



## **Action Plan on Gender Equality Among Key Affected Populations in Azerbaijan (2025-2027)**

### **Introduction**

This Action Plan aims to promote gender equality among key affected populations (KAPs) in Azerbaijan, focusing on women living with HIV, female sex workers, women who use drugs, and transgender individuals. The plan addresses the existing systemic challenges highlighted in a comprehensive desk review, including gender-based stigma, lack of access to gender-sensitive healthcare, legal barriers, and economic vulnerabilities, particularly in rural and underserved regions. This Action Plan covers the period from 2025-2027 and integrates lessons learned from previous national efforts while aligning with Azerbaijan's national HIV strategy.

The Action Plan was developed through a consultative and participatory process, ensuring the meaningful engagement of key populations and community representatives. The draft was reviewed and discussed with representatives of affected communities to reflect their needs, experiences, and priorities. Following the review process, the Action Plan was presented for consideration at a meeting of the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM), where it received approval. Community representatives actively participated in the CCC meeting, ensuring that their voices and concerns were fully integrated into the plan.

This Action Plan was prepared by Leyla Suleymanova, National Consultant in Azerbaijan for the Eurasian Women's Network on AIDS, as part of the Regional Project "Sustainability of Services for Key Populations in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SoS\_project 2.0)". The project is implemented by a consortium of organizations led by the Alliance for Public Health in partnership with CO "100% Life", with financial support from the Global Fund.

### **Vision**

To create a society in Azerbaijan where women and key affected populations experience equitable access to healthcare, justice, and socio-economic opportunities, free from stigma and discrimination.

### **Mission**

To eliminate gender-based inequalities and reduce vulnerabilities faced by key affected populations in Azerbaijan by implementing sustainable, cross-sectoral interventions in healthcare, legal frameworks, and socio-economic empowerment.

## Strategic Objectives:

1. **Enhance Access to Gender-Sensitive Healthcare Services**
2. **Improve Legal Protections and Address Discrimination Against Key Populations**
3. **Strengthen Economic Empowerment for Women and Marginalized Groups**
4. **Raise Awareness and Address Stigma through Culturally Sensitive Campaigns**
5. **Foster Cross-Sector Collaboration and Expand Support Systems**

### Strategic Objective 1: Enhance Access to Gender-Sensitive Healthcare Services

**Goal:** Ensure equitable access to healthcare services, including HIV prevention, care, and treatment, for women and key affected populations through comprehensive, gender-sensitive care.

#### Actions:

*1.1. Expand Mobile Healthcare Clinics (2025-2027): Establish mobile clinics in rural regions with services like HIV testing, reproductive health, mental health counseling, and substance use treatment.*

Timeline: Start in 2025, with regular visits by 2027.

Partners: Ministry of Health, NGOs, International Funders.

*1.2. Develop Gender-Specific Training for Healthcare Providers (2025): Implement mandatory training for healthcare providers on gender-sensitive care.*

Timeline: Start in mid-2025.

Partners: Azerbaijan Medical University, Ministry of Health, WHO, UNAIDS.

*1.3. Strengthen Data Collection and Monitoring Systems (2026): Integrate gender-disaggregated data collection into national HIV programs.*

Timeline: Develop systems by end of 2026.

Partners: National HIV/AIDS Programs, UNDP, International Agencies.

### Strategic Objective 2: Improve Legal Protections and Address Discrimination

**Goal:** Strengthen the legal framework to protect KAPs from discrimination and violence, focusing on decriminalizing behaviors affecting marginalized groups.

#### Actions:

*2.1. Advocate for Legal Reforms (2025-2027): Collaborate with civil society to advocate for the decriminalization of drug use and sex work.*

Timeline: Start in 2025, aim for reforms by 2027.

Partners: Local NGOs, Human Rights Watch, Government Legal Entities.

*2.2. Establish Legal Aid Clinics (2026-2027): Set up free clinics to support women and KAPs in accessing justice, especially against GBV.*

Timeline: Pilot in mid-2026, expand by 2027.

Partners: Bar Association, Local NGOs, International Legal Aid Organizations.

