

# HIGHLIGHT REPORT



## UNDP Azerbaijan

2023





# Highlight Report 2023

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# Resident Representative's Executive Summary

In 2023, UNDP continued to contribute to the national development goals of Azerbaijan in line with the SDGs. UNDP operates in the areas of energy and environment, mine action, social cohesion, gender and youth inclusion, safe return of IDPs, tourism, medical supply, as well as good governance and employment creation.

In 2023, UNDP made significant progress in achieving climate and energy goals. The government of Azerbaijan has made an ambitious commitment under the National Determined Contributions (NDC) to reduce its Greenhouse Gas emissions by 40% by 2050 compared to the baseline year 1990.

In 2023, updated NDC was approved by the Government of Azerbaijan and submitted to the UNFCCC, also considering the NDC and LT-LEDS ambitions the report on the "Assessment of carbon market potential for Azerbaijan's long-term low-carbon development" has been prepared and submitted to the Government.

In line with UNDP's greening commitment, the CO secured funding for utilization of electric cars under Moonshot Facility in a highly competitive environment.



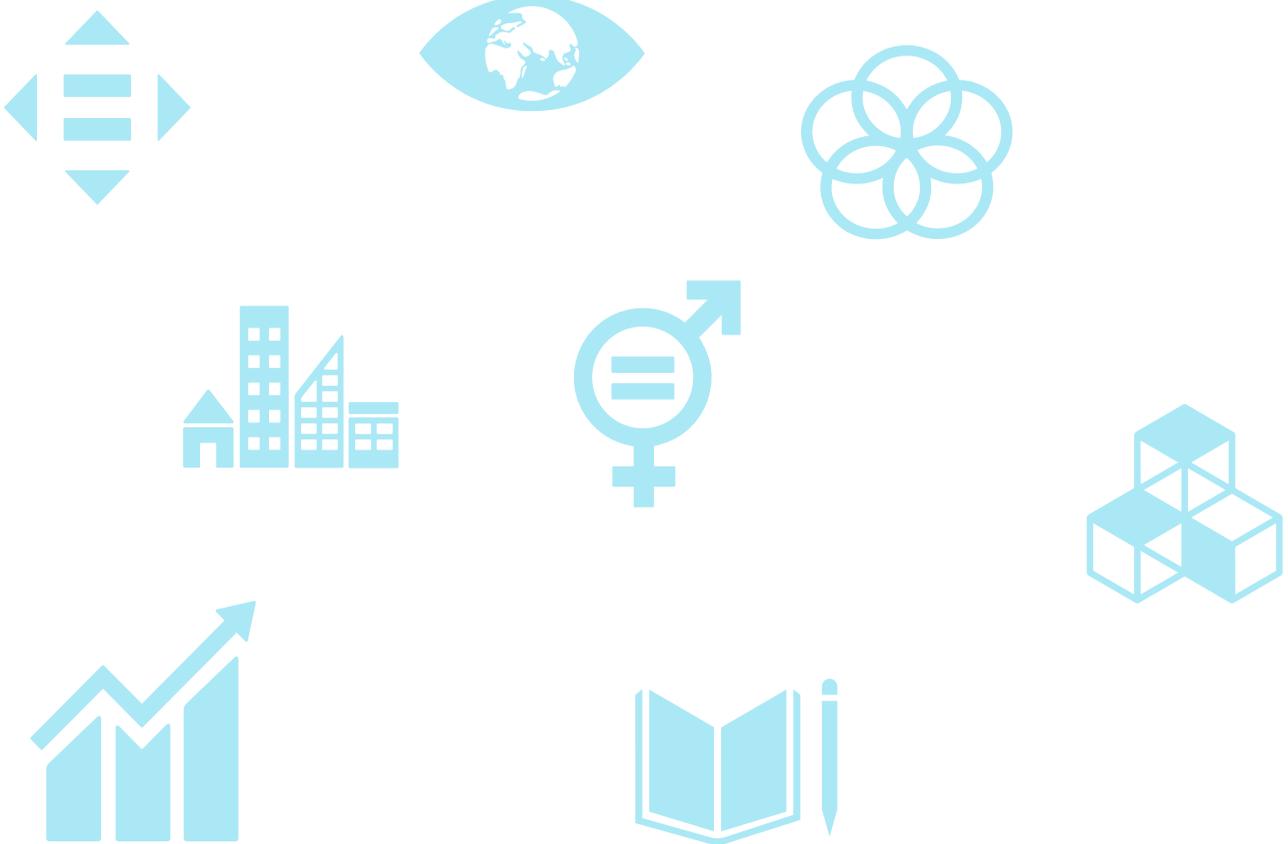
The Adaptation Working Group integrated into the State Commission on Climate Change, aligning focused efforts with national climate policy. A new legal framework for Climate Change Adaptation was developed, signifying a major step forward in addressing climate challenges. It provided comprehensive legal guidance to enhance the implementation of effective climate adaptation policies.

