

# STRUCTURAL AND FUNCTIONAL APPROACHES TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOCIAL SECTOR: REFORM AND PROSPECTS

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**ABSTRACT:** This article is devoted to the development of the social sphere, which is an important sector of society, and comments on the reforms implemented in Uzbekistan in this area and their results. The article analyzes the results of measures to effectively address the most important tasks of public social policy in the current complex situation and the scale of problems in the field on the basis of statistical data. As a result of the reforms, changes in the living standards of the population, income and unemployment issues, measures to eliminate them, poverty reduction and the work done in the social protection system were also highlighted. At the same time, issues related to education and upbringing, the development of science are presented. The institutional framework for quarantine measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus infection during the COVID-19 pandemic and reforms to support the population are outlined. In addition, strengthening the family, mechanisms for resolving family conflicts, protection of the rights of women and children, the results of health care reforms, as well as cases of requests for medical care and medication by the elderly and people with disabilities, education and upbringing and consistent reforms in the development of science have been considered on the basis of a structural approach.

**KEYWORDS:** social sphere, public policy, Action strategy, employment, reform, income, poverty reduction, social protection.

## INTRODUCTION

It is known that there are four spheres of society: economic, political, social and cultural. Among them, the social sphere is characterized by its specificity in terms of coverage as a set of sectors that serve the basic social needs of the population. The field is characterized by a wide range of aspects such as education of children and adults, medical care, cultural and sports activities, socialization of young people and so on. For this reason, the study of the social sphere is always practical as a topical issue. This area has been treated differently at different times. However, this field is characterized by a dynamic nature at all times. In Uzbekistan, this area has been the main focus of public policy since the early years of independence. However, in recent years, Uzbekistan's approach to this area has acquired a new meaning, and radical reforms are being implemented to further develop it. In particular, it should be noted that the adoption of the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated February 7, 2017 PD-4947 "On the

Strategy for further development of the Republic of Uzbekistan” serves as an institutional basis for improving mechanisms for change in this area. The decree identifies the development of the social sphere as the fourth priority, according to which “consistent increase in employment and real incomes”, “improvement of social protection and health care, increasing the socio-political activity of women”, “Affordable housing”, “Implementation of targeted programs for the construction of roads”, “Development and modernization of road transport, engineering and communications” and “Social infrastructure to improve the living conditions of the population”, “Development of education and science”, “Improvement of state youth policy”[1]. A clear action plan for development is being developed and implemented. In the context of this article, we would like to reflect on the reforms that have taken place in the social sphere of Uzbekistan over the past short period and their results. Because as a result of these changes, people's worldviews have changed and positive changes are taking place in the social consciousness. For this reason, we would like to comment on some of the aspects that are recognized as important in our article.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The state's social policy in Uzbekistan covers a wide range of issues, including income regulation, employment and the formation of new labor relations, social protection and support of certain categories and groups of the population, health, physical culture and sports, education and others. Therefore, in the preparation of this article, the methodological basis of the reforms implemented in the development of the social sphere in the Republic of Uzbekistan in recent years, in particular, laws and decrees of the President, decisions of the Cabinet of Ministers and other legal acts. Also, the content analysis as a ideological basis of the conceptual ideas of the President Sh.Mirziyoev on the development of the industry. In particular, the Law “On Employment” No. LRU-642, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated June 22, 2020 “On approval of the National Strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Human Rights” DP-6012, August 11, 2020 “On Poor and Unemployed Citizens” Resolution No. DP-4804 of October 30, 2020 “On additional measures aimed at attracting entrepreneurs, increasing their labor activity and vocational training, as well as employment”, “Measures for the widespread introduction of a healthy lifestyle and further development of mass sports” Decree DP-6099 and other similar normative and legal acts were used as an institutional framework to clarify the nature of the issues in the process of preparing the article, and a structural-functional approach was taken.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In the social sphere, one of the tasks set out in the Strategy of Action has created the most important institutional framework for “Consistent increase in employment and real incomes”. Creating favorable conditions for the effective work of the population, increasing their material interests is the essence of the ongoing socio-economic reforms in Uzbekistan. After all, the employment of able-bodied people is an important factor in improving the welfare of citizens, raising living standards. In this regard, the adoption of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Employment” No. LRU-642 on October 20, 2020, consisting of Article 123, should be recognized as an important historical event. Article 6 of this law defines the main directions of state policy in the field of employment, indicating the following:

