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SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. This article looks at a lot of information that shows the opportunities for disabled people at the level of what should be for this category of people, what conditions should be in place for them to be fully integrated into a full life, without infringing on their rights and freedoms.

Keywords: disability, government, health, inclusive education, rehabilitation, aids, social protection.

You don't have to lose an organ or your health to understand the happiness of walking, running, jumping and simply doing what you love without help, you just have to look around and see people with disabilities. And it will give you an opportunity to reflect on the good that is given to us from above, and we should be grateful for it.

The socio-economic problems of persons with disabilities and their solutions in Uzbekistan are addressed at government level. Government areas assess the access of this group to health care, education, rehabilitation and rehabilitation aids, the labour market, infrastructure, social protection, and recommendations for the reforms necessary to improve the lives of persons with disabilities.

In researching this topic, we have looked at a lot of information on accessible information channels. A lot of data shows the opportunities for people with disabilities at the level of what should be for this category of people, what conditions should be in place for their full inclusion in a full life, without infringement of their rights and freedoms.

However, citing data published by the World Bank with the report "Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities" in Uzbekistan "The official number of persons with disabilities, which is 2.1 per cent of the population, is probably an underestimate, given that an estimated 15 per cent of people worldwide have some form of disability, and about 80 per cent of them live in developing countries"¹.

This conclusion is explained by the fact that in most national families, due to their mentality, family secrets are often not made public, even those concerning the offspring's future, even if the child is disabled or has some kind of disability. Whatever happens in the family is often left uninvestigated and every family dealing with such problems finds its own solutions. It is certainly difficult to view this from

¹ <https://World%20Bank%20Document.pdf>

an open society perspective, but in terms of mentality and attitudes to family traditions one cannot be accused of withholding information from the public.

But despite this, the government has proposed a draft for consideration which proposes to define disability on the basis of the severity of a disease rather than the degree of loss of ability to work. The draft proposes "... (a) abandoning the practice of defining disability on the basis of the degree of loss of the ability to work. Instead, to introduce a procedure for determining disability in accordance with international standards for the social adaptation of disabled people to life and the restoration of their health;

b) creating favourable conditions for unhindered access to all social infrastructure facilities for persons unable to act and move around independently;

c) Enabling persons with disabilities to use information technology in accessible formats, sign language and other alternative forms of communication (ramps, lifts, sign language interpretation, audible and visual signals, etc.)"²

Thus, the significant difference between the administrative data on the number of persons with disabilities and the survey data on disability prevalence is due to the above-mentioned factors too. However, our aim of the survey is to look at the categories of persons with disabilities in economic and social terms in terms of their social adjustment to life and their recovery. To what extent they make full use of public transport services, public places, education, outdoor recreation and other benefits available to the citizens of the country. All of this is provided for in the draft "Presidential Decree on the State Programme for the Implementation of the New Uzbekistan Development Strategy for 2022-2026 in the 'Year of Caring for People and Quality Education', which provides for the introduction of a number of benefits and innovations for the population in need of social protection, including persons with disabilities, the seriously ill, the elderly and others"³.

The research carried out in this area is divided into several phases: 1. Access to health services; 2. Gender and disability; 3. Accessible environment; 4. Access to education; 5. Access to employment.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the materials studied: families with disabled persons (children, adults) have applied to the social welfare authorities for the inability to purchase wheelchairs on their own, accounting for over - 25% of all registered persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities require rehabilitation aids and services - 44%. Of these, 21.5% have access and only 2.8% have received such aids from public institutions. In comparison, children with disabilities have significantly less access to rehabilitation tools and facilities than adults; early intervention services are not available and families of children with disabilities cannot access them. The government is deliberately moving towards market competition in the provision of rehabilitation aids in order to improve the quality of products and services and give persons with disabilities more choice. This may further reduce the cost of materials needed to manufacture rehabilitation aids.