UNDP's presentation at COP28, led by high government officials, was significant to showcase its success and Azerbaijan's commitment to climate adaptation and sustainability to a wider international community. Immediately after announcing Azerbaijan as a host country for COP29 in 2024, UNDP CO started communication with the Government of Azerbaijan on relevant cooperation.

Several stand-alone initiatives are implemented to boost SDG financing, however, more coordinated actions under the umbrella of Integrated National Financing Frameworks for SDG financing could serve as catalytic.

As a first step towards an INFF, the Development Finance Assessment was undertaken with support of UNDP. A number of the recommendations for the INFF Roadmap included in the DFA report have already started to be implemented by the Government.

As UNDP Azerbaijan we are very grateful to our donors for their continued support in advocating for change and connecting people to knowledge, experience, and resources to help them build a better life. Implementing our projects in close cooperation to achieve Sustainable Development Goals, we represent an unprecedented leap forward in the fight against inequalities, as well as in the struggle for environmental sustainability.



by2050

1) Azerbaijan's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) by 2050 were renewed in 2023. In 2023, updated NDC that was approved by the Government of Azerbaijan and. With a focus on building resilience, green economic policies and facilitating climate finance, UNDP contributed to strengthening institutions, shaping policies, and executing on-the-ground initiatives aimed at mitigating greenhouse gas emissions.

over 8.200

2) The Women's Resource Center (WRCs) are continuing to empower women, promote gender equality and fostering inclusive and sustainable development. This resulted in establishment of 15 WRCs including Community Resource Hubs (CRHs) covering conflict affected regions by expanding number to include over 8,200 women members.

Facilitated by the recruitment of 6 non-technical survey and demining teams along with 2 ADTs (rats and dogs) by the local NGO, the International Eurasia Press Fund, a substantial area of land has been surveyed, totaling more than 3,6 mln m<sup>2</sup>, with 894k m<sup>2</sup> successfully cleared. The explosive ordnance disposal teams have completed 475 spot tasks, uncovering 33 AP mines, 28 AT mines, 982 UXOs, 62,211 pieces of SAA (small arms and ammunition), alongside various other teams.

894k m<sup>2</sup>



1) In partnership with UNDP, the State Agency for Vocational Education (SAVE) boosted enrolment in vocational education. The SAVE expanded capacity by 10%, offering 25,420 places in 128 specializations across 66 institutions.



2) The establishment of the Climate Web Portal has significantly streamlined communication among government entities working on climate change. This portal serves as a central repository for climate data, aiding in informed decision-making and policy development.



3) The II Baku Forum on Sustainable Development was held on November 15-16. In turn, UNDP produced excellent ground for further development of Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) in Azerbaijan to accelerate SDGs financing. UNDP together with the Government counterparts complemented the INFF process with over 16 technical meetings, built capacity of 250 on green economy, INFF implementation, fintech solutions, and green investments.