*2.3. Train Law Enforcement (2026): Develop sensitivity training for officers to reduce discrimination and ensure legal protections.*

Timeline: Start in late 2026.

Partners: Ministry of Internal Affairs, Human Rights Organizations.

### **Strategic Objective 3: Strengthen Economic Empowerment for Women and Marginalized Groups**

**Goal:** Provide economic opportunities for women living with HIV, sex workers, women who use drugs, and transgender individuals through vocational training, financial support, and employment programs.

**Actions:**

*3.1. Introduce Vocational Training Programs (2025-2026): Develop gender-sensitive training for skills in IT, tailoring, and entrepreneurship.*

Timeline: Start in early 2025, implement throughout 2026.

Partners: Ministry of Labor, NGOs, Vocational Training Centers.

*3.2. Empowerment through Gender-Sensitive Vocational Training (2025-2027): Tailor training programs to meet women's needs, including flexible schedules.*

Timeline: Start in mid-2025, ongoing through 2027.

Partners: Ministry of Labor, Local NGOs, Vocational Training Centers.

*3.3. Provide Microfinance and Small Business Grants (2026-2027): Offer grants for women and marginalized groups to start businesses.*

Timeline: Begin in mid-2026.

Partners: Microfinance Institutions, Global Fund.

*3.4. Link Key Populations to Employment Opportunities (2027): Partner with companies for employment placement services, promoting inclusive hiring.*

Timeline: Start in 2027.

Partners: Private Sector, Employment Agencies, NGOs.

*3.5. Gender Equality and Rights Advocacy Training (2025-2027): Train women living with HIV on advocacy, human rights, and engaging local authorities.*

Timeline: Start in early 2025, ongoing mentorship through 2027.

Partners: Women's Rights Organizations, UN Women, UNAIDS.

*3.6. Gender-Sensitive Support Groups (2025-2027): Establish peer support groups for women living with HIV to address stigma and GBV.*

Timeline: Start in 2025, regular meetings through 2027.

Partners: Mental Health NGOs, Peer Support Networks.

#### **Strategic Objective 4: Raise Awareness and Address Stigma through Culturally Sensitive Campaigns**

**Goal:** Reduce stigma against KAPs by designing public awareness campaigns that address cultural and gender-specific barriers.

**Actions:**

*4.1. Develop National Stigma-Reduction Campaigns (2025-2027): Create campaigns targeting rural areas, debunking myths around HIV and promoting gender equality.*

Timeline: Launch in early 2025, continue through 2027.

Partners: Media Outlets, Community Leaders.

*4.2. Engage Religious and Community Leaders (2026-2027): Work with leaders to promote inclusion and address harmful cultural norms.*

Timeline: Begin in 2026.

Partners: Religious Institutions, Cultural Associations, NGOs.

*4.3. Leverage Social Media for Youth Engagement (2026): Use social media for campaigns targeting youth on HIV prevention and gender equality.*

Timeline: Start in 2026.

Partners: Influencers, Youth Organizations, Media Agencies.

#### **Strategic Objective 5: Foster Cross-Sector Collaboration and Expand Support Systems**

**Goal:** Strengthen collaboration between government, civil society, and international agencies for effective gender-sensitive HIV programs.

**Actions:**

*5.1. Create a Gender Equality Task Force (2025): Form a task force for overseeing plan implementation.*

Timeline: Mid-2025.

Partners: Ministries, UN Agencies, Civil Society.

*5.2. Enhance Capacity-Building for Healthcare Providers (2025-2027): Provide ongoing training for gender-sensitive care.*

Timeline: Start in 2025, periodic refreshers through 2027.

Partners: Healthcare Institutions, Medical Universities.

*5.3. Organize Annual Stakeholder Review Conferences (2026-2027): Review progress, share best practices, and address challenges.*

Timeline: First conference in 2026.

Partners: Government, Civil Society, Donor Agencies.

*5.4. Capacity-Building in Gender-Responsive Program Design (2026): Train NGOs on integrating gender analysis and monitoring in their programs.*

Timeline: Start in 2026.

Partners: UNDP, Gender Experts.