“Promotion of job creation and promotion of employment, including through the formation of the state order for the creation of jobs and the state order for vocational training, retraining and advanced training of job seekers and the unemployed;

financial support and social protection of the unemployed, taking measures to reduce unemployment, assistance in employment of socially vulnerable groups;

implementation of measures to ensure the employment of young people, especially young people in rural areas, graduates of general secondary and secondary special education institutions, vocational schools, vocational colleges, technical schools, higher education institutions;

introduction of modern professional standards in the field of employment, standardization of labor and improvement of remuneration mechanisms;

ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the field of employment” [2].

It is noteworthy that this law is based on 3 existing laws, 12 decrees and resolutions of President Sh.Mirziyoev and more than 40 normative documents adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers on employment and labor market regulation, external labor migration. It is also significant in that it incorporates recent reforms and new financial mechanisms.

It should be noted that the Law on Employment, consisting of Article 35, which was in force before the law, was adopted in 1998 and did not fully reflect the current state of the labor market, did not address existing problems and issues in the field of labor and employment. Also, over the past 22 years, there have been a number of significant changes in the labor market, in particular, the number of employed increased by 1.5 times (from 8.8 million to 13.5 million), the number of employers increased by 4.5 times (203, From 2 thousand to 928.9 thousand) [3].

In January-June, the unemployment rate in Uzbekistan was 13.2%, the number of people in need of employment was 1.94 million, and the unemployment rate among 16-30 year olds was 20.1%, and among women it was 17.4%. The unemployment rate in January-September was 11.1 percent, down 2.1 percent from the first half of the year. According to the study, the number of labor resources in the country amounted to 19.1 million people, and the number of people leaving the country for work was 1.9 million. The total number of people in need of work in Uzbekistan has exceeded 1.6 million.

Quarantine measures aimed at preventing the spread of coronavirus infection during the COVID-19 pandemic have had a significant impact on the labor market. In January-September 2020, the economically inactive population of Uzbekistan amounted to 4 million 273.6 thousand people, a decrease of 3% or 130.3 thousand people compared to the first half of the year [6]. At the same time, Uzbekistan provides employment through the introduction of effective mechanisms of the labor market, increasing the activity of the population, training poor and unemployed citizens in modern professions and entrepreneurial skills, and on this basis to involve them in labor and entrepreneurial activities. According to it, the adoption of the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated August 11, 2020 No RP-4804 “On additional measures aimed at attracting poor and unemployed citizens to entrepreneurship, increasing their labor activity and vocational training and employment” serves to take the ongoing reforms to a new level and ensure their effectiveness. According to the resolution, until January 1, 2021 in the Republic of Karakalpakstan and regions to establish mono-centers “Welcome to work”, to establish local vocational training centers under the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations, short-term vocational training in the districts of Tashkent with the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education courses, and the establishment of vocational training facilities for the

community in collaboration with the Ministry of Neighborhood and Family Support [7], which are being implemented consistently. In particular, the resolution provides for the implementation of a number of tasks in 2020 to ensure the employment of socially vulnerable groups, especially people with disabilities. In particular: “Business entities creating jobs for people with disabilities at the expense of the State Fund for Employment Promotion through commercial banks for up to 25 times the base rate for each job created, but not more than 500 times the base rate for each business entity for 3 years, the introduction of the procedure for allocating microcredits at the basic rate of the Central Bank with a grace period of one year, provided that persons with disabilities in the created workplace work for at least one year; to provide subsidies of up to 40 times the basic calculation amount for each adapted workplace at the expense of the State Fund for Employment Promotion for the adaptation of jobs and conditions of business entities to persons with disabilities.

