



**ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY AS AN IMPORTANT DIRECTION OF REFORMS IN  
MODERN UZBEKISTAN**

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**Abstract**

In the article the author touches upon the issues of gender equality in Uzbekistan. That it guarantees women and men equal participation in the management of the affairs of society and the State. The issue of gender equality has been raised to the level of state policy. "Strategy for achieving gender equality in the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030" defines the concept of gender equality as equal rights and opportunities for women and men in all spheres of life and activities of society. At the legal and regulatory level, equal rights of women and men are enshrined.

**Keywords:** Gender, society, public policy, Constitution, gender strategy.

**Introduction**

Gender equality in Uzbekistan has become part of state policy since 1991. The principles of non-discrimination and equality of women and men are enshrined at the regulatory and legal level, primarily in the Constitution.

Article 46 of the Basic Law states: "Women and men have equal rights." <sup>1</sup>

In 2019, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men" was adopted. The law regulates relations "in the field of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men." <sup>2</sup>

It defines that "the basic principles of guaranteeing equal rights and opportunities for women and men are the rule of law; democracy; equality between women and men; non-discrimination on the basis of sex; openness and transparency".<sup>3</sup>

The degree of study of the problem. Among the studied works, the following groups can be distinguished. The first group includes studies by foreign scientists who considered the problem from the point of view of its various aspects. In particular, B. Anderson, M. Foucault studied identity in

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<sup>1</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan. URL: <https://lex.onto/acts/35869> (date Treatment: 09.09.2022)

<sup>2</sup> Law Of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On guarantees of equal rights and opportunities for women and men". URL: <https://lex.onto/acts/4494873> (date Treatment: 09.09.2022)

<sup>3</sup> Over there same



harmony with social problems in the cultural life of people. J. Turner, E. Smith, T. Kuhn associated identity with religious faith.<sup>45</sup>

The second group includes the works of scientists of Uzbekistan. In particular, the sociological aspects of national mentality and self-consciousness were studied by M. Bekmurodov, R. A. Ubaidullaeva, O. Ata-Mirzaev, M. Ganieva, N. Alikoriev, T. Matibayev, social and religious factors were studied by R. T. Ubaidullaeva, A. Umarov, A. Kholbekov, K. Kalanov, B. Farfiyev, N. Latipova, the system of continuity and intergenerational relations - Sh. Sodikova, A. Seitov, S. Kalanova,<sup>6</sup>

According to the Law, "the State shall guarantee women and men equality in the enjoyment of personal, political, economic, social and cultural rights". "The State guarantees women and men equal participation in the management of the affairs of society and the State, the electoral process, ensuring equal rights and opportunities in the field of health protection, education, science, culture, work and social protection, as well as in other spheres of state and public life."<sup>7</sup>

**Methodological basis.** The article is based on the principles of scientificity and historicism, complex, comparative, historical methods, the method of document analysis and others are used.

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<sup>4</sup> Anderson B. Imaginary communities. Reflection on the origins and spread of nationalism. M.: Kanon-press.Ts.; 2001., Foucault M. Archaeology of Knowledge. SPb.: Humanitarian Academy: Universitetskaya kniga, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Turner J. The Structure of Sociological Theory. M.: «Progress», 1985, Smith E. National Identity. M.: «Osnovy». 1994., Kun T. Struktura nauchnykh revolyutsii. M., 2009.

