

PROTECTING THE SOCIALLY VULNERABLE SEGMENTS OF THE POPULATION IS A PRESSING ISSUE IN THE PROCESS OF DEMOCRATIZATION OF SOCIETY

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Annotation: This article focuses on improving the social protection of vulnerable segments of the population during the process of democratization of society. It also highlights issues related to the support of the elderly, including the development of a state system aimed at providing social protection for senior citizens and veterans, among other related aspects.

Keywords: Society, democracy, need, social protection, peace, patronage nurses, disease prevention, oncology dispensaries, international financial institutions, credit, grant, law, non-governmental organization, family.

INTRODUCTION

At the current stage of our development, increasing attention is being given to issues related to ensuring compulsory social guarantees for the population, enhancing the social protection of vulnerable segments of society, strengthening state support for the elderly and persons with disabilities, and improving the quality of social services.

In Uzbekistan, between 2010 and 2015, the material and technical base of 12 “Sakhovat” and “Muruvvat” residential care homes intended for the elderly and pensioners was strengthened. Housing conditions were improved for 14.6 thousand lonely elderly people, pensioners, and persons with disabilities. Furthermore, 5.4 thousand individuals were provided with rehabilitation aids and prosthetic-orthopedic devices, and 6.4 thousand persons with disabilities and pensioners underwent health rehabilitation in sanatoriums. The total amount of medical and social assistance provided reached 132.2 billion UZS [1,173].

In the context of democratization of society, the enhancement of social protection for vulnerable population groups requires continued state support of the “Nuroni” Foundation, the further improvement of systems for protecting lonely elderly people, pensioners, and persons with disabilities, and ensuring the targeted nature of such support. It is also necessary to improve the level and quality of medical and social assistance provided to the elderly, people with disabilities, and isolated seniors, as well as to develop fundamentally new approaches that ensure access for district and city residents to modern diagnostic and treatment methods.

In order to further improve the state system for supporting the elderly, measures have been taken to enhance the social protection of senior citizens and veterans, increase their engagement, and create conditions for their full participation in the socio-political life of the country. Additionally, efforts have been made to strengthen the role of the older generation in ensuring peace and stability. A significant step in this direction was the issuance of the Presidential Decree of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated December 28, 2016, “On Measures to Further Improve the Activities of the Nuroni Foundation for the Social Support of Veterans of Uzbekistan” [2], as well as the adoption of the Resolution “On Additional Measures to Further Improve the System of State Support for the Elderly

and Persons with Disabilities” [3]. These documents marked a new phase in the implementation of relevant reforms.

The decree and resolution emphasize the importance of involving elders, senior citizens, and veterans in social activities, improving their quality of life at the local level, supporting their social engagement, and providing social and material assistance to lonely and needy elderly individuals in cooperation with citizens' self-governing bodies. Additional provisions include the financial support of the central office and regional branches of the Nuroniy Foundation, the establishment of "Nuroniylar Maskani" complexes, and ensuring comprehensive medical examinations for all 2.8 million elderly citizens through specialized medical brigades for early detection and treatment of illnesses.

Preventive measures to control the health of the elderly are being expanded through continuous monitoring by assigned patronage nurses. To improve the living standards and quality of life for 15,500 lonely elderly people, personal social workers have been assigned. The initiative also ensures the free treatment and rehabilitation of elderly individuals.

In support of these goals, 20,000 medical service vouchers were allocated to the country's specialized medical centers, and over 215,000 to regional healthcare institutions, totaling 178.9 billion UZS. Furthermore, all medical associations and institutions, including oncology dispensaries in every region, were equipped with modern medical equipment worth a total of 108.7 million USD. The material and technical infrastructure of 23 “Sakhovat” and “Muruvvat” residential homes for the elderly and persons with disabilities was strengthened, with investments amounting to 207 billion UZS under the implementation of the aforementioned decree and resolution.

To finance the implementation of this program, 688.2 billion UZS have been allocated, with plans to attract an additional \$108.7 million USD in credit and grant funds from international financial institutions [4].

In addition, on December 26, 2016, the Law "On Social Services for the Elderly, Persons with Disabilities, and Other Socially Vulnerable Categories of the Population" was adopted. The essence of this law lies in improving the legal framework for social services provided to vulnerable groups of the population, defining general requirements and key directions for the provision of social services, increasing the roles of both governmental and non-governmental organizations in this sector, and specifying the main concepts within the system of social protection. The law envisions the targeted and individualized delivery of social services, assistance to those in need, creation of opportunities for them to participate equally in social life, and support to help them independently meet their essential daily needs through a comprehensive set of legal, economic, psychological, educational, medical, rehabilitative, and other measures.

Ensuring the protection of socially vulnerable segments of the population has been identified as one of the country's top priorities. This issue was fully reflected in the State Program for the Implementation of the Strategy of Actions on Five Priority Areas of Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017–2021, declared under the theme "The Year of Dialogue with the People and Human Interests."

The program also aimed to enhance the social engagement and status of the elderly in society. Accordingly, in 2017, measures were undertaken with the involvement of the Nuroniy Foundation, Mahalla Foundation, Women's Committee, the Oila Scientific-Practical Center, the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, as well as regional and Tashkent city administrations. These initiatives were designed to create necessary conditions for active participation of elderly citizens in the socio-political life of the country, to ensure peace and stability in families and communities, and to strengthen the role of the older generation in educating the younger generation to respect the centuries-old traditions of the Uzbek people.

To support these initiatives, a total of 200 million UZS is planned to be allocated from the budgets of the implementing organizations [5].

In this direction, efforts are being made to enhance the support for the older generation and to expand their targeted social protection, including increasing the responsibility of employers and trade unions. In particular, through collective agreements and arrangements, provisions have been made to offer moral and material support to elderly individuals. Specifically, 15,000 pre-retirement individuals are to receive one-time financial assistance and be presented with valuable gifts before retirement, 14,000 employees are to be awarded valuable gifts on their jubilee anniversaries, and 55,000 non-working pensioners (former employees of enterprises) are to receive financial aid. To implement these measures, 7 billion UZS will be allocated from employers' funds and 1 billion UZS from trade union resources.

To further enhance the restoration of health and provision of quality medical and social services to the elderly, comprehensive measures are being implemented in 2017 to strengthen the material and technical base of social institutions across the country. For this purpose, a total of 49.312 billion UZS will be allocated from the state budget [5].

CONCLUSION

This year, the Action Strategy envisions identifying low-income families who are genuinely in need and require state support, assigning pensions and financial assistance, and simplifying the procedures for assigning such aid based on temporary residence. In line with this, the development of a draft resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers is planned to amend and supplement the existing Regulation on the Procedure for Assigning and Paying Social Benefits and Financial Aid to Low-Income Families, which was approved by Cabinet Resolution No. 44 dated February 15, 2013 [5]. This, in turn, is expected to contribute to the establishment of a legal framework for organizing targeted social protection — as emphasized by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in his address.

References:

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