

Report by the Secretary-General on progress towards ending child, early and forced marriage worldwide

Answers to the guiding questions

I. What efforts have been made or are planned to address the recommendations of the latest report of the Secretary-General on the issue of child, early and forced marriage (N77/282)? Please, provide information, inter alia, on measures to:

a) address the root causes of child, early and forced marriage including social norms, gender inequalities and stereotypes;

In January of each year on the implementation of the "Awareness-raising Regulation on the negative consequences of early marriage and marriage between relatives, the importance of family and marriage among young people, its protection and strengthening", approved by the Resolution No. 213 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated June 23, 2020 the State Committee prepares a report on the country, based on the information provided by the institutions, publishes it on the official website of the Committee, and informs the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan about it.

The "Action Plan for 2020-2025 on preventing gender selection of children before birth" was approved by the Decree No. 71s of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated February 24, 2020. The plan of measures is of exceptional importance in terms of eliminating discrepancies in the gender structure of the population. Acquiring reliable and accessible data and indicators on the gender ratio of children born without documents and improving legislation in this area, expanding support measures for girls and women to eliminate gender discrimination, carrying out propaganda and educational measures in the direction of eliminating gender stereotypes, as well as inter-institutional relations, and it envisages the implementation of activities in the main areas such as strengthening of cooperation.

Taking into account the recommendations of the UN on the fifth and sixth joint periodic report of the Government of Azerbaijan on the UN "Convention on the Rights of the Child", presented in Geneva on January 24, 2023, according to the Family Code, a proposal was submitted to the relevant institutions regarding the cancellation of the exception of reducing the age of marriage by 1 year if there are valid reasons.

- Educational meetings are regularly organized by the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, as well as the Child and Family Support Centers (CFSC) operating under the Committee in schools, first vocational and secondary educational institutions with the participation of pupils, students, teachers and parents on the negative consequences of early marriage of teenagers and young people and marriage between relatives. At the same time, printed materials, social networks are prepared and distributed among the population, electronic posters are prepared and posted on the official website of the Committee and the

Facebook page, as well as in places of public use (billboards of metro stations, boards of vehicles of Baku Bus OJSC).

- The electronic poster on the theme "Say NO to child marriage" was displayed on electronic boards located in metro stations of Baku city and shared on the social network pages of the State Committee. An electronic poster was prepared on "Love and care for your daughters!" promoting the rights of girls and their value to parents and published on the social network pages of the State Committee.
- During the year 2023, in order to explain the negative consequences of early marriage and marriage between relatives among teenagers and young people meetings were held with pupils, students, teachers, school psychologists and parents on "Early marriage and negative consequences of marriage between relatives" in full secondary schools of Baku city and regions and in First Vocational-specialized educational institutions. The total number of events was 10, the total number of beneficiaries was 1124 people. At the same time, 11 Child and Family Support Centers of the State Committee held 36 events related to "Consequences of early marriage and consanguineous marriage" with students, teachers and parents in educational institutions. 2268 participants benefited from the events.
- Based on the initiative of the Assembly of Children's Ambassadors operating under the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, 3 meetings called "Girls join the discussion" were organized in 2023 with the participation of girls in the 14-16 age group from the regions of the republic. During the event, girls (160 girls in total) were given interactive information on "Stereotypes", "What is a complex?", "Physiological changes that occur in children during adolescence", "Psychological and physiological consequences of early marriage", "Ways to eliminate stereotypes against girls in the family" and discussions were held on the topic using interactive methods.

b) ensure access to education, decent work, social protection, health services, including sexual and reproductive health, for girls and women who are affected or at risk, who are already married or in informal unions, who have fled such a marriage or union, whose marriage has dissolved, and widowed girls or women who were married as girls;

- 8 events were organized within the framework of the project "Don't be silent, make your voice heard!" implemented with the support of local executive authorities, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Republic of Azerbaijan (OMBUDSMAN), the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, and the Department of Education for Baku City. The schoolchildren were informed about the pilot project, which was carried out in order to identify the families included in the risk group within the framework of the fight against domestic violence, conduct preventive work with them and provide the necessary psychological and legal support to the victims of violence. The project was also organized with the aim of expanding educational work among schoolchildren about domestic violence, early marriage and truancy and their consequences.

