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*New Golden Age Initiatives*



# THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN CENTRAL ASIA (TRENDS AND PROSPECTIVES)

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**THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN CENTRAL ASIA  
(TRENDS AND PROSPECTS)**

## **Content**

Summary	3
Introduction	4
The role of women in modern society of Central Asia	6
Socio-economic opportunities for women	14
Political participation of women	25
Recommendations	40
Conclusion	42
References	43

## Summary

This publication reflects the role of women in Central Asia including its trends and prospects, progress, and some of the unresolved issues in achieving gender equality in the social, economic and political spheres. The publication brings together concrete examples, the best practices and provides the practices from Central Asian countries.

The publication examines the participation of women in the social life, business, the work of parliaments and political parties, in elections and politics at different levels. This includes the participation of women in political life, in the context of the status of women in society as a whole.

The relevance of the publication lies in the fact that it tries to fill the existing gap in the place and role of women in the political life of Central Asian countries. The problems raised in the study stem from the daily practice of building a renewed region. In this regard, this work is important, but it is also necessary for practical terms. It is also associated with the need to create favorable conditions for the participation of women in political life and economic environment of society. Of considerable importance are the recommendations proposed by the author on improving the means and methods of increasing the business and civic activity of women in the region.

## Introduction

The diversity of the Central Asian region that contains five countries is expressed in the multiplicity of its ethnic groups, languages, and religions. Moreover, the region has its own special history of development, implementing 28 years of fundamental, political and socio-economic reforms in connection with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the transition from a planned to a market economy.

One of the main aspirations of people during the transition period to democratic rule and a market economy was the hope of expanding the opportunities for citizens to participate in the life of society, which they will create and enjoy its benefits. Citizens should be represented at all levels and in all areas of decision-making so that their voice is heard by decision-makers, and so that

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the decisions are made considering a wider range of opinions, which means that they are more effective. In addition, the transition period in the economic, social and political life of the region led to the elimination of state's monopoly

on ensuring gender equality. Women found themselves in an open environment with new conditions in relation to equality with more opportunities and dangers.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, new borders formed and new social, economic and political, opportunities were created as well. For 28 years of independence, in order to assert their rights, women had to overcome great obstacles due to the difficult political and social situation.

The role of women is growing dynamically in all areas of society. No one disputes that this is a global trend. Women, not only an integral part of the historical process but also its increasingly significant driving force.

So, what is the role of women in modern Central Asia? It consists not only in fulfilling her direct duties at work but also in realizing herself as a good mother, an exemplary wife and a mistress. The main

principle for any woman was the ability to comply with the rule of the «golden mean.» Women have a very honorable and important role in society. After all, with her kindness and attitude, she softens conflicts and channels male power and energy in a positive direction. If a society succeeds not only in raising the position of women but also in equalizing its importance in building society, then many problems will be solved.

## The role of women in Central Asian society

For many hundreds of years, women have been given the only role - to keep the hearth, give birth, and raise children. However, our century is fundamentally different from the previous ones, not only in terms of scientific and technological progress but social change as well. A woman in modern society is not only a wife and mother, but also a person with her desires and needs. Now the fair sex themselves are looking for their calling and can set for themselves absolutely any goals.

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and prejudices. They have to maneuver between traditions and modern trends in order to succeed and build a future for themselves and their children. Central Asia is a patriarchal region where, in the post-Soviet era, trends towards a return to traditional values were observed. In this regard, paradoxical situations arose, which means that women have to

maneuver between traditions and modern trends in order to succeed and build a future for themselves and their children.

In her work on gender studies: an anthropologist Rano Turaeva, who studies the features of the development of female entrepreneurship in the post-Soviet period, as well as a combination of innovations and traditions in the study of gender issues in Central Asia, shows that the diversity of post-Soviet processes, which meant not only economic difficulties and return traditions, but also new opportunities for women in Central Asia. There are given examples of women who have developed entrepreneurial talent and are actively fighting for better living conditions. The region is influenced by the globalization, trans-nationalization of economic and social relations, as well as political changes. The innovation of women is manifested contrary to religious restrictions or social stereotypes. At the same time, some traditions and conservatism are still present in the realities of the region and coexist with new trends. The latter justifies



the recommendation of the researcher about the need for systematic studies of gender changes and a departure from a simplified vision of the post-Soviet history of the region as just a regressive period for women [3].

In the countries of Central Asia, as in any other society, there are problems of discrimination against women. It is difficult for women with children to get a job, or they may be warned that sick leave is not welcomed, even though children often get sick. It is no secret that for the same work, men often receive larger salaries. However, not everything is so bad, as women are the directors of various organizations, enterprises, institutions, which has long been common. In professional terms, they are not inferior to men. Although at the same time, we observe that a woman is constantly forced to prove to herself and others that she is able to carry out her work and corresponds to a position that is not required of a man [24]. Women in Central Asia break stereotypes that “politics is the destiny of men”. I will cite an example of several prominent politicians in the region - Roza Otunbayeva, Aida Salyanova, Makhbuba Azizova, Oinihol Bobonazarova, Dariga Nazarbayeva, Akja Nurberdyeva, Gulnara Karimova and many others.

The active participation of women in socio-economic and political life, their struggle to maintain peace, equality, protection of the rights of children and they became the foundations of women’s organizations and movements. Each country has its own women’s organizations, and they play an important role in solving many social problems and much more.

For many centuries, a woman was the guardian of the hearth, while all that was related to the outside world was taken over by the man. This, of course, gave him the right to consider a woman much lower than himself in status. However, in our time of technological progress, scientific discoveries and feminism, the situation has radically changed. A woman in modern society has a completely different status and vocation, she has other values and needs that make her reconsider her views on the female role in today’s world.

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The role of women in modern society is no longer limited to the performance of household chores, caring for their children’s upbringing and serving the legal spouse. Now, this position is gradually changing, and many women who still choose it are perceived as supporters of conservative beliefs who almost voluntarily give themselves up as

slaves to men. Indeed, the embodiment of personal ambitions, career growth and the status of independence, at least financially, does not appeal to everyone to this day[1].

In fear of Central Asia, still many women do not single out these criteria as an end in themselves, preferring to fully serve the family. There are examples when some parents put the issue of independence a priority for their daughters, for example, in the modern world the concept of social status has become fashionable, which means that many young women today are considered not only as a faithful housewife and good mother, but also independent in financially, a person who stands firmly on her feet. That is, a woman should be in any situation, for example, if the spouse suddenly leaves the family and the children are left without a father, or something terrible happens, but there are few such examples. Unfortunately, such fears have a place to be, because today, divorce is not considered something reprehensible. Here is an example, the number of divorces that grow every year:

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people become more categorical and intolerant in a marriage and the family institution to some extent loses its value.

It turns out that the task of a woman in the modern world is, first and foremost, the achievement of success in work, career growth, material

independence, and only then the status of wife and mother. Thus, the so-called revaluation of values takes place, which in turn leads to a rethinking of the significance of the family and marital relations in the life of the weaker sex.

Due to the fact that the social role and status of women in modern society have undergone radical changes in recent decades, psychologists tend to consider the following main categories of women: leaders, careerists, housewives, and freelancers [2]. Women leaders by character traits are much like men: they are purposeful, confident in their own abilities and achieve everything on their own, not hoping for anyone else's help. Self-development and self-realization are the main goals of careerists, who always put work and achievement of career success in the first place. Only after such results can they afford to think about creating a family and planning children. The status of a woman in modern society who has chosen the role of a housewife, as a rule, is viewed today not from the best side.

