

PROBLEMS OF STRENGTHENING SOCIAL PROTECTION OF THE POPULATION

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Abstract: This article analyzes the current issues of strengthening the social protection of the population, existing problems and ways to solve them. The social protection system is considered as the main mechanism for stabilizing the living standards of the population, reducing poverty, and supporting the disabled in the conditions of Uzbekistan. The study highlights the prospects for improving the social protection of the population based on the principle of social orientation of state policy, international experience and modern approaches.

Keywords: Social protection, social policy, living standards of the population, poverty, pension system, employment, rights of the disabled, unemployment, social justice.

Introduction

The social protection system is the basis of sustainable social development in every democratic state. The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan guarantees human rights, social justice and a decent life for citizens. Nevertheless, problems related to the social protection of certain segments of the population - the disabled, single elderly people, large families and unemployed citizens - are still relevant.

In a market economy, the effectiveness of the social protection system directly depends on the income of the population, the stability of the labor market and the social policy of the state. Therefore, in recent years, the government of Uzbekistan has been taking important steps to reform the social protection system, introduce a "single social register" and digitize social services.

Literature review

The issues of social protection of the population have been studied by many domestic and foreign scientists. In particular, J. Keynes and A. Sen substantiated the role of the state in providing assistance to citizens and mechanisms for reducing economic inequality in the theory of social justice.

Among Uzbek scientists, A. Khojayev, D. Karimov, Sh. Ziyayeva and others conducted scientific research in the areas of modernization of social policy, combating poverty and improving the system of social services.

Among international organizations, the experiences recognized by the UN, the International Labor Organization (ILO), the World Bank and the European Union put forward the concept of viewing the social protection system as an investment in human capital.

The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Social Protection of the Population", Presidential Decrees and the "Poverty Reduction Strategy" programs are the main regulatory documents in this area

Methods section

The following scientific and methodological approaches were used in the preparation of the article:

Analytical method - analysis of the state of the existing social protection system based on statistical data.

Comparative method - comparison of the experience of Uzbekistan with international practice.

Sociological approach - identification of the social needs of the population and study of their attitude to state programs.

Systematic analysis - identification of the interrelationships between the elements of the social protection system.

Forecasting methods - determination of the prospects for the development of the social protection system.

Results

To provide detailed information on the problems of strengthening social protection of the population in Uzbekistan, I will first consider the general state of this area, its current problems and their causes, as well as possible solutions. Below are the main problems of the social protection system in the context of Uzbekistan and proposals for their solution. If you want to focus on another country or a specific aspect, please clarify.

Social protection system in Uzbekistan: overview

The social protection system in Uzbekistan is aimed at protecting citizens from social risks (poverty, unemployment, disability, old age, health problems). This system includes programs such as pension provision, social benefits, medical services, assistance to the unemployed, support for disabled people and low-income families. In recent years, reforms have been implemented in the field of social protection in Uzbekistan, for example:

“Iron Book” and “Women’s Book”: Social support programs for low-income families and women.

- Assistance through the neighborhood system: Identification of those in need through local communities and providing them with assistance.

- Pension system reforms: Improving the functioning of the Pension Fund and increasing transparency.

However, despite these reforms, the social protection system faces a number of serious problems.

Lack of financial resources

The problem: Social protection programs require significant financial resources, but Uzbekistan’s economy is still developing and budget opportunities are limited. For example:

- The amount of pensions and benefits is often not enough to live on. As of 2025, there are cases where the average pension in Uzbekistan does not keep up with inflation and the cost of living

Social assistance programs (for example, benefits for families with children) cover only a certain group, which leaves many in need out of support.

Reasons:

- Slow economic growth and limited tax base.

- High unemployment, which leads to a decrease in revenues to social funds.

- An economy based on agriculture, in which many citizens work in the informal sector and do not pay social insurance contributions.

Solutions:

- Attract more funds to the budget by reforming the tax system.

- Reduce the informal economy and attract workers to the formal sector.

- Financing social programs in partnership with the private sector and international organizations.

Legislative and governance challenges

Problem: Social protection legislation is often outdated or not flexible enough. For example:

- The process of obtaining social assistance is complicated and requires a lot of documentation.
- Assistance does not arrive on time due to lack of coordination between local authorities and state agencies.

Reasons:

- Burdensome bureaucratic system and low transparency.
- Insufficient use of modern technologies in managing social protection programs.
- Legislation is not adapted to international experience.