- With the support of the Ministry of Science and Education and the participation of experts, for the purpose of forming safe reproductive health behaviors and healthy lifestyle habits among teenagers and young people educational meetings on "Healthy lifestyle, reproductive health and family planning" held in Baku city and regions. Total number of events: 5 Total number of participants: 398 people.
- With the organization of Sabirabad, Gabala, Shuvelan, Hajigabul, Zardab Child and Family Support Centers of the State Committee, educational meetings were held separately for girls and boys in secondary schools on "Reproductive health behaviors". 375 participants benefited from the events.
- Training on "Reproductive health and family planning" was held for 11 Child and Family Support Centers employees (online). Number of participants: 60 people
- "Take care of your health to be a parent! If you plan your family, you will have planned your future!" An electronic poster was prepared and displayed on the electronic boards located in the metro stations of Baku city
- The conference was held on "Reproductive health: challenges and prospects" in the Public Health and Reforms Center of the Ministry of Health with the joint organization of the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, Ministry of Health, ISIM, TABIB, Scientific Research Institute of Obstetrics and Gynecology and the Azerbaijan representation of the UN Population Fund on 16.02.2023. Number of participants: 30 people

c) guarantee protection measures, remedies and support services for victims; d).

Victims of domestic violence are protected by law. The protection of victims is described as follows according to the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Prevention of Domestic Violence".

If the actions of the person who committed domestic violence do not create criminal liability, but the rights and legal interests of the victim are violated as a result of these actions, the relevant executive body issues a written warning to the person who committed the actions related to domestic violence not to repeat the same or similar actions, and a short-term protection order is issued.

If the offender fails to comply with the requirements of a short-term protection order, it may be grounds for a long-term protection order.

Letters were sent in order to submit information about the facts mothers under the age of 16 registered in 2022 by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as those registered in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the General Prosecutor's Office for having sex with a person under the age of sixteen or other acts of a sexual nature according to Article 152 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs. In order to investigate the received information, the Child and Family Support Centers of the State Committee organized visits to families, and appropriate measures were taken to assess and control the families.

There are 116-111 Children's Hotlines and 860 Gender-based Violence Support Lines operating in Azerbaijan. Identified cases of early marriage have been prevented.

d) implement child - and gender-responsive budgeting to support effective measures to eradicate child, early and forced marriage

By the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated March 6, 2021, the "Regulation on the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of state programs" was approved. According to the document, drafts of state programs should be prepared according to the established structure, and measures should be monitored and evaluated. The state program should reflect the target indicators, goals, priority directions, financing mechanism and action plan determined as the basis for its achievement for the period covered by it.

2. What prevention mechanisms have proved effective to eradicate child, early and forced marriage? Please include examples of promising practices and challenges encountered on engaging family members, religious, traditional and community leaders, in raising awareness about, and countering child, early and forced marriage.

According to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, if a woman is forced to enter into marriage, this fact creates criminal liability. The sanction of the article in question is as follows:

Article 176-1. To force a woman into marriage

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shall be punished by a fine in the amount of two thousand to three thousand manats or imprisonment for a term of up to two years.

176-1.2. When the same acts are committed against a person under the age of marriage

shall be punished by a fine in the amount of three thousand to four thousand manats or imprisonment for a term of up to four years

When the information is received by the State Committee and Child and Family Support Centers operating under the Committee, visits to families are organized by the Committee or the Center with the participation of representatives of the local executive authorities and the police in order to detect the facts of early marriage and child marriage, the responsibility for such marriages is stipulated in the legislation is explained, appropriate measures are taken to prevent such situations.

Thus, in 2023, monitoring visits were made to 29 families by the UADMs of Goranboy, Aghdam, Ismayilli, Saatli, Gabala, Shuvelan, and Zardab in connection with the facts of early marriage, and 25 early marriages were prevented.

Letters were sent to the offices of the District Executive Powers in the Administrative Territorial District to detect and prevent early marriages in time, as well as to strengthen the education work among the population with the organization of the Child and Family Support Centers. Educational leaflets called "Letter to the head of the family" were also printed and attached to the letters for distribution among the residents of the district. In total, 213 letters and 1460 copies of "Letter to the head of the family" leaflets were sent to the representative offices of the administrative territory. Along with this, a relevant database was created through the local executive authorities about the families living in the territory of the cities and regions of Azerbaijan, during the academic years of 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, who diverted their girls from education. To examine the received information, visits to the families of children who are evading education and who are in a socially dangerous situation are also organized by the Centers with the participation of representatives of relevant institutions, individual preventive work is carried out with children, and preventive measures are taken to prevent early marriage and child marriage.

