

# Women of Uzbekistan: Gender Issues, Dynamics and Historical Analysis

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**Abstract**— This study describes the historical situation, current development and development of the issue of gender equality in Uzbekistan based on observations and a literature search. It is known that now on the global scale, the establishment of real equal rights of women and men is considered the basis of social development and sustainable development of society. During the past years of independence, the Republic of Uzbekistan implemented comprehensive reforms aimed at ensuring women's rights and freedoms, employment and family stability, achieving gender equality, social protection of motherhood and childhood, and creating decent working conditions for them. It is important to analyse the legal basis of these issues, gender issues, and socioeconomic dynamics on the example of the republic and individual regions. The observations showed that current trends in gender equality and developing the role of women in Uzbekistan have increased step by step in recent years.

**Keywords**— Uzbekistan, Samarkand region, women's, social problems, rights, gender equality.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the process of globalization, which is gaining momentum worldwide, the issue of increasing the role of women in reforms in the fields of state and social management, education, science, and ensuring the strength of the family institution is gaining urgent importance (Annesley et al. 2015). Raising the social status of women in the world, studying their participation in the political, socioeconomic and cultural spheres of society on the basis of gender equality has been reflected in the research conducted in recent years (Laufer et al. 2018, Mazur and Engeli 2020, Atanova 2022). Notably, the principles of equal rights and non-discrimination are being strengthened in global legal documents in the field of human rights. Husuan, the fact that the UN has introduced another index of humanitarian criteria since 1996 confirms that the issue of gender equality is extremely relevant and important in the context of globalization (Bonnie 2007, Haack et al. 2022).

A number of researchers have studied the issue of gender equality in the case of Central Asia and Uzbekistan. The research of Kane and Gorbenko (2016) confirms that the social situation of Uzbekistan during the colonial period, especially issues of gender equality, was at a very low level. Scientific works in this regard were noted by other researchers (Alimova and Azimova 2000, Doi 2002, Dadabayev 2013, Abramson 1998). The above research confirms that the issue of gender equality in Uzbekistan in the former Soviet era is in a very bad state. In most cases, women's freedoms and opportunities are limited.

Today, the government of Uzbekistan pays special attention to the issue of gender equality. Issues of gender equality were modernized, and the existing practice was adapted to international standards. Over the past years, the issues of ensuring women's rights and freedoms and achieving gender equality in society have been confirmed in the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2018) and the Family Code (2008). On May 6, 1995, Uzbekistan signed the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and became an active participant in the implementation of this document (2012). In Uzbekistan, approximately 20 legal documents aimed at protecting the rights and interests of women, including 2 laws, 1 presidential decree, 4 presidential decrees, and 13 cabinet decisions, have been adopted (2020). On the basis of these legal and regulatory documents, the place and role of women in the life of the state and society is increasingly strengthened. To determine the priorities of the women's movement, after the 4th World Women's Forum in Beijing (PRC) in 1995, which opened a new opportunity for increasing the civil potential of women on March 2, 1995, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Additional Privileges for Women" and a number of other documents were adopted (2007).

## II. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION

In 2015, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) office in Uzbekistan conducted a study on the gender balance in the country. According to him, as of 2015, the percentage of women employed in various sectors of the economy was 45 percent, including 28.3 percent in industry and 37% in agriculture (2015). For 2000-2015, the share of women in employment increased from 44% to 45.7%. In 2015, 40.4% of small enterprises were headed by women. By 2015, women made up 14 million of the population of Uzbekistan, 60% of whom lived in rural areas, and 50% of working women were employed (2015).

The permanent population of the republic has increased by 13.9 million people in the last 30 years. According to the State Statistics Committee (2022), in 1991, 50.6% of the permanent residents of the republic were women. This indicator was equal to 49.7% on January 1, 2022. As of August 1, 2022, the permanent population of Uzbekistan is 35433772 people, of which 17.5 million are women and 17.7 million are men.

