

THE PROJECT
“Building society for all ages: promoting wellbeing of the elderly persons in Azerbaijan through active ageing”

a) *Please explain the context in which the measure was taken (country context, national social security system, etc.)*

The technical assistance project “Building society for all ages: promoting wellbeing of the elderly persons in Azerbaijan through active ageing” initiated by the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) was carried out from March 2019 to December 2021. The project aimed to enhance the government's focus on older people, address their material and spiritual needs, and ensure decent living conditions through access to social and healthcare services. The project also supported the harmonization of relevant policy instruments to ensure the social inclusion and integration of older people. The project specifically targeted persons aged 65 and above as the identified beneficiaries.

b) *Please provide a brief overview of the measure.*

The project was implemented based on three components as outlined below:

1. The development of the Active Ageing Index (AAI) to assess and measure active and healthy ageing of elderly individuals.
2. Enhancing awareness levels through traditional and modern communication tools to promote active ageing.
3. Providing integrated social services for elderly individuals.

Through the implementation of the first component of the project, the Active Ageing Index (AAI) was created in Azerbaijan by international expert Asghar Zaidi. This marked the first time that the AAI was prepared in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region, including the South Caucasus. According to the AAI results, Azerbaijan ranked 19th out of 31 countries, including 28 European Union countries, China, and South Korea with an index value of 32.7.

The application of the AAI in our country will facilitate the collection of relevant evidence on the current situation with a view to implementing future-oriented policy priorities related to active ageing, assessing and measuring the potential for active and healthy ageing among older people, and improving specific areas based on the results of the assessment.

Under the implementation of the second component, the “YAŞA” centres were established across three regions of the country by the “Üçüncü Bahar” Public Union on support for the elderly, starting from February 2021. These centres focus on awareness-raising, health, and creativity, catering to the diverse interests of elderly people.

Under the third component, trainings were organized to promote the use of computers and new technologies among elderly individuals and to arrange their leisure time. Additionally, a digital library of audiobooks was created.

Throughout the project's implementation period, various public events, festivals, intellectual games, training courses, exhibitions, and excursions were organised to support active and healthy lifestyles for elderly individuals.

One of the important accomplishments of the project is that Azerbaijan was highlighted as a commendable model in the area of active ageing among the countries featured in the recent Political Summary publication by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

Furthermore, the project was showcased as a positive experience during the session on "Demographic Sustainability EXPO" at the Ministerial Conference on "Shaping Europe's Demographic Future", held in Sofia, Bulgaria on the 1st-2nd of December 2021.

c) Please specify how it was financed

The primary document that forms the basis for the financing and implementation of the project is the Co-financing Agreement between the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the United Nations Population Fund". A total funding of AZN 580,004 was allocated for the project, with a contribution of AZN 169,840 from the United Nations Population Fund and AZN 410,164 from the Government.

d) Please indicate if other actors were involved in designing and implementing the measure, and, if so, what their respective roles were.

The project was implemented in close cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population as the main actor, along with the State Statistical Committee, the State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as local government bodies and NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations).

e) Please share the outcomes and impacts of the measure.

Component 1 - Development of the Active Ageing Index for assessing and measuring the active and healthy ageing potential of older people.

The findings of a survey conducted in October 2020 among 2,002 individuals aged 55 and above in Azerbaijan form the basis of the prepared AAI. The survey participants were randomly selected from nine different regions, which are considered a representative sample of Azerbaijan as a whole. Indicators such as "life expectancy at age 55" and "proportion of remaining healthy life years at age 55" were obtained from the database of the World Health Organization (WHO). Material welfare indicators, including "relative average income" and "absence of poverty risk", were provided by the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The methodology used in the preparation of the AAI for Azerbaijan aligns with the approach utilized for calculating the AAI in 28 European Union (EU) countries. The same weights used in those EU countries were applied to each indicator and domain in the calculation of the AAI.

A comprehensive Report has been prepared in Azerbaijan, providing detailed information for the first time on the Active Ageing Index (AAI) and presenting a comparative analysis with European Union (EU) countries. The Report offers extensive information on the activity and participation of the older population group. Using consistent definitions, the analysis of the AAI and its domains allows for a comprehensive assessment of Azerbaijan's relative position compared to EU countries.

The Report has been formally presented to relevant institutions, and a training session on the AAI has been organised by international expert.

