construction, and in the civil service. As result, their perspectives are often missed when transport decisions are made. Identifying ways to engage women in public consultations to provide inputs into transport decisions is important to designing effective and user-friendly transport systems.<sup>225</sup>

- **Inappropriate behavior from other passengers can deter women from using public transit.**

A study on women's safety in public transport conducted by ADB identified some incidences where women who use public transport in Baku experienced some form of inappropriate behavior from another passenger.<sup>226</sup> The sample for the survey was too small to assess the full extent of the problem. However, the report provides some anecdotal evidence that sexual harassment occurs in Baku's public transit system. Women who participated in the survey, most of whom used public transit to attend school or go to work, were concerned with sexual harassment from other passengers and affected their use of public transport. A more thorough research on women's experiences with public transport could clarify to what extent women's mobility is affected by inappropriate behavior from other passengers, and the measures needed to prevent this problem.

## 2. Government Initiatives

- **The government's transport sector road maps have potential to increase women's access to economic opportunities and reduce their travel time.**

The government's investments in transport are guided by its overarching development policies, such as the "Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future" Concept of Development and the Roadmap on the National Economy with 11 Strategic Roadmaps (2016–2025). These policies and programs highlight the importance of inclusive growth and gender mainstreaming across all sectors, including the transport sector. The State Program on Socioeconomic Development of Regions (2014–2018) included measures to enhance entrepreneurial development in parallel with improvements to the rural road network. It also specifically targets to raise women's income levels. This collaborative program was implemented by various ministries and agencies, including the Ministry of Transport, Communications and High Technologies, State Agency of Azerbaijan Automobile Roads, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population. As road access is expanded, rural women benefit from easier access to markets, health and social services, and the possibility of creating roadside business opportunities.

<sup>225</sup> ADB. 2013. *Gender Tool Kit: Transport—Maximizing the Benefits of Improved Mobility for All*. Manila.

<sup>226</sup> ADB. 2015. *Policy Brief: A Safe Public Transportation Environment for Women and Girls*. Manila.

The government also addresses transport issues in its Strategic Roadmap for the Development of Logistics and Trade by 2025. The road map identifies priorities for improving railway transport infrastructure and operations and how to enhance economic opportunities derived from more efficient rail transport services. Azerbaijan is also a participant in the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program, an initiative to expand trade and improve competitiveness in six identified transport and economic corridors—allowing for the efficient and low-cost movement of goods between countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus, and connecting the country with major trading partners such as the PRC and Europe.<sup>227</sup> Stimulating business development in conjunction with transport infrastructure investment is conducive to adding components that increase women's access to new entrepreneurship opportunities. Integrating gender-specific actions and targets on gender equality will expand the benefits that women derive from state programs in the transport sector.

### 3. ADB Experience in Mainstreaming Gender in the Transport Sector

ADB has been investing in the transport sector to support the government's goals of stimulating inclusive economic growth and the sector remains as a key area in ADB's ongoing portfolio. The following discussion outlines how gender is being mainstreamed into ADB's transport sector projects.

**Multitranches financing facilities for road network development.** ADB developed a multitranches financing facility (MFF) to support the construction of a highway along the border to Iran—to enhance national and regional trade routes and rehabilitate local roads to improve access to communities along the highway.<sup>228</sup> The MFF Road Network Development Program (2007–2017) financed 59 kilometers (km) of the new four-lane expressway from Masally to Astara on the border with Iran, and rehabilitated 82 km of local roads. ADB also extended its support to complete additional sections of the same highway through an MFF for the Second Road Network Development Investment Program (2016–2020). This MFF also includes support for road safety audits and the improvement of road specifications and standards.

Both phases of the road development investment program had gender elements as both investments improve women's access to markets and services, and generate opportunities for skilled women. The first MFF included measures to increase women's employment in civil works and construction. A project completion report under the MFF (Ganja bypass) reported that 21 women were employed during the project. The project was noted to have significantly increased access of villages to centers and boosted incomes for businesses along roadways. As a result, women also benefited from better access to services and more income-generating opportunities. However, no analysis was available to track the economic impacts.<sup>229</sup>

The gender measures included in the Second Road Network Development Investment Program currently underway include (i) skills building for women entrepreneurs along the roadway, (ii) ensuring that women have the chance to participate in monitoring the impact

<sup>227</sup> CAREC member countries are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, the PRC, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

<sup>228</sup> ADB. 2016. *Road Network Development Program: Project Administration Manual*. Manila. The MFF was approved in 2007, and three of its four tranches are ongoing until 2022.

<sup>229</sup> ADB. 2014. *Azerbaijan Road Network Development Program: Project Completion Report*. Manila.

of the investment program, (iii) promoting the employment of skilled and unskilled women laborers in civil works and consulting services, (iv) making provisions for the needs of men and women travelers for rest stops and sanitary facilities, and (v) disseminating information to reduce the risks of trafficking and HIV/AIDS linked to construction.<sup>230</sup>

During key informant interviews, the executing agency and the State Agency of Azerbaijan Automobile Roads (AAY) indicated a willingness to apply gender equality measures in their projects. The executing agency take steps to organize community consultative meetings and ensure that women are present to provide feedback on road design. However, no system is currently in place to collect specific data on participation in consultations that are disaggregated by sex. Other gender measures proposed in the design were entrepreneurship training, but these are difficult to implement by the executing agency as they fall outside its mandate. Facilities such as markets and rest stops to benefit women are the responsibilities of regional governments, hence, these are not part of the road design. Women and men have equal opportunity to apply for employment at AAY and in construction projects. AAY reported that 40% of the staff at its central level offices are women, however, fewer women worked in transport projects. Women are less likely to be trained in construction- and engineering-related professions and women face more constraints to travel due to family obligations.

**Baku Sustainable Urban Transport Investment Program (2012–2015).** ADB implemented the Baku Sustainable Urban Transport Investment Program (2012–2015) that targeted an improved and integrated urban transit system in Baku. A TA was implemented during 2012–2016 that aimed to produce a road map, an investment plan, a policy reform framework, and design components of a longer-term investment program. In parallel with this TA, ADB completed a study on women’s safety in public transport.<sup>231</sup>

**Railway sector development program.** ADB is also financing the Railway Sector Development Program (2017–2022) as part of its transport portfolio. This program aims to improve management, operations, and financial viability of the Azerbaijan Railway Company (ADY); and to rehabilitate the railway tracks in a key corridor (Sumgayit to Yalama). The project is expected to improve the rail network efficiency and reduce transport costs and travel time, bringing a positive impact on poverty alleviation in the rural areas and in non-Baku urban areas along the project railway.

Some gender elements and measures to mainstream gender equality are proposed in the project design documents. Identified benefits for women include (i) reduced travel time and easy access to public and business facilities, (ii) additional employment opportunities, and (iii) construction designs that increase safety particularly for women. The proposed measures include (i) constructing overpasses and bridges, (ii) installing safety fences and lighting, (iii) adding sanitation facilities for men and women, and (iv) supporting community safety awareness campaigns. Design documents state that advertisements for project-related jobs will also encourage women to apply. ADY is also meant to implement a skills development program and ensure a 30% participation by women. ADY will also design a new pricing strategy for passenger services that incorporates measures to mitigate any potential negative impact on the poor, women, children, and the elderly.<sup>232</sup>

<sup>230</sup> ADB. 2012. *Multitranches Financing Facility for the Second Road Network Development Program: Report and Recommendation to the President*. Manila.

<sup>231</sup> Footnote 226.

<sup>232</sup> ADB. 2017. *Azerbaijan Railway Sector Development Program: Report and Recommendations to the President*. Manila.

Although the project has some gender elements, it does not require the preparation and monitoring of a gender action plan. As a result, no monitoring systems are in place to report on the extent to which the proposed gender measures are implemented or to what extent gender targets are achieved.

#### 4. Entry Points for Gender Mainstreaming

ADB has the potential to improve gender mainstreaming in transport through the following multiple measures:

**Support TA projects that can pilot innovative approaches in mainstreaming gender.** Opportunities provided by TA grants, or support from other trust funds, can be maximized to deepen understanding of gender issues in the transport sector. For example, a TA designed specifically to study women’s travel needs and patterns may be used to assess any mobility issues and challenges affecting women’s use of the transport system. A working paper produced under the TA can be a useful tool to guide project officers to integrate gender concerns into the project design. Project officers can also explore opportunities for a TA to be linked with a specific transport project—to help identify gender issues and to integrate gender actions in the project design.

**Ensure more participatory approaches to project planning.** More efforts are needed to engage with women early in transport planning stages. Consulting women beneficiaries during project preparation is a good way to ensure that women’s concerns and preferences are heard

#### Box 11: Addressing Social Dimensions of Transport Based on ADB’s Sustainable Transport Initiative

Since the overarching goal of the Asian Development Bank is poverty reduction, its work on transport should contribute to providing effective solutions to the transport needs of the poor. More effective approaches should address other social dimensions of transport, including gender mainstreaming, participation, and social risks other than those covered by ADB’s safeguard policies.

These include the following:

- (i) more participatory approaches to project planning and project strategies to protect beneficiaries from HIV/AIDS and human trafficking risks;
- (ii) incorporating complementary development programs and community-based maintenance;
- (iii) improving transport services;
- (iv) providing improved facilities, such as public toilets and pedestrian and bicycle lanes to make transport accessible and safe for all social groups, including women and the elderly;
- (v) applying core labor standards; and
- (vi) using tariff and subsidy options to increase access for vulnerable groups.

Source: ADB. 2010. *Sustainable Transport Initiative— Operational Plan*. <https://www.adb.org/documents/sustainable-transport-initiative-operational-plan>.



in the selection, location, and design of infrastructures. Their travel patterns and transport needs must be considered to ensure that the transport projects include gender-design features. Consultations with women's participation could be done through stakeholders' meetings, or by holding separate meetings with women, as circumstances warrant. Conducting the meeting in places, days, and times conducive for women's participation is also important.

