

10-4-2021

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Recommended Citation

Alimova, Sabokhat G.; Gulyamova, Aziza N.; and Melieva, Gulzoda B. (2021) "PROBLEMS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT OF THE POPULATION DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC AND THEIR SOLUTIONS IN UZBEKISTAN," *Central Asian Journal of Medicine*: Vol. 2021 : Iss. 3 , Article 13.

Available at: <https://uzjournals.edu.uz/tma/vol2021/iss3/13>

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PROBLEMS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT OF THE POPULATION DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC AND THEIR SOLUTIONS IN UZBEKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This article reflects the problems and ways to solve them, the impact on the economy of countries in particular the Republic of Uzbekistan during the coronavirus pandemic and the slowdown in business activity of people who are considered the most vulnerable groups of people.

Key words: Pandemic, population, vulnerable groups, business activity, income of people, low-income families, iron notebook, Unified Register, social protection.

INTRODUCTION

It is obvious that the economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic are very serious." Governments and Central banks around the world are preparing for an economic slowdown and even a recession. The Uzbek authorities are also well aware of this. The President said that: "The coronavirus Pandemic, as in all countries of the world, will naturally have a negative impact on our economy." He instructed the government to develop a program to support the spheres and sectors of the economy, local budgets and the population. What does the pandemic mean for the Uzbek economy and what should we do? There are two risk vectors for our economy. The

first is a decline in business activity within the country, and the second is a slowdown in the global economy and, in particular, in the economies of countries with which we have close economic ties. Let's start with the first one. It is clear that forced measures to reduce the spread of the virus, such as closing public places, canceling events, closing universities and schools, are absolutely justified and timely. But we must understand that such measures, of course, will affect business activity.

Materials and methods. As a result of the slowdown in business activity, people's incomes will naturally fall. The most vulnerable groups of people during such a crisis are people who work on piecework, and low-income people who do not have savings. Such workers are very vulnerable during crises, because due to a downturn in business activity, employees who have a permanent job may not be laid off. At the same time, millions of people who work for piecework (taxi drivers, movers at markets, cleaners, construction workers, car washers, handymen, dishwashers and waiters) are left without sources of income due to the fact that people will consume less and go out on the street. In other words, the decline in economic activity has hit people who are not employed in permanent and official fixed-wage jobs much harder than it has hit people who are not settled for permanent and official work with a fixed salary.

Our formal economy employs only 5.6 million people out of a total workforce of almost 19 million. In other words, most people in Uzbekistan are not employed in the formal sector and are potentially very vulnerable to economic shocks. Moreover, when vulnerable workers lose their income, it is clear that their activity will also decrease, and they will also start to consume and spend less, as a result, the crisis spiral will spin. An economic crisis, or downturn in business activity, occurs when consumers don't spend money and firms don't invest. Therefore, when taking anti-crisis measures, you need to be well aware that everything is connected in the economy, and a decline in business activity will negatively affect even those industries and those employees who, it would seem, should not suffer. Even the indirect economic consequences of the virus hit lower-

income people harder. For example, a single mother whose children are in kindergarten may work as an employee during the working day, but since the children were left at home and there was no one to leave them, she and her family lost all their income. Moreover, former world Bank economist David Evans writes that in developing countries, women can disproportionately experience the economic and social consequences of the coronavirus.

Results and discussions. During the pandemic, the government of the Republic of Uzbekistan developed many programs to improve the well-being of the population during this period. To help socially vulnerable families in Uzbekistan, the "Temir daftar" ("iron notebook") list was introduced, where information about those in need is entered. The list is formed by the chairmen of mahalla committees together with the heads of sectors. Officials enter information in the "iron notebook " in electronic form on the Sakhovat.argos website.uz using an electronic signature key. Five categories of families in need were identified when maintaining the "iron notebook": the presence of disabled and chronically ill family members; families consisting of lonely elderly people, widows and needy people, people in need of care; families with five and more children; the citizens who lost their jobs and sources of income as a result of quarantine measures, including returning migrants; families below the poverty line, in need of help and financial support. Before the introduction of the "iron notebook", some families had access to benefits for caring for a child under 2 years of age, for children under 14 years of age, and benefits for low-income families. To qualify for such assistance, the average monthly total income for each family member for the last three months should not exceed 1.5 times the average monthly minimum wage, or 358 thousand soums.

However, the upper limit of low-income of 358 thousand soums is an understated criterion for the neediness of families. Since 2015, the world Bank has defined extreme poverty as living on less than \$ 1.9 a day, which means that the income per person per month of \$ 57, or more than 580 thousand soums (at the current exchange rate), is the threshold of extreme poverty. August 8-Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov criticized the chairmen of citizens' gatherings for

delaying the process of allocating one-time financial assistance to families in need. Naturally, household rounds and identifying seven categories of families based on unapproved and subjective criteria can take much more time and effort, which is also affected by the efficiency and training of the employees of mahalla committees with limited staff.

It is quite possible that the chairmen of mahallas and their assistants are aware of what is happening in the mahalla, they may have organizational skills, life experience and enjoy authority among the population. However, they will not replace professional social workers who have the skills of case management and social support for socially vulnerable children and adults. Therefore, it is more expedient to abandon the mediation of mahallas in this matter.

In the new system of the Unified register of social protection (operating in a test mode in the Syrdarya region from October 1, 2019, until the end of the year it should be implemented throughout Uzbekistan), citizens will be able to register using an individual's personal identification number (PIN) and apply for social benefits. Digitalization of this process will avoid paperwork and provide an opportunity to objectively assess the degree of need of low-income families with the ability to track the level of prosperity, wages and other private personal data.

One-time assistance to families affected by the socio-economic crisis as a result of the pandemic will allow them to survive for a certain period. At the same time, representatives of mahallas and sectors will obviously assist these people in finding employment after strict quarantine measures, but the positive impact on the total family income may be insignificant due to low wages from low-skilled workers and public works.

The coronavirus pandemic has shown that we are all vulnerable both in terms of health and socio-economic situation. The self-employed and workers in the rather large informal sector were particularly vulnerable. It is very important to think in detail about how in the future information about families in need of social protection collected in the "iron notebook" can be preserved and used to create a truly national register, which will reflect the history of recipients of social assistance. Ultimately,

evaluating the stories and effectiveness of the support provided to people will serve to develop the social protection system in the country.

Conclusion. The slowdown of the global economy and the way out of this situation are solved differently in all countries. There is currently no more effective way for governments to mitigate the impact of the crisis. Some countries have adopted for the basis of the solution of method the distribution of money, which will help from two sides: first, it will help to soften the blow of difficult circumstances to a huge number of households, and secondly, to help fast enough to get out of the crisis, because the money that the government handed out to people who almost immediately will be included in the real economy and will have a good multiplier effect. People's expenses from this money are the income of other people, and the income of these people is an expense in the future. In other words, the flywheel of the economy will spin. This method is now used with great success in many countries. For example, Hong Kong will pay each adult citizen \$ 1,280 to finally take to the streets and start buying something. Stimulating economic activity is the right thing to do.

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