

SELF-EMPLOYMENT AS A MEANS OF ENSURING THE WELL-BEING OF THE POPULATION IN UZBEKISTAN

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A set of direct factors for the well-being of the population is the level of income, labor productivity, ensuring employment of the population, fair distribution of income, the level of accessibility of healthcare, education, and information technology. In modern economic conditions, one of the current threats to the well-being of the population is unemployment, the prevention of which requires regulation. The regulatory mechanism manifests itself in the process of regulating the income of the population and has all the characteristics of an economic category. It expresses real economic relations in society regarding the creation, primary distribution and redistribution of income as a manifestation of the economic realization of ownership of factors of production in order to ensure an increase in the level of income as a factor in the growth of well-being.

The form of expression of the social purpose of the mechanism for regulating the income of the population is the functions it performs: environment-forming, distribution, stimulating, social. Self-employment is one of the strategic directions in the economy, aimed at reducing tensions in the labor market and performing the above-described regulatory functions [1]. In the economic dictionary, the term self-employment means employment in labor or management in one's own household or in one's own company. In most cases, self-employment is work done as part of one's own business rather than being hired.

It should be noted that self-employment performs the following economic functions [2]:

1. Increases the overall share of citizens employed.
2. Reduces state treasury expenses due to reduced funding for programs aimed at the unemployed.
3. Creates a ton of additional jobs and government revenue from taxation of new individual microenterprises and small businesses.
4. Helps raise the standard of living of citizens and their incomes.
5. Reduces the risk of tension in society due to high unemployment and lack of paid work, caused, in particular, by any crises.
6. Youth can succeed in this type of employment by solving the problem of their employment.

7. Reduces the risk of a negative process of professional deformation of the unemployed and other functions.

In Uzbekistan, the use of non-standard forms of employment organization, in particular self-employment, is an important way to mitigate the situation in regional labor markets. It opens up the possibility of influencing employment by limiting the supply of labor on the open labor market, making it possible to simultaneously limit the large-scale release of employees and prevent a surge in unemployment. The introduction of non-standard forms of employment is a measure that meets the interests of both individuals and employers, and society as a whole, and can, to a certain extent, mitigate the imbalance in the labor market.

In Uzbekistan, the activities of the self-employed are regulated by the Regulations on the procedure for carrying out activities by a self-employed person. Initially, it is worth noting the level of taxation. In accordance with this system, self-employed persons are required to pay only social tax, the fixed rate of which is 1 Basic Calculated Value (BCV) per year. A significantly important aspect is that all income received from the entrepreneurial activities of a self-employed person is completely exempt from personal income tax.

In addition, it should be emphasized that there is no need to maintain complex tax and financial records, as well as the absence of accounting requirements. This aspect simplifies administrative barriers, allowing entrepreneurs to focus on their activities.

An important aspect of this system is the right of self-employed persons to work with both individuals and legal entities. Since the introduction of this system from the beginning of March 2023, entrepreneurs can also hire self-employed individuals as home workers, which opens up new prospects for business development.

It should also be emphasized that it is possible to provide services to foreign individuals and legal entities, which helps expand markets and increase potential income.

However, it is worth noting that the taxation system for self-employed persons takes into account work experience, which ensures the preservation of social guarantees and future benefits. And finally, it is important to emphasize that this system does not require a legal address to carry out business activities, which provides flexibility and comfort when working, including the possibility of organizing activities from home.

Today in Uzbekistan there is no term “freelancer” at the legislative level. However, taking into account the essence of this term (Freelancer is a type of employment in which a specialist provides himself with work independently), the concept of “self-employment” is equivalent to the concept of “freelancing”. At the same time, a very important question today is to what extent Uzbekistan is able to successfully enter the global freelance market. To carry out the assessment, the World Bank methodology “Assessing Country Readiness for Online Outsourcing” was used. This methodology has been adapted to modern available indicators.

Thus, to assess Uzbekistan’s readiness to enter the freelance market, 27 indicators were used, which were divided into 4 blocks: availability and quality of talent, costs, infrastructure and creation of favorable conditions [3].

