

Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons

The Programme of Action (PA) is Khazar University strategy to enhance disability prevention, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities, which pertains to full participation of persons with disabilities in social life and national development. The PA also emphasizes the need to approach disability from a human rights perspective.

Objectives, Background and Concepts

Objectives

The purpose of the Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons is to promote effective measures for prevention of disability, rehabilitation and the realization of the goals of "full participation" of disabled persons in social life and development, and of "equality". This means opportunities equal to those of the whole population and an equal share in the improvement in living conditions resulting from social and economic development.

Background

The Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan demonstrates strong commitment to support Persons with Disabilities including children with disabilities by ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on 21 July 1992, and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on 20 October 2008, which explicitly prohibits discrimination against children on the basis of disability.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its Optional Protocol was adopted on 13 December 2006 by the United Nations and was opened for signature on 30 March 2007. Azerbaijan ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol in January 2009, becoming one of the first countries in the region to do so. In line with the requirement under Article 31(1) of the CRPD, Azerbaijan submitted to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities a comprehensive state party report on measures taken to give effect to its obligations under the CRPD and on the progress made in that regard within two years after the entry into force of the CRPD for Azerbaijan in January 2011. Azerbaijan ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol in January 2009, becoming one of the first countries in the region to do so.

In 2017, the country adopted the "State Programme for the Development of Inclusive Education for Persons with Disabilities 2018-2024" aiming at ensuring persons with disabilities access education on an equal basis as others and eliminating barriers to full and meaningful inclusion.

The prerequisites for achieving the purposes of the Programme are economic and social development, extended services provided to the whole population in the humanitarian area, the redistribution of resources and income and an improvement in the living standards of the population. It is necessary to use every effort to prevent wars leading to devastation, catastrophe and poverty, hunger, suffering, diseases and mass disability of people, and therefore to adopt measures at all levels to strengthen international peace and security, to settle all international disputes by peaceful means and to eliminate all forms of racism and racial discrimination in countries where they still exist.

Definition

Azerbaijan definition of disability:

A person in need of social assistance and protection, with limited life activity as a result of various mental, spiritual, physical defects and diseases that cause with violation of the overall development of the body (A Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the Rights of the person with disabilities, 1992, Art 2)

International classification of Functioning Disability and Health (ICT)

ICT is a classification of health and health-related domains. As the functioning and disability of an individual occurs in a context, ICT also includes a list of environmental factors. (WHO, 2001)

The following distinction is made by the World Health Organization, in the context of health experience, between impairment, disability and handicap:

- **Impairment:** Any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function.
- **Disability:** Any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being.
- **Handicap:** A disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or disability, that, limits or prevents the fulfillment of a role that is normal, depending on age, sex, social and cultural factors, for that individual.

Current Situation in Azerbaijan

The main legislative acts of the Republic of Azerbaijan provide a very good basis for the protection of the human rights of people with disabilities in Azerbaijan. However, significant legal reforms are required in order to bring the legislation fully into harmony with the CRPD.

There are many provisions which require amendment in order to reflect international best practice and the social model of disability espoused in the CRPD in order to promote an inclusive approach to people with disabilities (PWD) and their rights, rather than the outdated, segregated, medical approach of yesteryear. Moreover, additional legislation needs to be drafted and enacted to address gaps in the current legislative framework.

There are about 624,000 people with disabilities in Azerbaijan, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Azerbaijan reported.

Persons with disabilities make up about a third of citizens receiving pensions and benefits from the state.

These statistics are based on the number of citizens of the republic who receive disability benefits. According to the ministry, today people with physical disabilities make up about 30 percent of 1.3 million pensioners. At the same time, 60 percent of recipients of disability benefits are minors.

Invalids of the Karabakh war and people equated to them also receive disability allowance in Azerbaijan. Since 1997, the state has begun to provide housing for this category of citizens, and to date, 6,100 disabled people and shakhid families have been provided with it.

Disability benefits are also received by the children of the liquidators of the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

In addition, the Ministry of Labor reported that there are 14 rehabilitation institutions for people with disabilities in the country, in which over 10,000 people are assisted annually.

According to the ministry, in only 11 months of this year, 8,200 people, including children, underwent rehabilitation courses. In addition, since the beginning of the year 1,200 wheelchairs have been distributed across the state.

“Now all the rehabilitation centers are located in regional centers, and residents of several districts come there. For example, in the south, such a center is located in Lankaran, and those who live in Masalli, Yardimli, Jalilabad, Lerik come there. The population is large, and, accordingly, the queue of those who need rehabilitation is also rather big. Some people with disabilities can wait for their turn not a week or a month, but several years. In addition, there are not enough places and beds in these regional centers. This is not to say that some form of disability is more important than another, everyone in need of rehabilitation should go through it in a timely manner. If there are 1-2 rehabilitation centers in each district, then people will not have to travel somewhere. The sooner this initiative is implemented, the more people will be able to receive treatment on time. Thus, it may be possible to prevent some types of disability” - says expert Aydin Khalilov. (<https://zerkalo.az/reabilitatsiya-dolznya-byt-kompleksnoj-i-svoevremennoj/>)

