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# Best Practices Database

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## People Friendly city, Baku

Azerbaijan

Good Practice

New for 2002

### Categories:

#### Social Services:

- education
- health and welfare
- public safety
- recreation

#### Environmental Management:

- ecological sustainability
- environmental health
- monitoring and control
- pollution reduction
- resource management
- urban greening

#### Urban Governance:

- human resources and leadership development
- legislation
- partnership development
- public administration and management
- resource mobilization

**Level of Activity:** City/Town

**Ecosystem:** Coastal

### Summary

The purpose of the initiative is:

- 1) To change the situation in Baku city by making it more comfortable, lovely and a friendly place for people from different nationalities, ethnic groups and faith to live in. Also to create a friendly environment for the many refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) who have flee lands in Azerbaijan occupied by the neighboring country of Armenia.
- 2) To improve the living standards of people, through solving of their housing, employment, education, healthcare and social protection problems.
- 3) To create better, clean and healthy environment for city inhabitants of different gender and age.
- 4) To build recreation zones for psychological rehabilitation of people suffering from effects of war, violence, natural disasters etc.

The main achievements of the initiative are: Baku city became more clean, comfortable, beautiful site due to the newly built and restored ancient buildings, monuments of the ancient culture, architecture, sculptures and mosques. The broken roads in the city and its surroundings are maintained and also sport and recreation zones have been built. The inhabitants themselves say, "Baku city became the most beautiful city for people that dreamt of living life in peace and dignity"

### Narrative

#### SITUATION BEFORE THE INITIATIVE BEGAN

Azerbaijan is one of the most significant countries of the historical "Silk Route" and its capital is the city of Baku, which is one of the most ancient cities. Baku City has a long history of 5.5 thousand years. Great changes were experienced in the city as a result of a devoted and an open mind Mayer of Baku city.

Currently Azerbaijan is subjected to long-term Armenian aggression in which 20% of its territories have been occupied. Alongside with great destructions and damages accounting to 22 billion USD, one million people became refugees as the result of the ethnic clashes in the neighboring Armenia. This also led to increase in the number of Internally Displaced Persons, who fled their native lands so as to save their lives, their children, and the elderly due to occupation of their land by Armenian aggressors.

The situation was also intensified by the rapid urbanization of the city due to the flow of people, mainly from the occupied rural districts. The population of the city increased during the years of Armenian aggression (in 1998) from 2 million to 3.5 million citizens. This created great housing and environmental problems.

Refugees and IDPs were given a place to live in official buildings, schools, kindergartens, recreation zones, under-built houses, special refugee camps, dug outs, wagons on railways etc. There has been great damage to the environment, through improper disposal of wastes, pollution, lack of drinking water, destruction and disorder violations of the Human Habitat system of the infrastructure and city roads, etc. The damage has been so huge that no solution for the problem seemed to exist.

Within a year of his governance as a city mayor, Abutalibov H. brought about unprecedented changes in the City of Baku. These changes had obvious and tangible impact on improving quality of life of the people. As a result came public oriented policy based on raising awareness of decision-makers at all levels and mobilization of the public potential to solution of common social, economic and environmental problems. Currently, Baku city is people friendly city with good, healthy and friendly environment for everybody living here.

#### ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIORITIES

Survey was carried out so as to identify the urgent needs of population in the different city districts, the priorities were;

- 1) Repair and reconstruction of city buildings established through the national development plans. Surveys were carried in the areas damaged by natural disasters for example earthquakes
- 2) Restoration of city recreation zones through study of their state
- 3) Enhancement of drinking water supply in the city through decorative fountains as a result of the study of the needs of inhabitants
- 4) Improvement of living environment for refugees and IDPs through surveys and questionnaires and identification of the priorities and urgent needs of this category of the city's population
- 5) Making the city and its surroundings green that suffered from deforestation and land slides and also making recreational zones including areas for refugees and IDPs

#### FORMULATION OF OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

The main strategy was:

- a) To change the life style by improving the living standards of the people
- b) To fight poverty through the mobilization of the local natural, financial and human resources for rebuilding of the houses, streets and recreation places, which are damaged by wear and tear, earthquakes, landslides and other disasters,
- c) To encourage and mobilize the members of the community to participate in the transformation of the ancient city to a liveable modern city

Main objectives:

1. To create a healthy and friendly environment for people living in the city.
2. To assist in solving the housing problems, which included use of private houses, state buildings, communal hostels etc., where refugees and IDPs live
3. To maintain the city roads and to improve the local transportation system.
4. To create job opportunities for the poor, unemployed, refugees and IDPs
5. To improve the social protection of the high-risk groups of the city inhabitants: poor, disabled, lonely, elderly, orphans, street children etc.
6. To create good environment for healthy lifestyle, which includes fighting tobacco, alcohol, drug abuse
7. To restore destroyed city objects, such as Funikolor leading to the Memorial Park of War Martyrs.

