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PARTICIPATION OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF THE STATE REGARDING YOUTH

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Abstract. *This article provides a theoretical and legal analysis of the participation of non-governmental non-profit organizations (NGOs) in the implementation of the state's social function concerning youth. It examines the content, significance, and legal mechanisms of social partnership between the state and civil society institutions in implementing the social function of the state. The institutional development of state youth policy in Uzbekistan, including organizational transformations from the Kamolot Youth Social Movement to the Youth Union of Uzbekistan and the Youth Affairs Agency, is examined from the perspective of the development of this function. Based on an analysis of foreign experience and national legislation, the role of NGOs in ensuring the social rights of youth, representing their interests, exercising public oversight, and conducting social monitoring is substantiated. The article also proposes subjecting youth-related normative legal acts to public review, digitalizing the exchange of social data, and introducing the principle of "youth interests through the eyes of youth" to improve social partnership between the state and NGOs. This approach is argued to contribute to strengthening the active participation of youth in the implementation of the state's social function.*

Keywords: *state youth policy, state function, social rights, NGO, social partnership, public control, institutional mechanism, Youth Affairs Agency, social monitoring, legal guarantee*

Introduction

Cooperation between state organizations and youth non-governmental non-profit organizations in ensuring the social rights of youth is an integral part of the

state's social function aimed at the democratic development of Uzbekistan, ensuring social stability, and increasing youth activity. In our country, youth policy is effectively implemented through the social function of the state, especially through work to protect the rights and interests of youth and the interaction between the state and non-state sectors.

Indeed, Resolution No. 23 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated January 18, 2021, "On Approval of the Concept for the Development of State Youth Policy in Uzbekistan until 2025," states that there are currently more than 830 non-governmental non-profit organizations (NGOs) and public associations in Uzbekistan related to youth issues and the protection of their interests. Through their activities, these organizations make a significant contribution to protecting the rights and legitimate interests of youth, providing them with social and economic support, and creating opportunities for participation in various social and cultural projects.

The participation of civil society institutions in implementing the state's social function concerning youth is manifested in expanding educational opportunities for young people and ensuring social equality. In particular, the "Ibrat Farzandlari" project provides opportunities to learn 13 *foreign* languages and, in 2024, reached 1.5 million young people, of whom 212,000 received certificates. Furthermore, the "*Zamin*" Foundation contributes to eliminating barriers to education for young people with disabilities, the "*Ziyo Forum*" promotes the development of science and education, while "*Technovation Girls Uzbekistan*" expands opportunities for girls to receive education in IT and technology. This practice demonstrates that, in the implementation of the state's social function, non-governmental institutions participate as actors that complement the state's social responsibilities and contribute to the realization of youth rights.

Non-governmental non-profit organizations play an important role in working with young people, as they are active partners in the implementation of state policy. They help expand educational opportunities for young people, support their professional development, promote healthy lifestyles, and provide legal and psychological assistance. These organizations organize trainings, seminars, educational programs, and social events on their own initiative, which increases the social activity of young people. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On State Youth Policy" and the "Uzbekistan 2030" Strategy provide for the strengthening of the principle of social partnership between state bodies and NGOs. Social partnership is a system of organizational and legal relations based on cooperation between state bodies and civil society institutions in addressing socially significant issues.

At the same time, cooperation between state bodies and non-governmental non-profit organizations (NGOs) in guaranteeing the social rights of youth through the social function of the state is based on the principle of social partnership and is carried out through social orders and public control mechanisms. It is necessary to increase the effectiveness of this cooperation and strengthen guarantees for the social protection of youth by integrating NGO projects into digital systems.

"According to the theory of digital social protection, integrating social services provided by various entities (government bodies and NGOs) into a single digital platform increases service delivery speed and reduces bureaucracy" (Barca, 2017, p. 12). Based on V. Barca's theory of managing social protection through integrated digital registers, integrating NGO projects into state platforms such as the "Youth Notebook" in Uzbekistan will make youth social protection more targeted and effective.

