

Gender Equality in Entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan

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Abstract: This article analyzes the state of gender equality in the field of entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan. The study examines the policies and initiatives implemented to increase equal opportunities between women and men in society. The article also discusses the obstacles faced by women entrepreneurs and ways to overcome them. As a result, the reforms implemented in Uzbekistan to ensure gender equality and future plans are assessed.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, entrepreneurship, gender equality, women entrepreneurs, political reforms, social equality.

The Strategy of Actions for the Further Development of Uzbekistan has identified increasing socio-economic activity, especially the participation of women, as an important factor. The formation of the property class and the transition to a market economy play an important role in the economic and political stability of society, these processes serve to create new jobs and expand the country's market.

The participation of women in entrepreneurship is of decisive importance in increasing the effectiveness of these processes. The Strategy of Actions identifies measures aimed at developing small and medium-sized businesses and ensuring the socio-economic activity of women. These measures include comprehensive support for women entrepreneurs, ensuring benefits in the minimum wage and pensions, as well as the organization of private entrepreneurs into associations and strengthening social protection systems.

These reforms serve the goals of increasing women's economic independence, assisting low-income families, and ensuring employment of the population. Thus, Uzbekistan is taking bold steps towards creating a more economically strong and stable society.

In the process of transition of the Republic of Uzbekistan to a market economy, support for small and medium-sized businesses and private entrepreneurship has become of great importance. A number of regulatory and legal documents adopted and put into practice during this process are aimed at developing and strengthening entrepreneurial activity.

In particular, such documents as the Law of May 25, 2000 "On Guarantees of Freedom of Entrepreneurship"; the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan of April 9, 1998 "On Measures to Further Encourage the Development of Private Entrepreneurship and Small Business" play an important role. These documents serve the purpose of strengthening the legal protection of business entities, liberalizing financial liability for violations of the law in the economic sphere, and forming a favorable business environment for the development of small business and private entrepreneurship.

In addition, the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of February 14, 1995 "On Urgent Measures to Demonstrate Initiative and Encourage Private Entrepreneurship" and other similar

resolutions determined the issues of establishing a private entrepreneurship and small business support fund (Business Fund) and its activities.

Uzbekistan's legislative framework in this regard is aimed at modernizing the country's economy and increasing its competitiveness in global markets by improving the business environment and providing broad freedom to entrepreneurship. At the same time, the declaration of 2011 as the "Year of Small Business and Private Entrepreneurship", and 2018 as the "Year of Support for Active Entrepreneurship, Innovative Ideas and Technologies" also paved the way for the further development of entrepreneurship among women. In the rapid development of small business and private entrepreneurship in the country, the reduction of tax benefits established for this sector, first of all, further stimulated entrepreneurship. In particular, during the period 1996-2016, tax rates established for small business and private entrepreneurship decreased from 38% to 5%, that is, 7.4 times. This contributed to the annual increase in the share of women entrepreneurs in the gross domestic product of the republic. The growth of entrepreneurial activity among women is associated with their adaptation to the relations of a socially oriented market economy, increased employment, and expanded opportunities for earning higher incomes.

The role of women engaged in entrepreneurial activities in the socio-economic life of the Republic of Uzbekistan has increased significantly in 1995-1996. Comparative analytical data presented in the regions show that women have become more active in the field of entrepreneurship. For example, in Andijan region, in 1995 there were 291 women entrepreneurs, while in 1996 this figure reached 400. In Bukhara, the number increased from 1401 to 1495, and in Samarkand from 2068 to 2345.

According to statistical data for 1997, 67.8% of working women wanted to stay in the workforce, while 21% preferred to quit their jobs if family well-being was ensured. These indicators indicate that women's economic activity is closely related to their family goals and aspirations for professional development.

The main reason for working was the need to earn money for the family (55%), and another 14% indicated the desire to become financially independent. These changes have led to an increase in the role of women in society and their economic independence. In 2001, among the entrepreneurs included in the database of the Republican Chamber of Producers and Entrepreneurs, women accounted for only 14.2%, while men accounted for 86.8%. By 2019, the share of women entrepreneurs was 29%. It should be noted that entrepreneurial activity among women in the republic has been one of the important factors in their achievement of economic independence.

The "Tadbirkor Ayol" association, which has been operating since 1991, has played an important role in expanding women's economic and social rights and opportunities, supporting their entrepreneurial initiatives, retraining unemployed women in business basics and professions that are in demand in the labor market, and providing legal support to women entrepreneurs. The association has 14 regional branches, 68 district and city branches, uniting more than 15,000 business entities. About 200 specialists in the association have made a worthy contribution to ensuring women's gainful employment by developing women's entrepreneurial movement, improving their economic knowledge, retraining them for a profession, and widely promoting family entrepreneurship. If in 1991 20% of the association's members had their own business, this figure amounted to more than 60% in 1999.

Women's activity in the labor market is explained by the need to meet family needs, find their place in the family and society, form a modern worldview, improve their professional skills, and pursue a career. All this strengthens women's aspirations for work and makes them an important contributor to the sustainable development of society. In short, the increase in women's entrepreneurial and economic activity in Uzbekistan has allowed them to strengthen their position in society and contribute to economic stability. These changes have created the foundation for continuing to strengthen the social and economic role of women.

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