



# **ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY AS A KEY DIRECTION OF REFORMS IN NEW UZBEKISTAN**

**Seitova Z.P.**, Doctor of Social Sciences (DSc),

Acting Professor

Department of "National Ideology,

Foundations of Spirituality

and Legal Education"

Ajiniyaz Nukus State Pedagogical Institute

Nukus, Republic of Karakalpakstan

**[z.seitova62@mail.ru](mailto:z.seitova62@mail.ru)**

**Abstract:** In this article, the author examines issues of gender equality and how these issues are addressed at the state level. An analysis of sources that have covered equality issues in their publications is conducted. The article also explores how this issue currently stands at the state level.

**Keywords:** Uzbekistan, gender, laws, politics, Family Code.

In Uzbekistan, gender equality issues are among the priority areas of state policy. Gender equality in Uzbekistan has been a part of state policy since 1991. The principles of non-discrimination and equal rights for women and men are enshrined at the legislative level, primarily in the Constitution. Article 46 of the Fundamental 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 stipulates that "the fundamental principles for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men are: legality; democracy; equality between women and men; prohibition of gender-based discrimination; openness and transparency"<sup>3</sup>.

According to the Law, "the state guarantees equal rights to women and men in exercising personal, political, economic, social, and cultural rights." "The state ensures equal participation of women and men in managing the affairs of society and the state, in the electoral process, and guarantees equal rights and opportunities in the spheres of healthcare, education, science, culture, labor and social protection, as well as in other areas of state and public life"<sup>4</sup>.

In addition, "in order to achieve de facto equality between women and men, expand their participation in all spheres of social life, eliminate and prevent direct and indirect

<sup>1</sup> Конституция Республики Узбекистан. URL: <https://lex.uz/acts/35869> (дата обращения: 09.09.2022)

<sup>2</sup> Закон Республики Узбекистан «О гарантиях равных прав и возможностей для женщин и мужчин». URL: <https://lex.uz/acts/4494873> (дата обращения: 09.09.2022)

<sup>3</sup> Закон Республики Узбекистан «О гарантиях равных прав и возможностей для женщин и мужчин». URL: <https://lex.uz/acts/4494873> (дата обращения: 09.09.2022)

<sup>4</sup> Закон Республики Узбекистан «О гарантиях равных прав и возможностей для женщин и мужчин». URL: <https://lex.uz/acts/4494873> (дата обращения: 09.09.2022)



discrimination based on sex, the state is adopting temporary special measures to ensure the implementation of gender policy»<sup>5</sup>.

The main directions of the country's policy in ensuring gender equality are as follows: - "Developing and improving the legal and regulatory framework in this area"; - "Formulating and implementing state programs, national action plans, and strategies in this field"; - "Fostering a culture of equal rights and opportunities for women and men"; - "Ensuring equal participation of women and men in managing societal and state affairs"; - "Providing equal rights and opportunities for women and men to balance work and family responsibilities"; - "Offering social protection and support for families and children, promoting responsible motherhood and fatherhood"; - "Protecting society from information aimed at direct and indirect sex-based discrimination"; - "Engaging citizens' self-governance 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 from 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 with the aim of achieving equal rights and opportunities for women and men"<sup>6</sup>.

An important addition to the legislative framework of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which ensures equal rights and protection of women's rights, is the Labor Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan.<sup>7</sup>

The Family Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan stipulates that "all citizens have equal rights in family relations. Any direct or indirect restriction of rights, establishment of direct or indirect advantages when entering into marriage, and interference in family relations based on sex, race, nationality, language, religion, social origin, beliefs, personal or social status, or other circumstances is not permitted"<sup>8</sup>.

The Family Code emphasizes that "the protection of mothers' and children's interests is ensured through special measures safeguarding women's labor and health, creating conditions that allow women to balance work with motherhood, and providing legal protection, as well as material and moral support for motherhood and childhood"<sup>9</sup>. Article 19 of the Family Code stipulates that "spouses enjoy equal rights and bear equal responsibilities within the family"<sup>10</sup>. In 2021, the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted a Resolution "On Approval of the Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality in the Republic of Uzbekistan by 2030"<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Там же

<sup>6</sup> Закон Республики Узбекистан «О гарантиях равных прав и возможностей для женщин и мужчин». URL: <https://lex.uz/acts/4494873> (дата обращения: 09.09.2022)

<sup>7</sup> Трудовой кодекс Республики Узбекистан. URL: <https://lex.uz/acts/145261#145288> (дата обращения: 09.09.2022)

<sup>8</sup> Семейный кодекс Республики Узбекистан. URL: <https://lex.uz/acts/104723#160482> (дата обращения: 09.09.2022)

<sup>9</sup> Там же

<sup>10</sup> Там же

<sup>11</sup> Постановление Сената Олий Мажлиса Республики Узбекистан «Об утверждении Стратегии достижения гендерного равенства в Республике Узбекистан до 2030 года». URL: <https://lex.uz/docs/5466725> (дата обращения: 09.09.2022)



The Decree states that achieving equal rights and opportunities for women and men, ensuring their equal participation in managing the affairs of society and the state, supporting women in social and legal aspects, as well as protecting women from oppression and violence are the strategic goals of the reforms being implemented in this sphere. The issue of gender equality has been elevated to the level of state policy, with 25 legislative documents related to this area having been adopted<sup>12</sup>.