3. What kind of approaches and tools have been used to collect disaggregated data on child, early and forced marriages, as well as informal unions?

- According to the Part 2 of Resolution No. 213 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated June 23, 2020, appropriate measures are taken by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan to ensure the statistics on the marriage of young people under the age of 18 (early marriage) and between the ages of 18 and 29 including, marriages between persons who are considered relatives and the cases of marriage violations between these young people over the years.
- An analytical report entitled "Causes, scope, consequences and prevention of violence against children: legislation and its implementation practice" was prepared and published in 2023.

4. Have digital technologies and tools been used to address child, early and forced marriage? If so, please share promising practices, challenges and possible solutions.

From April 2023, "Early marriage makes a parent a criminal!", "Be the voice of your defenseless children" developed by the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs. Call the hotline! 116-111", "Three yeses for our children - Love! Understanding! Care!", "Let's fight violence against children! Call the hotline! 116-111", "End cyber

violence!", "Cybercrime is also a crime!", "Listen to your child's problems! Protect from suicide!" and "No to child labor! To a happy childhood - yes!" electronic posters and a video on the subject were broadcasted on the monitors inside the high-speed passenger trains. At the same time, it was shared on the official website of the Committee and on various social networks.

5. Are digitalized birth and marriage registration systems being used in your country, requiring mandatory registration of all births and marriages, including childbirths at home and marriages under customary and religious laws? Do these digitalized registration systems allow to verify digitally birth certificates, before registering any marriage?

According to the Family Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, marriage is registered only by the Ministry of Justice and a marriage certificate is issued.

Birth information (child's birth date and sex, mother's surname, first name, father's name, place of residence, ID card number and date of issuance) by the medical institution subordinated to the Management Union of Medical Territorial Units immediately to the State Agency for Compulsory Medical Insurance, and by another medical institution Transmitted to the Ministry of Health. The information is transmitted to the information system of the Ministry of Justice through the Electronic Government Information System (EHIS) and from there to the registration department of the mother's place of residence in an automated mode by the State Agency for Health Insurance and Compulsory Medical Insurance.

-The list of documents required for registration of birth is reflected in the "Rule of state registration of acts of citizenship" approved by the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 145 dated October 31, 2003. According to the change made in that decision on July 21, 2017, if one or both of the parents are foreigners or stateless persons, the requirement to submit a document on their residence registration in AR was canceled. This ensured the registration of all children born in the country, regardless of the migration status of their parents.

- State registration of acts of civil status is carried out in accordance with the "Rule of state registration of acts of civil status" approved by the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated October 31, 2003 No. 145 and the recommendations of the UN.

-Information about birth is obtained based on the statistical processing of information contained in relevant acts about birth compiled by the Registration Departments of the Ministry of Justice and submitted to the State Statistics Committee.

6. What other innovative strategies have been used to address child, early and forced marriage, as well as informal unions and collect data on this practice in your country?

Special mention should be made of the "Children's Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2020-2030" and the "Action Plan for the Implementation of the Children's Strategy for 2020-2025" approved by the Decree of the President in 2020. Improving the existing legal framework in the field of children's rights in the Republic of Azerbaijan, creating an effective mechanism for the protection of children, providing state support for their development in early childhood, protecting children in difficult living conditions, their growth and education in a healthy environment, and developing a system for monitoring and evaluating measures implemented in relation to children defines the main directions and the main goals of children's policy in the Republic of Azerbaijan according to the strategy.

A hotline (860) operates under the State Committee for women and girls who have experienced violence, and at the same time, the Children's hotline 116-111 was established with the support of the Committee.

- During the year 2023, 18 events were held in educational institutions on the topic of early marriages, with the participation of schoolchildren, administrative institution employees and community residents (1242 people).
- Together with relevant institutions, educational events were held on the topic of "reproductive health and family planning" with high school students, students, female residents of villages and towns, and women working in industrial enterprises, as well as separately for girls and boys. 12 events were held by 11 centers, 707 people participated.