The so-called "women's issue" has become very relevant in a society where it constantly undergoes a change in the sphere of society and culture, and socio-cultural reform and the development of secular principles within the institution of the family are quickly

and successfully undergoing, which affects the position of women. Modern trends in the socio-cultural development of society, characterized by global awareness and social richness, dynamism and, most importantly, the formation of a new status of a woman that meets the needs of society, have made it possible to evaluate her role differently in society. The family is an extremely conservative institution; relatively few changes are taking place in it. The main change that has occurred in eastern families in recent years is the position of a woman. Her ever-increasing social and professional activity, which is sometimes called the «quiet revolution of the 21st century»

A new trend is developing, which is female emancipation. Interestingly, women with a traditional family are more successful in business than those who are single. New types of women have significantly changed the socio-demographic structure of society. Their appearance proved that over the past years, the traditional ideas of happiness and prosperity for a young woman have radically changed. At present, such a model of the family is becoming the most popular, where a woman, like a man, puts a career first and only then family. The second thing that one should pay attention to when touching upon the role of women in society is that they strive for financial independence.

It is especially worth noting that today, a woman cannot afford to confine herself to only one social role, whether she be a mother or a businesswoman. The most acceptable combination of a number of status positions, roles both at the level of the institution of the family, relations within the family, and within society as a macro-institute. A modern woman seeks to harmoniously combine and successfully realize those social roles that are important and interesting to her. The radical socio-cultural transformations in the institution of the family, first of all, influenced such demographic indicators as the state of marriage and family relations, the sphere of relations between spouses, the distribution and achievement of status-role positions. Socio-cultural changes in the status-role positions of women, one way or another, affect the family, are refracted in its value orientations, which are currently characterized by an increase in complexity and diversity. Despite this, the traditional status-role positions of women remain dominant, creating an atmosphere of favorable development and self-realization

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of the woman's personality in the field of modern social reality[1].

The effective implementation of the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) for women and girls necessitates the creation and strengthening of an enabling environment for achieving gender equality. Although Central Asian countries have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, de facto persistent discriminatory laws, the existence of

social norms, practices and problems of inequality faced by the most marginalized groups of women and girls are the causes of gender inequality. Critical problems, such as violence against women, which occurs in the region, inequality in sharing the burden of unpaid work in the

household, women's limited access to resources, violation of sexual and reproductive health and the rights of women and girls, including their unequal participation in decision-making in the private and public sectors displays the existence of gender inequality in the region. Addressing these challenges and contributing to progress on the 2030 agenda requires identifying and eradicating the root causes of gender inequality. This requires strong political will on the way to creating gender-sensitive institutions, establishing sound public administration and accountability systems, including adopting effective macroeconomic policies that are aligned with human rights standards, fully implementing the provisions of CEDAW and all the ensuing of her duties and obligations. Appropriate monitoring and reporting mechanisms are also required to facilitate progress.

The national laws of the countries of Central Asia provide for the protection of women's rights in all spheres of life. In the Kyrgyz Republic, in accordance with the Constitution, fundamental human rights and freedoms are recognized and guaranteed in accordance with generally recognized principles and norms of international law, interstate treaties and agreements on human rights issues ratified by the Kyrgyz Republic. In the National Strategy for Sustainable Development until 2017 and in the Program and Plan of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic for the transition to sustainable development for 2013-2017. The issues of the role of women, family and gender development are included in the priority areas and offer a fairly wide range of tasks and measures aimed at integrating the gender dimension in the sustainable development of the country[82, 83].

The equal rights and opportunities of women and men are enshrined in international and national obligations of the Kyrgyz

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Republic. Over the years of independence, Kyrgyzstan has joined a number of international conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Gender equality is an integral part of human rights and freedoms provided for in the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic. The legal mechanisms of gender policy are based on such normative legal acts as the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On State Guarantees of Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women” dated August 4, 2008 No. 184 and the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Social and Legal Protection from Domestic Violence” «Dated March 25, 2003, No. 62.

In Kazakhstan, human rights and freedoms are recognized and guaranteed in accordance with the Constitution. In the Strategy - “Kazakhstan-2050”: “a woman is the support of the family, and therefore - the support of the state. A girl, a woman has always been an equal member of our society, and her mother is his most respected person.” It is noted that ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities for all sectors and groups of the population to participate in the political life of the country is a necessary prerequisite and condition for building a legal state.

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In confirmation of the desire proclaimed by the Constitution of Kazakhstan to build a democratic and legal state, Kazakhstan joined the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted on December 18, 1979. The Convention connects the equality of persons of both sexes in the political sphere with three basic conditions. The participating states have the obligation to ensure that women, on an equal footing, have the right to: 1) vote in all elections and be elected to all publicly elected bodies; 2) participate in the formation and implementation of government policies and hold public office, as well as carry out all public functions at all levels of government; 3) to participate in the activities of non-governmental organizations and associations, to deal with the problems of public and political life of the country. The concept of “discrimination against women” under the Convention means any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of sex, which is aimed at weakening or negating the recognition, use or enjoyment by women, regardless of their marital status, on the basis of equal rights between men and women, human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field [17, 33].

Under the Constitution, Turkmenistan guarantees equal rights and freedoms of man and citizen, as well as equality of man and citizen

before the law and the court, regardless of nationality, color, sex, origin, property and official position, place of residence, language, religion, political opinion or other circumstances. In article 29, a man and a woman in Turkmenistan have equal rights and freedoms, as well as equal opportunities for their implementation. Violation of equality on the basis of sex shall entail liability established by law. Turkmenistan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on December 20, 1996.

A national legal system has been created in the republic, which guarantees equality and eliminates discrimination against women in all spheres of life of society and the state. The laws of Turkmenistan establish criminal, judicial and administrative liability for any manifestation of the violation of women's rights and freedoms. The legislative framework of the country does not contain a single discriminatory norm against women and provides for a set of legal measures protecting the life and health, honor and dignity of women and their property, family, labor, inheritance and other rights and interests. The protection of the rights and freedoms of women are directed by special norms of the relevant branches of legislation (civil, criminal, criminal procedure, administrative, etc.) that establish legal responsibility for the violation of the rights and freedoms of women [17, 29].

Uzbekistan adopted the Law "On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women", which states that conditions for gender equality have already been created in the country. The main provisions are enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan "All citizens have the same rights and freedoms

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and are equal before the law without distinction gender, race, nationality, language, religion, social origin, beliefs, personal and social status. In 1995, Uzbekistan joined the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Uzbekistan also supports and approves all United Nations initiatives aimed at ensuring the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of women [17, 49, 55].

Today in Uzbekistan, the issues of ensuring the rights and interests of women, increasing their economic, social, and political activity are identified as an important direction of state policy. Over the past years, significant work has been done in this direction, however, an effective mechanism for the realization of the interests of women has not been created. The Women's Committee, the "mahalla" and other public organizations for years have been limited only to

various events and meetings; they have not carried out effective work to provide real assistance to families, women, and girls in difficult social situations. As a result, many problems have accumulated on the ground for the solution of which specific targeted measures have not been taken.

The Republic of Tajikistan guarantees the rights and freedoms of everyone, regardless of nationality, race, gender, language, religion, political opinion, education, social and property status. Men and women are equal. In 1993, Tajikistan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), in 2014 its Optional Protocol, and in 2002, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Despite the ratified international women's documents and domestic laws are discriminated against and unequal in social, economic and political life. Their representation in policy and decision-making processes remains below international standards. The bulk of the male population went to work and women, become actual heads of households and are independently responsible for the formation of family income for the maintenance of children and elderly family members, despite limited access to education, resources, microcredit, social protection and employment opportunities, especially in the countryside [17, 64, 67, 91].

The situation when women turn out to be abandoned by husbands, they are aggravated by negative social norms and the traditional attitude to the status and rights of women in the family and society. As a rule, Tajik parents invest more in the development and education of boys as future breadwinners, thereby creating a hopeless future for girls and seriously limiting women's economic independence.

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## Socio-economic opportunities for women

Today, representatives of women’s businesses are filling with new content the relations between the three countries of Central Asia. Supporting women’s economic opportunities is crucial for establishing new business relationships between women entrepreneurs, fostering trade relations and contributing to economic integration in the region.