## Key results achieved in partnership with other UN agencies in support of national goals

In 2023, UNDP continued its partnership with the UN Women promoting Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) expanding WRCs and reaching out to beneficiaries. As a result of UNDP's continuous efforts, 20 private companies signed on to the WEPs fostering gender equality at workplaces. More than 926 rural women in four districts of the country were provided with various skills development trainings and economic empowerment opportunities. Thus, the Azerbaijan's first WEPs trainings took place, whereas 15 representatives from 11 companies including insights from 2 Georgian companies attended the courses.

UNDP, along with the State Committee on Family, Women, and Children Affairs and various UN agencies (RCO, UNFPA, FAO, UNHCR, IOM, and UNICEF) led 16 Days of Activism campaign against gender-based violence (GBV).



UNDP and UNFPA jointly scaled up SDG-aligned programs, integrating a finance framework that prioritizes gender inclusivity.

Under Disability Fund (UN-PRPD) contribution, UNDP, UNICEF, and UNFPA established joint initiative complementing the collective effort that aims to uphold the rights of persons with disabilities.

UNDP worked with ILO and the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MLSPP) to reduce restrictions on banned jobs for women. This initiative included a review of the Labour Code and the development of a training manual. In this regard, we organized trainings at the Aghjabadi, Barda and Tartar Women's Resource Centers on non-discrimination in employment and occupations.



## People furthest behind participate in and benefit from a diverse and innovative economy encompassing future-oriented labour-market transformation and access to decent work



### UNDP's contribution to UNSDCF CPD outcome level results and moonshot targets

In 2023, UNDP consistently emphasized the empowerment of marginalized individuals in a dynamic and diverse economic landscape. The CO collaborated with the Government and stakeholders to ensure access to decent work implementing measures to empower vulnerable groups. This resulted in

  
**1** more financial and non-financial resources

  
**2** better acknowledgment of needs of conflict-affected communities and

  
**3** more future-oriented labour skills of vulnerable groups.

**23%** According to the results of 2023, the proportion of small-scale industries as a total of industry value added was 23% (SDG 9.3.1).



UNDP's implementation of the WRCs methodology since 2011 reflects a commitment to empowering women, promoting gender equality, and fostering inclusive and sustainable development and it's resulted in establishment of 15 WRCs including Community Resource Hubs (CRHs) covering conflict affected regions. To date, free training courses have empowered over 9600 individuals (women, men, GBV survivors, PWDs, youth etc.) by imparting skills in economic empowerment, including business development, social entrepreneurship, finance, legal aid, human rights, psychological support, etc. All these indicators contributed to UNDP's moonshot goal of "Helping 100 million people to escape out of multidimensional poverty".

**1025**

In 2023, 1025 individuals from vulnerable communities including PWDs received tailored support for activation, social and work oriented rehabilitation for employment into the formal labor market.

**285**

Number of young individuals acquiring skills and securing decent employment following UNDP's career - focused trainings in Azerbaijan is 285 in 2023.

**310.5**



**293.3**

In comparison with last year, the number of unemployed persons per thousand declined from 310,5 to 293,3 individuals. This can be attributed to UNDP initiatives, such as trainings, workshops, and other capacity-building programs, on direct economic empowerment, income generation, microenterprise development and activities.

Vulnerable groups, particularly the poor, women and people with disabilities (PWD), are empowered to gain universal access to financial and non-financial assets to build productive capacities and benefit from sustainable livelihoods and jobs.





# Scaling up development impact



In 2023, 145 youths with 68% female participation completed the PROGRO Standard training and networked with regional youth. 43% of the alumni were employed upon the completion of the training.

68 women have launched businesses, gaining crucial skills in business planning, tax calculation, and book-keeping for effective management.



UNDP contributed the conduction of training in leadership, gender equality, and business development to 395 individuals. In partnership with the State Agency on Vocational Education and the Barda Vocational Lyceum, over 200 women participated at VET courses in beauty, tailoring, beekeeping, and clerical work.

In 2023, a total of 2,182 individuals received free legal advice services, psychological-support and social advisory services.