**ADB's Sustainable Transport Initiative can provide guidance in addressing gender considerations in transport operations.** The Sustainable Transport Initiative was established to align ADB's transport operations with Strategy 2020.<sup>233</sup> The document underscores ADB's overarching goal of assisting member countries to develop sustainable transport, which is defined as a transport system that is accessible, safe, environment-friendly, and affordable. This entails addressing gender dimensions, such as barriers to women's access to safe and affordable transport system. The Sustainable Transport Initiative Operational Plan highlights approaches to address the social dimensions of transport, which are still relevant and may provide guidance in mainstreaming gender in the sector (Box 11).

**Support the capacity-building initiatives of the government and transport sector partners.** The government is committed to ensuring equal opportunities for women in all spheres, as evident in its international commitments and national policies and programs. ADB can support the government's efforts to mainstream gender in the transport sector, through assistance in capacity-building initiatives for sector planners and implementers. Training workshops, such as the Sub-Regional Workshop on Gender Mainstreaming in Infrastructure Projects in Central and West Asia undertaken in 2017, are good opportunities for project officers and implementers to share experiences and explore strategies for integrating gender in infrastructure projects, including in transport. Capacity-building assessments specifically for the transport sector in Azerbaijan can help identify the capacity gaps and training needs of project planners and implementers—and how to identify and address gender issues relevant to the sector. This can be the basis for providing further capacity-building activities.

**Develop programs to enhance women's access to income-earning opportunities.** Increased connectivity and greater mobility of people and goods may open employment and income-generating opportunities. ADB could engage with government counterparts and other development partners to design programs that enhance women's capacity to take advantage of such opportunities in ADB-financed transport projects. These programs could include (i) workshops to introduce women to transport-related business opportunities; and (ii) training on business development that includes how to establish linkages with production groups, business associations, markets, and financial institutions.

**Identify and implement measures to increase employment opportunities for women in the transport sector.** Having more women working in the transport sector (i) creates a wider pool of talent for recruitment, (ii) ensures that women benefit from transport investments, and (iii) adds knowledge on the sector informed by women's experiences in transport usage. ADB could work with the AAY and ADY to develop more proactive approaches to women's hiring in the transport sector—beyond the current practice of requiring contractors to advertise that women are encouraged to apply. Consulting with women already working in the transport sector and identifying measures to improve their working conditions is another step to increase hiring for women.

<sup>233</sup> ADB. 2010. *Sustainable Transport Initiative—Operational Plan*. Manila.

**Integrate gender-responsive design measures that increase women’s safety in transport infrastructure and facilities.** Developing specific gender-sensitive transport designs may also include improving female passengers’ safety. Among the safety features that may be integrated in the design of road and railways projects include (i) priority seating in waiting areas for the elderly, people with disabilities, and pregnant women; (ii) separate restrooms for males and females in bus stops and railway stations; (iii) separate queuing spaces for women and men; (iv) staffed help desks; (v) visible posters with messages against sexual harassment and other crimes; and (vi) visible emergency help lines and signage. Supporting campaigns to raise public awareness on safe and appropriate behavior will benefit all users while ensuring that women and girls have equal access to public transport. Such campaigns could be undertaken in collaboration with organizations such as the UNDP, which are addressing issues of women and girls’ safety and freedom from gender-based violence.

**Support the government to scale up its responses to human trafficking and irregular migration.** Aside from facilitating the legitimate movement of goods and people, highway transport projects increase the risk of human trafficking and irregular migration, which require appropriate responses based on the level of risk. ADB participates in networks to combat human trafficking in Central Asia and the South Caucasus and has supported various campaigns to educate communities, particularly women and girls, at risk. ADB could increase its technical support to the government in monitoring social safeguards that require construction contractors to undertake measures to prevent trafficking around construction sites. To assist the government in ensuring secure and efficient movement of legitimate goods and services, ADB could design knowledge building programs and support the setting up of information and communication technology (ICT) initiatives that improve border controls, monitor transport routes, and other measures aligned with the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking. These could be undertaken with other development partners, such as the International Organization for Migration, which addresses trafficking issues in the country and in the region.

**Improve monitoring mechanisms to track gender equality targets in transport projects.** Data collection on women’s participation in transport projects is limited. A sex-disaggregated monitoring system for consultations is needed to track women’s participation at the design stage and monitor how their concerns and recommendations are documented and integrated into final design decisions. Available data on the number of women hired by transport project contractors are limited. More quantitative indicators are needed to track how proposed measures to increase women’s representation are being implemented. At the design stage, ADB could assist AAY and ADY in developing and implementing steps to collect basic data on gender equality targets. The government could then periodically review such data to track how effective transport projects are in hiring women in various positions. More detailed recruitment data will assist in identifying what is working and not working to better integrate women into the transport sector.

## B. Energy

Azerbaijan is rich in energy resources. The overall volume of the country's hydrocarbon reserves is estimated at 7 trillion barrels of oil equivalent. Azerbaijan is one of the world's oldest oil-producing countries.<sup>234</sup> As the largest segment of the economy, the energy sector plays a leading role in Azerbaijan's socioeconomic growth, contributing 50% of the country's GDP. Economic growth rests largely on the successful development of oil and natural gas resources and through effective management of the resulting revenue stream.<sup>235</sup>

In its key policy document, the “Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future” Concept of Development, the government sets out its key strategies for the energy sector. The government aims to improve energy efficiency to meet the growing domestic demand for energy supply and to maintain its position as an energy exporter. The goals also include protecting the country's energy security, developing renewable energy, and improving energy efficiency. Efforts to improve energy distribution are also outlined as part of the government's commitment to meet its Sustainable Development Goal of access to sustainable energy for all.

Energy is an important sector in the ADB–Azerbaijan partnership, comprising 30.33% of the cumulative lending, grant, and TA commitments by 2017. ADB provided the government with TAs to develop an action plan to boost renewable energy development. ADB also supported the preparation of an energy sector master plan to provide a vision for investment in the sector—from the government, ADB, and other development partners. The master plan sets out an investment strategy for the power generation, transmission, and distribution subsectors. Under the distribution subsector, the immediate priority for investment is to rehabilitate the distribution networks that currently experience frequent system outages and supply interruptions.<sup>236</sup> ADB will support the government in increasing its energy sources, and in rehabilitating and augmenting the power distribution network throughout the country.

The following section aims to identify strategies to ensure that ADB-supported energy projects positively impact women's access to reliable energy, which results in reduced workload and improved quality of life. It also reviews how investments in the energy sector could have a positive impact on women's economic empowerment.

### 1. Key Gender Issues

- **Ensuring reliable access to energy increases women's access to economic opportunities, information technology, and time-saving appliances.**

Investments in generation and transmission facilities over the past 10 years have resulted in 100% access to electricity for the population.<sup>237</sup> However, power generation, transmission, and distribution networks are aging, and the distribution network is deteriorated. Distribution losses are between 15%–20% in some places. The systems are particularly degraded in suburban areas, where available facilities cannot provide a reliable source of

<sup>234</sup> ADB. 2014. *Power Distribution Enhancement Investment Program. Sector Assessment Summary: Energy*. Manila.

<sup>235</sup> Footnote 234.

<sup>236</sup> ADB. 2016. *Proposed Multitranches Financing Facility Azerishiq Open Joint-Stock Company Power Distribution Enhancement Investment Program*. Manila.

<sup>237</sup> World Bank. 2015. *Access to Electricity by Percentage of the Population*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.ELC.ACDS.ZS>.

energy to customers. Frequent electricity outages, undependable heating systems, and weak maintenance and repair services affect the well-being of households and limit investments in businesses that require dependable electricity.<sup>238</sup>

This situation is particularly difficult for women because of their greater share in domestic tasks and must perform these without the aid of time-saving appliances. Women are more often at home and are more affected by poor heating systems. Rural women are particularly disadvantaged as they may also rely on electricity for farm work such as postharvest processing. Due to lack of time and limited mobility, women have less direct contact with business, social, and political networks. Reliable energy will make more media—web, TV, and radio—available to women, particularly rural women. It is through these media that they can readily access needed information on health, business, social services, or other topics.

Women's domestic role also makes them the main household energy consumers and have more stake in energy decisions. Women do have an important role in promoting energy efficiency; changing household energy behavior; or adopting new technologies in energy use, metering, and billing. Investments in energy reform and infrastructure development need to consider women's perspectives on consumption, design, production, distribution, and sale of energy sources and technologies. Their perspectives can guide in making appropriate investments to improve performance across the whole energy supply chain.

- **Increasing women's access to employment and business opportunities in the country's large energy sector is important for their economic empowerment**

Women are underrepresented in energy-related jobs. Women comprise only 11.3% of those employed in electricity, gas, and steam production and only 13.8% of those employed in mining.<sup>239</sup> Education patterns show that this situation is not likely to change soon. Women are only 13% of those studying in the energy field and in energy-machine building in vocational education, and only 10% of those enrolled in the exploration and extraction of minerals.<sup>240</sup> At the university level, women are just over a quarter of those studying in technical and technological fields that could potentially lead toward the energy sector. Given the key role of the energy sector in Azerbaijan's economy, women would benefit if they are employed in this high-paying sector, particularly those who live in areas where energy-related businesses are the main employers. In communities that depend mainly on energy sector jobs, women risk becoming more dependent on the male members of their family, having less resources on their own due to their limited employment in this sector. As a result, women have lower levels of autonomy and self-sufficiency and are more vulnerable to domestic violence in these situations.<sup>241</sup>

Oil and gas production are generally dominated by state enterprises and large companies. Official statistics identify only 62 entrepreneurs under the electricity, gas, and steam production of which 57 are men and five are women. However, with more attention to developing renewable energy sources to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, new opportunities for enterprise development are opening up that could expand opportunities for women as

<sup>238</sup> ADB. 2014. *Azerbaijan Country Partnership Strategy: Energy Sector Assessment*. Manila.

