

EQUITABLE ACCESS COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS: AZERBAIJAN

Section I: Country setting

Basic information

POPULATION	9.9 million
AREA	86,600 km ²
GDP	US\$ 39 billion
GDP PER CAPITA	US\$ 4,097
ACCESS TO DRINKING WATER (2017)	Total: 97% Urban: 98.9% Rural: 75.8 %
ACCESS TO SANITATION (2017)	Total: 68.2% Urban: 98.2% Rural: 26%

Protocol on Water and Health. Azerbaijan ratified the Protocol in 2002.

Section II: Self-assessment of equitable access to water and sanitation

II.A. Key findings

Governance framework. Overall, the strategic framework and the sector's financial policies contribute to achieving equitable access. However, the regulatory framework for water resources management in the case of emergencies is not fully developed.

Geographical disparities. Azerbaijan has introduced a number of State programmes aimed at reducing geographical disparities and increasing awareness of sanitation issues. A Master Plan was prepared in 2012 to provide sewerage systems for the Absheron peninsula settlements and is being implemented by Azersu OJSC. However, there are still important geographical discrepancies in access to water and sanitation between rural and urban areas, with some neighbourhoods in rural and mountainous areas without access to centralized water systems. In addition, there is a need to improve the sewerage systems and access to sanitation in the residential areas of Baku's suburbs. Finally, water quality is not controlled in private wells, mostly those located in rural areas.

Vulnerable and marginalized groups. Schoolchildren and vulnerable people, such as users of nursing homes, are well provided for with access to water and sanitation. However, some challenges still remain. Most public toilets are not free. Problems were identified related to access to water and sanitation in schools and lack of knowledge of WASH. There is also a need to improve water and sanitation infrastructure in the penitentiary system, as well as conditions of access to water, and particularly sanitation, by refugees and internally displaced persons.

II.B. Process of self-assessment

Brief description. Azerbaijan initiated the process of self-assessment in 2015 with a launching workshop. The lead organizations were the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources. A working group with experts from the different agencies at the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, Azersu water operating company, and an independent expert delivered a draft filled score-card in 2016. Partners involved in the self-assessment included the State Water Resources Agency of the Ministry of Emergency Situations, Azersu OJSC, Baku State University, the State Statistical Committee, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population, the Commissioner for Human Rights, the Ministry of Education, the State Committee for Affairs of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, and the NGO Ruzigar. The main findings of the score-card were discussed in a national consultation meeting in July 2018, consecutive to a meeting of the Steering Committee of the National Policy Dialogue on Integrated Water Resources Management.

Key lessons learned from the process:

- The process of self-assessment required interministerial cooperation to facilitate an exchange of views among all the relevant agencies on the need to improve access to water and sanitation.
- The process of self-assessment has enabled a better understanding of the social issues around water and sanitation in Azerbaijan and the identification of important gaps.
- The working group should include multidisciplinary specialists and experts from the field.

Section III: Actions taken to improve equitable access to water and sanitation

The main findings of the self-assessment were taken into account in the development of the national 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the national targets under the Protocol to improve access to water and sanitation, which were officially approved in August 2018. Measures to address geographical disparities in access to water and sanitation by schoolchildren, as well as rural-urban disparities were included in the targets. A focused analysis of the situation of drinking water, sanitation and hygiene in schools is planned in three regions of the country. Since March 2017, the operating water company Azersu OJSC has begun work to provide the population of 170 settlements in 28 regions with drinking water by constructing and restoring water lines and by drilling artesian and sub-artesian wells. In addition, the reconstruction of several pipelines in five regions are expected to provide access to a total of 193 villages. Public awareness campaigns to improve knowledge of the human rights to water and sanitation, and responsibilities for access to water and sanitation were launched in 2017. In 2017, more than one million schoolchildren were involved in educational work on WASH. A decree was adopted, based on international standards, which requires cooperation between the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources and the Ministry of Justice to improve water and sanitation infrastructures in penitentiaries.

Section IV: Financing equitable access to water and sanitation

Past actions to ensure equitable access to water and sanitation have been funded by the State Oil Fund and the State budget. State budgetary resources for water and sanitation increased markedly over the previous decade from €0.25 million in 2006 to €13.1 million in 2015. In 2018, 22 million manat (~€11.7 million) were allocated from the State budget to Azersu OJSC for the completion of a water supply and sewerage system in Agdash city.

Planned water investment projects provide an opportunity to finance equitable access to water and sanitation. Equitable access issues related to geographical disparities and vulnerable and marginalized groups can be integrated as key priorities in those projects.

