

**POVERTY REDUCTION IN THE STRATEGY OF THE NEW UZBEKISTAN:
PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS**

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Abstract: The article discusses the problems of poverty reduction in the context of the Strategy of the new Uzbekistan, as well as ways to solve them.

Keywords: New Uzbekistan, welfare, poverty, impoverishment, laziness, idleness, income, "Iron notebook", "Women's notebook", "Youth notebook", knowledge.

Introduction. The problems of the poor are acute social problems that exist in all countries to one degree or another. The fact that poverty is universal indicates that its causes are common. According to the World Bank, today the total number of poor people in the world has exceeded 800 million. The first of the UN's international system of indicators, which is currently widely used in the world, is the eradication of poverty.

Poverty is one of the social problems of Uzbekistan, as well as of other countries of the world. This problem cannot be completely solved, since the stratification of the population is an objective and natural phenomenon for the economy. However, poverty can provoke social conflicts, which in turn creates social instability, hinders and threatens the economic renewal of society. Given this, it is necessary to alleviate the problem of poverty. In this regard, wide-ranging measures are being implemented in Uzbekistan. These are policies to increase employment and incomes.

Analysis. Poverty is a global problem. The fact that this problem still attracts the attention of the world's most prominent experts, scholars and philosophers can be seen in the fact that there is still no universally accepted and single agreed definition of the concepts of "poverty" and "poverty". Each country describes these concepts based on its own poverty criteria.

In particular, according to the UN definition [1], poverty is a lack of income and resources necessary for a person to live, in addition, hunger and malnutrition, restrictions on access to health care, education or other basic services, lack of housing, living in a dangerous natural and man-made environment, and social inequality.

Poverty [2] is a condition in which a person lacks choices and opportunities throughout their life, is hindered by barriers to full participation in society, and is characterized by a lack of opportunities to feed and clothe their family, to receive education or medical care, to engage in any form of employment or gainful employment, and by limited access to credit. Poverty is also a condition in which individuals, households, and communities are socially marginalized, vulnerable, and vulnerable to risks.

As the blessed Hadiths say, "poverty is the greatest misfortune and the greatest affliction. Poverty makes a person an enemy to everyone, shameless, takes away his justice and kindness, weakens his strength and understanding. Poverty is a source of sin and corruption" [3].

The people of Uzbekistan have entered an important stage of national upliftment. Today, reforms are being boldly implemented in all spheres in our country. Solutions are being found to issues that previously seemed insurmountable. Most importantly, the living conditions of the people are improving. Ordinary people are satisfied with the state and life.

The words of our President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in his speech at the solemn ceremony dedicated to the twenty-ninth anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan: "No one should ever forget: no matter how difficult it is, no matter how much money and opportunities are required, not a single citizen of Uzbekistan will be left to their own devices," [4] further strengthened the firm belief of our citizens that they have a mountain they can trust, a state that will

protect them. The status of a citizen of Uzbekistan has been elevated, and the holder of this status has acquired a reputation for protection, special care and affection.

Poverty has been a “closed topic” in our country for many years. On January 24, 2020, in his Address to the Oliy Majlis, the head of our state spoke openly about this and for the first time in our history, poverty reduction was identified as a priority.

“According to preliminary estimates, 12-15 percent or 4-5 million of our population are poor. This means that their daily income does not exceed 10-13 thousand soums. Or a family may have a car and livestock, but if one person is seriously ill, at least 70 percent of the family's income goes to his treatment. Can such a family be called self-sufficient? As the president, I am tormented every day by the question of what is happening to the vital needs of our people, such as food, treatment, education of their children, and clothing,” [5] - said the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at a videoconference meeting on measures aimed at reducing poverty through the development of entrepreneurship on February 27, 2020.

The head of our state is striving to solve the problem of overcoming poverty. This idea also forms the basis of the philosophy of satisfying the people. Representatives of responsible agencies in the socio-economic sectors went from neighborhood to neighborhood, house to house, studied the situation on the spot, compiled a list of low-income, unemployed, poor families, women, and youth, and separately created “Iron Notebook”, “Women's Notebook” and “Youth Notebook” for them. A system of support was developed to identify the entrepreneurial potential of citizens included in these notebooks, then create appropriate conditions for them, and provide them with initial “start-up capital”.

In this regard, it is worth recalling that President Shavkat Mirziyoyev paid attention to another important issue: “Reducing poverty does not mean increasing the amount of salaries or benefits, or giving loans to everyone. To do this, first of all, it is necessary to train the population in professions, increase financial literacy, instill a sense of entrepreneurship in people, improve infrastructure, educate their children, provide quality treatment, and introduce a system of targeted benefits” [see source 5].