At the conference “Regional Association of Women Entrepreneurs: Creating a Sustainable Future for Women’s Business in Central Asia - Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan”, which was held in Osh in April 2017, participants discussed the role of business associations in enhancing cooperation between women entrepreneurs. They made recommendations on expanding opportunities for the development of women’s entrepreneurship in the region. Among the 45 invited participants were leaders of associations of women entrepreneurs, representatives of state bodies, associations, businessmen, representatives of the expert community and non-governmental sector of three countries of the region. The participants adopted a resolution on the development of regional cooperation of women entrepreneurs in Central Asia.

Investing in women’s economic empowerment leads to greater equality, poverty reduction, and economic growth. Women make an enormous economic contribution by working in private companies, on farms, as entrepreneurs or employees, or in performing unpaid homework.

In Central Asia, it is women who suffer the most from the effects of poverty, gender discrimination, persistent wage gaps between women and men, exploitation and limited career opportunities and

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advancement. Women hardly survive in low-paid and unprotected jobs that do not allow them to provide themselves and their families at the proper level. The limited economic opportunities of women negatively affect the entire

society and limit the economic potential for all, while women from minority groups and socially vulnerable segments of the population most often face especially frightening economic problems [91].



## Tajikistan

The Republic of Tajikistan is taking the necessary measures to ensure equal rights for women and men in the field of employment. The right to work is enshrined in article 35 of the Constitution of Tajikistan, according to which: “Everyone has the right to work, choice of profession, work, labor protection and social protection against unemployment. Salaries should not be lower than the minimum wage. Any restrictions on labor relations are prohibited. For equal work, equal pay is issued. No one may be involved in forced labor, except as otherwise provided by law.” All citizens have equal opportunities in the field of labor relations.

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**Everyone has the right to work, choice of profession, work, labor protection and social protection against unemployment**

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Any distinction, exclusion or preference for refusal of employment is prohibited based on nationality, race, color, sex, age, religion, political opinion, place of birth, foreign origin or social origin, leading to a violation of equality of opportunity in work. “Differences in the world of work are not discrimination, due to the requirements inherent in a given type of labor or special care of the state for persons in need of increased social protection (women, minors, disabled people)” (Article 7 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Tajikistan). The structure of women’s employment can be represented in the form of a pyramid: the higher the social status of labor, the lower the proportion of women in it. They often find themselves in peripheral segments of labor, forming groups of temporarily employed, part-time workers, low-skilled workers, and low-paid workers.

Regarding the social role of women, there are two approaches: patriarchal (the subordinate position of a woman, her sphere of activity is limited to home and family, a strict hierarchical separation of male and female roles) and egalitarian (equal rights and opportunities for life choice for men and women). The latter approach also means that the family, children should not be associated only with a woman, and career - only with a man. Although in the press, in the scientific literature, we are used to seeing publications in which the word “family” is accompanied by the word “woman”. However, publications under the title “Man and Family” are extremely rare, since the stereotypes “family and woman” and “man and career” are firmly rooted in the public mind. As a result, we get the costs of female parenting and other problems.

The central problem is the problem of adapting female society to a reforming environment, a search for a new social identity, its place on

the social vertical of emerging market space, the modernization of the goals structure, life values, and standards of behavior. Thus, the real-life situation today is such that a woman's labor activity is objectively determined not so much by its content as by remuneration. However, the financial result of female labor is extremely low. The nature of

labor cannot satisfy either. Does this lead to the fact that a woman questions the feasibility of her participation in social work? The answer to this question is no. In reality, a woman does not have a

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dilemma: to work or not. The choice is virtually nonexistent. Under the influence of objective conditions, orientations towards social labor are fully realized.

The question is that even the woman does not always realize the opportunities available. According to the results of sociological surveys, in Russia, for example, only 25% of the women surveyed would like to have a career, 8% said that they more identify with their profession than with their family. The profession, as the most important value, was named by 21% of Russian respondents. A characteristic picture is observed in Tajikistan. Over the long years of the paternalistic campaign, the woman got used to taking everything ready-made. Hence the lack of an internal need for something to persistently seek in life itself, to change something.

## Turkmenistan

The present Turkmen society honors the tradition of worshipping the mother as a woman, dating back to antiquity, giving rise to a new life, protecting spiritual values and a family hearth, inspiring to accomplish. In Turkmenistan, conditions are being created for the comprehensive development of women, the disclosure of their scientific, intellectual, creative and spiritual potential. Systematic and consistent work is underway to promote gender equality and enhance the role of women in society, in the implementation of large-scale transformative programs of the new historical era. Turkmen women actively participate in the political, social and cultural life of the state, work in various sectors of the national economy, and are successfully engaged in entrepreneurial activities. Most importantly, women are surrounded by truly state care, attention, they feel the demand, and are confident in a peaceful and prosperous tomorrow.

Caring for women, raising their status in society, ensuring genuine gender equality in accordance with the Constitution of Turkmenistan

and universally recognized norms of international law is one of the important priorities of the political course of an independent neutral state. The republic's actions to implement gender policy find support at the international level, especially the UN community. As you know, in 2015, the country was elected to the Executive Council of the UN structure on gender equality and the empowerment of women "UN Women". An important step confirming the position of the state aimed at promoting gender equality in the country in close cooperation with the UN was the election of Turkmenistan last year to the Executive Council of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) for 2018-2020, as well as to the Commission on the Status of Women for 2018 -2022 years.

Achievements of the country in addressing gender issues relevant to the world community are obvious and directly related to the process of democratization of Turkmen society and the implementation of a socially-oriented state course. This is because the important indicators of a healthy society include the level of care for children and mothers, the strength of family foundations, and assistance to large families.

Successes in achieving gender equality are considered as one of the most important conditions for the formation of a comprehensively developed society, committed to the principles of humanism and equality. In this regard, we can note the meeting of women entrepreneurs of Turkmenistan and a number of states of the region, held in November 2017 as part of the 7th Conference of Regional Economic Cooperation on Afghanistan (RECCA VII). As you know, the wife of the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Rulagani, as well as women entrepreneurs from Afghanistan, India, Kyrgyzstan, and Pakistan, were invited to participate in this forum. The participants in the meeting took with great interest information on social guarantees that the state provides to Turkmen women, which in turn contributes to the comprehensive development of the personality of our contemporary. They expressed genuine admiration for the conditions created in our country for the realization by women of their gender rights, including for the development of women's business.

More and more women in countries choose entrepreneurial activity for themselves. Among them, there are many active and talented businesswomen, authors of successful entrepreneurial projects. Today, women are represented on the board of the Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, heading its structural divisions, in particular, the School of Entrepreneurship, the editorial board of

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the Rysgal newspaper, and the National Organization of Turkmenistan for Bar Codes. Activists of the Party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs are members of the national parliament and have been nominated as candidates for the upcoming elections of the sixth convocation of the Mejlis, members of the Khalkmaslahaty and Gengeshes this month.

Women entrepreneurs are very enthusiastic in the contest «Woman of the Year», which provides them with the opportunity to demonstrate their organizational and entrepreneurial abilities. Recently, great opportunities have appeared in women who are traditionally engaged in carpet weaving, embroidery, and the production of national fabrics. In this regard, the role of the Center for Business Women of Turkmenistan is important, the work of which contributes to solving the issues of labor

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employment of the female population, especially the rural population, and increasing its professional and educational level. Gradually, an infrastructure to support women's entrepreneurship is being created. The center has already helped many rural

residents make their favorite business run. At the same time, it is equally important that young people join him, thus, wonderful craftsmanship traditions are preserved and developed, which Turkmen women have passed down from generation to generation, and traditional folk crafts are not forgotten.

As practice shows, women's entrepreneurship is more concentrated in the services and trade sectors. However, in recent years, women have been increasingly active in various areas of entrepreneurial activity, using the capabilities of state programs to support entrepreneurship and, in particular, lending to promising projects. Under the strict guidance of the fair sex, the activities of construction companies are carried out, greenhouse farms, food production enterprises work, and women farmers are engaged in the processing of agricultural products [32].

