

NATIONAL VALUES AND FAMILY AS THE BASIS FOR ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY

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Abstract:

This article analyzes gender issues in social life in the Republic of Uzbekistan, the need to develop gender equality, the political and social status of gender equality relations, the nature of the laws adopted on this issue, the strategy and importance of achieving gender equality.

Keywords: gender, gender equality, political-social relations, gender equality strategy.

Introduction

Women make up approximately 53 percent of the world's population, which is why gender-related issues have become one of the most pressing topics of our time. In Uzbekistan, nearly half of the population consists of women, who are actively and effectively engaged across all spheres of social, spiritual, political, and economic life. The Constitution—the fundamental law of the country—affirms the equal rights of women in every area of society. Government resolutions and decrees consistently prioritize the interests of women, families, and children. These efforts are increasingly reflected in the growing participation of women in public life. There are several key aspects contributing to the enhanced socio-political engagement of women. In particular, improving their legal awareness and culture, expanding their role in economic activities, and advancing the system of social protection have become among the state's top priorities.

In Uzbekistan, growing attention to gender issues and gender equality in social life is clearly reflected in numerous ongoing initiatives. A notable example is the adoption of the Law No. O'RQ-562, dated September 2, 2019, titled "On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men." This legislation lays the foundation for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for both women and men, enhancing legal and social support for women, improving the systems protecting motherhood, fatherhood, and childhood, and promoting women's equal participation in social and socio-political activities.

Within the framework of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 5—Achieving Gender Equality—Uzbekistan has also developed nine specific targets aimed at advancing gender equality and expanding the rights and opportunities of all women. These goals emphasize the need to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls by 2030, and to ensure full and effective participation as well as equal leadership opportunities for women at all levels of political, economic, and public decision-making.

It is important to highlight that the country has taken practical and effective measures to approach international standards in gender relations, with a strong emphasis on creating equal opportunities for women to actively engage across all sectors of society. One clear example is the increasing implementation of gender quotas, particularly in higher education, where, for instance, postgraduate education fees for female students admitted to master's programs are fully covered by the state.

Furthermore, the growing representation of women at the local level and in executive authorities, as well as their active involvement in parliamentary processes, underscores the state's commitment to strengthening gender equality and women's empowerment.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has undertaken notable reforms aimed at embedding the principles of gender equality within society. President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, in his speech delivered in the Uzbek language at the 75th anniversary session of the United Nations General Assembly on September 23, 2020, highlighted key priorities in the country's political, social, and economic modernization agenda, giving particular attention to gender issues. He stated: "For us, gender equality policy has become a top priority. The role of women in public administration is steadily increasing. The number of female deputies in our new parliament has doubled," thus emphasizing the country's commitment to advancing women's rights and representation.

This commitment was reiterated during the President's address at the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, where he once again underscored the importance of promoting gender equality and supporting women as a key strategic direction for the "New Uzbekistan." In particular, he emphasized that ensuring the active participation of women in both public and state governance is one of today's most pressing issues. The President also identified the core national objectives as the protection of women's rights, the strengthening of families, and the establishment of a peaceful and secure life for women—all of which are considered fundamental to the country's political vision.

Significant progress has been made in Uzbekistan toward achieving gender equality through a series of systemic reforms. Notably, in the past year, women accounted for 49 percent of university admissions, and for the first time, their representation in public administration reached 35 percent. Furthermore, a specific law was enacted to protect women and minors from violence, reflecting the government's growing commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of vulnerable groups.

Comprehensive measures have also been implemented to enhance the socio-political and economic participation of women. These include the creation of conditions that enable women to realize their full potential across various sectors, ensuring the protection of their legal rights and interests, and providing robust support for motherhood and childhood. Over the past six

years, more than 40 laws and regulatory documents have been adopted to strengthen the institution of the family.

Two landmark legislative acts — the Law "On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men" and the Law "On Protection of Women from Harassment and Violence" — have laid the foundation for legal reforms in gender-related issues. Additionally, two presidential decrees were issued in March 2022: one on improving the system for working with women, families, and community elders (dated March 1), and another aimed at accelerating efforts to support women and families systematically (dated March 7). These directives marked a new phase in the institutional support for women.

To further this progress, the National Program to Increase Women's Participation in All Spheres of Public Life for 2022–2026 and the Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality in Uzbekistan by 2030 were adopted. Moreover, according to amendments in the Electoral Code, political parties are now required to ensure that at least 30 percent of their nominated candidates for parliamentary elections are women.

A new policy has been introduced in Uzbekistan requiring all government agencies and organizations to appoint at least one female deputy among their leadership. As a result, the proportion of women in leadership roles increased from 27 percent in 2017 to 33 percent by 2023. Women now comprise 37 percent of the entrepreneurship sector, 47 percent within political parties, 46 percent in the economy and industry, and 77 percent in healthcare.

In the legislative sphere, women account for 33 percent of deputies in the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis, 24 percent of senators, and 25 percent of deputies in the Jokargi Kenes of the Republic of Karakalpakstan as well as in regional and Tashkent city councils. The representation of women in ministerial and equivalent positions has nearly doubled — from 2.9 percent in 2018 to 5.7 percent today. Notably, women currently serve as governors (hokims) in several districts, including Kattaqo‘rg‘on city and the districts of Bo‘ston, Olot, Boyovut, and Yakkasaroy.