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<sup>7</sup> Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men". URL: <https://lex.onto/acts/4494873> (date of access: 09.09.2022)



In addition, "in order to achieve de facto equality between women and men, increase their participation in all spheres of society, eliminate and prevent direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of sex, the State shall take temporary special measures to ensure the implementation of gender policy".<sup>8</sup>

The main directions of the country's policy in the field of gender equality are as follows:

- "formation and improvement of the regulatory framework in this area";
  - "development and implementation of state programs, national action plans and strategies in this area";
  - "Creating a culture of equal rights and opportunities for women and men";
  - "Ensuring the equal participation of women and men in the management of the affairs of society and the State";
  - "Ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men to reconcile work and family responsibilities";
  - "social protection and support of the family, childhood, the formation of responsible motherhood and fatherhood";
  - "Protection of society from information aimed at direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of sex";
  - "involvement of citizens' self-government bodies, non-governmental non-profit organizations and other civil society institutions in the development and implementation of state programs, national action plans and strategies in this area";
- "Financing measures to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men at the expense of the State budget of the Republic of Uzbekistan and other sources not prohibited by law";
- "Development of effective cooperation at the national, regional and international levels in order to achieve equal rights and opportunities for women and men".<sup>9</sup>

The Labour Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan is an important addition to the legal framework of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which ensures equal rights and protection of women's rights.<sup>10</sup>

The Family Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan states that "all citizens have equal rights in family relations. Any direct or indirect restriction of rights, the establishment of direct or indirect advantages in marriage and interference in family relations on the basis of sex, race, nationality, language, religion, social origin, beliefs, personal and social status and other circumstances shall not be permitted."<sup>11</sup>

The Family Code emphasizes that "the protection of the interests of mothers and children is ensured by special measures to protect the work and health of women, the creation of conditions that allow women to combine work with motherhood, legal protection, material and moral support for motherhood and childhood."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Over there same

<sup>9</sup> Law Of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On guarantees of equal rights and opportunities for women and men". URL: <https://lex.onto/acts/4494873> (date Treatment: 09.09.2022)

<sup>10</sup> Labour Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan. URL: <https://lex.onto/acts/145261#145288> (date Treatment: 09.09.2022)

<sup>11</sup> Domestic Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan. URL: <https://lex.onto/acts/104723#160482> (date Treatment: 09.09.2022)

<sup>12</sup> Over there same



Article 19 of the Family Code stipulates that "spouses shall enjoy equal rights and duties in the family".<sup>13</sup> In 2021, the Resolution of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Approval of the Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality in the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030" was adopted.<sup>14</sup> The Resolution states that the achievement of equal rights and opportunities for women and men, ensuring their equal participation in the management of the affairs of society and the State, supporting women in social and legal terms, as well as protecting women from oppression and violence is the strategic goal of the ongoing reforms in this area.

The issue of gender equality has been raised to the level of state policy, 25 legislative documents relating to this area have been adopted.<sup>15</sup>

In Karakalpakstan, back in the 1990s, public figures and the mass media of the republic made a significant contribution to the discussion of gender equality. The most illustrative in this regard is the example of the magazine "Aral Kyzlary", the editor-in-chief of which was the famous writer and scientist G. Yesemuratova. Famous representatives of women of Karakalpakstan, such as scientists S. Bakhadyrova, R. Yesemuratova, P. Muratova, journalists Sh. Pakhradinova, A. Turekeyeva, united around the magazine.<sup>16</sup>

The magazine began to actively promote the ideas of an active lifestyle of women, to discuss their problems, including social status in society and the family. The magazine published materials about famous women of Karakalpakstan in the history of our time. It quickly gained popularity among women.

One of the main functions of the magazine was the rejection of traditional stereotypes about the role of women. Ideological attitudes in society usually determined the position of the media, which consolidated traditionally conservative hierarchical gender ideas, forming stereotypes of mass consciousness created by men and for men.<sup>17</sup>

From this point of view, the magazine "Aral Kyzlary" was innovative. He pursued not only the goals of forming modern views on society and social relations as a whole, but also on the role of women in modern society.