To further support livelihoods in conflict-affected communities, the CO implemented a holistic community approach to identify the needs of communities in the targeted area, particularly in Fuzuli, Tartar and Aghjabadi region. As a result of this livelihood initiative, the CO successfully assisted 361 beneficiary families across 20 villages, benefiting approximately 1,784 family members, surpassing the initial target of 300 families and 1,500 members.



## Green supply chain for MSMEs specializing in rural and ecotourism has been established



In close cooperation with local authorities, the CO implemented a sustainable supply chain for MSMEs focused on rural and ecotourism in 2023. During the year, UNDP developed and reviewed a comprehensive five-year Destination Management Plans (DMP) for the South, North, North-West, and West.

The CO also prioritized facilitation of tourism infrastructure improvements for regional MSMEs. As a result of these efforts, 6 MSME owners in Khinalig and Sim villages obtained water heating systems, and 16 MSME owners in Sim, Khinalig, and Griz villages received Water Heating Systems, Mini Ovens, and Glass Stoves, enhancing facilities, and supporting local tourism businesses.

Additionally, the CO enabled the procurement, delivery, and installation of gardening items and wooden furniture for 2 MSME owners in Naftalan's Gashalty Gardens and procured kitchen supplies for 5 MSME owners in Basgal Village. These endeavors further strengthened the foundation for sustainable rural and ecotourism development.



## Nature-based solutions and mechanisms developed and supported for improving rural community resilience



In 2023, UNDP progressed the use of nature-based solutions and several mechanisms to improve resilience in rural communities in partnership with stakeholders and government organizations.



The team updated the Fruit and Vegetables Value Chain database and led to an increase in the number of participants. This database is now available online for beneficiaries involved in the value chain, such as the State Agrarian Development Centers and the Small and Medium Business Development Agency. According to the latest study, there are 6,128 farmers (5,722 eligible for subsidies/registered) in Lanjaran-Astara Economic Region (LAER). As a result, 110 farmers, including 24 women, formed cooperative connections with processing companies with the help of this database.



UNDP concluded SWOT analysis specifically focused on the fruit and vegetable value chains in the LAER region. Based on the conducted research and database information, 610 (172 women) operators out of targeted 1000 were selected.



As a pivotal accomplishment, UNDP marked key milestones: the Steering Committee (including the Government) approved the Support Facility Access and Use Manual in April, leading to an open call for non-cash grants. In 2023, 471 people, including 97 women and 270 youth, participated in training activities.



A study tour to the Republic of Croatia was organized on 24-30 September 2023. A total of 8 persons (1 woman and 7 men) participated in the visit. The study tour featured the best practices in collaborative undertakings, including agricultural production and processing (SDG 8.2).



The CO conducted a festival for the promotion of local fruit and vegetables of LAER in the framework of Euro Village in June 2023.



## People furthest behind benefit from enhanced national capacities and governance structures for social protection and quality public and social services, in line with Azerbaijan’s international commitments



In 2023, UNDP made significant progress in enhancing national capacities and governance structures for social protection and public services, aligning with Azerbaijan’s international commitments. The main efforts facilitated by UNDP, included strengthening demining capabilities in conflict-affected regions through ANAMA, supporting the reform of the vocational education and training system, mainstreaming human rights, strengthening local governance, and advocating for the rights of vulnerable groups in collaboration with civil society.



Additionally, UNDP participated in the advancement of the national health-care procurement system, focusing primarily on essential medicines for tuberculosis and HIV.

89,779

90,408

UNDP continued scaling up its contribution to mine action in Azerbaijan by supporting ANAMA with technical expertise, equipment, capacity development and financial resources. Between 2020 and 2023, ANAMA cleared 89,779 hectares and safely disposed of 90,408 explosive devices. Additionally, UNDP and ANAMA’s collaboration resulted in neutralization of 869 unexploded ordnances.