<sup>239</sup> Footnote 54.

<sup>240</sup> Footnote 54.

<sup>241</sup> J. Scott et al. 2013. *Extracting Lessons on Gender in the Oil and Gas Sector: A Survey and Analysis of the Gendered Impacts of Onshore Oil and Gas Production in Three Developing Countries*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

employees or entrepreneurs.<sup>242</sup> Azerbaijan has one of the lowest shares of renewable energy in total energy consumption in the Caucasus and Central Asia. However, it has been investing in increasing its wind and solar capacity in the past few years. The emergence of businesses associated with the development of wind and solar sources may offer more opportunity for women to become involved in the energy sector. Based on experiences in other countries, addressing barriers such as access to information and finance would assist women to access new employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in the renewable energy sector.<sup>243</sup>

- **Due to differences in gender roles, the impacts of extractive industries on women and men vary and must be considered during the planning of initiatives in this sector.**

Azerbaijan's extensive investment in the energy sector means that many communities are affected by energy-related development. Such investments generate benefits as well as negative impacts for women and men in affected communities. Employment is one of the main positive impact of energy projects. Noise, pollution, land acquisition, and increased traffic are the main negative impacts. Research into the gendered impacts of onshore oil and gas production in Azerbaijan and two other developing countries showed that positive impacts need to be further enhanced to mitigate the negative ones, particularly for women. Households located near the actual energy production are exposed to the negative impacts of noise and pollution. Community members often anticipate high economic benefits to offset the negative ones but only some community members will qualify for available jobs, most of which are available only during construction phase.<sup>244</sup>

Women are less likely to receive economic benefits that mitigate negative impacts. Interviews in communities affected by oil production projects revealed that most men received the benefits of compensation for land acquisitions, and men filled most of the local jobs that were generated. Women reported that their concerns about noise, pollution, and share in the benefits should have been given more consideration during the consultation phase.<sup>245</sup>

## 2. Government Initiatives

- **The Strategic Roadmap for the Development of Utilities Services has a high potential to increasing women's access to reliable energy and time-saving appliances.**

To achieve this vision, the government developed the Strategic Roadmap for the Development of Utilities Services (electric energy, heating, water, and gas). The road map envisions improvements across the electricity supply chain—from generation to distribution—toward establishing a fully unbundled and liberalized environment where generation, transmission, distribution, and retail services are separated into different state entities. More efficient utility services will have a positive impact on women who spend more time for domestic tasks and, therefore, are more likely to be in contact with utilities. More effective energy services also mean that women have more reliable access to time-saving appliances.

<sup>242</sup> Global Gender and Climate Alliance and UNDP. 2016. *Policy Brief: Gender and Sustainable Energy*. New York.

<sup>243</sup> Footnote 242.

<sup>244</sup> Footnote 241.

<sup>245</sup> Footnote 241.

- **The utility road map and the National Strategy on the Use of Alternative and Renewable Energy Sources (2012–2020) could create more possibilities to increasing the number of women working in the energy sector.**

The utility road map targets not only more efficient operations but also the creation of 6,645 new jobs along the whole value chain in the utilities sector. The government also plans to diversify generation capacity to include wind, solar, and biomass energy. The government will expand the coverage of heating supply to reach 50% of residential buildings. The road map also commits to mobilize and engage with civil society to disseminate information and seek support for the plan during its implementation.<sup>246</sup> The target of increasing energy-related employment and business opportunities opens up new avenues to the hiring of more women in the sector.

Azerbaijan also has a National Strategy on the Use of Alternative and Renewable Energy Sources for the period 2012–2020. The strategy targets (i) reducing greenhouse gas emission by 20% from 1990 levels, (ii) increasing the share of renewable energies in energy consumption by up to 20%, and (iii) increasing energy efficiency by 20% by 2020. Alternative energy is a sector that often stimulates small and medium business development as it develops new technology, provides equipment, or supplies energy on a small scale. Investments in this sector could create new business opportunities for women entrepreneurs, including women in the rural areas where solar and wind sources are most often generated.

### 3. ADB Experience in Mainstreaming Gender in the Energy Sector

Through its investments in the energy sector, ADB is supporting the government's efforts to provide a reliable and efficient power supply to meet its growing energy needs for inclusive development, especially in secondary cities and rural areas. Such actions bring positive benefits to women that further enhance gender equality measures, which are integrated into the design of projects.

**Investment program to enhance power distribution.** Through the Power Distribution Enhancement Investment Program (2016–2019), ADB is supporting the rehabilitation and augmentation of the power distribution network throughout the country.<sup>247</sup> The investment program aims to improve power supply reliability and efficiency and the operational and financial performance of the state-owned power distribution company, the Azerishiq Open Joint-Stock Company (OJSC).

This investment program is classified as having some gender elements. It is expected to result in improved reliability of electricity supply at the household level. This, in turn, will lead to decreased household spending on solid and liquid fuels for heating, cooking, and lighting, and reduce the associated indoor air quality issues. Households will also be able to use more labor-saving electrical appliances without risking damage due to power voltage fluctuations.

<sup>246</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan, Ministry of Energy. 2016. *Strategic Roadmap for the Development of Utilities Services*. Baku.

<sup>247</sup> Footnote 236.

The program is also expected to contribute to improved income-generating opportunities by providing reliable electricity to small industries and agricultural businesses.<sup>248</sup>

The project design includes the following gender-specific development measures: (i) at least 20% of female staff from Azerishiq OJSC will be trained in key aspects of distribution network management, (ii) new recruits in customer care jobs under the program will include at least 80% female staff members, (iii) at least 50% female representation will be ensured in the consultation process during the project implementation period. The design document also commits to put in place safeguards to minimize negative impacts caused by construction or new installations.

**Shah Deniz Gas Field Expansion Project.** ADB is also providing a partial credit guarantee for a commercial loan of \$500 million to the Southern Gas Corridor Closed Joint-Stock Company through the Shah Deniz Gas Field Expansion Project (2016–2022). The project is expected to expand Azerbaijan’s oil production and export capacity, contributing to creating jobs and stimulating economic growth. This project will create over 19,000 temporary jobs during construction and 1,800 permanent local jobs (15% of which are expected to be for women) during the operation of Shah Deniz-II by 2022. The project is classified as having no gender elements. A safeguard audit of the Shah Deniz Gas Field Expansion found that the Environment and Social Impact Assessment did not make any specific provision for gender equality. No measures were also proposed to promote a more gender-balanced project workforce nor to ensure no discrimination in hiring. While gender equality issues were discussed in the baseline study, there were no specifics on how gender targets in employment will be implemented or other gender recommendations will be followed up.<sup>249</sup>

#### 4. Entry Points for Gender Mainstreaming in ADB Operations in the Sector

Investments in the energy sector create an opportunity for ADB to advance gender equality in the economic sector. Recommendations for mainstreaming gender and creating gender entry points are presented below:

**Undertake consultations and surveys to ensure that women’s perspectives are mainstreamed into the design and implementation of energy sector projects.** It is critical to gather women’s perspectives as energy consumers for the effective implementation of energy projects and promotion of greater energy efficiency. Feasibility studies of every energy project should include a gender assessment and an analysis of the needs and preferences of end users with a gender lens. While the inclusion of women in design consultations is an important measure, it is only a first step. ADB should put in place a series of measures to encourage and facilitate women’s participation in project design and in interventions to promote energy use behavior change once the project is being implemented. Such measures could include the following:

- (i) Ensuring that design teams have staff designated and trained to engage with women and facilitate their active participation at the design stage;

<sup>248</sup> Footnote 236.

<sup>249</sup> ADB. 2016. *Shah Deniz Gas Field Expansion Project*. Manila.

- (ii) Working with civil society groups and/or women's groups to mobilize women to actively participate in consultation sessions on energy-related issues, or to conduct surveys on women's needs and preferences related to energy investments and services; and
- (iii) Documenting and disseminating the feedback generated during consultations and reporting if these inputs were considered in the project design.

Mechanisms to ensure the active participation of women in consultations are very important in achieving not only women's representation but are also critical in generating substantive feedback and in building responsiveness to consumer concerns early in the project design stage.

**Design measures to ensure ongoing affordability of reliable utility services.** To sustain improvements in the utilities, costs must be rationalized based on expenses and revenues to ensure that utility companies operate on a sustainable basis. This means putting in place new billing systems and ensuring that customers pay their bills so the system can be sustained. While necessary to maintain a quality service, such changes can create problems of affordability for low-income households, including households headed by single females. The government could consult with women to identify ways to reduce energy consumption and lower electricity bills while facilitating domestic tasks. This could include promoting greater use of induction heat cookers and using heat pump equipment.

**Support initiatives to make energy more affordable, especially for the poor and vulnerable sectors.** The government's efforts to implement reforms in the power sector provide opportunities for ADB to help design and implement initiatives that ensure affordability of energy for low-income households. ADB is currently implementing a TA project to assist the government in preparing a power sector financial recovery plan.<sup>250</sup> Under this TA, a study was undertaken to help prepare a new tariff structure for power generation, which allows for differentiation among the different classes of customers. Compared to the current single tariff for all customers, this new system will help the government target its subsidies to poor and vulnerable people and allow cross-subsidization among customer classes. This good initiative can be complemented with education campaigns to ensure that low-income households are well informed on how to take advantage of such beneficial measures. More initiatives can be undertaken by targeting such subsidies among households headed by females and other vulnerable sectors of the population.

