

## Gender vector of social policy in Uzbekistan, by Professor Lola Saidova



Modern Uzbekistan has embarked on a course to build a social state. This means that the state aims to effectively build a system to protect and ensure the rights and interests and needs of the population, to fully support the well-being of citizens, different strata, categories of people, women and men, young and old people.

The implementation of fair social policy is aimed at developing human capital and ensuring a decent life for the population.

The social policy of Uzbekistan is aimed at mitigating social inequalities in society caused by the conditions of the development of market relations, creating decent living conditions through the redistribution of benefits, providing employment and supporting the socially unprotected segments of the population.

The state pays great attention to increasing the role of women in the socio-economic and political life of the country, women make up exactly half (50%) of the 35 million population of the country. Protection of the rights and the legitimate interests of women, increasing their economic, social and political activity, protection of their health, training for their professions, ensuring employment of women, their wide involvement in entrepreneurship, social support for women in need and ensuring gender equality have been the main directions of the policy of the country's leadership in recent years.

This policy was reflected in the 2022 National Programme to enhance women's activity in all the spheres of economic, political and social life for 2022-2026 and the Presidential Decree on Measures to further accelerate work on systemic support for families and women.

The goal of the national program is to further strengthen the system of social protection of women, strengthening their health, creating the necessary conditions for the education and upbringing of girls, forming and improving the legal framework for the protection of women's rights and interests, increasing the socio-economic and political activity of women and strengthening their role in society.

In the newly updated Constitution of Uzbekistan, Article 58 reflects the provision on the equality of women

and men, that the state will ensure this equality in all spheres of public and state life. All in all, more than 40 normative acts reflect the issues of social policy in relation to women in Uzbekistan.

The Gender Strategy of Uzbekistan until 2030 is being implemented.

At the same time, since 2022 a Secretariat for Family and Women's Issues has been functioning under the government, a commission and committee on achieving gender equality in the Senate, the Committee on Family and women's issues under the Ministry of Poverty Reduction and Employment has resumed its work.

Gender expertise and gender audit requirements for all organisations and institutions have now been introduced, the position of an authorised person responsible for the full implementation of gender policies in all institutions and all organisations of the country has been introduced.

According to the Decree of the President №300, in 2022 a system of integrated approach of social services in mahallas to families in need of social support was established.

More than 4,500 specialists in the social spheres of various ministries and departments, as well as women's activists in the mahallas, have been made responsible for the implementation of social programs under the developed 'Single Register of Social Protection' of the population of the country.

Women are provided with all possible targeted support to help them find employment and improve their working conditions.

In 2022, 878 thousand women were employed throughout the country, and more than 230 thousand women have been employed so far this year. The work on wide involvement of women, especially young girls in rural areas, in family and private entrepreneurship, craftsmanship is being carried out.

At the initiative of the President, the Family and Women's Support Fund was established in 2018 together with the People's Bank. More than 100.0 billion sums of soft loans for women wishing to start entrepreneurial activities were allocated.

Over the past year and a half, 49,708 women have received 206 billion sums in subsidies for small businesses and, under other entrepreneurship programmes, 39,763 women have received 738 billion sums in loans from the National Bank and other banks in Uzbekistan.

Since 2021, the institution of 'women's notebooks' as a special system of gradual and systematic support for women in special need of social support has been introduced. Currently more than 2.5 million women in the country are now included in the 'women's notebooks'. Of these, more than 2 million women have already received social assistance.

This system works by categories of women's vulnerability, the ultimate goal of which is a step-by-step improvement of women's living standards.

As of 2018, initial instalments of mortgage subsidies for housing have been allocated to improve women's housing conditions. In the last year, 8,711 thousand apartments have been repaired from women in special need of social protection, 12.9 thousand women have improved their housing conditions.

In 2022, for example, primary payments or rent were paid to 3,343 women who lost a breadwinner or have disabled parents or children in the family. Fourteen thousand women who lost the breadwinner were exempted from parental payment for the maintenance of a child in pre-school institutions.

A special area of social protection for women is educational benefits for admission to higher education institutions: for example, in 2022, 65,225 female students were granted interest-free educational loans worth 726.8 billion sums for a period of 7 year.

More than 10 thousand girls were reimbursed contractual payments for 68.3 billion sums for their master's degree.

In Uzbekistan the system of social rehabilitation and adaptation of women who are victims of domestic violence is also being improved: 28 rehabilitation centres with shelters for female victims are operating throughout the country.

They are provided with psychological, legal and social assistance. Last year, 1,168 women and children underwent rehabilitation programs. The institute of protection warrants – protection from the rapist for the period up to one year – began to work effectively. In 2022, 49,774 protection orders were issued to women victims of violence.

Summarising the above, we can conclude that Uzbekistan has created a unique system of social protection for women, actively implementing a set of measures aimed at developing women’s potential, achieving decent living conditions, providing employment with effective measures to improve the socially unprotected population, leading to the growth of income of the general population and human capital.

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**Source**