## Kazakhstan

In Kazakhstan, attempts to ensure full and productive employment is being continued. In the framework of the "Employment Roadmap 2020", assistance will continue to be provided to citizens in finding employment, developing entrepreneurship, and increasing labor mobility. Priority is given to women from rural areas. Support for women's entrepreneurship is provided through the programs of the Damu Fund. Particular attention is paid to microcredit projects of rural women.

Along with this, women are massively involved in the implementation of the new “Nurly Zhol” economic policy, which involves infrastructural modernization, development of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), job creation in non-resource sectors, as well as the nation’s “100 concrete steps” plan containing detailed and practical solutions for further phased modernization of the country [42]. Ongoing work has made it possible to reduce female unemployment. The contribution of women-run business enterprises to the employment rate should be noted. Today, more than 44% of SMEs in the country are managed by women, they created 30% of all jobs in the small and medium business sector of Kazakhstan. These figures indicate that women have become an important resource of the economy and the social sphere, a powerful driving force for entrepreneurship.

Currently, the National Commission for Women and Family Demographic Policy is working on a thematic project with the OECD, which will focus on promoting the economic activity of Kazakhstani women with a focus on enhancing their participation in small and medium-sized businesses. For the first five-year period of the industrialization program, 770 projects were introduced. These projects employ 63 thousand people, of which 18 thousand (29%) are women. In general, the contribution of women to the country’s GDP reaches about 40%. According to IMF experts, as more women enter the labor market, as faster the global GDP will grow. In 2018, women managers in small and medium enterprises throughout Kazakhstan amounted to 969,987 people. In order to harmoniously combine professional and family responsibilities, the Labor Code introduced a rule on distance employment and developed a methodology for accounting for unpaid domestic work.

Despite the measures taken, the country still maintains a gender imbalance in providing employment, career opportunities and wages. The pay gap is widespread: in 2016, women in Kazakhstan earned an average of 31.4% less than men. Experts believe that investing in women’s economic empowerment will improve equality, reduce poverty and promote economic growth. Women of the Kazakh Republic make an enormous economic contribution to the development of entrepreneurship and agriculture, acting as managers or employees, or performing unpaid housework [44].

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**Despite the measures taken, the country still maintains a gender imbalance in providing employment, career opportunities and wages.**

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At the high levels of the state apparatus of Kazakhstan, several improvements have been observed. Over the past ten years, Kazakhstan

has achieved significant enhancements on the rights of women in the socio-political environment. Among the key achievements the adoption of two important laws: the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities of Men and Women, the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence in 2009, as well as the adoption of the National Strategy for Gender Equality for 2006–2016, the Concept of Family and gender policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2030 can be emphasized. There were also important improvements in the participation of women in the socio-political life of Kazakhstan, however, women are still not well represented at key political posts [37, 40, 43].

## Kyrgyzstan

Women in Kyrgyzstan constitute a large portion of labor, both in the public and private sectors of the economy. Even with a general decline in employment in the public sector of the economy, women continue to make up a significant part of the country's labor force. The level of economic activity of women in Kyrgyzstan is lower than that of men, by 20-30% in different regions. On average, women in the republic are three times less among leaders in the business sector. At the same time, women's salaries are only 75% in relation to men. Such data of national statistics were announced in 2017 at a meeting of the Interdepartmental Working Group on gender analysis of labor legislation and the development of proposals to eliminate gender discrimination in labor legislation.

Women in the country have fewer opportunities to be involved in economic activity for various reasons. According to gender expert Zulfiya Kochorbaeva, there are unequal access of men and women to the

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**According to gender expert Zulfiya Kochorbaeva, there are unequal access of men and women to the realization of economic opportunities remains.**

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realization of economic opportunities remains. "The participation of women in economic decision-making today is minimal. And this, in turn, affects the degree of equality between men and women both at the individual level and at the family level and, accordingly,

at the level of society as a whole. It is very often when women face such phenomena as disloyalty to their family roles and various types of discrimination in the workplace on the basis of gender," the expert noted [90]. It was to eliminate such problems that the ADB / Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia project was launched "Development of a Policy to Eliminate Gender Discrimination in Labor Legislation".

In order to implement the National Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality in the Kyrgyz Republic until 2020, an interdepartmental group was created by order of the Minister of Labor and Social Development, whose task was to conduct a gender analysis in the field of labor legislation and develop proposals on legal mechanisms and tools for identified obstacles and barriers to labor market for women.

Women are not involved in productive labor, but do work that is not paid, although they are generally useful for the economy. This is what the state needs to work with at the system level. In all age groups, male employment is higher. Moreover, the level of education of women is higher than the level of education of men, that is, it is not a question of competence - this does not mean that women do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to be involved in the labor market.

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**Women are not involved in productive labor, but do work that is not paid, although they are generally useful for the economy.**

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Employment areas are unevenly distributed. Thus, women are concentrated in sectors such as real estate, health, and social services, education and the operation of hotels and restaurants. Men are more involved in construction, transportation, energy. And in many ways, this distribution takes its roots in the vocational education system. Mostly girls study at pedagogical universities, and young men go to engineering specialties. In many aspects, this division is due to the career guidance system. "As for wages, the situation has not changed much in recent years. The gap is narrowing even slightly, but the situation is far from what we can say - men and women have equal incomes. If in 2010 the gap was 66%, this the wages of women in relation to men, then in 2016 - 75.3%, «experts say.

Today, more than 200 thousand women are employed in the clothing industry, according to unofficial data, more than 300 thousand, and 90% of workers in this sector are women. "Business run by women entrepreneurs must become a powerful economic force. At the same time, we should not forget that a woman is a mother, the keeper of the hearth, and an example for her children. We must help women entrepreneurs become even more successful," said Kyrgyz Prime Minister Abylgaziev.

Despite this, the number of successful entrepreneurs in Kyrgyzstan is increasing every year. Particularly noticeable is the growth of small businesses in rural areas. This is largely facilitated by the implementation of the joint project of the UN and the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic to expand the economic opportunities and rights of rural women (RWEE). According to the results of the project, participants

increased their income by an average of 32%, while the growth of agricultural products amounted to more than 60%. This indicator is one of the clearest examples of the fact that the empowerment of rural women directly affects the development of the economy of the country's regions. The participants opened their own business: bakeries and greenhouses, mini-shops for the production of flour products, for the preservation, drying and processing of vegetables and fruits, as well as sewing, felt and carpet weaving workshops, photo studios and computer courses.

To transfer experience and expand entrepreneurship among rural women, the project participants created four women's associations that provide services to almost 2,000 women, advising on agricultural technologies, launching their own business or agricultural project. The project participants carried out a series of social initiatives, which directly benefited over 12,000 people. Among such initiatives are equipment for kindergartens in villages, repair and construction of electric networks and water supply systems, the opening of computer courses and the improvement of road traffic.

In 2017 alone, project participants grew about two million kilograms of various vegetable products. Improving the growth of income and yield of project participants is one of the most important factors in increasing interest in agricultural projects and regional development. If at the beginning of the project (in 2014) the average household income of the project participants was about 1,200 soms per month, then in 2016 it was increased to 3,450 - 42,143 soms, and in 2017 the family income of each of the project participants grew to 85,000 soms. These figures are another real indicator of the improvement of agro-technical and entrepreneurial skills of rural women, and, as a result, the increase in the economic income of their families.

Thanks to the active lobbying of gender issues in 14 ayil okrugs (villages), gender-responsive social and economic development strategies for 2017-2030 were adopted. These strategies are tailored to the needs and requirements of men and women, and their outcomes that provide equal impact contribute to gender equality. This work was strengthened at the national level, in the formation of a gender-responsive policy of the Kyrgyz Republic in the context of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.