**Integrate more safeguard measures that specifically target women for projects in oil and gas extraction and/or production.** Investments in oil and gas production are often considered gender-neutral as these are large-scale projects targeting export markets. However, extraction projects have significant positive and negative impacts in surrounding communities that are experienced differently by women and men. There is some evidence that negative impacts may be greater felt by women, hence, more safeguards are needed. While it is important to target women's employment in energy projects, making these a reality requires support—such as outreach, training, and positive discrimination in hiring—or other steps to facilitate women's entry into a nontraditional sector over the longer term.

Extraction projects and other energy-related construction also generate negative impacts, such as noise, pollution, environment degradation, and increased traffic that needs to be mitigated.

<sup>250</sup> ADB. 2016. *Technical Assistance Report—Azerbaijan: Preparing a Power Sector Financial Recovery Plan*. Manila.



Aside from ensuring that women benefit directly from compensation for land acquisition, other benefit-sharing measures must be put in place to offset other types of disruptions. Other benefit-sharing measures could include gender components that are designed around women's concerns and support them to improve their existing livelihoods. These will lead to more robust safeguards and ensure that women have access to project benefits.

**Develop campaigns to promote women's employment in the energy sector:** Longer-term initiatives are needed to increase women's employment in the energy sector. Potential measures that could be introduced include the following:

- Support career fairs or awareness programs that encourage more women to study in energy-related fields.
- Women in the project areas can be recruited as public communication staff to work directly with consumer groups.
- The executing agency could put in place proactive measures to recruit women at their frontline sales offices.
- ADB-financed projects could demonstrate the effectiveness of employing women in nontraditional fields, such as in energy companies, by creating more incentives for counterparts and contractors to hire women as technicians and project managers.

Having a small number of women in nontraditional fields could break barriers, creating role models and changing the work environment in ways that will encourage more women to enter energy-related fields.

**Introduce components in the energy sector projects for women's enterprise development.** Reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the energy sector will require new investments in renewable energy and green growth technologies to mitigate the impacts of climate change. ADB is a lead development partner that finances private sector investment in green growth technologies and enterprise initiatives. Within its green growth portfolio, ADB could set up pilot programs to support women entrepreneurs to learn new technologies and start micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises in the renewable energy and green growth sector. Training in various renewable energy enterprises could be provided for enterprising women under ADB's SMEs programming to help women to position themselves in this strategic sector.

## C. Water and Other Urban Infrastructure and Services

Increasing access to improved and reliable water and sanitation services was a key achievement for Azerbaijan in meeting its Millennium Development Goals. According to the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene in 2015, Azerbaijan had 91% of the population using an improved water source, with 98% of urban residents having an improved water source compared to 83% of rural residents.<sup>251</sup> Overall, Azerbaijan has:

<sup>251</sup> WHO and UNICEF. 2017. *Joint Monitoring Program*. Geneva. <https://washdata.org/data#!/afg>. An improved water source is one that, by nature of its construction or through active intervention, is likely to be protected from outside contamination, particularly from contamination with fecal matter.

- 72% of its population considered to have met the SDG indicator of a safely managed water source, defined as accessible on premises, available when needed, and free from contamination;
- 95% of the population to have an improved sanitation facility, 89% for rural and 100% for urban households;<sup>252</sup> and
- 73% of its urban population using a facility that meets the SDG indicator of a safely managed sanitation—defined as improved (private and hygienic) as well as connected to proper waste treatment, and not shared with another household.<sup>253</sup>

Similar data on safely managed sanitation were not available for rural areas.

## 1. Government Initiatives

The government continues to prioritize this sector to ensure that the population has access to safe, reliable, and efficient water supply and sanitation services. Plans include upgrading the infrastructure, increasing the efficiency of water consumption and supply, and putting in place a clean wastewater infrastructure.

Several strategic documents target the improvement of coverage and quality of water supply and sanitation services. These aim to enhance the health and living conditions of the population, especially for women and children.

- The government has been investing in improving water supply and sanitation service coverage and quality standards, allocating significant resources to improve infrastructure and operations in rural areas under the **State Program on Socio-economic Development of Regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2014–2018 years**.<sup>254</sup> Azerbaijan has also been investing to enhance the rational use of water resources, water supply and wastewater treatment, rainwater harvesting, water resources management, and the construction and operation of pipeline systems.<sup>255</sup>
- Through its **Strategic Roadmap for the Development of Utilities Services** (i.e., electric energy, heating, water, and gas), the government targets to improve services to better meet consumer demand, and install an efficient and responsive service. The road map outlines its path for reforming public utilities. Among its strategic priority is to create an effective water supply system by (i) upgrading infrastructure, (ii) increasing the efficiency of water consumption and supply, and (iii) putting in place a clean wastewater infrastructure.<sup>256</sup> The utilities will also coordinate with other relevant agencies in defining tariff policies that ensure that low-income populations and other strategic consumer groups will have access to utilities, including water and sanitation. The road map will ensure that these tariff provisions are built into relevant social programs.

<sup>252</sup> WHO and UNICEF. 2017. *Joint Monitoring Program*. Geneva. <https://washdata.org/data#!/afg>. An improved sanitation facility is one that hygienically separates human excreta from human contact.

<sup>253</sup> WHO and UNICEF. 2017. *Joint Monitoring Program*. Geneva. <https://washdata.org/data#!/afg>.

<sup>254</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan. 2017. *Report to the Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights on Access to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation*. Geneva.

<sup>255</sup> WHO. 2016. *UN Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water: Azerbaijan*. Geneva.

<sup>256</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan. 2016. *Strategic Roadmap for the Development of Utilities Services in the Republic of Azerbaijan*. Approved by Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, dated 6 December. Baku.

Resources under both programs will benefit women, ease the burdens on their time, and contribute to improve health outcomes for women and children, especially those in the rural areas. However, the government's plans and programs for water and sanitation do not specifically mention or set targets related to gender equality or to increasing women's engagement, through consultations, user groups, or employment in the water supply and sanitation (WSS) sector. It is expected that more specific gender equality measures in state WSS programs will enhance benefits to women as the government continues to invest in this sector.

## 2. Key Gender Issues

- **Women have specific needs and priorities in water and sanitation due to their household roles**

Social assessments undertaken during the project preparation for the ADB Water Supply and Sanitation Investment Program (WSSIP) showed that women have specific needs and priorities to be addressed to maximize the benefits of the project.<sup>257</sup> Households interviewed in the towns of Agdash and Goychay were mainly concerned about the cleanliness, color, and taste of the water that their families were using. Before the rehabilitation of the old water supply system, water quality was not fit for drinking and household use, and women had to boil, filter, or use sterilization tablets and other treatments before they could use it. Water from the network was also not enough for gardening and other purposes, and the households had to collect from outside sources. The farthest distance was 5 km, with some having to go back and forth 10–12 times and spend 6–10 hours a day during dry weather.<sup>258</sup> During consultations in the project villages in Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, women also raised the issue of water quality. Not only did they have to boil the water before drinking, they also had to use softening chemicals when washing clothes as the water tend to harden the fabrics. The chemicals were damaging the washing machines; hence, women could not use such labor-saving appliances.<sup>259</sup>

- **Improvements in water supply and sanitation infrastructure lighten women's burden and reduce their time poverty.**

Women who were interviewed during a project mission for the WSSIP in October 2017 said that access to 24-hour supply of clean water considerably lightened their loads.<sup>260</sup> They no longer had to collect water from outside sources, which was particularly difficult during winter. They no longer need to boil, filter, or use sterilization tablets before they could drink water. Since the water supply is continuous, they can finish their housework, such as cooking, cleaning, and washing anytime. Previously, they had to schedule their household chores based on water availability. The use of washing machines also afforded them more time to do other productive or leisure activities.

<sup>257</sup> S. Korkut. 2011. Azerbaijan Water Supply and Sanitation Investment Programme. A socioeconomic research report for Agdash and Goychay Rayons in Azerbaijan, submitted to ADB. Unpublished.

<sup>258</sup> AY Consulting Ltd. 2009. Social Assessment on the Reconstruction of Water Supply and Sewerage Systems in Agdash, Goychay, and Nakhchivan (informal survey). Submitted to ADB. Unpublished.

<sup>259</sup> Based on an interview with WSSIP Project Management Unit staff during the ADB mission on 17–23 October 2017.

<sup>260</sup> Based on information from interviewed women beneficiaries in Goychay, Agdash, and Nakhchivan during ADB mission on 17–23 October 2017.

- **Universal access to safely managed water and sanitation will require more efforts to improve the living conditions of women particularly those in rural areas.**

While data show that the majority of the population has access to water and sanitation, the rate of coverage is lower in rural areas. Piped water supply is generally unreliable across the country. Water quality remains a challenge even in urban areas. Water treatment facilities are limited, constraining access to a safe water supply.<sup>261</sup> Continued improvements are needed to improve services and ensure access to safely managed water and sanitation systems, particularly in rural areas—in line with the SDG definitions.<sup>262</sup> Poor quality water affects women's health, particularly reproductive health. It also contributes to more illnesses among children, and parents, usually mothers, will need time away from work to provide care.

- **Women's active participation in the WSS sector needs to be enhanced.**

A UNDP study found that women were underrepresented in management and technical positions in the water supply and sanitation sector—due to gender stereotypes that such positions were more suited to men. This belief was predominant among men but also shared by many women.<sup>263</sup> A World Bank study also found that women were less likely than men to be knowledgeable about the role and activities of water user associations (WUAs) and so were less likely to participate. However, when asked in a survey, both men and women considered women's participation in WUAs to be important.<sup>264</sup>

### 3. ADB Experience in Mainstreaming Gender in the Sector

The water and other urban infrastructure and services sector represents 17.42% of ADB's cumulative lending, grant, and TA commitments in 2017.<sup>265</sup> ADB has been supporting the government to implement its plans for improved water and other urban infrastructure and services with TA, loans, and multitranches financing. Since 2009, the main water sector activity of the portfolio has been the **Multi-Tranche Financing Facility for the Water Supply and Sanitation Investment Program (2009–2018)**. The outputs of the WSSIP include (i) the physical expansion of the WSS system; (ii) greater institutional efficiencies and management for the main water utility's executing agency; and (iii) better planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting for this national investment program.<sup>266</sup>

Under this program, ADB improved the coverage, continuity, and quality of water supplies and wastewater disposal in the secondary towns of Azerbaijan.<sup>267</sup> ADB's support increased the access to high-quality and reliable drinking water of over 350,000 urban and rural residents.<sup>268</sup> In Azerbaijan's Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, ADB-supported projects (i) provided about 135,000 people with access to a 24-hour supply of water treated through state-of-the-art technology, (ii) established the first citywide sewerage network with adequate wastewater treatment, and (iii) installed water meters in 24,700 households to make the water utility

<sup>261</sup> Footnote 254.