Component 2 - Enhancing the level of awareness through effective communication channels, both traditional and contemporary, to promote active and healthy ageing. Development of a range of informative materials that encourage positive attitudes towards active and healthy ageing.

Informational leaflet - An informational leaflet promoting positive perceptions of active ageing was created, printed, and distributed among older individuals. The booklet included concise information about the project and the concept of active ageing, as well as relevant statistical data. Additionally, it provides contact information for institutions and centres offering services for older adults in the country.

Promotional calendar - A calendar depicting 12 success stories and featuring photographs of project beneficiaries was designed and printed. The calendar aims to support government initiatives in promoting active ageing and foster a positive attitude towards the ageing process. It is widely distributed among various stakeholders for sharing and dissemination.

Video series - Two video series were produced, showcasing positive perceptions of ageing and promoting active and healthy ageing. The videos also featured real-life success stories of project beneficiaries. These videos were shared through social media platforms to reach a wider audience.

Public events, workshops, and other activities that support active and healthy lifestyle for older individuals

Public gatherings (both offline and online) - In compliance with quarantine regulations, the YAŞA centre organised dance therapy, yoga, gymnastics, *zumba*, *gurama* (a variety of decorative art), and stained-glass lessons, and other activities for older individuals. Information sessions were conducted with healthcare professionals and psychologists to address the participants' questions. These activities have benefitted nearly 5,000 older adults.

Intellectual competition - What? Where? When? During the spring and winter sessions, an intellectual game was held where 10-11 teams, each comprised of 6 members, competed. In each competition, three victorious teams were recognized and awarded, with the first-place team receiving a trophy. Certificates and rewards were presented by official guests.

Photo exhibition - In celebration of International Day of Older Persons, a 5-day photo exhibition promoting active and healthy ageing was held. The exhibition International Day of Older People

featured photographs showcasing a range of real hobbies and activities, including sports, yoga, gardening, dance, painting, photography, fishing, and more; a total of 22 older individuals were selected to contribute their photographs, capturing their engagement in various hobbies and activities.

YAŞA Centre in Mingachevir

Services of the YAŞA Centre – The centre commenced its activities in February 2021. The facility for the centre was provided by the State Agency for Compulsory Medical Insurance. UNFPA undertook the renovation/restoration work, while Kapital Bank supplied the necessary technical equipment, furniture, and covered utility expenses. The NGO Üçüncü Bahar was entrusted with the operational management of the centre and the provision of relevant services to older individuals. The YAŞA Centre offers services in three key areas: education, health, and creativity, all aimed at promoting a healthy and active ageing lifestyle. Within this context, the centre has conducted classes such as handicrafts, painting, weaving, dance, utilization of new technologies, financial literacy, gardening, chess, and more. Around 450 older adults have benefitted from the services offered by the centre.

Festival for Older People - The festival showcased a diverse range of captivating master classes and activities in various fields of interest. Attendees had the opportunity to engage in expert-led sessions exploring tabletop games, crafts, painting, stained glass, fabric bag and flower wreath making, and other handicrafts. The festival aimed to provide enjoyment, learning, and foster connections among participants. An exhibition wall was arranged to proudly exhibit the handcrafted works created by members of the NGO Üçüncü Bahar. The festival also highlighted performances in music, poetry recitals, and a dance presentation by the chorus group, comprised of older individuals. The event garnered the enthusiastic participation of over 90 individuals.

Component 3 - Comprehensive Social Services for Older People

Web Library of Audio Books - A library of audio books has been created, featuring 26 popular works narrated by well-known TV presenters and players, both from Azerbaijan and abroad. The selection of these works took into consideration the preferences of older individuals based on verbal surveys. The ASANBook mobile application, compatible with the Android operating system, has been developed to provide access to these narrated audiobooks.

Computer and New Technology Training for Older Adults - Computer courses and training sessions were organized for older individuals to learn how to use computers and new technologies effectively. These courses are offered both online and in-person, including small group sessions and home-based training. The curriculum covers a range of topics, including using online communication programs like WhatsApp and Skype, navigating social media platforms, utilizing electronic government services and online payments, making the most of the Internet, conducting information searches, understanding operating systems, managing email and social network registrations, and using Office programmes, among others. Information

leaflets were prepared for each topic and distributed as valuable training resources for participants and other older individuals. The training materials were designed to deliver terminology and information in an easy-to-understand and straightforward manner. To ensure broader accessibility, short training videos were created and shared on YouTube. These computer and new technology training sessions were conducted in both Baku and regional areas, with participation from over 22,000 older individuals.