Within the judiciary, 26 of the 181 female judges now hold senior leadership positions. Despite the growing number of opportunities, women's representation in management roles within the civil service remains at 27 percent. To further increase this figure, the Academy of Public Administration has launched a training initiative titled the "School for Women Leaders," aimed at preparing women for executive positions. Under this program, 100 women from the reserve talent pool are trained each year.

In recognition of their exceptional service to the nation and people, 17 women have been awarded Uzbekistan's highest national honor — the title of "Hero of Uzbekistan."

Twelve female scholars who have made significant contributions to the advancement of science and established new academic schools have been awarded the title of academician. Over the past five years alone, 5,971 women across various disciplines have attained academic degrees, including 737 Doctor of Science (DSc) recipients and 5,059 holders of the Doctor of Philosophy

(PhD) degree. In 2024 alone, 212 women earned the DSc, while 1,389 received the PhD degree. Currently, nearly 5,000 women scientists are actively engaged in research across the country. Moreover, more than 14,000 women are working in higher education institutions as educators and scientific researchers. It is noteworthy that 7 women serve as rectors, 45 as vice-rectors, and over 70 as deans, reflecting a commendable rise in female academic leadership. The "Women Scientists" initiative, which promotes applied and innovative scientific projects, has also witnessed remarkable growth: the number of submitted projects increased from just 11 in 2021 to 342 in 2024. These figures clearly demonstrate the expanding participation of women in the field of science and research in Uzbekistan.

In addition to recognizing women active in public and professional life, the state has also honored homemakers who have successfully raised well-rounded children. For this purpose, the honorary badge "Mo'tabar Ayol" ("Respected Woman") was established, and to date, it has been awarded to 1,794 women.

In order to enhance the efficiency of gender equality efforts, recent administrative reforms in Uzbekistan have played a crucial role. Within this context, the Civil Service Development Agency under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan has undertaken several key initiatives. Notably, the proportion of women included in the National Personnel Reserve is steadily increasing. Among active women leaders serving in citizens' assemblies at the mahalla (neighborhood) level, the most qualified are being selected for inclusion in the "Skilled Personnel Reserve." These candidates undergo a structured process of evaluation and training, which includes performance assessments by sector leaders, standardized testing, and interview stages.

Reflecting changes in electoral legislation, a significant development occurred during the October 2024 parliamentary elections. It was mandated that 40% of nominated candidates must be women—a criterion that was fully met during the candidate selection phase. As a result, women now constitute 38% of the newly elected deputies in the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis, marking the highest representation of women in Uzbekistan's legislative history. By comparison, the previous convocation included only 32% female deputies, indicating a 6% increase.

The role of education and moral upbringing—central to the development of any society—begins within the family. The family serves as the foundation for relationships between spouses, between parents and children, and ultimately for shaping individual identity. It is in this microenvironment that societal values are cultivated. Numerous real-world examples already underscore the pivotal role women play in familial upbringing and societal moral development. However, critical challenges remain. Research on the gender-specific aspects of internal and external migration—including their impact on women, men, and their families—remains insufficient. Public awareness efforts regarding legal rights, protections for labor migrants, and

gender equality in migration contexts are underdeveloped. Additionally, gender audits of media content are rarely conducted. Traditional gender stereotypes still dominate portrayals of women and men in both print and digital media, and the substantial contributions of women to societal development are inadequately represented in mass communications.

The persistence of such issues and shortcomings not only limits the full realization of human rights and freedoms but also negatively affects Uzbekistan's image on the international stage and its rankings in global indices. For instance, according to the World Bank's *Women, Business and the Law Index*, Uzbekistan ranks 139th out of 190 countries. In the *Women, Peace, and Security Index* published by the Georgetown Institute (USA), the country stands at 89th out of 167. Notably, Uzbekistan's position is absent from the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report*, which further indicates gaps in data representation and visibility. In this context, the implementation of the National Gender Strategy is essential for eliminating political, economic, social, and other disparities between women and men, while also improving Uzbekistan's international standing. The core goal of the Gender Strategy is to ensure gender equality for women and men regardless of race, ethnicity, language, religion, social background, belief, or personal and societal status.

The key objectives of the Gender Strategy include:

Conclusions

Uzbekistan is steadily advancing toward ensuring gender equality and enhancing the role of women across all spheres of society. Systematic reforms, including the appointment of women to leadership positions in state institutions, their increased representation in political, economic, and scientific domains, and the implementation of programs such as the "School for Women Leaders" and the "Honored Woman" badge, demonstrate the state's commitment to empowering women.

Notably, the growing number of female researchers and educators, as well as the increase in women attaining academic degrees such as PhD and DSc, reflect the effectiveness of national policies supporting women in science and education. However, challenges remain, such as the underrepresentation of women in higher-level decision-making roles, insufficient gender-sensitive media coverage, and the lack of comprehensive mechanisms addressing gender aspects of migration, violence, and economic inequality.

In this context, the implementation of the National Gender Strategy is crucial. It aims to eliminate gender-based disparities in political, economic, and social life, strengthen women's rights and opportunities, and improve Uzbekistan's standing in global gender indices. By fostering women's active participation and leadership, the country is laying the foundation for a more inclusive, sustainable, and equitable society.

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