The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On State Youth Policy" and Decree No. UP-87 strengthen the legal framework for this process. The main advantage of

NGOs is their ability to operate “mobile” within society, directly in mahallas, and to know the problems of young people from within. For this reason, the role of NGOs in working with youth, especially in protecting the rights of youth within the framework of the state’s social function, is significant; NGOs can make a significant contribution to the effective delivery of targeted social assistance to young people, particularly by identifying local needs and facilitating access to state support programmes. The National Association of Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations of Uzbekistan and the Public Fund under the Oliy Majlis play an important role in coordinating and supporting the activities of NGOs working with youth. These institutions serve as important partners of state bodies in enhancing the socio-political activity of young people, promoting their involvement in entrepreneurship, and implementing initiatives such as the “Besh muhim tashabbus”.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, young people under the age of 30 constitute more than 60 percent of the population, which demonstrates their fundamental importance for the country’s development. Accordingly, within the framework of the social function of the state, a number of institutions have been established to unite young people, ensure the realization of their social rights, and protect their legitimate interests. Initially, the non-governmental non-profit organization “Yoshlar ittifoqi” was established to unite the youth of Uzbekistan and promote the development of their creative potential. However, due to its inability to fully represent the interests of young people and difficulties encountered in implementing its decisions, the organization was dissolved in 1996 and replaced by the “Kamolot” Foundation. The Foundation was intended to create institutional opportunities for uniting young people and promoting their social activity. Subsequently, at the Youth Congress held in Tashkent in 2001, the “Kamolot” Youth Social Movement was established, focusing its activities on young people aged between 14 and 28.

In 2016, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On State Youth Policy” was adopted. Under this Law, persons under the age of 30 were recognized as youth. On 30 June 2017, with the participation of Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the “Kamolot” organization was dissolved, with its failure to achieve the expected results being cited as one of the reasons, and the Youth Union of Uzbekistan was established in its place. At present, this organization operates to protect the interests of young people, consolidate their participation in social life, and promote their development. To centralize the implementation of state youth policy, the Youth Affairs Agency was established on 30 June 2020. The Agency has been engaged in supporting young people and, since 2022, has expanded its activities to the mahalla level, allocating UZS 650 billion to support more than 700,000 young people. This demonstrates the effective cooperation between the Agency and citizens’ self-government bodies in working with youth and ensuring the realization of their social rights. At the same time, significant measures have been implemented at the initiative of the President to strengthen the social and economic support of young people. From a theoretical and legal perspective, the establishment of such institutional and financial mechanisms reflects the development of organizational forms through which the state’s social function concerning youth is implemented, particularly in the areas of employment and economic support.

In particular, pursuant to Resolution No. PD-60 of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 14 February 2025 “On Measures to Improve the System of Supporting Youth Entrepreneurship and Business Projects Aimed at Ensuring Youth Employment”, the State Target Fund for the Development of Youth Entrepreneurship was established under the Youth Affairs Agency on the basis of the Youth Entrepreneurship Support

Fund. Its primary purpose is to improve the system of youth employment by supporting entrepreneurial projects aimed at creating additional jobs for young people. The Fund operates as a non-profit institution established within the framework of state-supported mechanisms.

Methods

To examine cooperation between state bodies and youth-oriented non-governmental non-profit organizations (NGOs) within the social function of the state, the study employed systematic analysis, the comparative legal method, and doctrinal research methods. The research is aimed at providing a scholarly basis for practical proposals through an analysis of the legal mechanisms and institutional evolution of social partnership.

Through Anthony Giddens's concept of the "Third Way," cooperation between state bodies and youth NGOs can be viewed as a form of institutional integration between traditional state governance and unrestricted market relations (Giddens, 1998, pp. 1–10). This approach may transform the state into a "social investment" actor that shares the implementation of social functions with NGOs and supports youth initiatives.

Russian scholar A. Sungurov, in his monograph, provides a detailed analysis of the functions of NGOs in the protection of human rights. "The study comprehensively examines the role of youth organizations (NGOs) as a 'bridge' between the state and the younger generation, their active participation in improving youth-related legislation, and their significance in exercising public oversight over the protection of youth rights. The author argues that the creation of modern legal mechanisms, strong institutional foundations, and a sustainable financial system for supporting NGOs should be regarded as a priority" (Sungurov, 2017, pp. 36–65).

The author's characterization of youth organizations as intermediaries between the state and young people within the state's social policy is highly relevant. State bodies are often unable to identify the actual problems of young people "from below," including the needs arising within youth subcultures or difficulties associated with informal employment. Youth-oriented NGOs, by contrast, can identify these problems, translate them into academic and legal terms, and communicate them to decision-makers.