According to Professor K. Abdurakhmanov, “The demographic situation in Uzbekistan is healthy, the population and the economy are growing in proportion. If the birth rate remains at the current level until 2030, 710-720 thousand young men and women will enter the labor market every year. In turn, 230-240 thousand people will reach retirement age [8]. In this sense, it is important to take measures to attract young people now.

Comprehensive reforms are also being carried out to improve the social protection system. For example, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. DP-6012 of 22 June 2020 “On Approval of the National Human Rights Strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan” states that the rights and the work to protect their interests, as well as to strengthen the institution of the family, has been radically reconsidered. The concept of strengthening the institution of the family was adopted, which includes mechanisms for resolving family conflicts, issues of protection of the rights of women and children” [9].

As of 2020, there are 8,200,000 families in the country, and in 2020 the number of families on the verge of divorce was 13,865, of which 60% - 7,943 were reconciled. One in three family divorces falls during the first ten years or more of marriage. Causes of family divorces include relationships (50-60% of cases), financial difficulties, housing problems, improper interference of parents and other relatives in family relationships, incompatibility of husband and wife, one of which is harmful habits (alcoholism, drug addiction). etc.) has been found to be a lipstick [10]. The analysis of statistical data shows that in Uzbekistan there are currently more than 125,000 families who have lost their breadwinners [11]. In recent years, the problems and shortcomings in the social policy of our country have been recognized, and attempts have been made to introduce an effective mechanism to address them. Also, according to the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 824 of September 30, 2019: “increase the professional knowledge, skills and abilities of parents to strengthen and improve the spiritual and moral environment in families; increase the professional knowledge, skills and abilities of parents engaged in strengthening and improving the spiritual and moral environment in families; A system of measures to strengthen the family and improve the system of prevention of social orphan hood”[12] is also being developed and implemented.

As a result of measures aimed at reducing poverty in Uzbekistan over the past three years, real gross per capita income increased by 43.9%, the average nominal monthly wage by 79.7% or from 1293.8 thousand sums in 2016 to 2324.5 thousand sums in 2019. According to a survey of households conducted by the World Bank's project "Listening to the citizens of Uzbekistan", the

average monthly income of a poor household in January-March 2020 amounted to about 1.5 million sums, which in comparable prices increased by 12% compared to the same period last year. increased [13]. It should be noted that the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh.Mirziyoev put the problem of poverty eradication as a strategic task in his Address to the Oliy Majlis (Parliament) on January 24, 2020, saying: “This means the implementation of a comprehensive economic and social policy to create” [14]. According to the laws of economics, “poverty leads to poverty”. This process happens for several reasons.

First, low-income countries cannot afford to spend enough money on quality education and health care, and the poor cannot afford to pay for quality paid education and health care.

Second, as the incomes of the poor decline, the capacity of the consumer market decreases proportionately, resulting in a decline in demand for industrial goods, agricultural products, and especially services. This, in turn, hinders economic development, reduces budget revenues, and leads to the appearance of a closed cyclical process, reducing access to social support for the poor.

Third, in most cases, the worldview of the poor is different from that of the high-income. For the reasons mentioned above, it is less likely that people with creative and entrepreneurial abilities will emerge from among them. Also, crime rates are generally higher among poor family members.

In other words, the factors that contribute to poverty hinder the development of human potential in the country, the development of productive forces and the economic activity of the population.

In order to anticipate the above-mentioned negative situations, starting from 2020, “for the first time, targeted work with the poor has been started. A door-to-door survey identified 583,000 “poor families” in need of financial assistance. The development and implementation of targeted measures to lift them out of poverty and ensure their employment has begun. In particular, within the framework of the national movement “Generosity and Support” they were provided with financial assistance in the amount of more than 307 billion sums” [15].

