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Abstract. *This article raises questions: about the interpretation of the concept of poverty, the concept of studying and changing poverty, about the main groups of the poor and their signs, about the content and criteria of inequality.*

Keywords: *inequality, poverty, absolute and relative poverty, poverty line, living wage, chronic poverty.*

Poverty remains one of the most pressing social problems in Uzbekistan. Despite economic growth and ongoing reforms, many citizens face difficulties in meeting their needs. To understand the situation, it is important to consider the causes of poverty, its consequences, as well as measures taken by the state, including the presidential decree.

Poverty is not only a minimum income, but also a special lifestyle that is passed down from generation to generation. Poverty is the result of diverse and interrelated causes, which are grouped into the following groups:

- economic (unemployment, economic inequality, including low wages, low labor productivity, uncompetitiveness of the industry);
- social and medical (disability, old age, high morbidity rate);
- Demographic (single-parent families, overpopulation);
- educational qualification (low level of education, insufficient professional training);
- Political (military conflicts, forced migration);
- regional and geographical (uneven development of regions);

According to the World Bank, Uzbekistan is included in the group of countries with an average national income per capita (\$1,533 per person per year). According to a report by Focus Economics, Uzbekistan ranked 8th in the list of

the poorest countries in the world in 2018. Extreme poverty continues to be an important global problem – poverty when a person lives on \$1.9 per day or less.

About 16 percent of Uzbekistan's population lives below the poverty line, 75 percent of this population lives in rural areas. One of the most difficult problems facing the country is the lack of jobs. High unemployment and low wages are the reason for mass labor migration to Russia and Kazakhstan. From 2010 to 2012, remittances account for between 12 and 15 percent of the country's GDP.

Presidential initiatives

In 2021, President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev signed a decree aimed at reducing poverty and improving the quality of life of citizens. The decree "On additional measures to improve the standard of living of the population and reduce poverty" was an important step in solving this problem. It defines the main goals and directions of the State's work to combat poverty.

Basic measures to combat poverty

Social programs: The decree includes the launch of new support programs for the poor, such as cash payments, assistance in education and healthcare.

- Cash payments: Creation or expansion of cash benefit programs for low-income families and certain categories of citizens, such as large families, people with disabilities, the unemployed, and pensioners. These payments can be targeted or universal and are aimed at ensuring a minimum standard of living.

- Subsidies for utilities: In the context of rising utility tariffs, programs to subsidize or compensate for part of the cost of housing and utilities help reduce the financial burden on the poor.

- Benefits for families with children: Inclusion in social programs of payments to support families with children, especially for single parents and large families. This can be either one-time assistance or regular payments.

- Assistance in education: Free or subsidized places in educational institutions, scholarships, grants for students from poor families. There are also adult education assistance programs, including retraining and advanced training.

- Medical care: Expansion of free medical services for vulnerable groups of the population, including preventive measures, access to medicines and basic medical services for people with low incomes.

Infrastructure development: Emphasis is placed on infrastructure modernization, especially in rural and remote areas.

- Construction and modernization of schools: Special attention should be paid to the construction of new schools and modernization of existing ones in rural and remote areas. This not only improves the learning environment, but also creates new jobs for teachers and technical staff.

- Health care: The construction and renovation of health facilities, especially in sparsely populated areas, helps ensure access to health services for all citizens. It is important to create a network of mobile medical centers and develop telemedicine for remote regions.

- Transport infrastructure: Construction of new roads and bridges, modernization of public transport help to improve accessibility in rural and remote regions. This contributes not only to improving the quality of life, but also to expanding economic opportunities through job creation and increased mobility of the population.

- Energy infrastructure: The development of electricity and water supply networks, the creation of new sources of renewable energy, such as solar and wind power plants, all contribute to improving the quality of life, reducing utility costs and stimulating job creation in a green economy.

Support for small and medium-sized businesses: To create jobs and increase incomes of the population, the state offers credit programs and tax incentives for entrepreneurs.

- Credit programs: The government can provide preferential loans for small and medium-sized enterprises, especially at the initial stage of their development. This gives entrepreneurs the opportunity to develop their business, create new jobs and strengthen the economy. Microfinance programs and low-interest loans can also help small businesses, especially in rural areas.

- Tax incentives: To stimulate entrepreneurship, tax holidays or benefits for a certain period for new enterprises may be offered, as well as reduced taxes for small businesses operating in the field of social services or in the market of essential goods. This allows entrepreneurs to focus on business growth and job creation.

- Training and support for entrepreneurs: The development of an entrepreneur training system, including programs on financial management, marketing and business strategy, plays an important role. Public and private organizations can create consulting and training centers for startups and small businesses.

- Support for innovative technologies: An important area is the support of new technologies and innovative business models, for example, startups in the field of information technology, agribusiness or renewable energy sources. This creates new jobs and contributes to long-term economic growth.

Education and vocational training: The Decree focuses on improving the quality of education and expanding opportunities for vocational training, which will help train qualified personnel.

- Accessibility of education: Government programs aimed at providing free or subsidized education for all categories of citizens, including schoolchildren, students and adults. Special attention should be paid to distance learning, which opens up educational opportunities for people living in remote areas.

- Development of professional skills: An important element is the development of educational programs aimed at training specialists in popular industries (for example, in construction, healthcare, information technology, agriculture). This helps to ensure stable employment and income growth among the population.

- Retraining programs: Retraining and advanced training programs for those who have lost their jobs or want to change their field of activity. These programs may include courses in new professions such as IT specialists, managers, marketing specialists and others.

- Scholarships and grants: Scholarships and grants for students from low-income families are important elements of educational policy. This makes it possible to get a high-quality education without financial barriers and becomes an important tool in the fight against poverty.

- Business collaboration: Universities and colleges can collaborate with large and medium-sized enterprises to create internships, joint study programs and provide students with employment opportunities upon completion of their studies.

Poverty in Uzbekistan is a complex and multifaceted problem that requires an integrated approach and systemic changes. The presidential decree on poverty reduction reflects the state's intention to actively work to improve the living conditions of citizens. However, in order to achieve real results, a joint effort of the state and society is necessary. By focusing on education, business support and social protection, Uzbekistan can take significant steps to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of its citizens.

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