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**ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS
IN PLACES OF IMPRISONMENT**

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Abstract

This article describes the need to ensure gender equality and empower women and girls in prisons. Inclusive and adaptive education, which involves the inclusion of convicted women and girls in the processes of professionalization and building their own vector of professional development as future full-fledged university graduates in the space of professional qualifications.

Keywords: Employment, education, gender equality, inclusive education.

Introduction

In modern Uzbekistan, the role of women lies in their active participation in all spheres of socio-economic, political and cultural life of society, in the work of government bodies and public organizations, in their contribution to the education of the younger generation, health care, the social sphere, the development of industry, agriculture and other areas.

The Sustainable Development Program until 2030, developed by the UN General Assembly, “National program to increase the activity of women in all spheres of economic, political and social life of the country for 2022-2026” has become a powerful impetus to support women in realizing their rights and interests, strengthening their role in society and enhancing their participation in public administration.[1]

Today, ensuring the employment of women and eradicating discrimination in the labor market, equality in pay is one of the pressing problems throughout the world. The pandemic has had a negative impact on women's employment in general.

Unfortunately, the issue of women's employment still remains particularly relevant. According to an ILO report, the ratio of women who want to find work but are unable to find work is 4.5 percent higher than the number of men looking for work. This gender gap has remained almost unchanged for two decades. [7]

According to ILO estimates, in 2022 the level of participation of men of working age in the labor market was 71.9%, women – 46.6%. Overall, women are 1.5% less active than men. [6]

The adoption by the state of relevant Resolutions in order to eliminate gender equality, the organization of various kinds of events are aimed at expanding the rights and opportunities of women, increasing their role in all processes of public administration of society as a whole.

It is about restoring special status and respect for women. In recent years, the country has adopted 25 legal acts aimed at ensuring gender equality, including 2 laws, more than 20 decrees and



resolutions of the President, government resolutions.

Since 2019, national legal mechanisms have been in place to ensure compliance with norms on the inadmissibility of discrimination based on gender. Gender-oriented laws of the republic have been adopted, such as “On guarantees of equal rights and opportunities for men and women” and “On the protection of women from harassment and violence.” [5]

The Strategy for Gender Equality in Uzbekistan until 2030 is being implemented, which provides for an integrated approach to introducing the principle of equality between women and men in all spheres and levels of decision-making and execution. preventing incidents of harassment and violence against women.

A Commission on Gender Equality of the Republic of Uzbekistan has been created.

The political activity of women in the Legislative Chamber and Senate of the Oliy Majlis is growing, as well as the proportion of women in leadership positions. The number of female senators increased by almost 30 percent, and female deputies by 50 percent. In 2021, the share of women in the Oliy Majlis (legislative chamber) increased to 32.0%, in the Senate - to 24.0% and in leadership positions - to 28.8%.[5]

In order to strengthen social assistance to women included in the list of those in need, the State Trust Fund for the Support of Women was created. Measures have been implemented to provide comprehensive support, protect women's health, train them and develop women's entrepreneurship, pay down payments on mortgage loans, purchase social housing, and more.

Gender equality in the IT industry is steadily growing: the proportion of women with a mobile phone and Internet users is increasing.

A set of measures is being implemented to attract women to entrepreneurship (the share of women in business structures has reached 35.0%). In 2021, the World Bank's The Women, Business and the Law Index ranked Uzbekistan among 27 countries that have implemented significant reforms in the field of women's rights and gender equality. [5]

The ILO Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has been ratified. What is especially pleasing in Uzbekistan is that a 4% budget quota for girls entering universities has been introduced for girls in higher educational institutions, free master's studies are provided, and various types of benefits are provided for starting their own business.

In particular, women are provided with preferential loans in the amount of up to 35 million soums for the construction of greenhouses for growing flowers and vegetables on their plots, organizing livestock farming, poultry farming, fish farming and beekeeping and other areas.