*5.5. Peer Exchange Programs with Gender-Focused NGOs (2026-2027): Foster collaboration between local and international NGOs.*

Timeline: Start in 2026, continue through 2027.

Partners: International NGOs, Regional Networks.

*5.6. Workplace Gender Equality Policy Development (2025-2027): Assist NGOs in implementing gender equality policies internally.*

Timeline: Start in 2025, implementation by 2027.

Partners: Gender Advocacy Organizations, Legal Experts.

## **Budget and Resources**

Funding for the Action Plan will be secured from national and international donors, including UN agencies, the Global Fund, and private sector partners. Resources will be allocated to healthcare initiatives, legal reforms, economic empowerment, and awareness campaigns.

## **Monitoring**

The implementation of the **Action Plan for 2025-2027** will be systematically monitored to ensure transparency, accountability, and measurable progress toward achieving its objectives.

- 1. Annual Review and Oversight:** The progress of the Action Plan will be reviewed annually during meetings of the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM). These meetings will serve as a platform for stakeholders, including government representatives, civil society organizations, international donors, and technical partners, to assess implementation progress, identify obstacles, and propose necessary adjustments to improve outcomes.
- 2. Performance Indicators and Targets:** Clear performance indicators and specific targets will be established for all key components of the Action Plan, including healthcare access, legal reforms, economic empowerment, and awareness campaigns. These indicators will allow stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of initiatives against defined benchmarks.

3. **Mid-Term and Final Evaluations:** In addition to annual reviews, a mid-term evaluation will be conducted midway through the implementation period to provide an in-depth analysis of progress and any necessary strategic course corrections. A final evaluation at the end of the 2025-2027 cycle will assess the overall impact, sustainability, and lessons learned from the Action Plan's initiatives.
4. **Stakeholder Engagement and Feedback Mechanism:** Continuous stakeholder engagement will be facilitated through regular consultation meetings, workshops, and forums. A feedback mechanism will also be established to incorporate inputs from beneficiaries, particularly women and key affected populations (e.g., women living with HIV, sex workers, women who use drugs, and transgender individuals), ensuring the Action Plan remains responsive to their needs and challenges.

Through this monitoring framework, the Action Plan will remain adaptable, results-driven, and focused on addressing gender-based inequalities, fostering collaboration among stakeholders, and achieving meaningful improvements for women and key affected populations in Azerbaijan.

## **Conclusion**

The Action Plan for 2025-2027 tackles gender-based inequalities faced by women and key affected populations in Azerbaijan, including those living with HIV, sex workers, women who use drugs, and transgender individuals. It focuses on inclusive healthcare, legal protections, and economic empowerment to dismantle barriers and improve lives. Through collaboration with government, civil society, and international organizations, the plan aims to create a more equitable society and aligns with global gender equality goals.