## Uzbekistan

Over the years of independence in Uzbekistan, positive changes have taken place in the field of ensuring gender equality, the status of women has improved, and their rights have expanded. The existing legal framework guarantees men and women equal rights in access to all opportunities offered by the labor market (the sphere of paid labor in general, all types of activities, places of work with different characteristics, etc.). Nevertheless, as throughout the world, ensuring gender equality in the country's labor market is relevant. It is important to emphasize that even formally observed manifestations of gender differences should not be automatically considered as evidence of the unequal position of women and men in employment unless they are a consequence of restricting access to opportunities for workers of different sexes. Women make up about 47% of the labor force in Uzbekistan [56].

According to the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, women are less likely to participate in the labor market: their economic activity level 4 is 8.3 percentage points (pp) lower than the corresponding indicator for men (68.2% versus 76.5%), and employment rate - by 9.1 percentage points (64% vs 73%). At the same time, the level of economic inactivity of women is 17.5 percentage points higher than the corresponding indicator in men (33.9% versus 16.3%). Women make up more than half of the registered unemployed. So, in 2010 there were 68.1% of the total number of officially recognized unemployed. Women and men are employed in various sectors and professions; there is gender differentiation in the labor market. There are more women in such segments of the economy as healthcare, sports and social security, where the share of women exceeds 75% of all employed, as well as in the field combining education, culture, art, and science, where 2/3 of the workers are women. Jobs in sectors such as construction, transportation and communications are mainly occupied by men, where the proportion of women is 11.1% and 15.5%, respectively [56].

The country is conducting large-scale work to increase the socio-political activity of women, to show their talent and abilities in various fields, to ensure strict observance of their rights and legitimate interests, as well as to strengthen the institution of the family, and to increase the number of women in industries where their participation is insignificant or completely absent. In Uzbekistan, at the legislative

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level, there are no norms regarding the violation of women's labor rights, especially in matters of wages. However, it is absolutely true that due to the predominant employment of women in education and health care systems, the level of pay in these sectors was generally low[61].

At present, relevant decisions have been taken, on the basis of which the wages of employees of the educational and medical systems have been increased significantly and this process will continue further. Together with the International Labor Organization, a study of the situation of women in the world of work is being carried out and the results of the study will be the basis for determining further actions that

will help eliminate gender imbalances in the world of work. At the same time, in the structure of the population's employment, a steady increase in the share of women is observed, which amounts to 45.5%, while about 170 thousand women work in the field of

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**In Uzbekistan 170 thousand women work in the field of entrepreneurship, 34% of the heads of private structures are women, about 500 thousand jobs are created annually for women**

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entrepreneurship, 34% of the heads of private structures are women, about 500 thousand jobs are created annually for women at the expense of development of entrepreneurship, farming and home-based labor.

Particular attention is paid to guarantees of women's labor rights, and guarantees have been strengthened for the employment of single and large parents with children under 14 years of age and children with disabilities, college and university graduates, girls, victims of trafficking, especially women. Pregnant women, women with children under three years old, and graduates of colleges, lyceums and universities are exempted from the probationary period when hiring. The Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan dated December 5, 2017 "On measures to improve the activities of citizens' self-governing bodies to ensure employment of the population, primarily youth and women" provides for the procedure for interaction of citizens' self-governing bodies with the Youth Union, the Committee of Women and bodies of labor and employment of the population, including youth and women [60].

## Political participation of women

It is recognized that gender inequalities destroy the effectiveness of socio-political strategies aimed at formation and development. However, this problem often lies on the periphery of the socio-political dialogue and the development of resolutions, both in the domestic politics of the countries of the Central Asian region and in the international arena. Ensuring that women and men have equal rights is an important development goal in itself. However, this point has other aspects. The establishment of equality of women and men in rights creates an environment of equal opportunities and powers, which is an essential element in achieving gender equality in other areas, such as education, employment, healthcare and political participation [95].

In Central Asian countries, it is still believed that women and politics are two incompatible things, however, in recent years, the tendency of women to strive for independence and independence has become more apparent. The advancement of women in power is considered today as an instrument of stable, humane and sustainable development of society, since the real equality of men and women changes the priorities of state policy. A striking example of the need of society for the participation of women in political life was the rise to power of the first woman president in such a traditionally patriarchal region as Central Asia. In 2010, Kyrgyz citizens expressed their confidence to Rosa Otunbayeva and gave her a chance to lead the country out of the crisis. Choosing a woman for the post of head of state, we believed in the restoration of stability, peace, and tranquility [21].

However, despite the significant role of women, they are still extremely poorly represented in the power structures of the state. What is the reason? This is an insufficient regulatory framework, the weak development of civil society institutions, and the low political activity of women themselves, and the low level of development of democracy. However, the main factor that significantly inhibits the advancement of women in politics and power is the sustainable preservation of socio-cultural patriarchal traditions and stereotypes.

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The presence of a certain number of women in parliament or in the government does not reflect the real situation with gender inequality in Kyrgyzstan itself. Women have always been a social minority in politics, and still have to fight for their political rights. In almost all countries of the world, men make up a large part of the political elite, although in the 20th-century changes were observed in many countries, the number of women coming to power increased and the role of women in decision-making at various levels increased.

So far, in the Central Asian countries, there has been a negative reaction in discussions about women and their role in politics. In

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many Central Asian countries, the influence of religion, traditionalism and outdated stereotypes is observed, which also negatively affects the perception of gender equality and its ideas, as well as the political participation of women.

How to achieve gender equality in politics? World experience shows that the more equal the number of women and men in power, the more stable the development of not only the social sector, but also increases the level of economic development in the country. In more detail, states that have less than 25-30% of women in their parliaments and governments cope poorly with the problems of protecting motherhood and childhood, the rights of the child, and social protection. This indicates that the observance and enforcement of human rights in accordance with basic democratic requirements is not fully implemented. Therefore, it is not surprising that the struggle for genuine democracy includes a very important component, which is full equality for women, up to parity with men in governments, parliaments, and in all state institutions that ensure social justice and stability in society [21].

## Kyrgyzstan

Despite the fact that women in Kyrgyzstan play an important role, still today they occupy a modest place in the political system. What is the matter? The main reason of gender inequality is considered to be the imperfection of the legislation, which undoubtedly needs reform. In modern conditions, the advancement of women in power should be considered as a democratic development of society. Recent historical events have shown that a female leader personifies stability. There was a need for women to enter politics not in a revolutionary way, but in an evolutionary way [21].

The process of democratization of social development is impossible without the full participation of women in political processes. The dynamics of the last decade of development in Kyrgyzstan and, in particular, the participation of women in recent elections have shown the instability of the position of women in government. Statistics show that there are not enough women in government. The smallest number of women are in the highest authorities. The fall in the number of women in government shows obstacles to women's access to power. Patriarchal models, values, and stereotypes significantly block the path to politics for women. Legal norms do not contribute to the achievement of gender equality in politics. None of the laws of Kyrgyzstan ensures gender equality in the Parliament, the Cabinet of Ministers and other supreme authorities of the country. Promotion to government is traditionally done through specialized institutions such as political parties. Political parties in Kyrgyzstan practically do not promote women. The lack of specialized institutions and mechanisms for promoting women in government in a situation of falling levels of their participation in the political processes is also an obstacle for women.

Lack of support from women's organizations also plays a significant role in reducing women's political opportunities. It is crucial that women themselves and their organizations participate in the promotion of women in politics. It is women who can and should become the catalyst for gender equality in politics [85].

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**Lack of support from women's organizations also plays a significant role in reducing women's political opportunities.**

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In 2012, Kyrgyzstan switched to a two-tier budget, according to which it is the deputies of local keneshes who decide on the items of expenditures of the rural budget. Indeed, it is the representation of women in decision-making that is directly related to the solution of socially significant issues, the interests of children, women, and vulnerable groups. This topic is especially relevant in the year of regional development and digitalization.