² [https:// regulation.gov.uz/ru/d/76071](https://regulation.gov.uz/ru/d/76071)

³ *ibid*

Women and girls are more likely to receive disability-related opinions from occupational health commissions due to their longer life expectancy.

The lack of access to necessary infrastructure has a negative impact on the livelihoods and well-being of persons with disabilities. Very many buildings and social infrastructure facilities in Tashkent city are not adapted for use by persons with disabilities, although there are around hundreds of thousands of persons with disabilities living here who have difficulty in using the infrastructure. Public transport in the capital also does not meet accessibility criteria for persons with disabilities, which has serious socio-economic implications for the well-being of persons with disabilities. Existing problems of public transport for persons with disabilities: Tashkent does not have any traffic lights equipped with sound suppressors (for blind pedestrians); lack of special technical devices at stops, tactile orientation signs; Tashkent has not created a system to create a barrier-free environment for the disabled to integrate them into society; there is no organizational, methodological and information support; A large number of transport infrastructure facilities and buildings of government agencies, as well as public buildings, are not accessible to the disabled. The lack of facilities for persons with disabilities that facilitate their freedom of movement violates the rights of this category of citizens and prevents them from full participation in public life, education, work and other activities, which negatively affects their quality of life. Thus, persons with disabilities, especially those with physical disabilities, are forced into social isolation, become highly dependent on others and are unable to enjoy the benefits of urban living.

As an experiment, the inclusive education system was introduced in general education schools in the cities of Uzbekistan, as well as in Tashkent districts in the academic year 2021-2022. Based on the results of this pilot programme, the inclusive approach to education will be introduced in other regions of the country. In the new academic year, 225 general education schools in all regions of Uzbekistan opened their doors to children with disabilities. The UNICEF office in Tashkent called it an unprecedented step in the country's history in the field of education. It was done in accordance with the Concept of Development of Inclusive Education in the Public Education System for 2020-2025, approved by a presidential decree of October 2020.⁴

However, the study shows that general secondary schools are not yet ready for this as they still lack accessible infrastructure and toilets for children with disabilities, the necessary adaptations for the learning process and qualified staff. For example, there is a need for sign language interpreters, Braille textbooks for the visually impaired, teachers and tutors for children with learning disabilities and hearing impairments.⁵

In Uzbekistan, regulations have been enacted at the state level which favor entrepreneurs and manufacturers, as the involvement of persons with disabilities in productive activities ultimately results in tax and tax exemptions for entrepreneurs

⁴ <https://lex.uz/ru/docs/5044745>

⁵ <https://World%20Bank%20Document.pdf>

who employ persons with disabilities. Nevertheless, the survey indicates that the current structure of the social security system reduces the motivation of disabled people to seek employment in the formal labour market. The access to disability allowances is limited to those who are medically assessed as "disabled" by the Medical and Labour Expert Board. This excludes persons with disabilities from the labour market. Employed persons with disabilities fear losing their disability benefits during regular medical examinations at the Medical and Labour Expert Boards. For this reason, they are more likely to prefer working in the informal economy. In a competitive marketplace, a company can regulate its management policies, where the emphasis is mainly on the mobile part of the workforce, and the decisions taken may not be in favor of those with disabilities, so taking away their disability allowance literally makes them vulnerable. Hence their decision to work in the informal economy.

Based on the principle "From Action Strategy to Development Strategy The New Uzbekistan Development Strategy 2022-2026 is designed and tasked with introducing: the creation of a separate database on women, young people and persons with disabilities in need of assistance in the "Single Register of Social Protection" information system, including the integration of the "Single Register of Social Protection" with the "Iron Book", "Youth Book" and "Women's Book"; and the inclusion of care time for children with disabilities from childhood to age 18 when granting pensions in the employment record.⁶

The problems that have been identified by the public and free experts require and await socio-economic solutions. These problems must be solved not only with the participation of budgetary organizations, but also with patrons (wealthy entrepreneurs) who invest their money and intellect for the good of the prosperity of our motherland and people.

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