## Annex 1

### Action Plan on Gender Equality Among Key Affected Populations in Azerbaijan (2025-2027)

Actions	Timeline	Partners
<b>Strategic Objective 1. Enhance Access to Gender-Sensitive Healthcare Services</b>		
<b>Goal:</b> Ensure equitable access to healthcare services, including HIV prevention, care, and treatment, for women and KAPs through comprehensive, gender-sensitive care.		
<b>Expand Mobile Healthcare Clinics:</b> Establish mobile clinics in rural regions with gender-sensitive services like HIV testing, reproductive health, and counseling.	Start in early 2025, regular visits by 2027	Ministry of Health, NGOs, International Funders
<b>Develop Gender-Specific Training for Healthcare Providers:</b> Mandatory training on gender-sensitive care and non-discrimination.	Start in mid-2025	Azerbaijan Medical University, Ministry of Health, WHO, UNAIDS
<b>Strengthen Data Collection and Monitoring Systems:</b> Integrate gender-disaggregated data collection into national HIV programs.	Develop systems by end of 2026	National HIV/AIDS Programs, UNDP, International Agencies
<b>Strategic Objective 2. Improve Legal Protections and Address Discrimination</b>		
<b>Goal:</b> Strengthen the legal framework to protect KAPs from discrimination and violence, focusing on decriminalization.		
<b>Advocate for Legal Reforms:</b> Work with civil society to decriminalize behaviors such as drug use and sex work.	Start in 2025, aim for reforms by 2027	Local NGOs, Human Rights Watch, Government Legal Entities
<b>Establish Legal Aid Clinics:</b> Set up free legal aid clinics to support women and KAPs.	Pilot by mid-2026, expand by 2027	Bar Association, Local NGOs, International Legal Aid Organizations
<b>Train Law Enforcement:</b> Sensitivity training for officers to reduce discrimination and ensure protections.	Start in late 2026	Ministry of Internal Affairs, Human Rights Organizations
<b>Strategic Objective 3. Strengthen Economic Empowerment for Women and Marginalized Groups</b>		
<b>Goal:</b> Provide economic opportunities for women living with HIV, sex workers, WUD, and transgender individuals.		
<b>Introduce Vocational Training Programs:</b> Develop training in IT, tailoring, and entrepreneurship.	Start in early 2025, implement throughout 2026	Ministry of Labor, NGOs, Vocational Training Centers
<b>Empowerment through Gender-Sensitive Vocational Training:</b> Tailor training for women's needs, including flexible schedules.	Start in mid-2025, ongoing through 2027	Ministry of Labor, Local NGOs, Vocational Training Centers
<b>Provide Microfinance and Small Business Grants:</b> Offer grants for women and marginalized groups to start businesses.	Start in mid-2026	Microfinance Institutions, Global Fund

<b>Link Key Populations to Employment Opportunities:</b> Employment placement services with private companies.	Start in 2027	Private Sector, Employment Agencies, NGOs
<b>Gender Equality and Rights Advocacy Training:</b> Train women living with HIV on advocacy and human rights.	Start in early 2025, ongoing through 2027	Women's Rights Organizations, UN Women, UNAIDS
<b>Gender-Sensitive Support Groups:</b> Establish peer support groups for women living with HIV.	Start in 2025, continue through 2027	Mental Health NGOs, Peer Support Networks
<b>Strategic Objective 4. Raise Awareness and Address Stigma through Culturally Sensitive Campaigns</b>		
<b>Goal:</b> Reduce stigma against KAPs through targeted public awareness campaigns.		
<b>Develop National Stigma-Reduction Campaigns:</b> Create multimedia campaigns focusing on HIV myths and promoting gender equality.	Start in early 2025, continue through 2027	Media Outlets, Community Leaders
<b>Engage Religious and Community Leaders:</b> Promote inclusion and address harmful cultural norms.	Begin in 2026	Religious Institutions, Cultural Associations, NGOs
<b>Leverage Social Media for Youth Engagement:</b> Use social media for youth-targeted campaigns on HIV prevention and gender equality.	Start in 2026	Influencers, Youth Organizations, Media Agencies
<b>Strategic Objective 5. Foster Cross-Sector Collaboration and Expand Support Systems</b>		
<b>Goal:</b> Strengthen collaboration between government, civil society, and international agencies for effective implementation.		
<b>Create a Gender Equality Task Force:</b> Oversee Action Plan implementation.	Form by mid-2025	Ministries, UN Agencies, Civil Society
<b>Enhance Capacity-Building for Healthcare Providers:</b> Ongoing training for gender-sensitive care.	Start in 2025, periodic refreshers through 2027	Healthcare Institutions, Medical Universities
<b>Organize Annual Stakeholder Review Conferences:</b> Review progress, share best practices, address challenges.	First conference in 2026	Government, Civil Society, Donor Agencies
<b>Capacity-Building in Gender-Responsive Program Design:</b> Train NGOs on integrating gender analysis in programs.	Start in 2026	UNDP, Gender Experts
<b>Peer Exchange Programs with Gender-Focused NGOs:</b> Foster collaboration between local and international NGOs.	Start in 2026, continue through 2027	International NGOs, Regional Networks
<b>Workplace Gender Equality Policy Development:</b> Develop and implement gender equality policies within NGOs.	Start in 2025, implementation by 2027	Gender Advocacy Organizations, Legal Experts