It is important to indicate that President of Uzbekistan Mirziyoyev, pointed out in his speech at the 46th session of

the UN Human Rights Council on February 22, 2021, that "we will resolutely continue the work aimed at radically increasing the role of women in the social and political life of our country and in the field of business in terms of gender policy issues (2021). Based on this, in 2021, the strategy of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan to achieve gender equality in the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030 was approved. Eight groups were formed in the 8 directions defined in the Gender Strategy adopted until 2030, and 80 active young people were united. In this strategy, the issue of gender equality in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals is given great importance.

It is known that in Uzbekistan, the naming of years is becoming a special value, and it means the consistent continuation of socioeconomic reforms and promising works. In particular, protection of the interests of women and the family within the framework of state programs developed in connection with the years 1998 - "Year of the Family", 1999 - "Year of Women", 2000 - "Year of a Healthy Generation", 2001 - "Mothers and Children", a number of regulatory documents were adopted to increase the activity in socio-political and economic reforms. Bobojonova's research confirms the importance of this approach in ensuring gender equality and fulfilling the duties of the state defined by international standards and norms (2021). According to other researchers, this situation has economic, socio-political and ideological importance at the same time (Dadabayev 2007). The above information shows that in recent years, the issue of gender equality has been properly implemented in Uzbekistan.

### III. GLOBAL VIEW

Experts of the UN women's organization say that currently, approximately 750 million women in the world are forced to marry before turning 18. Forty-nine countries do not have laws prohibiting domestic violence. A number of actions are being taken to protect women from oppression and violence. In particular, by 2021, more than 7000 requests for a protection warrant were received by internal affairs bodies, and protection warrants were issued to women in 6183 cases (2023). In 2021-2026, a program of measures to protect women from harassment and violence and prevent violence was developed in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Among the countries of the world and Central Asia, Uzbekistan is taking a place among the countries that actively manage issues of gender equality. The first Central Asian women's platform was established. Uzbekistan chaired this platform in 2021. The organization of the presidency of Uzbekistan organized 12 different events and adopted 8 important documents (2022). This is the first dialogue of Central Asian countries on ensuring gender equality in the region under the auspices of the UN.

Some observations have shown that the reforms implemented in Uzbekistan in the direction of gender strategy and the elimination of inequality between women and men in political, economic, social and other spheres serve to increase the country's prestige in the international area. In particular, in the "Women, Peace and Security Index" (Women, Peace and Security Index. 2021/22) compiled by Georgetown of the USA

and Norway's Oslo Peace Research Institute, Uzbekistan ranked 89th among 167 countries in 2020 in a 1000-point system (710 points), and in 2021, it ranked 74th among 170 countries with 741 points (Kazakhstan 59th with 761 points, Kyrgyzstan 97th with 713 points, Tajikistan 85th with 727 points, Turkmenistan took 60th place with 760 points).

Another important indicator based on the report of the World Bank "Women, Business and the Law Index" (Women, Business and the Law 2021) among 190 countries, 2020 ranked 139th, with 70.6 points out of 100 points according to the results of 2021 Kazakhstan ranked 134th, 137th (69, 4 points), Kyrgyzstan 111th (76, 9 points), Tajikistan 103rd (78.8 points). In this report, Uzbekistan is among the countries whose rating has improved due to reforms in several areas. Furthermore, as is known by experience, every year, the United Nations Development Program conducts research on the gender inequality index in the countries of the world (Khojayev 2020). In the report published by the organization in 2019, the highest indicators regarding the provision of gender equality belong to countries such as Switzerland, Denmark, and Sweden. Among the CIS countries, the Republic of Belarus ranked 27th, Kazakhstan ranked 46th, Moldova ranked 50th, the Russian Federation ranked 54th, Uzbekistan ranked 64th, Tajikistan ranked 84th and Kyrgyzstan ranked 87th. Almost two-thirds of developing countries have achieved gender balance in primary education. However, there are still issues that need to be addressed in this regard. In particular, the "Global gender gap report" prepared by the World Economic Forum. 2021" (Global Gender Gap Report, 2021) does not include the place of Uzbekistan (Kazakhstan 80, Kyrgyzstan 108, Tajikistan 125 in this report). Therefore, it is appropriate to systematically continue the reforms on gender equality in the country, to further develop them and to expand the propaganda work.