International scholars H. Anheier and S. Toepler emphasize that non-profit organizations have become an integral part of contemporary public governance and serve not only as providers of social services but also as strategic partners of the state (Anheier & Toepler, 2022, pp. 153–155). This conceptual approach may serve as a theoretical basis for the legal regulation of institutional cooperation between youth organizations and state bodies in Uzbekistan. In particular, NGO projects in the fields of education, social protection, and employment may constitute an important institutional mechanism for the effective implementation of the social function of the state.

"In his 'Third Sector' theory, Salamon describes the relationship between the state and NGOs as "complementary cooperation". According to Salamon, rather than providing social services directly, it is more effective for the state to 'outsource' them to NGOs; this constitutes an appropriate model for addressing problems related to informal youth employment or youth subcultures" (Salamon, 1995). The theories of L. Salamon and J. Habermas demonstrate that, within a social state, NGOs are not competitors of the state but rather its strategic partners that make the implementation of its social function more responsive and targeted. In the context of Uzbekistan, such cooperation represents a democratic mechanism for bringing the less visible needs of young people into the legal and institutional sphere. NGOs are often better positioned to identify problems at the grassroots level, although they may lack sustainable financial

resources. One possible solution is a state – NGO partnership model in which the state provides financial support to NGOs, while NGOs directly deliver the relevant social services.

This model proposes implementing the state's social function concerning youth not solely according to a "top-down" approach, but also on the basis of a "bottom-up" principle, thereby strengthening the participation of youth and civil society institutions in identifying social needs and shaping mechanisms for addressing them.

Furthermore, "researchers such as L. Khamrayeva and A. Ismailov have analyzed in their studies the role of NGOs in exercising public oversight over the activities of state bodies and the practical mechanisms for implementing such oversight" (Xamrayeva & Ismailov, 2021, pp. 45–52). The authors examined the legal foundations of public oversight and the forms of its implementation and put forward specific proposals for improving Uzbekistan's practice in this field. At the same time, particular attention was paid to monitoring activities conducted by NGOs in ensuring individual rights and freedoms, as well as to measures aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of such monitoring.

The mechanisms proposed by L. Khamrayeva and A. Ismailov demonstrate that NGOs should not merely act as institutions that raise complaints, but should also perform an analytical role in ensuring social rights within the concept of the social state. In particular, the collection of data by NGOs on issues such as the proportion of young people who have access to quality healthcare or the number of young people who obtain employment after completing higher education can provide an objective assessment of the effectiveness of state bodies.

"In her work Insisting on the Rule of Law: Civil Society and Human Rights, E. Smith-Cannoy examines the role of NGOs representing and protecting individuals' interests in strengthening the legal order. Drawing on the experience of different countries, the author demonstrates that the activities of non-governmental non-profit organizations in safeguarding human rights constitute an important driving force in ensuring the rule of law and implementing systemic legal reforms" (Smith-Cannoy, 2012). This study serves as an important theoretical source for the scholarly understanding of the role of NGOs in the legal protection of individuals, including young people.

Results

The legal reforms implemented between 2016 and 2024 strengthened social partnership between the state and the third sector (NGOs) in Uzbekistan, contributing to the formation of a more participatory and transparent model of governance. According to studies conducted in 2025, the integration of civil society institutions into the activities of state bodies has played a significant role in promoting social innovation and ensuring accountability in public policy (Kamalov, 2025, p. 354).

Youth-oriented non-governmental non-profit organizations are non-commercial entities established on the principles of voluntariness and self-governance for the purpose of protecting the rights and freedoms of the younger generation and facilitating the realization of their social interests.

Within the social function of the state, the role of such organizations in ensuring youth rights is determined by the following key characteristics:

1) *independence*: due to their institutional independence from state bodies, NGOs are able to provide an impartial assessment of violations of youth rights and offences affecting young people, as well as critically analyze shortcomings in state policy;

2) *flexibility*: Owing to relatively less bureaucratic decision-making procedures, NGOs are able to respond promptly to emerging problems and trends affecting young people, including issues related to informal employment;

3) *specialization*: NGOs may develop specific expertise and practical experience in particular areas, including youth entrepreneurship, intellectual property, and inclusive education;

4) *social trust*: through continuous interaction with young people and local communities, NGOs are able to collect and systematize reliable information concerning the actual needs and social problems of youth.