<sup>262</sup> Footnote 253.

<sup>263</sup> UNDP. 2013. *Reducing Transboundary Degradation in The Kura Ara(k)s River Basin*. Baku.

<sup>264</sup> World Bank. 2012. *Enhancing the Role of Women in Water User Associations in Azerbaijan*. Baku.

<sup>265</sup> Footnote 224.

<sup>266</sup> ADB. 2009. *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors—Multitranches Financing Facility for Water Supply and Sanitation Investment Program*. Manila.

<sup>267</sup> These are the towns of Agjabedi, Agdash, Goychay, Beylagan, and Nakhichevan.

<sup>268</sup> Footnote 265.

financially viable and rationalize water demand.<sup>269</sup> ADB also supported water supply and sanitation utilities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their operations and services to customers.

The program has been classified as “effective gender mainstreaming” and gender has been well-integrated into the project components. Recognizing women’s role as the main collectors and users of water for household work, gardening, home-based enterprises, the project put a premium on ensuring women’s participation in consultations and outreach programs. Social assessments and surveys were undertaken in each of the project towns at the start of the project to identify women’s needs, issues, and priorities in the selection and design of infrastructure. Consultations were conducted throughout the project implementation period. Women’s concerns on water safety, quality, and access to low-cost meter installation were addressed in the project design.

Tranche-specific gender action plans (GAPs) were prepared to address specific issues identified based on social assessments. Key actions included the formation of neighborhood groups to ensure meaningful participation of women in project design and monitoring. The neighborhood associations were intended to provide women with an ongoing channel of communication with the executing agencies (the Azersu Open Joint Stock Company or Azersu JSC, the national water operator of Azerbaijan, and the State Amelioration and Water Management Committee of Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic–SAWMC), about service delivery or other topics after the construction ended. Other actions included (i) ensuring the provision of WSS connection to households headed by females; (ii) ensuring connections of schools with adequate washing and sanitation facilities for women and girls; and (iii) increasing women’s representation in civil works, maintenance, and recruitment in these utilities. The project also included actions to strengthen the capacity of the executing agencies (the Azersu JSC and the SAWMC) to integrate gender equality into human resource management, improve knowledge on gender issues, and develop techniques for community feedback and for promoting hygiene in schools.

Anecdotal evidence shows that women significantly benefited from project interventions through lighter workload and time saved, and improved health from access to clean, reliable water supply.<sup>270</sup> Certain gender actions were successfully implemented. Women were actively involved during consultations. Information and education campaigns were conducted to increase awareness on water, hygiene and sanitation; and on the mechanisms for customer rights and complaint on WSS services. Customer care services and grievance mechanisms have been established. The local utilities respond to customers on an individual household basis while national and local hotlines were set up for customer complaints.

However, GAP implementation has been uneven and no persons were assigned to oversee their implementation. No sex-disaggregated data were available for many of the indicators, including human resource database in the executing agencies and local water agencies. The key problems identified include the absence of dedicated personnel in both the Azersu and the State Amelioration and Water Management Committee to implement and report on GAP activities, while budgetary allocation for GAP implementation is limited.

<sup>269</sup> Footnote 265.

<sup>270</sup> This is mostly based on interviews with women beneficiaries during the project mission on 17–23 October 2017.

## 4. Entry Points for Gender Mainstreaming in ADB Operations in the Sector

ADB's water and sanitation projects are improving living conditions for women and their families. Measures to enhance the gender equality outcomes in the WSS sector are discussed below:

**Conduct gender analysis and consult women during project preparation.** From the experience in WSSIP, conducting social assessments and ensuring women's participation in consultation and outreach activities are good ways to ensure that project officers are aware of the problems of local women. This will also ensure that actions will be included in the project design—to address these problems and to maximize project benefits for women.

**Ensure that human and financial resources are in place to support the GAP.** GAPS are only effective when implemented by people who have a clear vision of the outcomes. The appointment of gender focal points (GFPs) in the executing agencies to oversee and report on the gender actions will ensure that GAP activities are successfully implemented. ADB can support the GFPs and project officers through trainings on gender, ADB's gender policies, and the GAP requirements. Adequate budget should be allocated for these activities.

**Support the executing agency and municipal utility services in putting in place monitoring systems with sex-disaggregated data.** Supporting utility agencies to develop sex-disaggregated data collection and monitoring systems is essential to mainstreaming gender in the WSS sector. Appropriate interventions are better identified during project design if there are baseline data from which to base the targets. During project negotiations and project design phase, targets should be included to ensure that sex-disaggregated data are built into new data collection and reporting tools and systems. This will be useful in managing human resources and improving customer service.

**Strengthen the capacity of the executing agency for gender mainstreaming.** It is important that the executing agency, and other agencies associated with the delivery of water and sanitation, do not simply accept GAPS because they are an ADB requirement. What is more crucial is to mainstream gender equality into the institutional strengthening efforts. ADB's interventions include gender components to ensure that the management and staff understand the importance of gender in WSS service provision. Under this component, the project can conduct gender awareness workshops for project officers and local WSS officers, which include discussions on gender concepts and ADB's gender policies and requirements. ADB could also continue to build the capacity of the public utility to institutionalize gender in relevant institutions. The formulation of a gender equality policy for the WSS sector could be supported by ADB. This could involve collaborations with other development agencies that are also concerned with monitoring gender quality outcomes in the WSS sector.

**Increase women's access to training opportunities in water and sanitation-related fields.** Since they are underrepresented in management and technical departments, women are less likely to have access to training programs to advance their career in the WSS sector. ADB could identify key areas of training that would strengthen women's position in the WSS sector and organize training or other types of learning opportunities according to these themes. Such trainings could target existing female personnel of water utilities, allowing them to progress toward management, or to build skills that would allow them to move toward higher-paying technical positions.

## D. Public Sector Management

Under its strategy—the “Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future” Concept of Development—the government highlights the importance of facilitating private sector development to diversify the economy. To support this goal, the government initiated the National Action Plan for 2016–2018 on the Promotion of Open Government, which aims to modernize government services to the public and businesses through e-government. The government is also implementing public financial management reforms and initiating critical structural reforms to stimulate private sector growth, create jobs, and ensure access to financing for entrepreneurs. The Strategic Roadmaps on National Economy and Selected Sectors puts emphasis on private sector as the “locomotive for the economic development.”<sup>271</sup> The improvement of business environment, promotion of private sector investment, and support for the public sector are identified as key foundations for economic growth. The Strategic Roadmap for SME Development specifically promotes small and medium-sized entrepreneurship as fundamental enabler for sustainable development in the country.<sup>272</sup> Over the past several years, the government has significantly improved budget comprehensiveness and transparency, and increased predictability and control in budget execution.<sup>273</sup>

Public sector management is a key sector of ADB support. ADB has supported the government with capacity development in planning, forecasting, and preparing sector investment road maps in key programming areas.<sup>274</sup> ADB has also provided TAs to strengthen the government’s auditing and financial reporting, and other governance issues cutting across the priority sectors.<sup>275</sup>

In 2017, public sector management represented 12.81% of ADB’s cumulative lending, grant, and TA commitments. ADB will continue helping to improve Azerbaijan’s public financial management framework, raise the efficiency of the public corporate sector, and strengthen private sector participation in the economy, including through public–private partnerships.<sup>276</sup>

This section discusses the efforts to identify strategies that would ensure women can actively participate and benefit from ADB’s support to the government for enhanced public sector management and facilitation of private sector growth.

### 1. Key Gender Issue in the Sector

- **Reforms to simplify business procedures benefit women entrepreneurs.**

Azerbaijan’s reform agenda includes improving public sector management and supporting private sector development. Reforming regulations and systems in the private sector, such as reducing the cost and number of procedures to register a business, are conducive to women as they could expand their informal trading into viable small and medium enterprises.

<sup>271</sup> Footnote 223.

<sup>272</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan. 2016. *Strategic Roadmap for the Production of Consumer Goods in Azerbaijan at the Level of Small and Medium Entrepreneurship*. Baku.

<sup>273</sup> ADB. 2016. *Countercyclical Support Facility. Public Sector Management and Finance Sector Assessment (Summary)*. Manila.

<sup>274</sup> Footnote 273.

<sup>275</sup> Footnote 218.

<sup>276</sup> Footnote 224.

- **Efforts to strengthen the banking sector can also benefit women.**

The government created in late 2017 a credit guarantee fund to ease the access to credit by SMEs with reduced collateral. This can help women to overcome the constraints of having to prove that they have sufficient assets to access a loan. However, state-supported programs are more frequently accessed by men who have stronger networks and are better informed about the available programs. Women can better benefit from credit when it is accompanied with services for enhancing their business development skills.

- **Privatization of state enterprises has a varying impact on women and men due to gender differences in occupational patterns.**

The privatization of state-owned enterprises, one of the key institutional reforms under the national strategic road maps, is expected to increase productivity and improve the efficiency of legal entities with the state's major shareholding.<sup>277</sup> This will, in turn, benefit the population through better services. In the agriculture sector, privatization is envisaged to create more business opportunities in various regions and across different value chains. Women are present in the agriculture sector and can take advantage of the new business opportunities that may open. However, the privatization process can also have detrimental effects on women's employment. Women in administrative, service, and low-skilled jobs may face higher unemployment when state-owned enterprises are restructured. Hence, an analysis of how women could be affected by privatization is essential to mitigate potential negative impacts, and to reinforce the positive impacts on women's economic empowerment.

