



**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 30 April 2021, has the honour to transmit herewith the response submitted by the Government of Azerbaijan on the subject of children in alternative care.

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, 24 June 2021

Enclosure: 4 pages

Office of the United Nations
High Commissioner for Human Rights
GENEVA

Information submitted by the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan

The current situation

"Graduate House" Social Institution, State Rehabilitation Institution for Children with Special Needs, Shelter and Social Rehabilitation Institution for vulnerable groups were established for graduates of state child institutions deprived of parental care.

During the implementation of the State Program on Deinstitutionalization and Alternative Care (2006-2015) in the Republic of Azerbaijan, most boarding schools were transformed into vocational schools, secondary schools and gymnasiums, some boarding schools were liquidated and state child institutions were closed, therefore the number decreased from 53 to 24. As a result of the measures taken under the State Program, some of the children studying and living in boarding schools returned to the care of their biological families and close relatives and as a result the number of children living in boarding schools decreased from 2,441 in 2006 to 862 in 2019.

There are cases in the regions where children with disabilities under the age of 18 are separated from their families and placed in a state-run children's institution in the capital. In this regard, it is especially important to increase educational opportunities for children with disabilities under the age of 18 in the regions.

Legislative acts

One of the last important steps in the implementation of state child policy is the formation of alternative care systems. In order to ensure the protection of children's rights and the formation of alternative care centers, the "Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan for Children for 2020-2030" was adopted by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated June 2, 2020. At the same time, on November 27, 2020, the "Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for Children for 2020-2025" was adopted.

Also, in order to form an alternative care system, the state program "Deinstitutionalization" "2006-2015" was prepared on March 29, 2006 for the transfer of children from state care to biological and foster families.

A number of articles of the main priority areas of the "Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Children for 2020-2030" are devoted to the alternative care system, which are listed below.

4.1.7. Improving the legislation on the application and development of alternative care services (foster care, family-type small group home) and defining the requirements based on international experience in this field

4.3.7. to take measures to introduce and develop a system of alternative family-based services (foster care services, family-type small group homes) for orphans and children deprived of parental care;

The Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy for Children for 2020-2025 also includes an action plan to provide alternative care.

Identification of children in difficult life conditions, living in neglected and socially dangerous situations lead the implementation of measures in the field of their social protection, rehabilitation, integration into society, as well as development of alternative care services in our country, development of legislative proposals on banning violence against children in all spheres of life. As a result, It is worth noting the followings:

Establishment of a regulatory framework to define mechanisms for the application and development of the institution of "foster family" as an alternative care service.

Promoting the activities of day care and community-based social rehabilitation centers on the basis of social order, increasing the network of such centers in the regions and improving the work of existing centers.

Part 9 of the Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated November 27, 2020 No. 2306 "On approval of the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for Children for 2020-2025" is dedicated to the alternative care center that was described below:

The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan, in coordination with the State Committee for Family, Women and Children and other relevant state bodies (state legal entities) to be determined in the implementation of "adoptive family", as an alternative care service to submit proposals to the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan by December 2022 as well as for the establishment of a regulatory framework and mechanisms.

By the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 393 dated December 10, 2018, the registration of the authorities in the field of adoption, including children deprived of parental care and adopted persons and persons wishing to adopt them, was submitted to the Ministry of Social Protection in an online form, from November 1, 2019. As a result of reforms in this area, a new governance model has been created that serves the interests of children, including children in orphanages as an alternative form of care, and allows for the services in the field of adoption electronically.

According to the information accounted in June 1, 2021, 1524 children were registered in 22 social service institutions for children deprived of parental care in the country. 933 of them are boys and 591 are girls. The number of healthy children in institutions is 1223, and the number of children with disabilities is 301.

As a result of the measures taken, from November 1, 2019 to June 1, 2021, 71 children in institutions were reintegrated into families and 8 children were adopted.

In order to expand the use of family-based alternative care institutions in the country, the Ministry is currently working to establish a foster family institution. Thus, in order to apply the "Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for Children for 2020-2025" approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 2306 dated November 27, 2020, alternative care services in sub-item 5.1.9 of the Action Plan, it is considered to create a normative legal basis for determining the mechanisms for the application and development of the institution of the foster family.

