

ENHANCING THE ROLE OF SOCIAL PROTECTION IN ACHIEVING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN UZBEKISTAN*Muratjanova Lobar**Student of Gulistan State University**ORCID: 0009-0000-3300-0646*

Abstract: This article analyzes the role of the social protection system in the development process in Uzbekistan. The social protection system is of great importance as a means of supporting the most vulnerable segments of the population and ensuring economic stability. The article examines the social protection measures implemented in the country, including the pension and benefit system, unemployment reduction programs, and the expansion of medical services and educational opportunities.

Keywords: Social protection, economic development, population well-being, social equality, pension system, unemployment problem, medical services, educational opportunities, social stability, social policy.

INTRODUCTION.

Today, Uzbekistan is entering a new stage of socio-economic development. The country is implementing reforms aimed at increasing the well-being of the population, achieving sustainable economic growth and strengthening social protection. In particular, supporting vulnerable groups of society, improving their living standards and increasing their economic activity through the development of the social protection system remains one of the most important issues.

The social protection system plays an important role not only in supporting the most needy segments of the population, but also in ensuring social equality in society, achieving economic stability and developing human capital.

The social protection sector in Uzbekistan covers such areas as pensions and benefits, reducing unemployment, medical services, educational opportunities and providing financial assistance to low-income families.

This article analyzes the impact of the social protection system on socio-economic development in Uzbekistan. It will also consider the possibilities of having a positive impact on the country's economy by supporting vulnerable segments of the population and current issues in this regard.

Research methodology.

This study used comprehensive analytical methods to determine the role and importance of the social protection system in achieving socio-economic development in Uzbekistan. To study the relationship between social protection and economic development, the available literature, regulatory legal acts, and statistical data were analyzed. Through a comprehensive approach to the research methodology, the impact of the social protection system on the socio-economic development of Uzbekistan was reasonably assessed and scientific and practical recommendations were developed to increase its effectiveness.

Analysis and results.

The social protection system in Uzbekistan plays an important role in the socio-economic development of the country. The country is implementing reforms aimed at supporting the most vulnerable segments of the population. In particular, the pension and benefit system is being improved, state programs are being introduced to reduce unemployment and increase

employment, and the quality of medical services and education is being improved.

The “Uzbekistan - 2030” strategy identifies improving the social protection system and adapting it to the needs of the population as one of the key priority areas. One of the main goals of the strategy is to establish an education, healthcare and social protection system that fully meets the needs of the population and international standards. The strategy also includes such goals as creating decent conditions for each person to realize their potential, as well as ensuring the well-being of the population through sustainable economic growth. 1

In 2024, Uzbekistan implemented a number of important reforms to improve the social protection system. The main aspects of these achievements are presented below:

1. Establishment of “Inson” centers: Inson centers and social workers in neighborhoods have been established in 208 districts and cities of the republic. This initiative serves to bring social services closer to the population and quickly meet their needs.

2. Expansion of social services: The list of prosthetic and rehabilitation devices for people with disabilities has been expanded from 18 to 30, which has made it possible to meet the needs of 100 thousand people since the beginning of the year. By 2025, it is planned to add 7 more types of devices, which will provide 80 thousand people in need with the necessary prosthetic devices.

3. Improvement of the social protection system: In accordance with Resolution No. 640 adopted on October 5, 2024, the procedure for providing material assistance to persons registered in the “Unified Register of Social Protection” information system has been further improved. This decision introduced new mechanisms, such as the “proactive” provision of benefits to children with disabilities and their legal representatives.

4. Centralization of the social services delivery system: Starting from January 1, 2024, orphanages were transferred from the Ministry of Health, as well as other social institutions from the relevant ministries, to the structure of the National Agency for Social Protection under the President. This change is aimed at introducing uniform standards and increasing efficiency in the provision of social services.²

As a result of these reforms, the social protection system in Uzbekistan has been further improved, and the quality of assistance provided to the most vulnerable segments of the population has increased. In the future, measures taken in this direction will serve to cover all segments of society.

Analysis shows that an effective social protection system leads to the following positive results:

1. The standard of living of the population increases - by supporting the low-income, unemployed and disabled people, their quality of life improves.

2. Economic activity increases - the economic participation of the population supported by the state increases, and the efficiency of the labor force increases.

3. Social equality is ensured - The social protection system serves to reduce inequalities in society and leads to a decrease in the level of poverty.

4. It has a positive impact on the economic stability of the state - Funds allocated for social protection increase the purchasing power of the population, which serves to develop the domestic market.

1 Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PF-158 dated September 11, 2023 "On approval of the Strategy "Uzbekistan - 2030".

2 President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2021). On measures to improve the system of social protection of the population of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2021–2030 [Decree]. Lex.uz. <https://lex.uz>

5. Human capital is developing - As a result of social programs aimed at education and healthcare, qualified personnel will be produced, which will serve the innovative development of the economy.³

However, some problems need to be solved in order for the social protection system to be more effective. In particular, important issues such as ensuring a more transparent and effective functioning of social protection mechanisms, the widespread use of electronic systems, and monitoring the targeted use of funds allocated from the state budget remain relevant.

According to the results of the analysis, the development of the social protection system in Uzbekistan directly affects socio-economic stability. Therefore, it is possible to accelerate the country's economic development by further improving the existing system and introducing innovative approaches.⁴

The following are proposed to improve the pension system of Uzbekistan:

- Ensure that the current system of mandatory pension fund accounts at the People's Bank is transformed into a voluntary, flexible and open to other banks.
- Allow large employers to introduce occupational pension schemes, linking them to financial institutions for cooperation.
- Set the amount of contributions to the state pension fund by the self-employed to be based on their income, rather than a fixed lump sum. Allow them to contribute a small amount.
- Improve the management of the state pension fund to reduce administrative and operational costs for each pension. Increasing transparency, establishing clear pension criteria, and further automating the system will reduce costs.
- Increase the level of formal employment, including among women, which will allow the pension system to increase its contribution base and population coverage.⁵

The Agency recommends developing a draft Presidential Decree to improve the pension system. It is advisable to take into account such aspects as: a large-scale reform of the pension system, including a review of the conditions for granting pensions, a review of the retirement age in line with life expectancy, a review of contributions for seniority or pensions, ensuring the financial stability of the pension system, and increasing population coverage.

CONCLUSION.

Uzbekistan pays special attention to improving the social protection system in order to achieve socio-economic development. The results of the study show that an effective social protection system has a positive impact on raising the standard of living of the population, ensuring economic stability and developing human capital. As a result of the reforms being implemented in the country, the pension and benefit system is being improved, employment is increasing, material assistance to the poor is being provided, and social programs in the fields of health care and education are being strengthened.

However, to increase the efficiency of the system, effective use of financial resources, ensuring transparency and widespread introduction of innovative technologies are of great importance.

Thus, further improvement of the social protection system is one of the important factors in ensuring sustainable economic development and social equality in Uzbekistan, and the state's efforts in this direction serve the country's long-term development strategy.

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