- **Civil service reform creates new opportunities to increase women's representation in senior government positions.**

Azerbaijan has been taking steps to improve its public administration systems and modernize its civil service. The Civil Service Commission has been working to develop a unified human resources policy, and introduce best practices in human resource management.<sup>278</sup> However, civil service reforms have not included gender equality as a central goal. Women are underrepresented at all levels within the civil service, particularly at senior management levels. More merit-based and open recruitment processes can be designed to attract more women to the public service or create more advancement opportunities for existing female employees.

Investments in training and professional development can provide women with the skills needed to aspire to senior management. Also, encouraging young women to enter nontraditional fields will create a wider recruitment pool as the civil service seeks to diversify its human resource skills to support the development of a market-based economy.

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<sup>277</sup> Footnote 223.

<sup>278</sup> UNDP. 2010. *HDR Project Proposal*. Baku.



- **Positive measures are being undertaken to improve access to public services, including online services. Monitoring is essential to ensure that rural women do benefit from these changes.**

Azerbaijan is continuing its efforts to increase transparency, accountability, and outreach of services. An e-Government portal was developed in 2012, which facilitated greater access to government services for individuals, families, and businesses. The State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations also established the Azerbaijan Service and Assessment Network (ASAN).<sup>279</sup> This network provides a “single-window” for the public and businesses to access government services. This reduced bureaucracy and eliminated corruption in various public services. A total of 13 single-window service centers have been set up since 2013 and the network will continue to expand countrywide. Women, particularly in rural areas, have benefited from these with their easier access to economic, health, and social services. However, women have less access to the information, technology, and communication skills and electronic devices that are needed to access online services.

This shift in how public services are delivered could disadvantage women if parallel measures are not undertaken to reduce the gender technology gap. Also, the government has not integrated performance measurement systems into its revised public service delivery mechanism, which can be used to track how women are using these services and their level of satisfaction with the changes. Improving access to public services is an ongoing process and more measures are needed to ensure that women are benefiting equally from the changes being put in place.

## 2. Government Initiatives

- **The Decree on the Implementation of the State Women’s Policy in the Republic of Azerbaijan calls for greater representation of women in government decision-making.**

The government is undertaking public sector reforms through a number of strategic policy decisions. The Decree on the Implementation of the State Women’s Policy in the Republic of Azerbaijan, implemented in 2000, provides for the equal representation of women and men at decision-making level in all state bodies. The decree encouraged the Cabinet of Ministers to ensure that gender equality provisions are considered in their implementation of economic reforms. It also confirmed the importance of collecting sex-disaggregated data to meet international standards. However, translating the statements in this policy decree into concrete measures will require greater efforts. One approach is ensuring that gender dimensions are integrated into action plans for public administration reform.

The Strategic Roadmap of the National Economy describes the government’s approach to strengthening public institutions, facilitating access to finance, and making public financial management more efficient. This road map also aims to achieve gender equality in the labor market yet it has no specific provisions for addressing gender inequities in the civil service, which is one of the key sectors where women are underrepresented.

<sup>279</sup> ASAN website: <https://asan.gov.az/az>.

The measures that the government is implementing to promote SME growth for greater diversification of the economy do not specifically target women-owned enterprises although women have a low level of entrepreneurship compared to other countries in the region. The State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations has also set up the service ABAD—Easy Support to Family Business—which assists entrepreneurs to package and market craft and agri-food products.<sup>280</sup> However, during KIIs, women involved in private sector development noted that few women had information on how to access these services despite their high presence in this value chain. Instead, benefits were concentrated in a small number of businesses.

### 3. ADB Experience in Mainstreaming Gender in the Sector

**Improving Governance and Public Sector Efficiency Program (2017–2018).** Under its public sector management portfolio, ADB launched the Improving Governance and Public Sector Efficiency Program (2017–2018). This project will (i) introduce rules-based fiscal planning in the budget system, (ii) improve legal and institutional structures governing state-owned enterprises, and (iii) help improve the SME business environment and their access to finance.<sup>281</sup> This program is also categorized under the no gender elements and its design and monitoring framework does not have any sex-disaggregated indicators.

The project document for the Improving Governance and Public Sector Efficiency Program notes that improved public expenditure management will contribute to improved policies and programs for social inclusion and gender equality. However, it does not contain specific measures to achieve these outcomes. The project's Summary Poverty Reduction and Social Strategy notes that women will benefit in the increased resources channeled toward education and health, and in more resources for social assistance. However, no reference is made to women's lower representation as entrepreneurs and no recommendations are outlined in the document on ways to increase the number of women entrepreneurs through the program.<sup>282</sup>

**The Rapid Response Support for Strategic Reforms (2017–2019).** The public sector management portfolio also includes this TA, which will assist the government in effectively designing and implementing reforms under the Strategic Roadmap on the National Economy through mainstreaming of new ideas and international best practices. Interventions will include (i) facilitating the sharing of relevant knowledge and experiences, such as study tours, to learn about reforms in other countries; and (ii) promote public–private dialogue as a form of knowledge transfer and awareness raising on good practices and know-how. No specific gender measures were mentioned in the TA, however, most of the policy areas are supported under the TA, such as (i) restructuring of state-owned enterprises, (ii) private–public partnerships for infrastructure, (iii) education and innovation, and (iv) financial inclusion. All these policy areas have implications for gender equality and women's empowerment. Women employed in the public sector could potentially benefit from the professional development opportunities offered through study tours and seminars.

ADB also plans to support improved access to tertiary education by supporting the financing of student residences in higher education institutions. This will be part of infrastructure

<sup>280</sup> ABAD website: <http://abad.gov.az/>.

<sup>281</sup> ADB. 2017. *Improving Governance and Public Sector Efficiency Program*. Manila.

<sup>282</sup> Footnote 281.

financing to universities as private sector entities. These partnerships will be made directly with higher education institutions that are looking to expand their student base and offer more education opportunities to women and men students living outside urban centers.

#### 4. Entry Points for Gender Mainstreaming in the Sector

Working on improved public sector management and governance creates opportunities for ADB to address key gender issues, such as the underrepresentation of women in the civil service in senior management and technical fields. Specific measures to integrate gender into the public sector management portfolio are outlined below.

**Improve monitoring mechanisms to track gender equality targets for public sector management.** ADB could provide support in improving the collection of sex-disaggregated data on key areas of public sector management. ADB could assist counterpart executing agencies, such as the transport and energy sectors, in improving their collection of gender statistics needed to monitor progress on gender equality. ADB could also identify specific state programs in its sector of operation and support the State Statistics Committee in improving its sex-disaggregated data collection to monitor the program's outreach to women. Such support could be in the form of TA or pilot programs to improve sex-disaggregated data collection, analysis, and reporting for key government programs such as the Strategic Roadmap for the National Economy.

**Provide technical assistance to improve gender analysis for social protection and job creation programs.** The themes identified the Rapid Response Technical Assistance for Strategic Reforms have important implications for gender equality outcomes. Gender equality needs to be explicitly identified as one of the areas where ADB will provide policy support. This will strengthen the targeted policy outcomes and improve the government's capacity to achieve its gender equality objectives. A gender analysis on policy options, using sex-disaggregated data, will deepen the analysis of proposed reforms in social protection, labor market, entrepreneurship financing, and other areas targeted under the TA. Providing TA and knowledge sharing avenues to improve gender analysis will aid policy development.

**Mainstream gender equality into action plans for public administration reform.** Ensuring a modernized, professional civil service is an integral part of the country's plans for improved public sector management. Azerbaijan's Strategic Roadmap on the National Economy proposes to develop a professional state apparatus that is result-oriented and capable of implementing the long-term state development priorities. As women are more likely to be in administrative and lower-level positions, they could be negatively affected by plans to restructure the civil service. ADB could identify and support the establishment of safeguards to avoid the negative impacts of restructuring on women and other vulnerable groups.

ADB could also provide TA for developing equitable, merit-based recruitment and promotion systems that would enhance women's representation in the civil service. In its road map for the national economy, the government intends to increase the employment of women and youth. ADB could support this goal by explicitly targeting an increase in women's employment, particularly at management levels, as a key area of reform. Raising the level of women's representation in senior political and civil service roles is critical to ensuring greater involvement of women in overall policy planning and government decision-making.

This could be undertaken in collaboration with UNDP, which is one of the key development partners supporting the initiatives for civil service reform.

**Train gender focal points on approaches to gender mainstreaming in the public sector.**

Under the public sector management portfolio, ADB could also partner with the SCFWCA to assist them in mainstreaming gender equality in state policies and programs. This could include offering TA, knowledge support, workshops, and tools on gender mainstreaming in public administration and policy development. It could also include assistance in strengthening the skills of the network of GFPs, focusing on the ministries of transport, energy, and finance, which are ADB counterparts. ADB could support SCFWCA to roll out the Resource Pack for Gender Focal Points, which was prepared in 2018 by the women's NGO WARD, to train GFPs. Incorporating modules on gender analysis and gender mainstreaming in policy and program development within management courses will ensure that gender is more systematically considered in decision-making processes in the future. Training public sector employees in gender analysis and strategy development could have lasting impact on setting and achieving gender equality outcomes in diverse sectors.

**Provide leadership training for women civil servants.** Support to civil service reform could include assisting the government to develop proactive policies on increasing women's representation in management, based on international best practices. Training women for career advancement is an intervention that ADB can build into its capacity-building for improved public governance. Targeted training programs can widen the pool of talents available to take on strategic leadership roles in the public service—to better facilitate private sector development and be more accountable to the wider public.