The legal mechanism governing the activities of NGOs is based on a number of normative legal acts. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations” defines the legal status of NGOs and regulates the procedures for their establishment, operation, and termination. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Public Oversight” establishes mechanisms through which NGOs may exercise public oversight over the activities of state bodies. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Social Partnership”, in turn, regulates the forms and mechanisms of cooperation between state bodies and NGOs within the framework of social partnership.

In this context, the further development of social partnership between NGOs and state bodies requires not only practical measures but also systemic improvement of its legal framework. Although the Law “On Social Partnership,” adopted in 2014, established the fundamental principles of such cooperation, certain legal gaps remain with regard to the representation and protection of youth interests. Therefore, the relevant legislation should be improved in the following areas:

Mandatory consideration of social initiatives: Proposals submitted by youth NGOs concerning the strengthening of social protection or promotion of youth employment, including recommendations on preferential mechanisms, should be subject to mandatory consideration by competent state bodies, with a reasoned response provided to the submitting organization. Such a mechanism would contribute to ensuring that the social needs and interests of young people are duly taken into account in public decision-making.

Exchange of statistical and social data: State bodies should ensure that youth NGOs have access, within the limits established by law, to open and reliable data concerning the actual social situation of young people, including youth unemployment and the provision of social assistance. This would enable NGOs to identify areas in which the realization of youth social rights requires additional institutional or legal measures.

Public and legal review of social legislation: Draft normative legal acts directly affecting the social rights and interests of young people, including changes in educational standards and labour legislation, should be subject to review with the participation of specialized youth organizations. This mechanism would facilitate the practical implementation of the principle “youth interests through the eyes of youth.”

Monitoring of social effectiveness: A legal mechanism should be developed enabling NGOs to participate in monitoring the extent to which state social resources – including subsidies, grants, and educational programmes – actually reach their intended young beneficiaries. Such monitoring would make it possible to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of social rights not merely at the normative level, but also in legal practice.

Effective protection and realization of youth social rights requires not only the development of cooperation between NGOs and state bodies but also the improvement of the legal and institutional foundations governing youth organizations themselves. In particular, it is necessary to strengthen the financial sustainability of youth NGOs, improve legal mechanisms enabling them to attract grants for international innovative educational

and social projects, and further simplify and liberalize their registration and reporting procedures.

From a theoretical and legal perspective, these measures would contribute to transforming NGOs from auxiliary participants in social policy into institutionally recognized partners in the implementation of the state's social function concerning youth, while preserving the state's primary responsibility for guaranteeing social rights.

Discussion

According to the results of the study, in order to bring the partnership between NGOs and state institutions in ensuring the social interests of youth to a new level, it is proposed to implement the following comprehensive legislative initiatives:

- to introduce a system of mandatory review by youth organizations of all state programmes and draft laws related to the implementation of the state's social function concerning youth;
- to amend the existing legislation by expanding the powers of youth organizations to conduct social monitoring;
- to develop new legal frameworks that take into account the specific features of NGO participation in protecting the social rights of youth, including youth volunteer movements and social entrepreneurship.

Such measures would enhance the capacity of youth organizations to respond promptly to social problems and provide an effective institutional form for youth participation in the implementation of the state's social function.

At the same time, the role and significance of youth organizations in the implementation of the state's social function in Uzbekistan, particularly in the fields of education, employment, and social protection, are steadily increasing. In particular, Resolution No. PD-148 of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 20 April 2026, "On the Implementation of the 'Youth of New Uzbekistan – 2030' Strategy in 2026–2027 and Additional Measures to Ensure Youth Employment," provides for the development of youth NGOs and the implementation of the "Professions of the Future" programme, aimed at training 20,000 young people in modern professions in cooperation with non-state providers of supplementary education services.

More than 10,000 NGOs currently operate in Uzbekistan, of which over 830 specialize directly in protecting the legal and social interests of young people. In relation to a youth population of 9.5 million, this number remains insufficient. Therefore, increasing the number and institutional capacity of youth organizations remains a relevant issue.