At the same time, it was difficult to completely revise the stereotypes in matters of gender equality within the framework of the magazine. Therefore, in the issues of the magazine you can find the ideas of reviving traditional relationships in society and everyday life, types of traditional needlework and handicrafts. In particular, the well-known art historian and ethnographer A. Allamuratov in the article "Ecology of Culture" pointed out that in the period of the USSR, women of the republic were forced to represent a socio-production unit and at the same time lead a household, and the author found it

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<sup>13</sup> Over there same

<sup>14</sup> Decree Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Approval of the Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality in the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030". URL: <https://lex.onto/docs/5466725> (date Treatment: 09.09.2022)

<sup>15</sup> Over there same

<sup>16</sup> Rustemova A. Gender inequality in the media // Materials of the international women's scientific and theoretical conference dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the journal "Aral Kyzlary". –Nukus, 2001, –p. 29.

<sup>17</sup> Rustemova A. Gender inequality in the media // Materials of the international women's scientific and theoretical conference dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the journal "Aral Kyzlary". –Nukus, 2001, –p. 29.



necessary to return to traditional material and spiritual culture under the new conditions, thereby rejecting the issues of women's emancipation and gender equality.<sup>18</sup>

However, the magazine also offered a platform for discussing and introducing innovative ideas. It published young journalists, poetesses, scientists and young researchers who put topical issues on the agenda and proposed their solution.

For example, O.A. Ataniyazova in the article "Auladti ana saklaidy" noted the impact of ecology on women's health. So, in the second half of the 1980s, women in Karakalpakstan almost 2 times increased the symptoms of anemia, as a result, more than 96% of women of the republic suffered from anemia. Girls married at the age of 17-19, and already relatively early marriages had an additional negative feature due to the often delay in their development. The author considered the most acceptable age of marriage to be 22-25 years.<sup>19</sup>

Poetess G. Matyakubova raised the issue of the social status of women. In her article "Turmystagy Ornymyz" she wrote that "due to the lack of income in the family, women were forced to work in the most difficult spheres of production, agriculture." In the conditions of the city, "women work in all spheres, they see their children only in the evening, there is no time to engage in education." She regards the role of women in the family, society and the State as free slavery. She noted the need for women to be represented in representative bodies of power and pointed out that women's committees could not address gender issues without the support of the State.<sup>202122</sup>

The history of the journal "Aral Kyzlary" shows that in order to solve the problems of gender inequality, it is extremely necessary to highlight these issues and bring them to the public, shaping public opinion and offering a vision of solving problems. Such publications contribute to strengthening the position of civil society, which will also contribute to the modernization of socio-political and economic relations, public perceptions of the role of women.

Meanwhile, at the state level, a set of measures is being taken to address these issues. For example, the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan has a Commission on Gender Equality and a Committee on Women and Girls and Gender Equality.

The number of women in the country's parliament has reached a level consistent with UN recommendations, the number of women in parliament has reached 32% and has risen to 37th place among 190 parliaments around the world. The share of women in senior positions reached 27%, in parties 44%, in higher education institutions 40%, in entrepreneurship 35%.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Allamuratov A. Madeniyat ekologiyasy.// Aral kyzlary, 1991, No 2. –p. 5

<sup>19</sup> Ataniyazova O. Auladti ana saklaidy.// Aral kyzlary, No2, -S. 17-19.

<sup>20</sup> Matyakubova G. Turmystaggy ornymyz.// Aral kyzlary, 1992, No3. –Pp. 5-7.

<sup>21</sup> Over there same

<sup>22</sup> Over there same

<sup>23</sup> Decree Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Approval of the Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality in the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030". URL: <https://lex.onto/docs/5466725> (date Treatment: 09.09.2022)



In order to provide social and economic support to women and to carry out individual work with them, the Women's Register system was introduced, within the framework of which 300 billion soums were allocated annually from the State budget.<sup>24</sup>

The country has introduced a system of covering the tuition fees of low-income girls who have lost their parents or one of them, and single women who do not have a breadwinner, and the number of scholarships for girls from low-income families for admission to higher education has been doubled.