It should be emphasized that in 2020, for the first time in the history of the country, the concept of poverty was recognized as a serious problem affecting the sustainable development of the country, and this direction became one of the main issues of socio-economic policy.

In this regard, the following was noted: [6. 439-b]

Firstly, poverty affects the growth of crime. Crime is widespread among low-income segments of the population, and they are more likely to resort to criminal forms of “earning money”.

The second negative consequence of poverty is its negative impact on the health of segments of the population with a low standard of living and low incomes.

Thirdly, poverty also directly affects the growth of alcoholism and drug addiction.

Fourthly, high levels of poverty are the cause of increased social tension in society.

Another dangerous consequence of poverty is the decline in the general level of education of the population.

Poverty also puts households and families at risk. Especially the problem of unemployment. Unemployment is when a person has the ability to work, but this demand is not satisfied, or when able-bodied people become unemployed, despite the need to earn money.

Another problem. The majority of our migrant citizens who have returned from abroad do not have a culture of spending their savings. Our people have a saying: “Until you earn money, count it.” They spend the money they earn through hard work mainly on large events, weddings, and buying housing. In order to attract citizens to entrepreneurship and private business, it is necessary to provide knowledge about entrepreneurship, offer business ideas and plans so that they do not fall into a difficult situation after spending their earned money.

Taking into account the negative consequences of poverty, developing strategic directions for combating it in our country has become one of the most important tasks.

In this regard, it should be noted that until now we have been ignoring, not knowing, that the majority of our citizens are really poor. Now there is no need to hide, we will need to understand the real problem and situation of our people living in difficult conditions, and change the worldview of all categories of leaders, writes our President Shavkat Mirziyoyev [see source 6: p. 438].

In his work “The Current Times and New Uzbekistan” (2024), published by the “Uzbekistan” publishing house, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev wrote: “My greatest intention is to completely eliminate poverty and unemployment in our country. I am confident that such days will come, and I am ready to devote all my strength, capabilities, and everything to this” [7. p. 460].

Of course, in a historically short period of time, a lot of work has been done in our country to ensure consistent economic growth, achieve economic development, and improve the standard of living and quality of life of our people. In particular, it is worth noting the reforms in the tax, banking and financial systems, including the liberalization of the foreign exchange market, the elimination of problems with cash, the implementation of international financial transactions based on world standards, the creation of new innovative, high-tech enterprises, the rapid introduction of modern communication systems and digital technologies into our lives, and the opening of a wide path for entrepreneurship.

The noble idea of “For the dignity of man, for the happiness of the people and the homeland!” is deeply embedded in the spirit and content of all our reforms.

In his speech at the festive celebration dedicated to the 33rd anniversary of our country's state independence, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev called improving the education sector the most priority direction of reforms and said: “The solution to our problems, the answer to our questions lies only in education. The key that opens all doors is only and only education and upbringing” [8]. Then our President continued his speech and put forward the following important idea: “He addressed the parents of girls in particular: “Educate your daughters, help them realize their dreams and hopes! As our elders said, if we educate a boy, one person becomes literate. If we educate a girl, the whole family, the whole society becomes educated!” [Source 8].

So, knowledge and skills are an important factor in reducing poverty.

In recent years, the approach to this issue in our country has changed radically, a new system has been created, and it is constantly improving, as can be seen in real numbers. The poverty rate decreased from 17 percent in 2021 to 14 percent in 2023 and to 11 percent by the beginning of 2024.

In 2020, 7.5 million or 23 percent of the population had incomes below the poverty line. By making 3.5 million people gainful in previous years, the poverty level decreased to 11 percent by the end of 2023. First, the coverage of social protection was expanded 4.5 times, and 12.3 trillion soums were allocated last year. The amount of pensions and benefits was also increased 1.5 times [9]. In the last 6 months of 2024, in order to ensure employment and reduce poverty, 113 thousand unemployed people were trained in professional and entrepreneurial skills. The indicator increased 1.5 times compared to the same period last year. In addition, training was launched in 12 new professions. Currently, training is being provided in more than 30 professions. Foreign language training has been increased to 10 thousand people, a fivefold increase compared to the previous year. In the first six months of 2024, 64 thousand people who wanted to work abroad were sent to work abroad in a legal, safe and organized manner [10]. In accordance with the “Uzbekistan - 2030” strategy, it is planned to double the size of the economy by 2030 and enter the ranks of “upper-middle-income countries” (Goal 45), and reduce the poverty rate to 10 percent by 2024 [11].

