



**Permanent Mission  
of the Republic of Azerbaijan  
to the UN Office and other  
International Organizations**

**GENEVA**

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The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and with reference to the letter dated 10 May 2021 by Dr. Tlaleng Mofokeng, Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, has the honour to transmit herewith the replies of the authorities of Azerbaijan to the questionnaire on the right to sexual and reproductive health during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 16 June 2021



Enclosure: 3 pages

Office of the United Nations  
High Commissioner for Human Rights  
GENEVA

## **Responding to the questionnaire on one's right to sexual and reproductive health during the COVID 19 pandemic**

1) The first case of COVID-19 infection in Azerbaijan was recorded on February 28. In order to adopt proper decisions and strengthen control over implementation of measures, the Task Force under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan was established and certain preventive, anti-epidemic and restrictive measures (wide public awareness, strengthened control over and certain restrictions in entry and exit to and from the country, stopping of activities of large commercial enterprises and public catering facilities where people densely assemble, including education in higher and secondary educational institutions in the country, etc.) were immediately started with participation of relevant government agencies.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a special quarantine regime was declared in Azerbaijan on March 24, 2020. Depending on the epidemiological situation, sometimes this regime has undergone further hardening or softening. At present, the term of the special quarantine regime declared by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the country has been extended until August 1, 2021.

During this period, no restrictions were applied on the activities of health and medical institutions (including maternity institutions and consulting centers, etc.) operating in the country, even more, the activities of these institutions under strengthened regime were ensured.

Also, in order to combat COVID-19 infection, vaccination of the population has begun and presently continues in our country. All necessary measures have been taken to organize the vaccination process with high quality. Registration, vaccination and postvaccinal waiting rooms have been set up in the medical centers arranged for vaccination. All rooms are supplied with the necessary medical and hygienic equipment.

Also, there were some difficulties in the timely arrival of pregnant women for the necessary examinations and treatment during pregnancy, and pregnant women refused to come for examinations, and so on.

The sexual and reproductive health and rights are one of the important public health issues that require high attention during pandemics. Due to the increased risk of undesirable outcomes, pregnant women with respiratory diseases should be given the highest priority, and the antenatal care and neonatal and maternal care departments should be isolated from detected COVID-19 infections. The provision of mental health and psychosocial support services to individuals, families, communities and health workers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic is an important part of the responses. Respiratory diseases in pregnant women, specifically COVID-19 infection, should be treated as a top priority due to the increased risk of undesirable outcome. One of the infection control measures is the adequate isolation of suspected, possible and confirmed cases from antenatal care and maternal and infant care departments. Medical facilities, including antenatal care institutions, should have monitoring and response systems for women of reproductive age and pregnant ones. The provision of family planning services and other sexual and reproductive health services and products, including hygienic care during the menstrual cycle, is important for women's and girls' health, extension of rights and opportunities and respect for dignity, and the supply

chains affected in the process to control the pandemic may affect the availability of products and services.

**2) b)** According to the requirements of the special quarantine regime, the ban on organization of mass events in the country, including weddings, has caused some concern and difficulties. However, respect for human rights and freedoms was ensured, and although no ceremonies were held, there were no restrictions on the registration of marriages.

#### **h) Prevention, diagnosis and treatment of HIV/AIDS**

There are the Law on Combating diseases caused by HIV, that developed on the recommendations of the WHO and other UN agencies in HIV Control and contains detailed articles on harm reduction programs, and a number of legislative acts and regulations governing the provision of preventive, treatment, care, support and other services to HIV-infected people.

Since 2006, an Action Plan to Combat HIV/AIDS is adopted for each period of 5 years. Free ARV-therapy, testing services, preventive measures are carried out for the population groups at high risk of infection within the mentioned Program.

In order to ensure accessibility for the population, HIV diagnosis, treatment and care services are provided by the Republican AIDS Center, its 10 regional laboratories, 48 voluntary testing and counseling centers, and 6 regional antiretroviral centers. In order to ensure access to vulnerable groups at high risk of HIV infection, testing and consultation are also carried out as an innovative approach through 12 mobile laboratories.

Prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV is carried out under the clinical protocol on "Prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV". Pregnant women are voluntarily tested for HIV in the first and, if necessary, third trimesters of pregnancy, and HIV-positive pregnant women are involved in ART.

In 2020, as in other countries, also in Azerbaijan, the focus and resources directed on the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a weakening of HIV detection rates.

641,720 people were tested for HIV in Azerbaijan in 2020 (747,021 people in 2019), of which 559 people (721 people in 2019) were newly diagnosed with HIV.

According to the finals of 2020, the prevalence of HIV in the country was 68.6 cases per 100,000 people, the incidence rate was 5.1 cases per 100,000 people, the number of people living with HIV was 7,302 (2,206 women), and 6,416 people were enrolled in antiretroviral therapy.

**3)** Educational materials (booklets, leaflets, etc.) on reproductive health protection, family planning, recommendations for pregnant women, etc. were prepared and published and duly distributed by the Public Health and Reforms Center (PHRC) of the Ministry of Health in 2020:

"Breastfeeding Week" leaflet (A5, 2-sided, circulation: 5000),

"Breastfeed your baby!" poster (Sticker-A1, circulation: 300),

"HIV and Hepatitis B, C" booklet (A4, double fold, circulation: 5000),

"Hello, mother" booklet (A4 paper, 44, circulation: 2000),

“Information on Breast Cancer” booklet (A4, double fold, circulation: 5000),  
“Child development schedule. For parents.” leaflet (A5, 2-sided, circulation: 10,000),  
“10 facts about HIV infection” booklet (A4, double fold, circulation: 5000),  
“Health begins with recognizing the body” booklet (for boys) (A4, double fold, circulation: 10,000)  
“Health begins with recognizing the body” booklet (for girls) (A4, double fold, circulation: 10,000)  
“Don’t kill your child! Adverse effects of selective abortion” leaflet (A5, 2-sided, circulation: 5000),  
“How hemophilia is inherited” booklet (A4, double fold, circulation: 10,000),  
“Sexually Transmitted Infections” leaflet (A5, 2-sided, circulation: 10,000), etc.

These materials are posted on the website [www.isim.az](http://www.isim.az), providing everyone with accessibility to recognize with them.

At the same time, in order to raise awareness among the population about reproductive health and family planning, PHRC has regularly posted educational materials on its YouTube, Facebook and Instagram pages, where young people are recommended to care their own health and the health of their future children.