In order to develop women's entrepreneurship, more than 224 thousand women were provided with preferential loans in the amount of 6.9 trillion soums.<sup>25</sup>

Ongoing reforms have a positive impact on Uzbekistan's place in international rankings, and in the World Bank's Women, Business and Law Index, Uzbekistan was included in the list of 27 countries that implemented important reforms in terms of women's rights and gender equality in 2020, rising by 5 places, among 190 countries ranked 134th.<sup>26</sup>

Uzbekistan has always demonstrated its commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and other universally recognized norms of international law. Thus, at the Un General Assembly Summit on Sustainable Development held in September 2015, Resolution No. 70 was adopted and 125 targets and 206 indicators were developed to achieve 16 national goals considered relevant for the country.<sup>27</sup>

In particular, sustainable development goal 5 – Gender equality and the empowerment of all women – is in harmony with reforms aimed at ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the country.<sup>28</sup>

The Commission of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Gender Equality is constantly taking measures to widely publicize the essence and significance of the Gender Strategy among the population, together with the Committee on Women and Girls' Affairs and Gender Equality of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Also, the Commission is mandated to provide information and analytical reviews, organization and announcement of broad public discussions with the participation of state bodies, non-governmental organizations, international organizations on reforms implemented within the framework of the Gender Strategy; to inform about the Comprehensive Programme of Action and the results achieved on the Target Indicators.<sup>29</sup>

The "Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality in the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030" defines the concept of gender equality as equal rights and opportunities for women and men in all spheres of life and activities of society, including politics, economics, law, culture, education, science, and sports.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Over there same

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<sup>27</sup> Decree Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Approval of the Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality in the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030". URL: <https://lex.onto/docs/5466725> (date Treatment: 09.09.2022)

<sup>28</sup> Over there same

<sup>29</sup> Over there same

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In general, the Republic of Uzbekistan has established a solid legal framework for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men in all spheres of public life and activity and for the protection of women.

More than 1300 women work in the system of state and public organizations, including 45 in ministries and departments, 39 in the Administration of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Cabinet of Ministers, 207 in local self-government bodies.<sup>31</sup>

About 50 percent of the 21,435,000 voters, or 10,825,641 people registered in the 2019 elections to the upper and lower chambers of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Zhokorgu Kenesh of the Republic of Karakalpakstan and local Kengashes, are women.<sup>32</sup>

41 per cent of the candidates nominated in those elections were women, an increase from the 30 per cent quota established by the Electoral Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan.<sup>33</sup>

Women make up 32 per cent of the deputies of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 25 per cent of the members of the Senate, the Parliament of the Republic of Karakalpakstan and local Kengashes.<sup>34</sup>

The issue of ensuring gender equality has risen to the level of State policy, and the Committee on Women's Affairs and Gender Equality, the Commission for Gender Equality of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Advisory Councils on Ensuring Equality and "Opportunities for Women and Men", and the Republican Women's Public Council work in the upper house of Parliament. The Women's Social Council was established.

Women make up 49% of the members of the Milliy Tiklanish Party and the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, 46% of the members of the Social Democratic Party of Uzbekistan "Adolat", 41% of the members of the Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan and the Ecological Party of Uzbekistan.<sup>35</sup>

The socio-economic policy pursued in Uzbekistan at all stages of reforms includes a wide range of issues. Additional guarantees have been given in terms of a systematic increase in incomes of the population, the formation of employment and labor relations, social protection and support for certain categories of the population, including women entrepreneurs and farmers.

In particular, in order to ensure the employment of women and their wide involvement in entrepreneurial activities, the practice of allocating preferential loans has been launched.