**Increase access to women-friendly residences in higher education.** ADB could enhance women's opportunities for higher education through its plans to finance women-friendly residences and campus spaces for universities. Depending on the design, the initiative potentially creates opportunities to enhance women's access to nontraditional fields of education, such as engineering, by making residence spaces available near engineering programs. This also increases women's safety and put in place measures to reduce violence against women on universities campuses. Other measures needed to ensure women-friendly campus spaces include (i) "women only" floors or buildings; (ii) controlled access to women's residence to ensure security; (iii) adequate male and female sanitation facilities in all campus buildings; (iv) access to hygienic materials and contraceptives; and (v) prevention of advertising, social events, or social media groups that stereotype or demean women.

ADB's support to the pilot delivery of university student accommodation in Baku through public-private partnerships could consider the inclusion of clear measures to prevent harassment and gender discrimination of female students. These could be required in the project design and in the contracts with private sponsors. Awareness campaigns or training faculty advisors or career counsellors are other measures that could encourage women to explore diverse educational and occupational paths. Women's information and referral services could be created to ensure that they can access health and other services when away from home. These are important measures that can be integrated into the design of women-friendly university residences.

# Gender Mainstreaming Entry Points

## A. Information and Communication Technology

Under its strategy, “Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future” Concept of Development, the government presents its vision to expand opportunities to develop and utilize ICT as a key driver of economic growth and in the formation of a modern state. Under this vision, the government aims to strengthen the infrastructure of the country’s telecommunication and information technologies, extend services provided in this field, and encourage greater use of these services.<sup>283</sup>

ADB identified ICT as a key support to the government’s efforts to modernize government services and stimulate private sector growth. The following section outlines how ICT is also a potential entry point to promote gender equality and women’s economic empowerment.

### 1. Key Gender Issues

- **Women’s use of ICT, technology and software development, and employment have high potential to contribute to gender equality and greater women’s participation.**

Due to efforts to enhance access and reliability of ICT, internet access in Azerbaijan has risen from 8% in 2005 to 79% in 2017 (76.8% for women, 81.2% for men).<sup>284</sup> However, data collected by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) show that women (69.4%) are less likely to use internet once a week than men (75%) for ages between 16 and 74 for both sexes. The largest difference is in prime working age range of 25–54 where 74.5% of women use internet once a week compared to 83.5% of men. The gap is less for younger women at 95.2% for women aged 16–24 using internet once a week compared to 96% for men of the same age.<sup>285</sup> At present, women represent only 31% of those working in the ICT sector. Women are 44% of those studying ICT at vocational schools, showing that more women are preparing to enter the field.<sup>286</sup>

<sup>283</sup> Republic of Azerbaijan, Ministry of Communications. 2014. *National Strategy for Information Society Development in the Republic of Azerbaijan (2014–2020)*. Baku.

<sup>284</sup> Footnote 54.

<sup>285</sup> The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. 2016. *The UNECE Statistical Database*. [http://w3.unece.org/PXWeb2015/pxweb/en/STAT/STAT\\_\\_30-GE\\_\\_09-Science\\_ICT/02\\_en\\_GEICT\\_InternetUse\\_r.px/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=02aa34fc-f855-41b2-81b2-ed7c174e2564](http://w3.unece.org/PXWeb2015/pxweb/en/STAT/STAT__30-GE__09-Science_ICT/02_en_GEICT_InternetUse_r.px/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=02aa34fc-f855-41b2-81b2-ed7c174e2564).

<sup>286</sup> Footnote 54.

- **Ensuring that women have ICT knowledge and skills is important in advancing gender equality across a number of sectors.**

The National Action Plan for 2016–2018 on the Promotion of Open Government has put in place measures to make economic, health, education, and social programs more accessible through e-government and single-window service centers. These services greatly benefit rural women, women with disabilities, and women with less mobility by reducing their need to visit different government offices. Access to government programs can be further enhanced through online services but only if the women who need these services are able to use the internet.

- **More access to ICT is important for women’s entrepreneurship development**

Increasing the number of women entrepreneurs is important to the goal to diversify the economy through private sector development. ICT tools will facilitate access to business development information and opportunities. However, a study commissioned by ADB on ICT use among women entrepreneurs in Azerbaijan and other countries in the region found that ICT tools are not being used to their full potential for business activities.<sup>287</sup>

In Azerbaijan, 41% of the women entrepreneurs surveyed had internet-capable mobile phones, but only 16% activated the internet services on their phones. Of the 16%, only 6% used these services for entrepreneurial purposes. While 55% of women entrepreneurs had a computer, only 27% were using it for entrepreneurial activities. Lack of understanding on how the internet could aid them in business was the main reason for not using it. The practice of not using internet-capable mobile phones and computers for entrepreneurial purposes was more marked for women in rural areas where women could benefit the most from using internet to access business information, services, and opportunities. When asked how they could use ICT for their business, the most common type of ICT support requested was education and/or training.<sup>288</sup>

## 2. Government Initiatives to Address Gender Issues

- **Developing an action plan to increase women’s access to ICT as part of the implementation of the National Strategy for Information Society Development in the Republic of Azerbaijan (2014–2020) would contribute to gender equality.**

The government outlines its strategy to build a knowledge society through improved ICT access in its National Strategy for Information Society Development in the Republic of Azerbaijan (2014–2020).<sup>289</sup> It sets out the government’s vision to strengthen the infrastructure of the country’s telecommunication and information technologies, extend services provided in this field, and encourage greater use of these services. The strategy aims to develop a high-quality broadband infrastructure with extensive coverage and fast speed by (i) improving governance of ICT, (ii) strengthening related business and institutions, (iii) promoting ICT in the private sector, and (iv) digitizing government and social programs to promote more use of

<sup>287</sup> ADB. 2014. *Information and Communication Technologies for Women Entrepreneurs: Prospects and Potential in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Uzbekistan*. Manila.

<sup>288</sup> Footnote 287.

<sup>289</sup> Footnote 283.

technology. A State Fund for Development of Information Technologies has been established to stimulate entrepreneurship, research, and innovations in the ICT sector.

Azerbaijan is also partnering with the Trans-Eurasian Information Super Highway and the Eurasian Connectivity Alliance—to facilitate access to the internet, telecommunication systems, and e-information resources for 20 countries.<sup>290</sup>

These initiatives are important elements in the country's development strategy, but they do not include measures to mainstream gender or specifically target women. While the government is focusing on the ICT sector, women are seemingly unable to take advantage of the opportunities for business start-ups in this area, and no particular initiatives have been set up to address this gap.<sup>291</sup>

### 3. Entry Points for Gender Mainstreaming in the Sector

Supporting enhanced gender analysis and introducing measures to integrate gender equality into the government's ICT strategy is a potential entry point for ADB to strengthen its gender equality programming. The following are some key recommendations for ADB to develop programming in this area:

**Undertake gender analysis of information and communication technology and how to increase women's connectivity.** ADB has already undertaken an analysis of gender equality in the ICT sector. This information could be updated and packaged as short policy briefing papers to be shared with government officials and other stakeholders in the ICT sector. Sharing such policy briefings are timely as the government sets its directions for ICT and begins to develop and implement its action plan for this sector.

**Develop pilot programs to support information and communication technology use among women entrepreneurs.** ADB could pilot programs to train more women in ICT use for business. This could include online or face-to-face trainings or short workshops on how to use ICT for entrepreneurial activities. Advanced modules on how to use ICT for specific purposes, including how to access domestic and export markets, could be developed. Training on how to use IT-related services, such as graphic design and photoshop, may also be provided as needed.<sup>292</sup>

**Increase women's access to online business development services.** ADB could support the government to improve its outreach to inform women, particularly rural women, on business development services, training, registration procedures, business opportunities, and other information through multiple ICT channels, including through TV, radio, internet, and mobile phones (short messaging service [SMS] alerts). This programming area could be explored in collaboration with the USAID and UNDP, which are the key development partners supporting women's entrepreneurship development. USAID and UNDP programs also focus on women in agribusiness development. Existing business associations for women could be supported to gather women-relevant information and disseminate these through

<sup>290</sup> United Nations. 2016. *United Nations–Azerbaijan Partnership Framework*. Baku.

<sup>291</sup> Footnote 287, p. 56.

<sup>292</sup> Footnote 287, p. 65.

internet and SMS. Support to establishing sustainable services to meet women entrepreneurs' information needs through ICT could be carried out as a form of TA.<sup>293</sup>

**Support the development of e-commerce services for women entrepreneurs, in partnership with the private sector.** ADB could provide TA or credit to support to the development of private sector services, assist women to set up websites for their companies, and help them engage more directly in e-commerce. This could include TA to link women to internet service providers that would assist them to develop online marketplaces or online stores for a small fee. Pilot initiatives could also include practical and hands-on programs to help women set up online sites to sell their products or services, whether locally or internationally. This can help them establish an online presence, which can expand their market reach to regional and international markets.<sup>294</sup>

**Finance special loan programs for women to either start information and communication technology-based businesses, or to invest in information and communication technology-related equipment.** ADB could facilitate credit and other supports for women to engage in entrepreneurship development in the ICT sector. ADB could contribute financing to the government's funds for stimulating business innovation through ICT and earmark funds for women entrepreneurs. Such financing would assist women in entering the field of ICT business or in using ICT in their business.<sup>295</sup>

**Develop models and best practices for the delivery of programs and services through information and communication technology.** Beyond women's entrepreneurship, ADB could support the government to extend social, health, education, and labor market services through ICT with a specific outreach to women. The government's e-portal initiatives are already assisting people to better access government programs. ADB could assist with an analysis of how women are using these services, whether they are finding what they need, and how the e-portals could be further improved to target women's information needs.<sup>296</sup> Areas to potentially expand the application of ICT services to women include distance education and training programs in nontraditional fields. Other services could include career counselling and support for job searches. Other potential applications that could be expanded are access to public health information and information on social services, housing, and social protection programs—through pilots or sharing of practices with other countries.