At the same time, improve the existing legislation in the gatekeeping system to be applied jointly with the foster family institution, taking into account the principles of conformity and necessity, and prevent the separation of children deprived of parental care (or at risk) from their families; The goal is to cover the most appropriate family-based alternative types of care (foster family, "family-type small group homes", etc.), taking into account their interests.

What are examples of legislation, policies or programmes that effectively strengthen families and prevent separation? What is it that makes them effective?

Resolution No. 213 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated June 23, 2020 approved the "Rules for raising awareness among young people about the importance of family and marriage, its negative consequences for early marriage and consanguineous marriage in order to protect and strengthen it".

A video conference was held on July 13, 2020 with the participation of relevant government agencies to discuss the Rules in order to raise awareness among adolescents and young people about the negative consequences of early marriage and intermarriage.

The State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs organized the draft project "Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Families for 2021-2030" and the first public discussion of the project was held on May 17, 2021.

What are examples of successful family reunification, and what factors contribute to their success (or failure)?

In 2020, a project on "Family Volunteers" was implemented in order to promote our national and spiritual values, healthy lifestyle, and strong family model, disseminate positive life examples and stories through the transfer of knowledge and experience, as well as to contribute to the effective organization of family leisure time using various means of communication and communication mechanisms. Supporting people affected by armed conflicts, natural disasters, fires, epidemics and other emergencies is among the main goals of the project. The goals of the Family Volunteers are to provide social, psychological and moral support to vulnerable groups, including low-income families, including young families.

As a continuation of awareness-raising activities carried out in educational institutions by the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, on May 4, 2021 an online meeting on the "Role of parents and teachers in inculcating family values in children" was held with the participation of teachers and parents of high school Kijaba settlement of Astara region.

An online event on "Formation of safe reproductive health behaviors and healthy lifestyle habits" was held jointly with the Ministry of Health and with the support of the Ministry of Education with the participation of students and teachers of the Gabala State Vocational Training Center.

What are examples of legislation, policies, programmes or practices that have helped to protect children without or at risk of losing parental care, including from all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation, and other human rights violations? What is it that makes them effective?

There are 11 Children and Family Support Centers acting under the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan. By the Presidential decree in 2007 Shuvalan and Goranboy Centers, in 2010 December more centers (Zaqatala, Qabala, Ismailli, Goygol, Aghdam, Hajiqabul, Saatli, Sabirabad, Zardab) have been subordinated to the State Committee.

One of the main beneficiaries of the Centers is the children with additional needs. The Centers has been created on the basis of alternative care models. Centers provide different types of therapies, developmental services, as well as psychological support to children with additional needs.

Each year on average more than 300 children with disabilities are being benefited by the services of the Centers.

What measures and responses have strengthened family care and prevented separation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?

In connection with the special quarantine regime, the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs held a competition "My Family" in order to stimulate families to spend their leisure time at home effectively and productively. On April 6, 2020 an announcement, regulations and a questionnaire on the competition were prepared and shared on the official website and Facebook pages of the Committee. A total of 26 videos and 17 photos from 23 families were included in the competition. The winning families were awarded diplomas and prizes by the jury of the competition.

In order to help parents to solve psychological problems in families during quarantine and social isolation and for the formation of adolescents and young people as a person in a family on April 22, 2020 an online meeting was held on "Psychological problems in families during the pandemic and ways to solve them" with the participation of psychologists to discuss the psychological climate of the family.

The project "Let's get to know our families" was held to promote national and spiritual values among young people, increase their level of readiness for marriage, introduce exemplary families, the secret of longevity in relations in such families, methods of raising children among members of society. The events within the project were held on 30.04.2020 and 21.09.2020.

A video was prepared with the participation of the families of the Committee staff and posted on the Committee's official website, Facebook page and YouTube, in order to encourage families to spend their free time at home and promote the tradition of reading with the family.