

Legal Normative Foundations of Increasing Social and Political Activity of Women in Uzbekistan

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Abstract: The journey towards gender equality and women's empowerment in Uzbekistan has witnessed significant strides in recent years, underpinned by a robust legal and normative framework aimed at fostering women's socio-political participation. Historically entrenched gender roles have gradually evolved, catalyzed by urbanization, educational reforms, and international commitments to women's rights. Central to this transformation is Uzbekistan's legal architecture, exemplified by constitutional provisions guaranteeing gender equality and non-discrimination. Legislative instruments such as the Law on Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men underscore the state's commitment to gender mainstreaming across public spheres. Political participation has been bolstered through gender quotas in electoral bodies and initiatives like the National Action Strategy for Gender Equality, reflecting a concerted effort to elevate women's voices in decision-making processes. Complementary measures targeting social engagement and economic empowerment further reinforce this trajectory, supported by governmental and non-governmental entities. However, challenges persist, including entrenched gender stereotypes and gaps in implementation. Addressing these obstacles necessitates innovative strategies and collaborative action to realise the vision of a more equitable and inclusive society. The culmination of legislative advancements, institutional mechanisms, and societal engagement underscores Uzbekistan's commitment to realising the full potential of its female populace, heralding a promising era of gender equality and women's empowerment.

1 INTRODUCTION

The manuscript probes into Uzbekistan's transformative journey toward socio-political evolution, particularly its concerted efforts to foster gender equality and elevate women's roles in public life. Against a backdrop of shifting societal norms and global dynamics, it meticulously examines the legal frameworks and policy measures aimed at enhancing women's social and political engagement. Historically entrenched gender roles have yielded to progressive legislative strides, with Uzbekistan's Constitution enshrining principles of gender parity and non-discrimination. Noteworthy advancements include the adoption of gender quotas in political arenas and initiatives promoting women's entrepreneurship and education. However, challenges persist, necessitating innovative strategies and collaborative action. Through an array of governmental programs and international

collaborations, Uzbekistan seeks to cultivate an environment conducive to women's empowerment and social inclusion. As the nation navigates toward a more equitable future, this manuscript serves as a beacon, illuminating the path towards comprehensive gender equality and societal enrichment.

2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The socio-political transformation in Uzbekistan has sparked efforts towards gender equality and women's empowerment. Despite progress, challenges persist, including entrenched gender stereotypes and limited access to opportunities. Ensuring effective policy implementation, international collaboration, and targeted support are crucial for enhancing women's participation in political, economic, and social spheres, promoting a more equitable society.

3 OBJECTIVES

- Enhance policy implementation for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Foster international collaboration to address gender-related challenges.
- Provide targeted support to overcome entrenched gender stereotypes and barriers to opportunities.
- Increase women's participation in political decision-making processes.
- Promote women's economic empowerment through tailored initiatives.
- Facilitate social inclusion by creating avenues for women's active engagement.
- Cultivate a more equitable society by addressing systemic barriers and promoting positive change.

4 GENDER DYNAMICS AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS IN UZBEKISTAN

4.1 Historical Context

Uzbekistan's historical narrative is deeply entwined with traditional gender roles and societal structures. Historically, Uzbek society has been patriarchal, relegating women mainly to domestic roles with limited access to education, employment, and political involvement. Yet, recent decades have seen notable shifts in societal perceptions of gender roles, influenced by urbanization, educational reforms, and international commitments to women's rights.

4.2 Legal Frameworks

At the heart of advancing women's rights in Uzbekistan lies a robust legal framework ensuring equal rights and opportunities for both genders. The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan embodies principles of gender equality and non-discrimination, laying the groundwork for subsequent legislative and policy measures aimed at empowering women. Key legal instruments, such as the Law on Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men, prohibit gender-based discrimination and advocate for gender mainstreaming across public spheres.

4.3 Political Participation

In recent years, Uzbekistan has made significant progress in augmenting women's representation in political decision-making arenas. The implementation of gender quotas for electoral bodies, including the Oliy Majlis (parliament) and local councils, has bolstered female presence in legislative bodies. Moreover, the establishment of the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan and the National Action Strategy for Gender Equality underscores the government's dedication to fostering women's political engagement and leadership roles.

4.4 Governmental Initiatives and Challenges

The Uzbekistani government has enacted approximately 20 regulatory and legal documents to safeguard women's rights and expand their opportunities. A strategic plan to achieve gender equality by 2030 has been devised, resulting in a surge of women in public administration and increased participation in public affairs and decision-making processes.

Despite strides made, substantial gender disparities persist globally, notably in education. Although women's education has progressed significantly, over 17 million girls worldwide still lack access to schooling. Additionally, women remain underrepresented in scientific research, with only a third of researchers being female globally. Addressing deep-seated gender stereotypes, enhancing resource accessibility, and bridging implementation gaps in gender equality laws are vital steps in overcoming remaining challenges and seizing opportunities for positive change in Uzbekistan.

5 HIVE: A HUB FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE

The advancement of women in science and education has been a focal point in Uzbekistan, underscored by the government's commitment to providing substantial support and incentives for female participation and leadership in these fields. Notably, starting from the 2022/2023 academic year, an additional 2,000 state grants will be allocated to women pursuing full-time undergraduate education, provided they possess a recommendation letter from the State Committee for Family and Women and do not hold higher education qualifications. Moreover, at

least 50% of these grants designated for women with recommendation letters will be directed towards disciplines encompassing exact and natural sciences, engineering, and medicine.