Table 1

Index of readiness of Uzbekistan to enter the freelance market

Indicators	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Block 1. Availability and quality of talent	45,7	46,6	48,4	46,6	47,6	55,5	59,7
Block 2. Costs	45,6	48,9	45,6	47,0	51,2	53,7	57,9
Block 3. Infrastructure	38,0	41,5	44,8	48,8	53,3	59,3	64,2
Block 4. Creation of favorable conditions	46,2	46,3	50,6	49,0	45,4	58,1	54,3
Composite index	43,9	45,8	47,4	47,9	49,4	56,7	59,0

As a result of the measures taken in the country, the Index of Uzbekistan’s readiness to enter the freelance market increased from 43.9 to 59.0. The greatest impact on this was made by improvements in the indicators of block 3. Thus, the average indicator for the “Infrastructure” block increased from 38.0 to 64.2. The greatest growth was noted in such indicators as the capacity of the international data network - an increase of 74.7 times (16.1 Gbit/s in 2015 and 1200 Gbit/s in 2021), the number of users (individuals) of remote banking systems - 20.2 times (979.5 thousand people in 2015 and 19,705.2 thousand people in 2021), the number of mobile communication base stations - 2.8 times (16.3 thousand in 2015 and 45.9 thousand units in 2021), the number of fixed broadband access subscribers - 2.4 times (5.8 subscribers per 100 people in 2015 and 14.4 subscribers in 2021), Internet coverage of the population - 2,2 times (26.6 connections per 100 people in 2015 and 58.4 connections in 2021) and others [3].

Also, significant growth is observed in other blocks in such indicators as the higher education enrollment rate - an increase of 3.8 times (8.3% of the population 18-22 years old in 2015 and 31.3% in 2021), the total number of Internet users in the country increased by 2.4 times (10.2 million people in 2015 and 24.7 million people in 2021), the cost of tariffs for Internet services (external channel) for providers decreased by 86.4 times (\$259.3 in 2015 and \$3.0 in 2021), exports of ICT goods – an increase of 2.4 times (0.07% share in total exports of goods in 2015 and 0.16% in 2021). In general, the assessment research showed that positive changes are taking place in Uzbekistan aimed at supporting freelancers and creating the conditions necessary for them. The coronavirus pandemic has accelerated these processes through a sharp increase in the digitalization of the country's economy [3].

In light of modern economic and social challenges, the development of self-employment in Uzbekistan is becoming an important strategic task. To achieve this goal, efforts need to be focused on several key areas.

First of all, infrastructure should be developed, providing access to technology, Internet connections and financial resources, which will allow

potential self-employed individuals to effectively conduct their activities and create new projects. An important element of stimulating self-employment is a correct tax policy, which eases the tax burden for self-employed citizens and creates conditions for their more active participation in the economy. Expanding the range of activities that can be defined as self-employed also contributes to the development of this form of entrepreneurship, providing citizens with more opportunities to choose and implement their business ideas. The development of self-employment in Uzbekistan will not only create additional sources of income for citizens, but also contributes to economic growth, the creation of new jobs and increased tax revenues to the budget. This will strengthen the financial stability of the state and improve the quality of life of the population, and therefore the level of their well-being.

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THE ROLE OF GENDER NORMS AND POWER RELATIONS IN SHAPING ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION-MAKING, AND HOW THEY CAN BE ANALYZED THROUGH A GENDER LENS

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Gender norms and power relations are pivotal in shaping environmental decision-making processes and outcomes, often in ways that go unnoticed. Research has shown that gender inequalities can influence the allocation of production assets within households, leading to male dominance in decision-making regarding innovation uptake and use of outputs [1]. Additionally, gender has been recognized as a key factor in understanding differences, inequalities, and power relations in environmental justice struggles worldwide, particularly in movements related to bodily wellbeing, land protection, livelihood, and climate justice [2]. Analyzing these dynamics through a gender lens is essential for comprehending how societal expectations and power imbalances can influence environmental policies, practices, and their impacts.