According to the "Women's Power Index" report compiled by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the number of women in public service in Uzbekistan remains small (Khalikova et al. 2021). In particular, in 2021, as of 2015, this indicator is 3% in Uzbekistan (Kazakhstan 10%, Kyrgyzstan 11%, Tajikistan 6%, Turkmenistan 4%, Russia 11%), increasing the number of women among employees and showing that it is important to ensure gender equality.

### IV. OBSERVATION-BASED REPORT

At this point, we found it appropriate to shed some light on the analysed issue on the example of the Samarkand region. According to the Statistics Committee, in 2020, the largest percentage of the total population of the republic was 11.4% in the Samarkand region, followed by 11.1% in the Fergana region, 9.7% in the Kashkadarya region, and 9.2% in the Andijan region (2022).

As of July 1 of this year, the number of permanent residents in the region is 469000 people, which has increased by 96100 people or 1.2% since the beginning of the year. According to the analysis, there are 2047.9 thousand men and 2021.4 thousand women in the Samarkand region. The number of men is more than that of women. However, in the 35-39 age group, the number of women aged 85 and older is

greater than that of men (2022). The analysis of women and girls permanently living in the Samarkand region (per year; thousand people) in the period 2017-2021 according to the population of cities and villages is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Analysis of women and girls permanently living in the Samarkand region (per year; thousand people) in the period 2017-2021

No	Years	Number of women	City dwellers	Villagers
1	2017	1819.5	689.6	1129.9
2	2018	1852.1	698.1	1154.0
3	2019	1889.8	709.8	1180.0
4	2020	1927.7	721.4	1206.3
5	2021	1962.0	731.5	1230.5

One of the important criteria for the active participation of women in the life of the state and society in Uzbekistan is receiving a decent education. In 2016, 110,000 women studied in higher education institutions, and according to the results of 2021, their number reached 400,000, or their share increased from 38% in 2016 to almost 50% by 2021 (2022). To systematically organize and coordinate these works, the "Society of Women Scholars" was established under the State Committee for Family and Women. This society serves to unite our women scientists who are achieving high achievements in the field of science in our country and abroad. Fifty billion soums are allocated annually to the "Society of Women Scientists" to adequately encourage the hard and honourable work of hard-working scientists and to create favourable conditions for them in all respects.

According to UNESCO, women scientists are conducting advanced research all over the world. However, despite their important discoveries, women still make up only 33.3% of researchers worldwide, and their work rarely gets the recognition it deserves. Less than 4 percent of the Nobel Prizes in science were awarded to women. As of 2022, approximately 700 women are doctors of science, 6 are academicians, and 15 are Heroes of Uzbekistan working in the field of science in Uzbekistan. In general, the percentage of women working in the fields of science, education, healthcare, art and culture is 72 percent (Mahkamova 2022).

To sum up, today in Uzbekistan, a consistent policy aimed at women's rightful place in society, protection of their rights and interests is being carried out. As a result, approximately 1400 women are working in leadership positions in the system of state and public organizations of our republic. Their share is 8925 in the Samarkand region, 1780 in the field of women's education, and 7145 in health care, art, culture, government, private sector, localities and social services.

### V. CONCLUSION

To further develop gender equality in Uzbekistan, to increase the role of traditional values in stabilizing the piritual environment in families, to protect women from harassment and violence, and to strengthen public control in the prevention of negative evils arising among them, especially in rural areas, it would be appropriate to systematically carry out the work of improving the level of health care services, raising the medical culture of women.

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