SDG  
18

In 2023, the Government has shown unprecedented commitment and ownership by adopting a national SDG 18 on MA. SDG 18 includes action to combat the threat of mines for safe return, resettlement, rehabilitation, prosperity, and peace in the liberated territories. SDGs localization is conducive to local policy agenda aligned with the government’s development priorities.



Regarding reformation of vocational education, UNDP established 26 public-private partnerships to modernize vocational education centers and promoted capacity-building measures for both vocational education and private sector stakeholders.



UNDP diligently worked to mainstream human rights, enhance local governance capacity, and improve the competencies of CSOs in addressing development issues, advocating for their active participation in public and political processes and increasing national capacities to combat gender-based violence.



Within the framework of South-South cooperation, the CO shared its knowledge and expertise on civil registry to support UNDP Turkmenistan in alignment with SDG 16.9.



## Strengthen institutional capacity to effectively develop and implement governance programmes, public service delivery and services to bridge digital divide and to promote social cohesion



In 2023, UNDP partnered with international organizations and donor countries to mobilize additional funding for mine action activities in Azerbaijan. This involved the recruitment of experts specialized in critical areas such as Non-Technical Surveys, Information Management, and Strategy.

# 6,107 km<sup>2</sup>

UNDP supported the Government in equipping the national teams that surveyed 6,107 km<sup>2</sup> of area, covering 456 villages, conducted 579 explosive ordnance disposal spot tasks, and 6,107 various items. The result exceeded the initial target by reaching 912 callouts against 400 initially planned. 20 anti-tank, 17 anti-personnel mines, 869 unexploded ordnances, 61,780 small arms ammunition and 431 pieces of other items were found in the targeted area.



ANAMA included both human resources and animals for effectively clearing mined areas to ensure the safe return of communities. "With help from the Mine Advisory Group (MAG), the International Eurasia Press Fund (IEPF) hired and trained 18 women deminers of two teams". ANAMA certified these teams, along with Anti-Personnel Landmines Detection Product Development, Technical Survey Dogs and Mine Detection Rats in Horadiz. In total, ANAMA accredited 8 mine detection dogs and 12 mine detection rats.

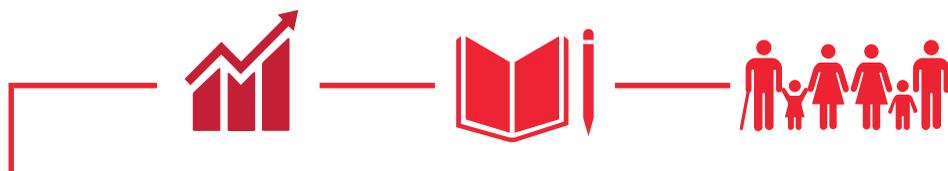
# 1700

UNDP facilitated legal aid, benefiting over 1700 individuals from 15 regions. UNDP, in partnership with the Law Human Rights Institute (LHRI), actively promotes human rights and legal knowledge. Training sessions across six regions target police, prosecutors, and advocates. The initiative aimed to enhance understanding of human rights principles.

# 52,711

UNDP made progress in the development of the Electronic System for Urban Planning Control (ESUPC) information system, including software development and testing. Following the analyses, usable images were determined, and a labeling work was carried out on satellite images to gather material for training a machine learning model. Allocated number of 51,508 out of total 52,711 labeled samples were prepared for the built category and 1,203 for the semi-constructed category.

## Growing labour market and social needs



In 2023, UNDP contributed reshaping the vocational education centers in Azerbaijan in pursuit of the targets outlined in SDGs 1,4, and 8.

