

# COVID-19

## GNWP Mitigation and Adaptation Strategy and Appeal

October 2020

### Country Update

# Azerbaijan

#### Context and government response:

As of October 20, 2020, Azerbaijan has registered 44,964 confirmed COVID-19 cases, including 626 deaths. In response, the government has also announced a special quarantine regime, which included social distancing, prohibition of all meetings of more than 10 people, restriction on travel within the country, and closure of borders. All major meetings and events have been cancelled and schools and universities have been closed across the country. Many government agencies have moved their work online, and the non-essential businesses, such as cafes and restaurants, have closed. The measures began to be lifted beginning on April 27, 2020. However, as the number of cases began to increase sharply following the lifting of restrictions, the government decided to introduce tighter measures, which took force on June 3, 2020, and reinstated full lockdown on June 21, 2020. Under the lockdown, Azerbaijanis are "only allowed to leave their homes once a day for a maximum of two hours after receiving permission via text message" from the authorities. The measures are expected to stay in force until the end of August. Most businesses have also been ordered to close.

#### Impact on women and on peace and security:

Women constitute 66% of frontline healthcare workers in Azerbaijan. Young women are also the majority of employees of grocery stores and other "essential businesses" that have remained open throughout the pandemic, which increases their exposure.

Temporary and migrant workers, the majority of whom are women, were disproportionately affected by businesses closures, which led to job cuts. This increases the likelihood that women will take on high-risk work for their economic survival.

The unpaid care work burden on women have also increased during the lockdown, including due to increased demands of childcare and home schooling. As one woman interviewed by GNWP partners put it: "I am exhausted, I have a feeling that this will never end. I am tense and nervous all the time, and this is where the exhaustion comes from." Another interviewee, who works as a teacher noted that fathers rarely support their kids with online/home-schooling: "It is only mothers who try and work hard. They are not familiar with technologies and don't have computers, but they still try to do something [to help their kids]. Now all the fathers are at home, but all these tasks fall upon the mothers' shoulders."

The government has introduced economic packages to support the most vulnerable individuals and families. Women constituted 45% of the beneficiaries of the State assistance during COVID-19. A National Action Plan to increase women's employment has also been developed by the government to address some of the economic challenges faced by women, in particular the issue of unpaid care work, and underemployment among women. The Plan sets out to create 90,000 additional jobs by the end of the year.

Civil society has also expressed concerns that the financial burden that the COVID-19 crisis is placing on the government will lead to the delay in the adoption of the NAP on UNSCR 1325 and the fulfilment of the government's obligations under the WPS agenda.