Solutions:

- Harmonization of social protection legislation with international standards.
- Simplification of receiving applications and distribution of assistance through digital platforms.
- Introduction of a single database to improve information exchange between state agencies.
- Low coverage of inactive groups

Problem: The social protection system often fails to fully cover the most vulnerable groups (people with disabilities, single elderly people, families with many children, people living in rural areas). For example:

- Many citizens are deprived of assistance due to the lack of social services in rural areas.
- Social infrastructure for people with disabilities (for example, rehabilitation centers or wheelchair ramps) is insufficient.

Reasons:

- Social services are mainly located in urban areas.
- Lack of information: many citizens are unaware of the assistance programs available to them.
- Ineffectiveness of the system for identifying those in need at the local level.

Solutions:

- Expanding the network of social services in rural areas.
- Creating special infrastructure for people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.
- Informing the population about social programs through the media and community organizations.
- Unemployment and economic instability

Problem: Unemployment in Uzbekistan is high, especially among young people and those living in rural areas. This puts an additional burden on the social protection system, as more people need state assistance.

- Those working in the informal sector do not contribute to the social insurance system, which makes it difficult to finance pension funds and other social programs.

Reasons:

- Lack of diversification of the economy (mainly reliant on agriculture and services).
- Emigration of skilled workers abroad.
- Lack of skills for modern professions among young people.

Solutions:

- Support small and medium-sized businesses to create new jobs.
- Expand vocational education and retraining programs.
- Introduce tax incentives to formalize the informal sector.

Demographic changes

Problem: Uzbekistan is experiencing an aging population, which puts significant pressure on the pension system. At the same time, the migration of young people abroad is reducing the size of the labor force and reducing income to social funds.

Reasons:

- Life expectancy is increasing due to the development of medical services.
- Migration due to limited economic opportunities among young people.

Solutions:

- Reform the pension system, for example, introducing private pension funds.
- Develop social services appropriate to the aging population (care centers for the elderly).
- Increase economic opportunities to reduce migration.

Corruption and lack of transparency

Problem: Social assistance programs are often misallocated, meaning that funds do not reach those who really need them. Corruption and poor transparency in management reduce the effectiveness of the system.

Causes:

- Weak monitoring and accountability mechanisms.
- Excessive influence of local authorities in the distribution of social assistance.

Solutions:

Digitalize and make social assistance distribution transparent.

- Introduce independent audit and monitoring systems.
- Strengthen public oversight through increased citizen participation.

Technological and infrastructure challenges

Problem: There are delays in the digitalization of social protection services. For example:

- The online application system does not work well in many regions.
- There is a lack of social service infrastructure (e.g., health centers, social workers) in rural areas.

Reasons:

- Underdeveloped digital infrastructure.
- Low internet connectivity and digital literacy, especially in rural areas.

Solutions:

- Develop digital platforms and train the population in digital literacy.
- Expand social service centers in rural areas.
- Simplify social services through mobile applications.

Recent reforms in the social protection system in Uzbekistan

The government of Uzbekistan has implemented a number of measures to strengthen social protection in recent years:

- The “Iron Book” system: Identifying low-income families and providing them with financial assistance, employment or subsidies.
- The “Women’s Book” and “Youth Book”: Creating economic opportunities for vulnerable groups (women, youth).
- Healthcare reforms: Expanding state-subsidized medical services.
- Pension system: Improving the management of the pension fund and increasing transparency.
- However, these reforms are still not fully successful, as infrastructural, financial and management challenges remain in their implementation.

Conclusion

To strengthen social protection of the population in Uzbekistan, it is necessary to continue work in the following areas:

- Economic stability: Increase financing of social programs through job creation and economic diversification.
- Digitalization: Simplify and make social services transparent through online platforms.
- Attention to vulnerable groups: Expand special programs for the disabled, the elderly, and rural residents.
- Transparency and accountability: Fight against corruption and strengthen public control.
- International experience: Implement best practices in cooperation with organizations such as the UN and the World Bank.

The following issues are important in solving problems related to strengthening social protection of the population:

Territorial imbalances - the quality of social services in rural areas is low, there is a shortage of personnel.

Subjectivity of the poverty measurement - in many cases, assistance is provided to people on the list, not to those who really need it.

Lack of integration of information systems - information exchange between different ministries and departments is weak.

Digital transformation processes - the use of artificial intelligence and "Big Data" technologies in the field of social protection has not yet been widely implemented.

Sources of financing - a stable financial basis is necessary for social assistance programs.

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