#### MOBILIZATION OF RESOURCES

Taking into account the low budget of the country, as a result of war and transition, 11 municipalities of the Baku city have been mobilized to analyze and identify the local resources. Additional financial resources have been taken from the private sector, this has accelerated the reconstruction of the houses, roads and the city in general. Resources have also been obtained as a result of awareness by the public and participation of the people in the initiative.

#### PROCESS

The process involved the unprecedented phenomenon of transformation of a big city with population of about 30 million, with a large number of them being refugees and IDPs from the dirty and polluted places to a sustainable urban setting with the new buildings, fountains, maintained roads, recreation parks, hospitals etc.

Active reconstruction and renovation activities were organized throughout the year 2001, including

- 1) Newly built and reconstructed houses
- 2) Newly built and restored roads
- 3) Newly built and restored recreation zones
- 4) New labour places
- 5) Repair of orphanages and boarding houses for elderly
- 6) Greening of the city and its surroundings

Baku is now a good place to live in for the city inhabitants and also for the visitors. The initiative restored tourism, which was very popular before the war but was damaged in the last decade. It means city governance will have additional financial sources for more improvement and restoration of the city. In one year there was great input into the progress of the city's development. The city mayor was a dedicated person with a lot of willingness, capacity and good ideas for innovation and changes.

## RESULTS ACHIEVED

The following sustainable social, cultural, economic and environment changes have been achieved:

- 1) A lot of new buildings have been constructed to solve the problem of housing;
- 2) New markets have been built, where poor people could sell their agricultural produce and handicrafts;
- 3) New labour places for poor people, refugees and IDPs have been created to reduce unemployment and poverty;
- 4) New recreation zones, parks, fountains have been developed, which are acceptable by all city inhabitants;
- 5) The city buildings destroyed after the earthquake of November 2000 were repaired including communal buildings, hostels, boarding-houses for elderly with the restoration and improvement of living standards;
- 6) The orphanage building for children affected by the war and other causes has been rebuilt and repaired;
- 7) Sport complexes with modern equipment and a National Park have been created at the sea-side boulevard;
- 8) A huge campaign has been launched for greening and growing of thousands of trees, bushes, green plantations to prevent landslides in the hills surrounding the city;
- 9) Hundreds of drinking water fountains have been constructed for people who use the recreation parks, squares and in the city streets;
- 10) Hundreds of the kilometers of destroyed roads have been repaired and covered with asphalt, that eases city transport;
- 11) Numerous cultural events have been organized, such as: The Flowers Day, National Festival, International holidays, organized with the participation of thousands of people from the urban and rural centers, poor and rich, people of different nationalities and ethnic groups living in Azerbaijan.

Key to the success is effective partnership with the public, private and civil sectors of the city population.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability of the initiative can be seen through:

- a) Improvement in the housing and labour places which will prevent people from migrating;
- b) Greening of the city that rehabilitates the environment and restores oxygen balance,
- c) Recreation of parks and fountains etc. that provide habitable environment for people.

## LESSONS LEARNT

The governance of Baku city mayor has proved that positive changes are possible even after the consequences war that results in mass destruction and poor financial situations if people of all generations are motivated, interested and involved in reconstruction, rehabilitation and restoration of the city environment.

## TRANSFERABILITY

Video films are developed and distributed in cities of other countries.

A lot of TV and Radio programmes have been used for dissemination of the best practice of Baku city.

## Key Dates

October 1, 2001-Celebration of the UN Habitat Day together with UNDPI, also Habitat - II Conference (Istanbul, 1996) and Habitat +5 (New York, 2001) participants, Discussion of Urban Development Perspectives

March 21, 2001- National Holiday - Novruz Bayrami Public Festival and heritage day - very appreciable for friendly relations, peace, tolerance, collaboration

May 9, 2001- Flowers and Handicrafts Exhibitions day in the city boulevard, stimulated cleaning of the city and friendly public events

October 14, December 10, 2001- Public Greening Days on the eve of the country Independence Day in October and

November. Hundreds of trees have been planted by people living in the city and its surrounding

December 1-2, 2001- Public Sanitation and City Cleaning Day on the eve of the Solidarity Day and the First Baku Congress of Azerbaijanis, settled worldwide on a huge territory, especially cleaning of the places where do refugees and IDPs live, by people, supported by the Executive Power of the city. All these activities have been initiated and managed by the city Mayor Abutalibov H.

Throughout the year of 2001 -Reconstruction of the sea-side National Park and other city recreation zones, monuments to the famous historic and art representatives.

## References

"Baku" newspaper, 25-31 January, 2001, devoted the one - year governance of the Baku city Mayor Abutalibov H. (English translation is available on request)

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**Type of Organization:** Local Authority

## Nominating Organization

Same as above

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