In Karakalpakstan, as early as the 1990s, public figures and the republic's mass media made significant contributions to the discussion of gender equality. The most striking example in this regard is the "Aral Qizlari" journal, which was headed by the renowned writer and scholar Gulaysha Yesemuratova as its editor-in-chief. The journal brought together prominent female representatives of Karakalpakstan, including scholars such as S. Bakhadyrova, R. Yesemuratova, P. Muratova, and journalists Sh. Pakhradinova and A. Turekeeva<sup>13</sup>.

The magazine began actively promoting ideas of an active lifestyle for women, discussing their issues, including their social status in society and family. The journal published materials about famous women of Karakalpakstan in modern history. It quickly gained popularity among women.

One of the main functions of the magazine became the rejection of traditional stereotypes about women's roles. Ideological attitudes in society typically determined the position of the media, which reinforced traditional conservative hierarchical gender representations, forming stereotypes of mass consciousness created by men and for men<sup>14</sup>. From this perspective, the "Aral Kyzlary" ("Aral Girls") magazine was innovative. It pursued the goal of shaping modern views not only on society and social relations in general but also on the role of women in modern society.

At the same time, within the framework of the magazine, it was difficult to completely revise the established stereotypes regarding gender equality. Therefore, in the magazine's issues, one can encounter ideas about reviving traditional relationships in society and everyday life, as well as types of traditional handicrafts and artisanship. In particular, the renowned art historian and ethnographer A. Allamuratov, in his article "Ecology of Culture," indicated that during the Soviet era, women of the republic were forced to represent a social-production unit while simultaneously managing the household. Under new conditions, the author deemed it necessary to return to traditional material and spiritual culture, thereby rejecting issues of women's emancipation and gender equality<sup>15</sup>.

However, the magazine also provided a platform for discussing and implementing innovative ideas. It featured young journalists, poetesses, scientists, and young researchers who brought pressing issues to the agenda and offered solutions.

For example, O.A. Ataniyazova, in her article "Auladty ana saklaydy," highlighted the impact of ecology on women's health. In the second half of the 1980s, the incidence of anemia

<sup>12</sup> Там же

<sup>13</sup> Рустимова А. Гендерное неравенство в СМИ// Материалы международной женской научно-теоритической конференции, посвященной 10-летию журнала «Арал кызлары». –Нукус, 2001, -С. 29.

<sup>14</sup> Рустимова А. Гендерное неравенство в СМИ// Материалы международной женской научно-теоритической конференции, посвященной 10-летию журнала «Арал кызлары». –Нукус, 2001, -С. 29.

<sup>15</sup> Алламуратов А. Маденият экологиясы.// Арал кызлары, 1991, № 2. –С. 5



symptoms in women of Karakalpakstan nearly doubled, resulting in more than 96% of women in the republic suffering from anemia. Girls were getting married at 17-19 years old, and these already relatively early marriages had an additional negative aspect due to the girls often being delayed in their development. The author considered the most appropriate age for marriage to be 22-25 years old<sup>16</sup>.

The poet G. Matyakubova raised the issue of women's social status. In her article "Turmystag'y ornymyz," she wrote that "due to the lack of family income, women were forced to work in the most difficult areas of production and agriculture"<sup>17</sup>. In urban environments, "women work in all spheres, only see their children in the evening, and have no time for child-rearing"<sup>18</sup>. She views the role of women in the family, society, and state as unpaid slavery. She emphasized the necessity of women's representation in representative government bodies and pointed out that Women's Committees cannot address gender issues without state support. Although the "Aral Qizlari" magazine is no longer published, its history demonstrates that to tackle gender inequality problems, it is crucial to highlight these issues and bring them to public attention, shaping public opinion and proposing solutions to problems. Such publications contribute to strengthening civil society positions, which will also promote the modernization of socio-political and economic relations, as well as public perceptions of women's roles.

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

**Conclusion.** Uzbekistan has made significant progress in ensuring gender equality. Equal rights for women and men are enshrined at the legislative and regulatory level. 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 Codes, as well as other acts. Substantial work has been done to implement gender equality in practice and to fulfill the tasks outlined in the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Notable progress can be observed in increasing women's representation in political structures, state governance and administration bodies, leadership positions in organizations, and in achieving certain improvements in protecting women's rights within the family.

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<sup>16</sup> Атаниязова О. Ауладты ана саклайды.// Арал кызлары, №2, -С. 17-19.

<sup>17</sup> Матьякубова Г. Турмыстагы орнымыз.// Арал кызлары, 1992, №3. -С. 5-7.

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