Currently, in Kyrgyzstan, reserving mandates for women in ayilkeneshs have been introduced. The law "On the election of deputies of local keneshes", which was adopted by the LCD of the Kyrgyz Republic and entered into force on August 20, 2019, used as a special measure the reservation for women of 30% of the mandates in ayilkeneshes of the Kyrgyz Republic (Articles 59-1, 62), which will allow to ensure the representation of women in the deputy corps of ayilkeneshes at a level of at least 30%.

Amendments to the law are progressive and are aimed at eliminating discrimination and achieving justice. As of December 2016, the share of women in local keneshes in the Kyrgyz Republic was 10%, and in some areas of the country - 8%, while almost 52% of the country's population are women. Eighty-six of the ayilkeneshes generally function without women deputies (or every fifth ayilkenesh), and is not represented by more than half of voters. The persistence of this trend could lead to the fact that by 2020, 1-2% of women

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**The imbalance in local authorities has repeatedly been the subject of discussion during the reporting period of the Kyrgyz Republic to the UN Committee**

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in the country as a whole remained in the village councils. The imbalance in local authorities has repeatedly been the subject of discussion during the reporting period of the Kyrgyz Republic to the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Unfortunately, legislative

amendments, as gender organizations and experts feared, provoked resistance from male candidates. On September 22, early elections were held in the Saruuyayilkenesh of the Jeti-Oguz region, where for the first time a reservation mechanism of 30% of mandates for women was applied. This was made possible thanks to amendments to the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On the election of deputies of local keneshes", which was adopted by the LCD of the Kyrgyz Republic and entered into force on August 20, 2019.

So, 65 male candidates from Saruuyayilokmotu wrote an appeal to the President of the country, in which they expressed dissatisfaction with the innovation, calling it discrimination and violation of their rights. At the same time, the public became aware that during the election process, women candidates in the Saruuyayilkenesh were subjected to great pressure and manipulation, as a result of which two women candidates decided to abandon their mandate quotas in favor of men [97]. In connection with this situation, the Forum of Women Deputies of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic held an emergency meeting with representatives of the Central Election Commission, candidates from Saruu, as well as gender experts and organizations that over the years have sought to introduce a 30% quota.

Moreover, today in 86 ayilkeneshes, i.e. in every fifth ayilkenesh, not a single woman was elected. Given the current trend of decreasing the proportion of women deputies of ayilkeneshes, in 2028 local keneshes will be without women, and given the growing influence of gender stereotypes in rural areas, already in 2020 there will be less than 2% of women in ayilkeneshes.

Today, women deputies of ayilkeneshes from all regions of the country, in cooperation with civil society and international organizations, advocate for the advancement of women's political rights at all levels of government. This initiative will be carried out as part of the implementation of the National Plan of Action for Achieving Gender Equality in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2018-2020 [95].

Currently, women in Kyrgyzstan are widely involved in the economic, political, socio-cultural life of the country and are present in high posts. More than 22% of the deputies of the Jogorku Kenesh are women, 60% of the judges of the Supreme Court are women, 33% of the CEC are women. Women hold important government posts: vice-speakers of the parliament, chairman of the Accounts Chamber, Attorney General

Ex-President of Kyrgyzstan Roza Otunbayeva said: "We are faced with the task of increasing the representation of women in parliament to 50% by 2030." According to her, the current quota of 30% was achieved with great difficulty. However, at present, the representation of women in parliament is less than 30%.

It is noteworthy that of all the states of Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan has the largest number of women in parliament, out of 120 deputies, 19 are female deputies. In the future, it is planned that the number of women will grow not only in leadership positions but also in senior positions. Recently, a whole generation of young highly educated, intelligent women have formed in Kyrgyzstan. Their participation in politics can bring new perspectives in decision-making, expansion, and development of the laws of governance, thereby enriching political processes by introducing new skills, visions, styles [99].

## Uzbekistan

Over the years of independent development, Uzbekistan has made great strides in protecting the rights and legitimate interests of women. No less significant are achievements in the field of ensuring their active participation in the socio-political and socio-economic life of the republic. First of all, it is necessary to note the work carried out in Uzbekistan in the field of developing the regulatory framework in this direction. Over the past years, about 100 national and international legal acts aimed at protecting the interests of women have been adopted and ratified. The cornerstone

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**Uzbekistan has made great strides in protecting the rights and legitimate interests of women.**

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document guaranteeing the fundamental rights of women is the country's Constitution. The list also includes a number of decrees and resolutions of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Cabinet of Ministers, including "On enhancing the role of women in state and public construction", "On additional measures to protect the health of mother and child, the formation of a healthy generation" and many others. Annually, special state programs are adopted, within the framework of which systematic work is carried out in a certain direction, which to one degree or another is related to improving the conditions and quality of life of our women. Uzbekistan has also ratified a number of UN conventions and the International Labor Organization, such as "On the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women", "On the Protection of Maternity", "On Discrimination in the Field of Labor and Occupation" and other documents.

The participation of women in public administration is becoming increasingly active. In particular, today they make up 17% of the members of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis and 16% of the deputies of the Legislative Chamber. Along with this, in recent years, the representation of women in the executive branch has grown by almost 5 times - from 3.4% to 16%.

The number of female representatives has increased in the country's political parties by creating a female wing. Currently, according to the Committee of Women of Uzbekistan, the proportion of women in the Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan has increased

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**The number of female representatives has increased in the country's political parties by creating a female wing.**

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from 35% to 38%, the Democratic Party MilliyTiklanish - from 40% to 46%, the People's Democratic Party - from 41% to 56%, the Social Democratic Party «Adolat» - from 38% to 49%.

The participation of women in local government and mahalla structures has also been expanded. So, over the last period, their share of the total number of chairmen of mahalla committees increased from 9.6% to 25.6%.

The main directions of a consistent and systematic policy to protect the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of women in Uzbekistan are:

- ensuring the implementation of legislative acts in the field of protecting the rights and interests of women, protecting mothers and children, as well as taking measures to further improve the legal framework;
- constant and comprehensive monitoring of the state of affairs to protect the rights of women, increasing their role in the family,



society and in the management of public and state affairs;

- adoption and implementation of effective measures to ensure the employment of women, the provision of comprehensive assistance to their employment, the development of various forms of women's entrepreneurship, especially in rural areas;

- preparation and implementation of measures aimed at increasing the socio-political and socio-legal activity of women, facilitating the active participation of women's non-governmental non-profit organizations in the public and political life of the country.

Opponents of the law "On guarantees of equal rights and opportunities" argue that conditions for gender equality have already been created in the country and they are enshrined in article 18 of the Constitution, where everyone is equal. But is equality actually respected? In terms of gender equality, Uzbekistan ranks 127th in the world ranking and last among CIS countries. Until now, women in the

country receive less, are less educated, less equal. The proportion of women in management personnel at the decision-making level is less than 2%. According to Prime Minister Abdullah Aripov, "future leaders are being trained at the

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Presidential Academy of Public Administration, but the ministries are proposing candidates for training. Out of 10 candidates, only one woman falls into the list or does not fall at all"[62]. In August 2019, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On guarantees of equal rights and opportunities for women and men" was adopted and approved [55].

The expansion of the role of women in public administration is also a key element of the national sustainable development goal No. 5. On October 20, 2018, the government of Uzbekistan adopted a resolution "On measures to implement national goals and objectives on the ground" for sustainable development until 2030." Task 5.5. stipulates that it is necessary "to ensure the full and effective participation of women and equal opportunities for them to lead at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life".

"The presence of a critical mass of women in leadership positions is positive in the development of society in all countries. Thus, world practice shows that increasing the representation of women in public administration leads to the fact that legislation is developed considering gender factors, women's participation in politics suggests that women's daily problems also begin to grow in parliamentary debates. Thus, increasing the representation of women in government can improve the protection of women's interests," said Helena Fraser,

UNDP Resident Representative in Uzbekistan[63]..

The country is conducting large-scale work to increase the socio-political activity of women, to show their talent and abilities in various fields, to ensure strict observance of their rights and legitimate interests, as well as to strengthen the institution of the family.