Azerbaijan's ratification of both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities underscores its commitment to protection of the rights of children with disabilities. Azerbaijan has backed up its international obligations by enacting and amending its legislative framework in key areas affecting the lives of children with disabilities, through legislation such as the Disability Prevention and Disabled Persons (Rehabilitation and Social Protection) Act 1992, which prohibits discrimination against children with disabilities, and the Law on Children's Rights which provides for the protection of children with disabilities in a range of areas. Moreover, there exist some excellent programmes, such as the “State Programme on De-Institutionalisation and Alternative Care 2006-2015” and “Inclusive Education” which are being implemented with a view to more adequately involving children with disabilities in mainstream education and mainstream family life, rather than living a life of segregation from the rest of Azeri society

There exist some excellent services for PWD in Azerbaijan, such as special treatment and medical services for children with hearing impairments, the embryonic provision of inclusive education for children with disabilities (CWD), and the trend towards deinstitutionalization of PWD and CWD. However, access to health services is otherwise severely limited and requires urgent attention, as does access to education and social services. The most pressing need would appear to be with respect to access to employment services for PWD, given that there exist no services in this area at the present time. The most frequently occurring type of disability in Azerbaijan is physical impairment, followed by sensory impairment and mental impairment. Most disability in Azerbaijan either originates from birth or from early

childhood. Therefore, the urgent need to address early intervention in order to prevent a large proportion of disability in Azerbaijan is evident. Other causes of disability include by accident.. Raising awareness of the general public about PWD Many factors are responsible for the rising numbers of disabled persons and the relegation of disabled persons to the margin of society. These include:

- Wars and the consequences of wars and other forms of violence and destruction, poverty, hunger, epidemics and major shifts in population.
- A high proportion of overburdened and impoverished families, and overcrowded and unhealthy housing and living conditions.
- Populations with a high proportion of illiteracy and little awareness of basic social services or of health and education measures.
- An absence of accurate knowledge about disability, its causes, prevention and treatment; this includes stigma, discrimination and misconceived ideas on disability.
- Inadequate programmes of primary health care and services.
- Constraints, including a lack of resources, geographical distance and physical and social barriers, that make it impossible for many people to take advantage of available services.
- Low priority in social and economic development for activities related to equalization of opportunities, disability prevention and rehabilitation.
- Industrial, agricultural and transportation-related accidents.
- Natural disaster and earthquake.
- Pollution of the physical environment.
- Stress and other psycho-social problems associated with the transition from a traditional to a modern society.

Khazar University Disability Strategy (KUDS) - Principles

The principles are:

- respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons
- non-discrimination
- full and effective participation and inclusion in society
- respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity
- equality of opportunity
- accessibility
- equality between men and women
- respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

The Khazar University 's Approach

The Khazar University is committed to promoting the Disability Strategy principles through the following strategies:

Employee awareness raising

We will continue measures to promote heightened awareness amongst our employees of the KUDS principles through:

- promoting appropriate opportunities (such as the Chairman's staff meetings, Staff News, International Day for People with a Disability)
- provision of information for selection panels as required

Employment

A disability employment strategy will be incorporated in our overall Workplace Diversity program.

Undertaking our core business

In conducting our public inquiries, research projects and other activities we will assess the impact of our policy proposals on the lives of people with disabilities prior to finalisation of those proposals through:

- including in our activity checklists the requirement to consider the needs of people with disabilities, and recording such consideration in the public document or internal records
- providing guidance to our employees on the steps to be considered by having available an appropriate checklist.

Consultation

Where considerations reveal a likely impact on the lives of people with disabilities, consultation with those people or their representatives will be initiated through determining the nature and extent of such consultations on a case-by-case basis as this is likely to vary according to individual circumstances.

Information provision

Where we identify, or people with disabilities self-identify, the need for information in formats other than those normally provided, we will endeavour to meet such needs in a timely manner through:

- including on our web site information related to accessibility issues and assistance;
- meeting all reasonable requests for the provision of information in accessible formats;
- undertaking any other reasonable actions to ensure timely accessibility information;
- maintaining a 'register of requests for information and assistance' to assist in planning for future needs and to aid our external reporting requirements.

Access to premises

We will ensure our activities are undertaken in premises accessible to employees and stakeholders with disabilities through:

- having regard to the needs of people with disabilities in respect of our existing premises, any new premises we may consider, and any external premises we may use in the conduct of our activities (e.g. training venues, public hearings)
- making appropriate arrangements to specifically assist people with disabilities).

Physical Facilities

Existing public facilities tend to be largely inaccessible. This includes changing rooms, lockers, showers, toilets and so on. Community sport centres should be developed in consultation with organisations of disabled people to ensure not only barrier-free access, but also integrated universal design to allow both non-disabled and disabled athletes to use the facilities simultaneously.

Public Education

The public-at-large, people with disabilities (especially those living in rural areas), sponsors and sport administrators tend to be largely unaware of the different forms of sport for disabled people. This aspect should be targeted in a public education programme.

Personnel Training

The training of personnel involved in the administration of social security benefits should include:

- raising awareness about the needs of people with disabilities and parents of disabled children;
- improving the confidence and knowledge of officials to provide assistance and advice, and
- implementing mechanisms to ensure effective and appropriate service delivery.

Sponsorship

Sport for disabled people should be 'mainstreamed' as far as possible to increase sponsorship value. In other words, it should be promoted jointly with mainstream events.

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