

## Entrepreneurship Development Foundation

### **Project: Improving the adequacy of government and civil society policies to the needs of persons over 65**

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF AZERBAIJAN

Based on the analysis of legislation and government decisions during the pandemic, as well as conducted among 1005 citizens of the country over the age of 65, the following recommendations were prepared for government bodies:

1. It is necessary to improve the awareness of older citizens about government decisions on the provision of social services to them during a pandemic and about where and how to seek help. Using only traditional media (TV channels, radio, Internet resources) is not enough. It is necessary to involve municipalities and non-governmental organizations in the informing process. Also, the use of telephone messages will be effective. Improving the awareness of stakeholders in Azerbaijan about new laws, presidential decrees, government decisions is an urgent task not only for emergencies such as a pandemic, but for any other cases. For example, it is not uncommon for businessmen in Azerbaijan to learn about new government decisions when they violate them. And this is observed in other areas as well. Therefore, the development and implementation of mechanisms guaranteeing informing all interested parties about the adopted laws and decisions is relevant in the country;
2. The provision of assistance and services to senior citizens should be the responsibility of not only the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population, but also other state bodies (for example, the Ministry of Emergency Situations) and local authorities. In times of pandemic and severe quarantine, it is necessary to use the potential of local executive authorities, which know better elderly single people in need of help than central authorities;
3. It is necessary to conduct an examination of the legislation with a view to its further improvement on the basis of the principles of the UN and recommendations of international organizations. This will ensure the adequacy of state policy to international standards. Expertise of legislation can be carried out in a short time. Because, the number of regulations (including government plans

and programs) is limited. Accelerating legislative improvement processes means improving the living conditions of older people in the remaining days of residence and increasing their life expectancy;

4. Non-governmental organizations and employees of municipalities during periods of severe quarantine should be able to work with the population and, in particular, with the elderly. It is nonsense that, during periods of severe quarantine, they are not allowed to leave the house. After all, their mission is, first of all, to make the life of citizens better;
5. All elderly people must be registered with the state medical records. A survey conducted among 1005 citizens over 65 years old showed that about half of the respondents are not registered with the state. This is a very alarming poll result. After all, older people need medical care more than others, but at the same time they do not have sufficient financial resources to use the services of paid medical institutions. The Ministry of Health, together with the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population and also with the participation of municipalities, needs to monitor the situation with state medical registration of elderly citizens everywhere. This is a guarantee of free medical services;
6. In times of pandemic and strict quarantine regime, volunteers and volunteer organizations are of particular importance. However, as shown by a survey of 1,005 citizens over the age of 65, the role of volunteers in providing services to older people during the pandemic was very weak. Apparently, the reason is that the overwhelming majority of volunteer organizations were created at the initiative of government agencies. This is evident from the names of these organizations. Independent initiatives can hardly be expected from such organizations. It is necessary to create a system to stimulate the development of volunteer organizations independent of government bodies. The known obstacles to the establishment and operation of such organizations are the problems of registration of non-governmental organizations and access to independent sources of funding. The pandemic has made it very clear that an unsatisfactory legal climate for NGOs' activities limits the effect of volunteering in such emergencies. It is necessary, without delay, to amend the laws on NGOs and on grants and in the corresponding decisions of the Cabinet of Ministers;
7. It is necessary to develop a mechanism for relieving stress among senior citizens during periods of a strict quarantine regime. As shown by a survey among 1005 citizens over the age of 65, more than half of them noted that they suffered stress during the pandemic. This is especially dangerous for the elderly. Therefore, the relevant government agencies (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Culture, etc.), as well as state television and radio, should consider possible programs to relieve stress in older people.