

NHDR Write-Up: VDA Practitioner Course on Human Development

National Human Development Report: *Challenges faced by people and policy implications*

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The human development approach has been at the core of UNDP's work in Azerbaijan. Being a valued tool for influencing national policy, National Human Development Reports (NHDR) have been promoting putting people at the centre of the development process and gradually led to a growing commitment of the Government to human development. One of the human development challenges that Azerbaijan has to address is the gender gap, particularly since unequal treatment of men and women with respect to employment opportunities, access to production resources, social protection benefits, education and health services, is not socially acceptable on the ground of equal rights, nor in the interest of the country's economic and social development. In my assignment, I will focus on the gender inequalities, from the human development perspective and national policy implementation, based on the Azerbaijan HDR 2007 "*Gender Attitudes in Azerbaijan: Trends and Challenges*".

The Government of Azerbaijan subscribes to the gender equality concept through its legislation and obligations taken in official treaties. Gender was integrated as a cross-cutting issue into the draft national development strategy, SPPRS, specifying the major policy measures aimed at improving gender equality in Azerbaijan. However, there is a gap between the government's gender equality commitment and the policies. To provide a lucid illustration of the existing gender disparities, UNDP CO commissioned, as input into the NHDR, a first national survey on gender attitudes.

The survey covered a wide range of areas including employment and living conditions; education; health; marriage, family and social life; and concludes that gender inequalities are often due to negative attitudes and stereotypes having their source in private life and inter-personal relations. The main challenge is to improve gender equality within the family without violating intra-family harmony and national identity.

Many gender equality initiatives have not been implemented as they did not form part of the budgetary decision making processes of government. The key challenge is to ensure that there are mechanisms which allow gender issues to be incorporated into all government programmes, and also a mechanism to link them to budget decisions. It is necessary to find a way of tracking the impact of budget allocations on men and women.

Women's representation in the country's decision-making bodies is still low. The challenge is to increase advocacy and awareness in order to empower women, and increase their participation and representation in the political and legal areas.

Based on the findings of the gender attitudes survey, specific policy recommendations were formulated in 2007 NHDR including: i) the State should be made more gender sensitive through the following measures: a) introduce the practice of gender assessment into the process of drafting laws; b) institute the monitoring of the enforcement of laws related to gender equality; c) build the capacity of Members of Parliament on gender issues; d) coordinate policies of government agencies and departments by using gender audits; and ii) the capacity of relevant statistical institutions in collecting gender-disaggregated data, its processing and reporting should be developed and included in all statistical publications.