Until 2021, the poverty line in Uzbekistan was not calculated. This line is measured differently around the world. Somewhere relative, somewhere absolute indicators. For the first time in Uzbekistan, surveys and studies were conducted on the consumption characteristics of the population.

The need for good calorie food, medical care and other services was calculated, and the concept of "minimum consumption costs" was developed. In this process, deep and comprehensive complex research was conducted based on international standards, a new methodology was created that includes the concept of "poverty", criteria for its definition and assessment methods. According to it, for the first time in the history of the country, a poverty line was established - the amount of minimum consumption costs.

The amount of minimum consumption costs in Uzbekistan was set at 440 thousand soums in 2021, and from January 2022 at 498 thousand soums. Later, this amount amounted to 568 thousand soums in July 2023.

The Statistics Agency recalculated the minimum consumption expenditure based on the "Regulation on the procedure for calculating the minimum consumption expenditure of the population and the poverty line". In accordance with the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers "On additional measures for the introduction of market mechanisms in the fuel and energy sector" [12], the Statistics Agency is required to revise and publish the minimum consumption expenditure by May 1, 2024, taking into account the increase in fuel and energy prices. Based on this, the Statistics Agency calculated the minimum consumption expenditure. According to it, the minimum consumption expenditure calculated from May 2024 will amount to 648 thousand soums per capita per month (the value announced in January 2024 was 621 thousand soums) [13].

It should be noted and clarified that in world practice, the use of the minimum consumption expenditure indicator as a poverty line is widespread, and this indicator is used to:

- identify the target group of the population in need of state material and other social assistance;
- increase the effectiveness and relevance of the tasks and measures set out in the poverty reduction strategy and programs, as well as to conduct their constant monitoring;
- determine the minimum amount of pensions and benefits, as well as to provide other types of material assistance to poor families.

In China, a decent lifestyle has been created for people and they have been lifted out of poverty based on the system of two foundations and three guarantees ("2+3"). That is, the rural poor have been freed from the worries of food and clothing, and have access to compulsory education, basic medical care, and safe housing. These are important requirements and key indicators of poverty reduction in China. Therefore, in this country, a person who has 5 guarantees has formed the basis for not only himself but also his descendants to be lifted out of poverty.

Systematic work, regulatory documents, roadmaps, and strategies are being developed to apply this experience in Uzbekistan. In particular, today in our country, preferential loans and subsidies are being allocated to the needy, low-income, and poor strata. A system of assistance to the needy has been created by uniting ministries and departments in villages with a high level of poverty, and increased attention has been paid to the development of homesteading.

The only correct solution to poverty reduction is to create conditions for entrepreneurs and establish beneficial cooperation with them. This allows both to ensure employment and to train qualified specialists. For this purpose, the "20 thousand entrepreneurs - 500 thousand qualified specialists" program was implemented.

At the videoconference meeting chaired by our President on September 11, 2024, clear tasks were set for officials in this direction [14]. This is not without reason. Because as the level of poverty decreases, its reduction becomes more difficult. Therefore, the "From Poverty to Prosperity" program is being prepared for the coming years.

Also, each mahalla will be fully surveyed and a “portrait of poor families” will be developed. Based on this program, the economic complex will be engaged in lifting families out of poverty.

Now poverty reduction will be carried out based on a new approach. 250 senior officials from ministries and departments at the republican level will be assigned to the 1,000 most difficult neighborhoods across the country. In addition, 2,000 senior officials from the region and 12,000 from the districts will work with 5 families in the most difficult situation.

Conclusions and recommendations.

1. Poverty cannot be solved by distributing money and paying benefits alone. For this, it is important to educate, train and provide employment to poor family members.

2. Each mahalla should undergo a full census and accelerate the development of a “portrait of poor families”. The economic complex should responsibly engage in lifting families out of poverty based on the “From Poverty to Prosperity” program to be developed for the coming years.

3. Land lease initiatives should be continued based on the principles of fairness and corruption should not be allowed.

4. Continue to apply tax benefits to entrepreneurs who provide employment to the poor.

5. Implement systematic work to solve the problems of the population at the mahalla level, strengthen cooperation among the “mahalla sevens”, work with youth, and ensure employment of the population.

6. In order to live well, first of all, it is necessary to act, abandon the mentality of dependence, and understand that nothing can be achieved without work. It is necessary to make the population, especially our youth, understand that poverty cannot be eliminated only with state support.

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