In order to consider issues of improving employment and creating working conditions for women, relations between Uzbekistan and such international organizations and financial institutions as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, KOICF, and UNDP have been fruitfully developed. For these purposes, various types of investment projects were implemented with the participation of the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations of the Republic of Uzbekistan. In particular, in the Fergana Valley of the republic, a project is being implemented in 2021-2023, which is aimed at creating employment opportunities by improving the technical and digital skills and competencies of the population in this region.

For each mahalla, lists of women and youth who are recognized as unemployed and who have expressed a desire to work or engage in entrepreneurship are compiled. The state reimburses 70% of the cost of courses in professions and entrepreneurship. For youth and women included in the



“Women's Notebook”, “Youth Notebook” and “Iron Notebook”, training is provided completely free of charge. Those who complete the training courses are provided with practical assistance, ranging from state registration as a business entity to independent implementation of activities. But along with achievements in the field of ensuring gender equality, it is also necessary to indicate problems that require solutions.

Uzbek women only begin to engage in career development at almost the age of 30. The reason for this is that the average age of marriage is 22.3 years, after which maternity leave takes at least 2 years.

Then women go back to work and after a while go on maternity leave again. Frequent maternity leave and sick leave, due to the health of children, also contribute to a decrease in the attractiveness of women among employers as a potential employee.

In order to take a certain place in society, a woman first needs to get an education.

Currently, it is believed that the main role of a woman is to create a family, and subsequently to raise and care for children. If a girl, after graduating from school and receiving a certificate of education, wants to continue her studies to obtain a higher education, then her attempts may meet strong resistance from her immediate family with their firm conviction that higher education is not the most important thing in a girl's life.

There is a need to determine priority: either the girl needs to make a good dowry, or spend this money on receiving it. Diploma of education. As a result, priority is given to marriage. In addition, it is considered correct that the sooner a girl starts a family, the faster she will have time to raise and raise her children. Stereotypes about the roles of men and women in the family and society are deeply rooted in the minds of our people. It is believed that the main breadwinner in the family and the “breadwinner” should be a man, so the question accordingly arises as to why waste time and money on educating girls if in the future the Diploma obtained with such difficulty will “gather dust” in the closet. But times are changing. Many in-demand professions are emerging that women can and are capable of performing, and the performance of these job responsibilities does not require the presence of women at work from morning to evening. The development of scientific and technological progress has led to the creation of professions that a woman can perform remotely and at the same time fulfill family responsibilities.

That is why the education of women and girls is becoming an area that should be the object of government attention.

In order to form a class of highly qualified women specialists, it is necessary to create a condition so that girls and women, after receiving a Bachelor's Diploma, are interested in continuing their education in Master's degrees, and subsequently obtaining scientific knowledge in doctoral studies. By directing its efforts to the education of women and girls, our state confirms the importance of developing the potential of women for society and the state.

But at the same time, it is impossible not to mention the women and girls who, due to severe financial family problems and a lack of understanding of the simple rules of the law, crossed the line and committed illegal actions as a result of which they committed criminal offenses. These girls and women are currently in pre-trial detention centers or serving their sentences in prisons.

We cannot erase them from society. They are part of society and sooner or later after serving their sentence they will have to return and become a full member of it. And what kind of people they



will return from prison and how they will continue their life in this society depends not only on themselves, but also on how we accept them.

We consider it necessary that, first of all, for this purpose it is possible to create opportunities in places of deprivation of liberty to receive higher distance education for those girls and women who were unable to obtain higher education while free or interrupted their studies for known objective reasons.

Education at the University should be carried out on a paid contract basis with the right to receive a grant in case of receiving excellent grades in the disciplines and exemplary behavior. The contract is paid from money received from working in prison, and in some special cases the girl can receive an educational grant if close relatives vouch for her.

By training one convicted girl who can take the path of correction, we give society one saved fate, who, after leaving prison, will not face condemnation, but a chance for a good and decent life.

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