The representation of women at the decision-making level is very small, especially in senior positions. But now work has begun in this direction. To ensure targeted training of women for leadership positions, a project has been launched to increase the potential of women's cadres who are able to actively participate in public and public administration. The appearance on the horizon of women who want to occupy certain positions in public administration speaks not only about the level of their activation but also about a change in the consciousness and outlook of loved ones, especially men[61].

## Tajikistan

The past century has been marked by enormous changes in the status of women in society. In Tajikistan, as in other civilized countries, women have equal legal rights in all spheres of life. No one will dispute the fact that women are mothers, and wives, and scientists, and agronomists, and doctors, and builders, and journalists, and lawyers, etc. The injustice lies in the fact that the employment of women is many times higher than that of men, but women are much less likely to participate in decision-making, in the allocation of resources and income, including their own.

In Tajikistan, there is a lack of targeting. The state program to promote women in government, the introduction of temporary special measures to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life, and increased participation of women in political processes are ineffective. So in 1998, women accounted for 8.3% in the

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**In Tajikistan, the state program to promote women in government, the introduction of temporary special measures to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life are ineffective.**

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elected bodies of the republic, including district, city and regional Majlis, while in the Majlisi Oli this figure barely reached 3% of the total number of deputies. In executive bodies, the proportion of women is much higher, although it is far from the 30% threshold recommended by International Standards to achieve

gender balance at the decision-making level. In the apparatus of the Government, the proportion of women in the total number of responsible workers was 19%, among the heads of ministries and

departments - 7.4%, in the apparatus of the Majlisi Oli - 15.3%, in local Hukumats - 16%. Among 75 Hukumats of all levels, only in two of them women were appointed chairmen.

An analysis of women's participation in the 2000 elections in Tajikistan did not record a trend of gender discrimination. So out of 287 candidates who nominated in single-mandate constituencies, 29 were women. This is just over 10% of all self-nominated people. Only 22 women out of 214 candidates received the candidate's mandate, which also makes up 10% of the total number of candidates. Women were elected as deputies in four of 41 single-mandate constituencies. This is also equal to 10%. An analysis of the dynamics of the elections shows that the greatest success was achieved by women nominated by political parties. All seven women who were nominated in single-mandate constituencies but did not receive a deputy mandate were independent, i.e. had no support from any of the six political parties. However, in general, these facts cannot be attributed to gender discrimination. Among male candidates, similar indicators do not differ by a large deviation[64].

In 2005, women were poorly represented in the political system of Tajikistan. There were no women among the chairmen of political parties, and few women held senior positions in political parties. Political parties did not have women's branches. 34 women out of 230 candidates were represented on the candidate list. All six registered parties had women on the party list, but they were placed at the bottom of the lists, which made it doubtful whether they could be elected. In the lists of the NDP and the PSD, women are included in the first 3 names; the NDP placed women evenly throughout the list. Women were nominated in 14 of 41 single-mandate constituencies; in three districts, two women were nominated, and in 11 districts one woman was nominated. The relatively low number of politically active women is usually explained by the complex influence of traditions, cultural norms and low economic conditions, which complicates the participation of many women in politics. The candidate's high electoral security was a particular obstacle for women.

Today, women in Tajikistan are underrepresented in political decision-making processes at all levels. In parliament, women makeup only 19% of legislators (12 out of 63) and are leaders of only two parliamentary committees and one ministry[67].

Until now, the problem of equal opportunities for women and men is not a priority for the political elite of the Tajik state. If the

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**There were no women among the chairmen of political parties, and few women held senior positions in political parties.**

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situation in this area is not changed, then Tajikistan may remain a country where governance is under the almost undivided control of one social group, the male one. The gender imbalance in modern Tajikistan, as both world and domestic experience shows, impedes the sustainable development and stability of society and promotes wasteful use of human and natural resources.

Thus, we believe that it is necessary to form a political will, that is, the state itself must make gender equality one of its main priorities. It is also necessary to formulate the appropriate organization of the decision-making process using an integrated approach, improve democratic representativeness, develop and strengthen the principle of gender equality, strengthen women's movements, non-governmental organizations, and lobbying groups in political parties. The most necessary is the implementation of institutional reforms related to the process of selection of leading personnel at the political and administrative levels[73].

## Kazakhstan

In modern Kazakhstani society, the problem of women's participation in the political life of society in the Republic of Kazakhstan and their involvement in the democratic process has become relevant due to the diversity of cultural contexts of the formation of a new type of political participation and the existence of difficulties in implementing the principle of cooperation in political life. In these circumstances:

First, the unacceptability of the theoretical and political-historical justification of gender inequality, support for its existing model, becomes apparent. It is known that the disclosure of the nature and consequences of the joint activities of men and women in politics was not part of the strategic interests of the state. In the

Soviet period, Kazakhstani women were involved in politics on the basis of quotas and in order to resolve the so-called women's issue. At the same time, the Soviet state's claim to world leadership in solving the problems of women's political participation was significant.

However, it is also known that in reality the state was not able to fully cope with this role. Comprehensive reform of modern Kazakhstani society aroused the activity of women in the development of the political sphere. In these conditions, it

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**In the Soviet period, Kazakhstani women were involved in politics on the basis of quotas and in order to resolve the so-called women's issue.**

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becomes necessary to study the improving participation of women in the political life of society at the present stage;

Second, it turned out to be necessary to have a theoretical understanding of what constitutional rules and procedures should be for developing the political participation of women, and what they could ideally offer. In this regard, it became relevant to determine the theoretical and practical possibilities of combining and complementing the classical political and gender approaches to analyzing the development of women's political participation and involvement in politics;

Third, an assessment of modern international and Kazakhstani documents was required, which varied the process of regulating the sphere of women's political participation. The official documents define the modern requirements for this side of political life, disclose the functional capabilities and expected results of the development process of women's participation, the degree of hierarchy and gender asymmetry in politics. At the same time, studies show a poorly developed gender policy in the country, as well as mechanisms for their implementation in the political life of modern Kazakhstan.

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**At the same time, studies show a poorly developed gender policy in Kazakhstan**

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It is believed that women in Kazakhstan are adequately represented in senior positions in government. So, in the Mazhilis of the Parliament of the previous convocation, there were 26% of women deputies. Three women worked in the Government.

In 2016, women accounted for 56% of the total number of administrative civil servants, but occupied only 10% of the political positions in the civil service, 22% of the seats in parliament and 24% of senior positions in the banking sector

The representation of women in the country's parliament today is 20% (31 people), and in the Mazhilis of the parliament - 26% (28 women). In the Senate of the Parliament, the share of women is 6%, only three women. The share of women in local representative bodies of power is 19% (in oblast, city, district maslikhats, there are only 3,316 deputies, of which 627 are women). The representation of women deputies in urban maslikhats has improved, they account for 22% (139 out of 623). The representation of women among members of the Government is 13% (Minister of Health and Social Development, Minister of Economic Integration.). Only 10% of women are political civil servants in the country (39 out of 386). The representation of women in leadership positions in local executive bodies is 20.7%. Currently, the number of public servants in the republic is about

87 thousand people, of which 55% are women. In the annual Global Report of the World Economic Forum on Gender Equality, the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2013 ranked 32nd among 146 countries of the world, now 72nd[46].

At the same time, despite the international recognition of Kazakhstan's achievements in addressing the gender issue, the current situation indicates that the ongoing political reforms in the country did not automatically increase the status of women. They are still poorly represented at the level of decision-making in government bodies and at highly paid jobs in various areas of the economy. A woman has not become a full-fledged object of politics, an important element of the electorate and an addressee of targeted actions of state programs, an active and influential participant in the political process and public administration. The problem arises that the obvious minority of women in power reduces their ability to participate in the creation of a just social society. This is despite the fact that a high level of education does not guarantee working women specialists career prospects[47].