Utilizing the potential and skills of older professionals - Professional Development and Silver Heritage courses were organized to harness the intellectual potential and capabilities of older individuals. These courses cover a wide range of subjects, including Culture and Arts, Law, Education and History, Psychology, First Aid, Financial Literacy, Career and Motivation, and Small Business Organisation and Management. The courses were conducted both in-person and through online, hybrid, and digital platforms to reach a broader audience. Around 100 older individuals were engaged in the development and delivery of professional training materials, and approximately 19,000 participants have joined these training programmes.

Art and Creativity by Older Adults - Lessons in sewing, weaving, cooking, gold-work, ceramics, painting, and other artistic fields were organised and led by older mentors. This provided valuable opportunities for older individuals to share their knowledge and skills with peers and younger generation, fostering intergenerational dialogue and connection.

Arrangement of Leisure Time for Older Adults - To enhance the quality of life and promote socialization among older adults, a variety of tours and master classes in activities such as poetry, dance, chess, fishing, yoga, and more were organised. Excursions to museums and historical sites in Baku and the surrounding regions were also conducted, providing opportunities for older individuals to visit notable places like the Gala Ethnographic Reserve, Zira Eco Centre, Old City, Carpet Museum, Zoo, Shamakhy Observatory, Khan Forest in Barda, History-Ethnography Museums in Aghjabadi and Sheki, Khan Palace, Markhal Forest, Caravanserai in Sheki, and Nizami Ganjavi Museum and Mausoleum in Ganja.

Advice Photos - A section called # Piece of Advice was created for older individuals who possess a wealth of life experiences and professional knowledge and wish to impart some guidance and messages to the younger generation. They were requested to write brief messages on small boards, which were then captured in photos and shared on social media platforms. Observing that the younger generation values their experiences and thoughts has brought great joy to these elderly individuals.

f) Please indicate any challenges faced in implementing the measure and the lessons learned.

There were gaps in the information provided by the State Statistical Committee, which presented challenges in compiling the Active Ageing Index. This poses a risk of not fully achieving the objectives of the project. To address this issue and ensure the elimination of data gaps and obtain consistent information, it was discussed and agreed among partners to conduct an additional

survey as an alternative solution. The United Nations Population Fund has taken responsibility for fulfilling the obligations related to the implementation of the survey on behalf of the United Nations Population Fund.

The initiative has a wide scope of implementation, as it ensures the application of projects both domestically and internationally. This is supported by various resources such as existing project documents, service passports, guidelines, transparent information on the website, training programmes, instructions, as well as materials on platforms like YouTube and Facebook. Additionally, colleagues have been trained to effectively implement the initiative. The developed model is now available for contributing to other government and private institutions, allowing it to be applied in different contexts. It is worth noting that the successful implementation of the Silver Volunteer DOST Initiative, starting from Baku DOST Centre No 1, and the Social Service at Home Initiative, has led to its replication in other DOST centres.

According to the action plan approved by the MLSP, by 2026, all residents of Azerbaijan will be covered by DOST services, including the planned expansion of programmes. To ensure the successful implementation of the project, presentations and exchange of information on the acquired experience were conducted during business trips abroad and meetings with foreign representatives.

The activities have led to the transformation of vulnerable individuals from being "Service Recipients" to becoming "Knowledge, Service, and Assistance Providers". For these individuals, communication and spending leisure time together have become sources of fulfilment. Efforts are underway to develop new projects that prioritize the value of meaningful connections.

g) Please share your views how best the OHCHR and/or other UN entities (including UN Country Team, ILO, etc) can support your Government to meet its obligations to realize the right to social security. Please indicate if there is any technical assistance the OHCHR can provide

- Providing support to the project **Provision of Mini-Workshops for Elderly and Retired Individuals in Home Settings**, to effectively utilize the existing potential and skills of elderly individuals and enhance their quality of life;
- Providing support to the implementation of the **Active Ageing** project, aimed at organising leisure time for elderly individuals and improving their overall well-being;
- Providing support to the **Benefit or Loose or IT is knocking on Your Door: Empowering Elderly Individuals with Information Technology** project, which focuses on preparing elderly individuals for potential global crises and pandemics, while also meeting the technological needs of the modern era;
- Providing support to the **I've Come to Visit You, or Bridges Between Generations** project, with the objective of strengthening intergenerational bonds and empowering socially vulnerable groups within the community.