These initiatives significantly contributed to advancing vocational education in Azerbaijan by addressing learner needs, fostering international cooperation, and supporting educators, establishing a solid foundation for ongoing success in the regions.

| 72

Focused on Higher Technical Vocational Education (HTVE) programs, 72 participants, comprising 53 staff and 19 tutors, engaged in five training sessions. This initiative aimed to enhance the HTVE sector's capacity to provide quality education.

| 152

The employment outcomes of the Dual VE graduates of the 2022-2023 academic year are success indicators of the programme. Consequently 249 graduates out of 358 received job offers (70% of Dual TVET graduates). Notably, 61% of graduates (152 students) accepted job offers, comprising 60 females and 92 males.

| 120

Tailor-made 10-day intensive trainings on basic accounting and computer skills were conducted in three regions for 120 women, organized by the Barda Vocational Lyceum.

| 60

More than 60 women in Aghjabadi, Barda and Tartar found jobs thanks to the VET and other trainings they received as a result of the cooperation between UNDP and the Barda Vocational Lyceum.

| 40

As part of the ongoing collaboration with the State Employment Agency (SEA), Tartar WRC members joined a job fair on June 23, featuring over 40 employers providing women with the opportunity to submit CVs and explore job vacancies.



Civic participation, particularly women's activism, strengthened through building CSOs' capacities in organizational development, financial sustainability and project management, enabling them to better response to public needs.

UNDP produced recommendations to promote social enterprises and successfully advocated for the policy changes to boost development of social entrepreneurship in Azerbaijan. UNDP rallied support of stakeholders for a new definition of 'social enterprise' aligned with international practices. The legal proposals also include provision of financial support and tax breaks to social enterprises along with the requirement to reinvest part of their profits into solving SDGs challenges.

UNDP fostered local capacity to support development of the local ecosystem of social entrepreneurship. We prepared a pool of master trainers who provide mentoring and training services throughout all stages of social business development from start-up to impact measurement.

25 CSOs benefitted from a comprehensive incubation programme on social entrepreneurship which creates new opportunities for a greater financial independence of CSOs while continuing to create social and environmental value and to benefit disadvantaged communities.



People including those left behind benefit from climate strategies and environment protection policies that ensure natural resources are sustainably managed, livelihoods are protected and resilience strengthened





Climate change measures integrated into national policies, strategies and planning frameworks.



In 2023, UNDP partnered with stakeholders and the Government to integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies, and planning frameworks, in accordance with SDGs 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15.

To address climate change issues, UNDP established the Climate Web Portal which resulted in significantly streamlined communication among government institutions, serving as a main storage for climate data.

UNDP developed a Private Sector Engagement strategy to boost collaboration between the government and private entities, enhance private sector involvement and investment in climate initiatives. Moreover, Climate Investment tools and a fiscal impacts manual alongside a pioneering Legal Framework for Climate Change Adaptation were produced.

In addition, the procurement and delivery of various types of IT equipment to the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources (MENR) significantly improved the Ministry's data management and analysis capabilities.

UNDP completed the training materials for government institutions and private sector stakeholders on MRV. The materials based on a review of climate change related governmental policies and strategies, including NDC, focused on sectoral mitigation opportunities.

UNDP submitted the "Analysis of the agricultural and irrigation possibilities in new areas" report to the Ministry of Agriculture. The report describes the possibilities of development potential of cultivated areas and animal husbandry.

Study tours in Guba-Khachmaz, Gobustan-Shamakhi, and Neftchala-Salyan regions were conducted engaging 75 decision-makers to offer practical insights into regional climate challenges.

UNDP facilitated a 4-day certified training session with the academic support of ADA University attended by 28 government officials, enhancing their understanding of climate change fundamentals on water and coastal areas.

In 2023, UNDP also participated in Caspian Sea Fluctuation and Climate Adaptation Event. This resulted in improved regional awareness and readiness for climate changes in the Caspian Sea, fostering better cooperation in managing these impacts among coastal communities and policymakers. Additionally, the World Environment Day Celebrations significantly raised public awareness and engagement in environmental issues, deepening community understanding of the importance of climate adaptation and encouraging active participation in sustainable practices.