More than 30% of the clients of the microcredit base of commercial banks are women. Loans in the amount of 4.9 trillion soums were allocated to more than 172 thousand women at the expense of

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<sup>31</sup> Decree Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Approval of the Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality in the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030". URL: <https://lex.onto/docs/5466725> (date Treatment: 09.09.2022)Over there same

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<sup>35</sup> Decree Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Approval of the Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality in the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030". URL: <https://lex.onto/docs/5466725> (date Treatment: 09.09.2022)



commercial banks. As a result, the number of women who started a business increased by 45,000 people in 2020 alone for the year.<sup>36</sup>

Since 2019, a system has been established to ensure employment and create new jobs on the basis of the state order. A procedure has been introduced for issuing temporary work permits to self-employed citizens and taking into account their seniority. As a result, the proportion of women employed in this sector has reached 27 per cent.<sup>37</sup>

Particular attention was also paid to the development of remote areas of the republic, the improvement of villages, poverty reduction by supporting the economic activity of women living in villages. More than 1.5 million women work in various fields of agriculture. Women manage 20% of economic entities, including 7.3% of farms.<sup>38</sup>

Since 2017, cardinal changes have been made in the health care system, systematic work has been carried out to strengthen the reproductive health of the population, educate citizens in consciousness and responsibility for the birth of healthy children, and create equal opportunities for the realization of the reproductive rights of women and men.

The number of radio and television programmes reflecting the image of the modern socially and politically active woman and highlighting the opportunities created for women and men has increased. In order to ensure gender equality and the empowerment of all women, the necessary measures have been identified in the political, social, economic and other spheres.

At the same time, there are issues that require serious attention to increasing the participation of women in the construction of the state and society, the socio-economic sphere, education, health care and other socio-economic spheres.

In particular, the issues of gender equality in decision-making on current issues related to governance are not sufficiently ensured, the involvement of women in the socio-economic development of the regions remains weak.

The negative attitude of society towards the activities of women in public power and administration prevents them from promoting their ideas in political processes. In most cases, women are assigned housework that has no economic value and is not remunerated. There was a sharp disparity between women and men in education, and today more than 70 per cent of teachers in general secondary education were women.<sup>39</sup>

While the proportion of women enrolled in the fields of pedagogy and humanities (philology, pedagogy, psychology, culture and the arts) is 68 per cent, their share in the fields of technology (information technology, energy, engineering) and law is still small (24 per cent).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Over there same

<sup>37</sup> Over there same

<sup>38</sup> Decree Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Approval of the Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality in the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030". URL: <https://lex.onto/docs/5466725> (date Treatment: 09.09.2022)

<sup>39</sup> Decree Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Approval of the Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality in the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030". URL: <https://lex.onto/docs/5466725> (date Treatment: 09.09.2022)

<sup>40</sup> Over there same





In the regions of the Country, especially in rural areas, the poor quality of medical care, the underdevelopment of private medical care and the insufficient medical culture of family planning among husbands and wives are the reasons for the persistence of maternal and infant mortality.

Insufficient research is being conducted on the gender aspects of external and internal migration, its impact on women and men, their families and children, the opportunities created for the population in this area, women's rights, and protection mechanisms for migrant workers are not sufficiently organized.

In addition, there is no gender expertise of media products, there are traditional views on the role of women and men in the family and society in the media, and the contribution of women to the development of society is not sufficiently covered in the press. <sup>41</sup>

In addition, significant gender inequalities in property ownership remain unresolved; vertical and horizontal segregation in the labour market, the propensity to hire women, social or part-time, seasonal, low-paid or unskilled jobs in the formal and informal sectors. Traditional stereotypes about the roles of women and men in the family and in society also remain a controversial issue. <sup>42</sup>

## Conclusions

A lot of work has been done in Uzbekistan to ensure gender equality. At the regulatory level, equal rights of women and men are enshrined. Women's rights are protected by the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men", the Labor and Family Code, as well as other acts.

A lot of work has been done to implement gender equality in practice, to fulfill the tasks in this area formulated in the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Progress can be noted in the formation of women's representation in political structures, public authorities and administration, leadership positions in organizations, certain achievements in protecting the rights of women in the family.

At the same time, traditional ideas about the role of women in society, especially in the regions, still fail to fully implement plans to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goal 5.

In this regard, the Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality in the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030, adopted in 2021, outlines projects to implement the principle of gender equality in practice, both in the field of labor and family relations, the position of women in society as a whole.

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