In Uzbekistan, “as a result of health care reforms, the population's access to quality health care has increased. Most importantly, the average life expectancy in the country increased from 67.2 years in 1990 to 74.6 years in 2020, maternal mortality decreased by one and a half times and child mortality by four times” [16]. In addition, the Presidential Decree “On measures to promote a healthy lifestyle and further development of mass sports” issued on October 30, 2020: Living standards are low, COVID-19 coronavirus infection primarily affects the health of our citizens suffering from cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and obesity, as a result of which today's pandemic has led to the untimely death of many of our citizens. In order to implement a healthy lifestyle and further develop mass sports, a number of tasks have been identified [17].

In 2020, as a result of a series of restrictions related to the pandemic, the situation in the field of living standards has become more complicated. Therefore, the work on identifying social problems is becoming more important and is being actively pursued. As of 2020, the number of appeals on social protection has doubled compared to the same period last year. Also, the number of applications for financial assistance and social benefits accounted for 48% of the total number of applicants for social protection, which is 1.9 times more than last year. At the same time, it should be noted that the number of citizens' requests for the abolition of pensions or benefits decreased by 4%. The number of appeals related to the low level of pensions decreased

by 52 percent. The number of applications for financial assistance for medical needs decreased by 19 percent, and for disability benefits by 14 percent.

In the field of free medical services, the number of applications decreased by 37%, applications to rehabilitation centers by 29%, applications for the provision of prosthetic and orthopedic products and rehabilitation equipment to the disabled by 64%. At the same time, the number of requests for medical care and medication by the elderly and people with disabilities increased sharply (20 percent). Given that they were in home isolation during quarantine restrictions, this situation makes sense.

New categories of pandemic-related inquiries have also begun to be used. During the quarantine period, requests for financial assistance, food and protection accounted for 16% of the total number of requests, and requests for prices and shortages of food and basic necessities accounted for 8%. The fact that the majority of these appeals were resolved positively indicates that the issues of social assistance were more successful [18].

At the same time, one of the important directions of the social sphere is that “large-scale radical changes are taking place in the field of education and upbringing. By 2025, the concept of developing the preschool education system, which provides for the coverage of 74.5% of children aged 3-7 with preschool education, is being implemented. The 11-year school education system has been restored. Today, the number of state, non-state and foreign universities is growing”. [19]

Consistent reforms are being carried out in our country in the development of science, one of the most important areas of the social sphere. In particular, the adoption of the Presidential Decree PD-6097 “On approval of the Concept of Science Development until 2030” on October 29, 2020 serves as an important institutional basis for the development of this sector. According to him: “By 2025, the share of total funding for science in GDP will increase by 6 times, and by 2030 - by 10 times;

Increase the share of private sector funding for research and development in the total funding of science by 2025 from the current 8% to 20%, and by 2030 to 30%;

In order to finance innovative developments and startup projects, it is planned to establish 2 venture funds in 2021 and 10 in 2025 in cooperation with leading foreign investment companies”. Also, to increase the average age of researchers in scientific organizations to 45 by 2025 and 39 by 2030;

Consistent reforms are being carried out to increase the share of highly qualified researchers (PhD, DSc) in the total number of researchers under the age of 39 by 2025, and to triple it by 2030.

## **CONCLUSION**

Further optimization of social protection measures, which are currently in full swing, should become our priority. In this regard:

first, to radically improve the existing system of programs and funds aimed at strong social protection of the population;

secondly, the creation of a new network of social protection systems, including the creation of a system of protection program "Protect and care" for students in need of social protection in school education;

third, the digitization of school education, taking into account the existing material and technical capabilities in the regions;

fourth, the establishment of a separate “Prevent disaster” corps for disease prevention in the health system;

fifth, the organization of annual social volunteer programs in the country;

sixth, the establishment of a separate department of vocational training centers on the basis of the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations for the purpose of employment;

Seventh, it is expedient to ensure the close connection of insurance companies providing health insurance services to the population with the territorial divisions of the Ministry of Health and to establish a single electronic portal system between them.

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