Following UNDP's global flagship initiative, CO demonstrated its commitment to promoting gender equality by participating in Gender Seal certification. The CO achieved Bronze level certification. Prior to assessment, the CO established Gender Focal Point (GFT) team to conduct the overall process. Moreover, UNDP commissioned an expert to conduct the first ever gender portfolio review (GPR) in the RBEC. The GPR monitored gender responsiveness of the projects and prepared the tools to formulate gender-sensitive approach across all portfolios.

414



In collaboration with the SCFWCA, UNDP supported vulnerable women in 15 regions. In 2023, the WRCs facilitated 68 women to start businesses. In parallel, approximately 414 rural women gained access to services for skills-building and self-employment.

70



100

Within 16 Days of Campaign, jointly organized events were held in several regions. The regions witnessed active participation, with 70 to 100+ attendees per event. Presentations by legal and psychological experts covered topics such as legislative frameworks and the psychological impact of gender-based violence.

49%

In 2023, 49% of applicants seeking legal aid were women, highlighting an increasing demand. Furthermore, the CO enhanced its commitment to the Women in STEM mentorship program, reaching out to over 150 participants. As a result of UNDP's continuous efforts, 20 private companies signed on to the Women Empowerment Principles in 2023.

60



UNDP is dedicated to promoting gender equality, involving women in various activities, particularly in agriculture. Attended by 60 participants, a "Leadership and Networking" training session for women in farming was conducted in 2023. Overall, 1700 farmers (407 women), significantly benefited from UNDP's commitment to advancing agricultural initiatives.



“Urban Transformation Portfolios of the Icherisheher Administration and the Khirdalan Municipality are a part of UNDP Compendium of Portfolio Country Cases. Azerbaijan is one of the 35 countries, where designed Portfolios are in Action. The CO catalyzed the work on portfolio approach through the EU4Mayors regional project. This is the entry point for implementation of this approach for scaling up this initiative in the various portfolios.

The Icherisheher Administration and the Khirdalan Municipality participated in the Regional Portfolio City Sensemaking held in Brussels, Belgium.

The Project organized a study tour for the Urva Municipality to Bosnia & Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro to learn about best practices of establishing family businesses and learn about municipal activities in the field of tourism and geographical identity.

As part of their Urban Transformation Portfolio designed under M4EG Project, the Khirdalan Municipality organized “1001 Ish” Job Fair in the Khirdalan City. Over 1,000 residents attended the fair organized with the support of M4EG and VET4Future Projects implemented by UNDP. 28 companies offered over 200 vacancies.

The Icherisheher Administration, the Khirdalan, Mingachevir, Naftalan, Sabail, Urva municipalities and the Municipality Center of the Ministry of Justice represented Azerbaijan at the Future Fit Cities Urban Forum held in Batumi, Georgia.

Within the framework of the Mayors for Economic Growth (M4EG) Facility, the CO has organized a study tour for the Icherisheher Administration team to the Smart City Expo World Congress 2023 in Barcelona, Spain.

With the support of the Municipality Center of the Ministry of Justice, the Project launched the Urban Learning Center online learning platform open to broader M4EG Network in Azerbaijan.”



**WELCOME TO THE NEW URBAN ERA**

# Cutting-edge strategic innovations and digital solutions cultivated for policy and programming



In 2023, with the innovation capabilities of the Accelerator Lab, the CO supported the implementation of innovative models across the programmes and projects. Additionally, UNDP introduced digital solutions through vocational education training, climate change activities, and women’s entrepreneurship. With UNDP’s support, innovative measures were tested, including work-based learning, new course curricula for future skills were developed, and digitalization and online training was expanded.

167—200

Within the STEM initiative “He for SHE” educational program, conducted in southern regions in collaboration with the Smartnation.az platform, aims to enhance awareness among girls about STEM careers. The initiative involved informational sessions for fathers, featuring male role models, and impacts over 200 girls.

In 2023, UNDP continued its support for creation of inclusive and sustainable self-employment possibilities for socially vulnerable groups in cooperation with the State Employment Agency under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Azerbaijan Republic. 167 individuals with disabilities in 12 regions were provided with necessary business equipment.





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