At the moment, women are not sufficiently involved in government and political structures, but at the same time there is a "gender vertical" of power widely used in the post-Soviet space, where women are present at the lower and middle levels, but are

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minimally represented in high positions (at the decision-making level). This means that decisions on public policies related to gender equality are still in the hands of men, the situation may change if more women occupy high posts in the

public sector and women voters "use the election opportunities as in their own interests so in the interests of society as a whole."

Greater access to women's power resources allows one to quickly and effectively influence the changing situation at different levels. Those levels include, institutional (legislation, legal field); informal (horizontal social mobility from political to business elite); value (the transformation of stereotypes of the role of women in society).

It must be admitted that, despite the difficulties, Kazakhstan is integrating more and more intensively into the world community. In addition, the country's women's movement is increasingly interacting with the international women's movement. The country has developed the institutional mechanism for achieving gender equality. Over the years of independence, Kazakhstan has made some progress in protecting the rights and legitimate interests of men and women. Behind this progress were important adopted documents for

the image of the state and society: 1998 - Kazakhstan's accession to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The country has ratified the United Nations conventions "On the political rights of women", "On the citizenship of a married woman", the conventions of the International Labor Organization, including "On equal remuneration of men and women for work of equal value".

Kazakhstan did not introduce a quota for women in government bodies, as was done in some developed countries. However, the main document approved by Decree No. 1677 of the Head of State on November 29, 2005, the Gender Equality Strategy for 2006-2016, proposes one of the main tasks in ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men: "To achieve 30% representation of women in power at the decision-making level in accordance with the requirements of the Beijing Platform for Action for the Advancement of Women

However, in the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women" there is no quota system for 30% for one gender in public administration. At the moment this does not guarantee at least a minimum representation of women at the decision-making level[48].

## Turkmenistan

The principle of equality and equal opportunities for women and men is fundamental to the Constitution of Turkmenistan, the policies of the President and the Government of Turkmenistan. This principle is the basis of the country's legislative and regulatory framework that does not discriminate on the basis of gender. Turkmenistan consistently implements the provisions of the Convention and the World Conference on the Status of Women (Beijing, September 4-5, 1995), ensuring women the enjoyment and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on the basis of gender equality with men.

Women in Turkmenistan are guaranteed the full range of political, economic, social and cultural rights and freedoms provided for by the Basic Law and the laws of the country, as well as international obligations of Turkmenistan. To this end, material, social and legal conditions have been created in Turkmenistan to ensure the full development and progress of women[29].

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**Women in Turkmenistan are guaranteed the full range of political, economic, social and cultural rights and freedoms he laws of the country**

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Democratic institutions and procedures have been formed in the country that provide women with equal rights and access to public service. This also allows women to participate in elections, as well as the right and opportunity to be elected to government bodies, to take part in managing the affairs of society and the state, and create and participate in public associations.

The legislation and practice of Turkmenistan does not know any prohibitions or discriminatory restrictions on the political rights of women (Law of Turkmenistan of October 19, 2012 No. 344-IV)[31].

However, in the political life of Turkmenistan, as well as in the Turkmen government, men dominate. Only a few women hold high posts in the Turkmen government, in state and administrative structures. Going into big politics, a woman should, first of all, become

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**In the political life of Turkmenistan, as well as in the Turkmen government, men dominate. Only a few women hold high posts in the Turkmen government**

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a member of the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (DPT), until recently, the only party in the country chaired by the current president of Turkmenistan. Nevertheless, the Turkmen authorities emphasize in their reports to various international organizations that women are “adequately represented in the elected state and administrative bodies of the country.” Thus, the 2011 report of Turkmenistan to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women states that “17% in the parliament of Turkmenistan are women, 17% in local councils, 17% in regional councils, and 20% in district and municipal councils.” According to the same report, 25 women hold senior positions in the country, including those at the level of ministers and their deputies. The Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (DPT), the successor to the former Communist Party, was the only political party until 2012. A few months after the adoption of the Law on Political Parties, the Party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs of Turkmenistan was created. The new party is the assignee of the Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs of Turkmenistan. In September 2014, the Constituent Congress of the third political party of the country, the Agrarian Party of Turkmenistan, was held in Ashgabat. This party was also created with the approval of the president. Information on whether women are members of new parties, and if so, in what percentage are not represented[31].

In his greeting to the congress of the Union of Women of Turkmenistan, the President of the country said: “I am sincerely happy and proud that Turkmen women are ardently supporting, actively participating in the process of national revival, in implementing our



policy of unity, unity, benevolence, peace and neutrality. The merits of Turkmen women in achievements in the fields of politics, economics, and culture are great. With a sense of deep satisfaction, I note that Turkmen women occupy a worthy place in government, in executive bodies, public organizations, science and education, the healthcare system, literature and art”[29].

## Recommendations

For the formation of a balanced state policy, parity democracy in the countries of Central Asia, for the promotion of female leadership, it is necessary to maximize relevant activities, which is expressed in the following:

1. To create sustainable and transparent democratic institutions and ensuring the rule of law. The definition and practice of such activities include the exercise by women of leadership and authority along with men.

2. To ensure equal and real participation in political life, based on the principles of society, including all citizens, in which everyone has an equal right to vote, to run for office, and the government represents the interests of citizens.

3. Further reform of civil society institutions is required, which will contribute to greater activity of the women's movement, will be the vehicle of gender policy in the state, their development and consolidation as a social base.

4. The state policy on women should not exclude the international aspect, fulfill the international obligations of states in connection with the ratification of relevant international conventions, and actively cooperate in the framework of international organizations.

5. The study of foreign practice suggests that it is necessary to fully consider modern challenges, namely, the increasing globalization of gender inequality, as a result of which the trafficking of women, prostitution, drug addiction, and poverty are increasing.

6. The use of media to strengthen the role of women in public and economic life and to prevent stereotypes that form a negative attitude towards women and contribute to the strengthening of gender prejudice.

7. Strengthening political parties, as they are a kind of springboard for political positions and the key to promoting women's full participation in political processes. Parties should not only include women on equal terms in party lists of candidates, but also actively implement internal party democracy and support women leaders (selection, training, provision of resources for propaganda, fundraising, networking, as well as opportunities and ways to influence government policy, etc.).

8. For the governments of the Central Asian region, it is necessary to systematically form a reserve of women leaders, not only from public servants but from the ranks of NGOs, representatives of international organizations and business. This list should be open and accessible to all interested parties; political parties, state organizations and executive authorities.

9. Introduction of temporary special measures (in the form of a 30% quota for the representation of women in government), which are aimed at accelerating the establishment of de facto equality between men and women are not considered as discrimination or infringement of democracy.

10. Promotion of entrepreneurship and business development among women with access to borrowed funds, capital markets, and finance.

11. Formation of women's assets through access to land and property rights.

12. Improving the financial and political literacy of women.

13. Providing better jobs for women and raising wages, improving working conditions and the system of benefits.

## Conclusion

Achieving gender equality and empowering women is an integral part of Central Asian states. One of the main barriers to women's leadership in Western countries is unequal access to education. As we see, the situation is different for the region. Despite free access to education, deeper problems arise with expectations. Conflicting values of traditional society and Western orientation on the professional self-realization of women. There is a dissonance: on the one hand, one needs to act as a good mother and wife, and on the other, try to build a successful career. As the practice of state programs and laws shows insufficiently, a close relationship between the government and public institutions and measures to change stereotypical thinking regarding the role of women are needed. Only by ensuring that the rights of women and girls are respected for all purposes can we achieve justice and integration, as well as creating economies that work for all and preserve the environment for us and our future generations.

Women are needed in power, as they objectively act as catalysts for change. In other words, women should go to power structures, since their arrival there is an objectively necessary condition for improving the position of the female population in society as a whole, and, therefore, for each individual woman.

I am deeply convinced that improving the quality of life and moving towards progress requires all laws and political decisions to be made considering the interests of both socio-sexual groups of society. Women make up half of the country's population, and their specific problems are of fundamental importance. In general, the policy of gender equality is a policy of justice, which considers the interests of both women and men.

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