In an effort to foster a conducive environment for women in science and education, various legislative measures have been enacted. These include provisions mandating the nomination of at least thirty percent of political party candidates for the Legislative Chamber and local councils to be women, ensuring equal participation of women and men in civil service positions, and offering financial assistance to women from needy families pursuing higher education.

Furthermore, a Presidential Decree dated March 7, 2022, outlines additional privileges aimed at further supporting women in science and education. These include interest-free loans for women studying in universities, technical institutes, and colleges, covering tuition fees for women pursuing master's degrees in state higher education institutions, and allocating grants specifically for women's bachelor's and master's degrees through the "El-Yurt Umid" fund.

In parallel, initiatives to enhance the representation of women in leadership roles and promote innovation in science have been proposed. These encompass specialised training courses for women leaders, increased female representation in master's degree programs at the Academy of Public Administration, and the establishment of forums and competitions aimed at recognising and promoting the contributions of women in various sectors.

Additionally, efforts to bolster science development among women involve holding annual contests such as the "Scientist Woman" competition and offering training courses on innovative management. Moreover, targeted internships abroad and financial support from the Science Funding and Innovation Support Fund further facilitate the professional growth of women in science and education.

Overall, these multifaceted initiatives underscore Uzbekistan's concerted efforts to empower women in science and education, fostering an environment conducive to gender equality and inclusive socio-economic development.

6 ENHANCING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND INCLUSION

In light of the preceding analysis, this section presents actionable recommendations to bolster women's socio-political empowerment, economic stability, and social integration in Uzbekistan.

6.1 Enhancing Women's Political Participation

There is a crucial need to ensure the effective implementation of state policies aimed at supporting women, with a specific focus on augmenting women's engagement in political leadership roles. Collaborative efforts involving the Ministry of Poverty Reduction and Employment and the Research Institute of Family and Women are imperative in this regard. Strategies may include the establishment of mentorship programs, targeted training initiatives, and advocacy campaigns to encourage women's active involvement in political management.

6.2 Socio-Political Empowerment

To safeguard women's rights and advance their socio-political participation, concerted actions are required. This entails organising women's work within specific organisations, generating employment opportunities, facilitating skill enhancement programmes for women returning from childcare leave, and integrating them into various public initiatives. The Ministry of Poverty Reduction and Employment, along with the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Uzbekistan, must collaborate to enact policies conducive to women's empowerment and active engagement.

6.3 Financial Support Mechanisms

Collaborative endeavours with international financial institutions, foundations, and organisations are indispensable for providing preferential loans to economically vulnerable women. Additionally, the establishment of a women's bank, financed through contributions, could serve as a pivotal resource for empowering women economically. Coordination between the Ministry of Poverty Reduction and Employment, the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and the Central Bank of the Republic of Uzbekistan is essential to facilitate these initiatives.

6.4 Social Welfare and Assistance

Timely identification and resolution of challenges faced by women in precarious social circumstances are imperative. This necessitates the provision of comprehensive social, legal, psychological, and material support to women in need. Collaboration between the Ministry of Poverty Reduction and Employment and the Research Institute of Family and Women is essential to ensure the effective implementation of these support measures.

6.5 Targeted Employment and Entrepreneurship Initiatives

Addressing issues related to women's employment, improving working conditions, and promoting entrepreneurship, particularly in rural areas, is vital. Collaborative efforts involving the Ministry of Poverty Reduction and Employment are essential to design and implement targeted programmes aimed at enhancing women's economic participation and empowerment.

6.6 Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Marginalised Women

Close cooperation between government bodies and civil society institutions is imperative to facilitate the social rehabilitation and reintegration of women reintegrating into society after being released from penal institutions. The Ministry of Poverty Reduction and Employment and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan should collaborate closely to develop and implement comprehensive reintegration programs.

6.7 Gender-Sensitive Migration Policies

The development of gender-sensitive approaches to migration management policies is paramount. Collaboration between the Ministry of Poverty Reduction and Employment and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan is essential to ensure that migration policies address the specific needs and challenges faced by women migrants, including protection from exploitation and access to essential services.

7 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Uzbekistan's pursuit of gender equality and women's empowerment relies on the foundational legal and normative frameworks highlighted in this study. These frameworks not only signify progress but also signify catalysts for further advancement. By nurturing an environment conducive to women's active engagement in social and political spheres, Uzbekistan can fully harness the capabilities of its female populace, fostering a society that is both equitable and inclusive.

Efforts to address socio-political, economic, and cultural barriers hindering women's participation must be underpinned by the principle of equality. It is imperative to tackle these challenges comprehensively, considering the rights, interests, potentials, and opportunities of all women. Through collaborative and targeted measures, Uzbekistan can overcome existing hurdles, paving the way for enhanced gender parity and the substantive inclusion of women in all aspects of public life.

Continued commitment to advancing women's rights, coupled with proactive policy interventions and institutional support, will be instrumental in shaping a future where women's voices are heard, valued, and integrated into the fabric of Uzbekistan's socio-political landscape. As the nation strives towards this collective vision, it underscores its dedication to fostering a society where every individual, regardless of gender, can thrive and contribute meaningfully to national progress and prosperity.

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