

CIVIL SOCIETY INSTITUTIONS

THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

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Today, the prevention and fight against corruption in our country has become a priority of state policy.

The activities of the National Anti-Corruption Council and the Anti-Corruption Agency have been established.

Important laws "On combating corruption" and "Public procurement", which are completely new for Uzbekistan, have been adopted.

Compliance control system is being introduced in every ministry and department, in economic administration bodies with respect to the fight against corruption.

Special portals such as openbudget.uz; d.xarid.uz; e-xarid.uz; cooperation.uz, which serve to ensure budget openness have been launched.

A system of recruitment to the civil service on the basis of open competition has been created.

In the **open data ranking** published by the international non-profit organization Open Data Inventory in December 2020, Uzbekistan ranked **44th** out of 187 countries in the world with 63 points, and **1st** in Central Asia.

In short, serious steps have been taken to prevent and combat corruption. However, there is still a lot of work to be done. Because cases of corruption still exist at all levels. So, is the fight against corruption only the job of government agencies or the duty of ordinary citizens as well? Active citizens and non-governmental non-profit organizations are involved as well in solving problems in other areas, especially social issues. This means that NGOs must be active in the fight against corruption too. However, we can say that

this process is still in its infancy. According to international and foreign experience, citizens are very active in exercising civil control over government agencies in developed countries. Public authorities provide full support to independent NGOs in exercising public control.

In accordance with Article 14 of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On combating corruption", "Citizens' self-government bodies, non-governmental non-profit organizations and citizens may:

- participate in the development and implementation of state programs and other programs in the field of combating corruption;
- participate in raising the legal awareness and legal culture of the population, the formation of an intolerant attitude to corruption in society;
- exercise public control over the implementation of anti-corruption legislation;
- make proposals to improve anti-corruption legislation;
- cooperate with government agencies and other organizations in the fight against corruption".

In addition, "non-governmental non-profit organizations participate in the activities of the Interdepartmental Commission and territorial interdepartmental commissions, as well as in the activities of working groups, commissions and public advisory bodies under government agencies in order to implement the measures provided for in this article".

Today, civil society institutions, in particular, non-governmental organizations become an important factor in protecting democratic values, human rights and freedoms and legitimate interests, create conditions for citizens to realize their potential, increase their social, socio-economic activity and legal culture in Uzbekistan, help maintain balance of interests in society.

For example, the Analytical Center for Openness and Transparency in Uzbekistan, an independent NGO that studies corruption and transparency, was recently registered. The main goal of the Center is to promote the formation of an intolerant attitude to corruption in society and to improve the

mechanisms of openness, transparency and accountability in public administration. True, this NGO has just started its activities, but it is a positive trend. There is a need to increase the number of NGOs in this area and their support.

The results of a global expert survey conducted by the national movement "Yuksalish", which assessed the reforms being carried out in Uzbekistan and involved 100 foreign and local experts, also show that the biggest obstacle to Uzbekistan's development is corruption. Almost all the experts surveyed stressed the need to further strengthen the anti-corruption system at all levels.

The "Yuksalish" national movement has also implemented projects in several areas to support the anti-corruption system. In particular, first of all, this is the direction of in-depth study of corruption risks across sectors.

In this regard, the National Movement "Yuksalish", the Anti-Corruption Agency and the international non-governmental organization "Regional Dialogue" have launched jointly the activity of "**Anti-Corruption laboratories**".

The purpose of the project is to conduct an in-depth analysis of corruption high-risk areas with the involvement of the general public, to develop recommendations for changes in legislation and procedures to eliminate corruption in the field. For this, a specific topic of the chosen field is identified as a laboratory object and all the links of the corruption chain are studied and the root causes and essence of corruption are determined.

Initially, the first topic of the "Anti-Corruption laboratories" was the process of admission to the first grade of school education. In the framework of the project, surveys were conducted in 114 secondary schools in 14 regions of the Republic of Uzbekistan with the participation of school principals, first grade teachers and parents of pupils. The scope of the initial results is very wide. The data collected are currently being summarized and analyzed. Based on the results of the analysis, a comprehensive report and recommendations on corruption risks will be developed and submitted to the Anti-Corruption Agency, the National Council and the Parliament. We believe that

significant results can be achieved by expanding the coverage of such laboratories with the participation of civil society and experts and covering more areas.

The second direction is to increase the organizational capacity of civil society institutions in the fight against corruption.

The purpose of the project is to increase the capacity of local communities and civil society institutions in identifying and eliminating corruption risks in the activities of public authorities and administration bodies.

To date, the movement has conducted special trainings and provided grants to develop the skills of public monitoring of about 30 public councils under ministries and departments, local authorities. The best practices in this area are being brought to the local level. As a result, we see that members of public councils – active citizens and representatives of the non-governmental sector – are effectively monitoring the activities of government agencies and local authorities, holding public hearings, submitting reports or monitoring reports to local councils and law enforcement agencies, and the number of such cases are increasing. Today, we believe that the activities of public councils in Khorezm, Kashkadarya and Fergana regions can be studied as an example.

Another important project of the national movement "Yuksalish" in this direction is the Media Schools, aimed at building the capacity of local journalists and bloggers. These Media Schools are conducting trainings aimed at increasing the inquiry capacity of journalists and bloggers. So far, more than 150 local journalists and bloggers have attended MediaSchools.

In addition, the Schools for Non-governmental Non-profit Organizations, organized by the movement, hold seminars and trainings on public monitoring of the activities of government agencies for representatives of the non-governmental sector and they are providing them with the necessary skills, legal and methodological advice. So far, more than 100 non-governmental organizations have participated in these NGO schools.

Elimination of this trouble requires the coordination of government and non-governmental organizations, as well as public efforts in general. That is, the work in this area will be effective only if the fight against corruption becomes a nationwide movement.

In our opinion, in order to further involve civil society institutions in the fight against corruption, it is necessary to pay attention to the following:

- creation of civil society networks to combat corruption, providing them with material, financial, political and legal and other necessary resources by the state;

- subsidies and grants from international donors and the state must have a component of public oversight, providing for participation of civil society institutions;

- we consider it expedient to support the activities of non-governmental non-profit organizations, the main activity of which is the systematic fight against corruption and to increase the number of such NGOs;

- it would be expedient to conduct sectoral researches in the field of anti-corruption, to make decisions based on in-depth analysis. In this regard, the activities of "Anti-Corruption Laboratories" can serve as a positive basis;

- more attention should be paid to building the capacity and authorities of civil society institutions and citizens to fight corruption at the local level;

- strengthening cooperation between government and non-government institutions through the establishment of grants and social orders for local NGOs by local authorities (according to international experience, it is an important factor in preventing corruption).

As noted by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev in his speech at the joint session of the branches of the Oliy Majlis, dedicated to the inauguration ceremony, "But we all understand well that the trouble of corruption cannot be combated only by state and legal measures. For this, it is crucial in our society, first of all, in the minds of young people to form an uncompromising attitude to this trouble, to unite all healthy forces.