## B. Gender-Responsive Budgeting

- **Integrating gender and social dimensions into budgeting, planning, and allocation ensures that resources are available to achieve targeted gender equality outcomes.**

Azerbaijan has made strong commitments to gender equality in its overarching document “Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future” Concept of Development. However, the strategic road maps for each sector do not generally refer to gender equality. When it is referred to, no specific budget resources are assigned to achieve targeted goals. Sector agencies lack

<sup>293</sup> Footnote 287, p. 63.

<sup>294</sup> Footnote 287, p. 61.

<sup>295</sup> Footnote 287, p. 64.

<sup>296</sup> Footnote 287.



resources to introduce measures that specifically target women. Also, while Azerbaijan's Law on Equality between Women and Men calls for an analysis of all legislation, policies, and programs from a gender perspective, the tools and techniques to undertake this task are not identified. As a result, the required gender analysis may not always take place.

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) is an approach that can assist in bridging the gap between the commitment to gender equality outcomes and the actual implementation of the required measures on a multiyear basis. GRB is increasingly becoming recognized as an effective measure to use fiscal policy and administration to secure gender equality in deciding public resource allocation.

GRB seeks to improve the results of budgets in general, and gender equality and women's empowerment in particular. GRB is a tool for integrating social dimensions, based on gender relevance, into the planning and budgeting process and considers how expenditure and revenue decisions (e.g., taxation) affect women and men differently. The deeper analysis of expenditures and key social dimensions also means that GRB helps to improve economic governance and strengthens the mechanisms for public expenditure transparency and reporting.<sup>297</sup> The analysis can be used to develop support through either government expenditures or revenues (e.g., tax credits for childcare expenses) to achieve desired gender equality outcomes.

## 1. Government Initiatives

- **The Ministry of Finance initiative to shift toward results-based budgeting creates an entry point for introducing gender-based budgeting.**

The Ministry of Finance (MOF) is undertaking actions to strengthen the public investment framework. Results-based budgeting was introduced and public expenditure accountability frameworks were developed to include state investment programs as part of the project management cycle. Budget systems will be organized around expected outcomes with more accountability so that spending agencies could develop, monitor, and report their targeted indicators in terms of how disbursements have contributed to stated policy and/or program outcomes. This is conducive to mainstreaming gender equality into goals and outcomes in the various sectors, and linking budgets to actions taken to advance gender equality outcomes.

Part of the objectives of results-based budgeting is to improve service delivery to achieve an effective resource allocation and social change—through fiscal policy. This approach aligns well with GRB. However, to date, GRB is not part of the governments' budgeting approach. A study by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the Middle East and Central Asia observed that Azerbaijan, Algeria, Georgia, Lebanon, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan have undergone training and workshops in the past, which indicate their interest in GRB.

The IMF document stresses the crucial role of the MOF in guiding the process and ensuring that vital ministries were on board with the initiative. In the 2005 ADB Country Gender Assessment for Azerbaijan, it was recommended that the State Program on Poverty Reduction

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<sup>297</sup> M. Bosnic. 2015. *Gender-Responsive Budgeting*. Governance, Social Development, Humanitarian, Conflict (GSDRC) Applied Knowledge Services. Professional Development Reading Pack No. 14. [http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/reading-packs/grb\\_rp.pdf](http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/reading-packs/grb_rp.pdf).

and Sustainable Development (SPPREAD) considers introducing, initially at the municipal level, gender budgeting approaches. It is difficult to assess whether this was done, however, or at what stage, because of the lack of available resources on gender budgeting in Azerbaijan.

## 2. Entry Points for Introducing Gender-Responsive Budgeting

GRB can reinforce improved financial management and results-based budgeting. ADB could initiate a knowledge building initiative to introduce gender-based budgeting to the MOF as part of the public sector management portfolio or as a stand-alone pilot project. The pilot project could provide expertise on tools, resources, and other country examples on GRB, and provide training that could develop starting points or practical exercises for gender analysis of public expenditure or revenue collection—to test the use of GRB tools in Azerbaijan. This could then be reviewed and discussed with other agencies to create a partnership among MOF and its development partners. They could proceed to learn and apply GRB as one element within the overall initiative to transition toward results-based budgeting in Azerbaijan. Key activities could include the following:

**Gender analysis of planning and budgeting processes.** This could initiate the process and determine the appropriate tools and entry points for gender equality measures. The focus could be on social sector ministries (health and/or education). Social assistance, social protection, and pension funding are also areas that could be entry points for gender analysis and gender-based budgeting.

**Development of gender-responsive budgeting tools appropriate to the Azerbaijani context.** Initiatives could be introduced to prepare gender-aware policy appraisals, gender-aware medium-term economic frameworks, sex-disaggregated public expenditure benefit incidence analyses, sex-disaggregated beneficiary assessments of public service delivery and budget priorities, and sex-disaggregated revenue incidence analyses, among others.

**Capacity-building.** This component could include the design of training materials, capacity-building programs and activities, and dissemination workshop results. Capacity-building activities could be conducted on gender-responsive, results-based planning and budgeting for relevant staff of the MOF and other key sector ministries.

# Conclusion

Azerbaijan has steadily advanced gender equality outcomes as it pursues its goals for inclusive growth. Gender equality in the workplace is legally recognized and women's active participation in the labor force is essential to household incomes and to continued economic growth. Women have benefited from investments in human development, such as near universal primary education, improved maternal and infant health, and improved water supply and sanitation services. Recent gains in increasing the number of women elected to municipal councils is a promising sign for increasing women's representation at the political level.

However, continued advancement of gender equality outcomes will require more focused efforts in the future. Public revenues from the oil sector are declining and the country needs to diversify its economy to ensure future growth. Developing an overall vision of how gender equality will be integrated into future strategies to face these challenges is essential. However, at present, Azerbaijan does not have an overarching gender equality strategy and action plan that is critical to guiding future efforts to address the remaining gender gaps.

Priority actions to be integrated into economic strategies include (i) reducing the male to female wage gap, (ii) addressing gender-based occupational segregation, (iii) providing more support to balance work and family life, (iv) promoting women's entrepreneurship, and (v) enhancing access to employment for women with disabilities. Increasing the representation of women in the national assembly, in senior government positions, and in the judiciary are also essential to ensuring that women have a voice in decision-making. Future human development strategies need to identify specific actions to reverse the trends of a declining female secondary school completion rate combined with a higher adolescent birth rate, and the growing male to female birth ratio. Improving access and affordability of quality health-care are also critical to further reducing the gap in male and female human development particularly in the rural areas.

ADB has acquired experience in mainstreaming gender equality in its portfolio and has focused on programming sectors, such as water supply and sanitation, which are important in saving time and improving women's health. ADB's future programming targets strategic areas such as transport, energy, municipal infrastructure and services, and public sector governance, which keys to facilitating women's economic empowerment, participation in government decision-making, and enhancing access to services.

Partnering with CSOs is increasingly becoming a part of how ADB does its business. CSOs play a crucial role in strengthening the institution's accountability for delivering positive development impact. They can (i) provide expertise and knowledge on specific issues, (ii) pilot innovative approaches to gender mainstreaming, (iii) represent and give voice to marginalized sectors, and (iv) ensure greater involvement for those affected by development

interventions. Partnerships with organizations working at the grassroots level help ADB reach some of the most marginalized communities in the country.

ADB can support continued progress on gender equality, notably by (i) increasing efforts to engage women in planning and decision-making on infrastructure investments; (ii) providing technical assistance on effective practices for mainstreaming gender equality in state policies, programs, and public expenditure frameworks; and (iii) sharing knowledge on approaches to private sector development to facilitate women's economic empowerment.

Azerbaijan has set a clear path to emerging as a modern, economically diverse, and globally integrated nation. It is essential that gender equality and women's empowerment are integral to the strategies that shape the country's future socioeconomic development.

## APPENDIX

# List of Agencies Participating in Key Informant Interviews

### Government Ministries and Agencies

- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population
- Ministry of Transport, Communications and High Technologies
- State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs
- Social Fund for Development of IDPs
- Azeravtoyol OJSC Azerbaijan Road Service
- Azerishiq OJSC Azerbaijan Energy Service

### Development Partners

- World Bank
- Swiss Cooperation
- FINCA

### Asian Development Bank

- Country Director
- Resident Mission Gender Focal Point/Project Officer for Energy
- Resident Mission Civil Society Liaison
- Senior Portfolio Management Specialist
- Project Officers for Finance and Transport
- Project Officers/Specialists responsible for investments in Finance and Transport sectors based in resident missions and headquarters

### Key informant interviews were also undertaken with the following:

- Civil society organizations working on women's issues, health, internally displaced persons, disability issues, women's entrepreneurship, legal assistance, municipal affairs, and combating violence against women
- Medical professionals and academics in economics, gender, construction, and sports
- Business women's associations
- Subnational water supply and sanitation officials

## **Azerbaijan Country Gender Assessment**

Azerbaijan has steadily advanced gender equality outcomes while pursuing its goal to become a highly developed country. Gender equality goals are cited in its national development policies and economic strategies. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) conducted a country gender assessment, including interviews with women in the communities who shared their stories and insights on how ADB projects and other social interventions have improved their lives. These afforded fresh perspectives on gender issues, leading to a deeper analysis and viable recommendations on the best way forward to close remaining gaps. The results of the assessment call for a more strategic focus to integrate Azerbaijan's gender concerns into ADB programs and operations to ensure continued progress toward gender equality and women's empowerment in the country.

### **About the Asian Development Bank**

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members—49 from the region. Its main instruments for helping its developing member countries are policy dialogue, loans, equity investments, guarantees, grants, and technical assistance.