The following problems have been identified in the activities of NGOs in Uzbekistan (Qodirov, 2022, pp. 56–67):

- due to the lack of sustainable sources of financing, many youth organizations are unable to fully implement long-term social projects aimed at supporting youth employment and education;
- the shortage of specialists in youth NGOs possessing in-depth knowledge and international experience in social and legal issues affecting young people, including labour rights and inclusive education, limits their capacity to conduct systematic analysis;
- in certain regions, excessive formalism in relations between youth organizations and state bodies, as well as a low level of mutual trust, prevents effective social partnership mechanisms, including state social contracting, from functioning to their full potential;
- legislation regulating the participation of organizations protecting youth interests in law-making and monitoring processes continues to contain certain ambiguities and provisions restricting their powers in the field of public oversight;

- the system for allocating state grants and subsidies to youth organizations should be made more transparent, while simplified legal mechanisms should be established for attracting private-sector sponsorship and international donor funding to support youth entrepreneurship and social projects;

- in order to elevate social partnership to a strategic level, the potential of the Law “On Social Partnership” should be used more effectively by establishing permanent dialogue platforms between youth organizations and state bodies, such as Youth Forums or Coordination Councils;

- within the framework of the Law “On Public Oversight,” youth organizations should be granted broader legal powers to independently monitor youth social protection, employment, and the quality of education, as well as to assess the implementation and effectiveness of relevant state programmes;

- the Law “On Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations” should be improved by taking into account the specific characteristics of youth organizations, particularly their operational flexibility and orientation towards innovation. In particular, the procedures for obtaining funding for international innovative educational programmes should be simplified to the greatest extent possible;

- a specialized professional development system in the fields of human rights and social management should be introduced for leaders working in the youth sector, while training within higher education in the field of “Youth Work and NGO Management” should be expanded.

In conclusion, non-governmental non-profit organizations, as important institutions of civil society, occupy a distinct position in ensuring the social rights of youth as an object of the social function of the state. According to the results of the study, NGO activities aimed at ensuring youth rights within the implementation of the state’s social function are multidimensional and include conducting monitoring, providing legal assistance, developing proposals for improving legislation, providing targeted social assistance, and exercising public oversight.

The role of NGOs in state youth policy is determined by such characteristics as their independence from state bodies, flexibility, specialization, and public trust. These characteristics enable them to provide objective information on violations of the rights and legitimate interests of young people, critically assess the activities of state bodies, and assist young people in protecting and realizing their rights and freedoms. At the same time, the participation of NGOs in socio-political processes contributes to the development of civil society and creates institutional conditions for young people to participate more actively in the development of the state and society.

In Uzbekistan, the legal foundations for NGO participation in the implementation of the state’s social function concerning youth are established in national legislation and international legal instruments. Reforms undertaken in recent years to support NGOs have created additional opportunities for strengthening their participation in the implementation of state youth policy. Within the framework of the national strategy for the development of civil society institutions, consistent measures have been taken to strengthen the role of NGOs, enhance their cooperation with state bodies, and expand their opportunities to exercise public oversight.

However, the study identified a number of factors that continue to limit the effectiveness of NGOs in the implementation of the state’s social function concerning youth, including insufficient financial resources, a shortage of qualified personnel, underdeveloped mechanisms of cooperation with state bodies, and certain deficiencies in the legal framework. Addressing these problems requires substantive amendments and additions

to the relevant legislation aimed at strengthening the institutional and legal mechanisms of social partnership between the state and youth-oriented NGOs.

Conclusion

In particular, it is necessary to improve the legal mechanisms of cooperation between NGOs and state bodies by introducing amendments and additions to the Laws of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Social Partnership,” “On Public Oversight,” and “On Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations,” to expand the powers of NGOs in the field of ensuring the social rights of youth, and to provide legal mechanisms for their participation in public decision-making processes. Fundamental improvements to the legislation would strengthen the legal guarantees of NGO participation in the mechanism for implementing the social function of the state, ensure their financial sustainability, and expand opportunities for international cooperation.

Furthermore, in order to further develop the principle of social partnership between NGOs and state bodies, it is advisable to implement the following practical measures:

- establish permanent public advisory councils with the participation of NGOs under state bodies responsible for ensuring the social rights of youth and provide legal and organizational conditions for their effective functioning;
- expand the participation of youth-oriented NGOs in the preparation of national and international reports based on the results of monitoring the realization of the social rights of youth;
- create open platforms to ensure the participation of youth-oriented NGOs in the drafting and public discussion of legislation aimed at ensuring youth rights within the framework of the social function of the state;
- introduce a system of targeted grants and subsidies for NGOs operating in the field of state youth policy;
- organize joint training programmes for representatives of NGOs and state bodies aimed at improving the effectiveness of mechanisms for ensuring youth rights within the social function of the state.

According to researchers in the field of non-profit organization management, modern NGOs are not merely service providers but also institutional structures that contribute to ensuring justice, equality, and inclusiveness in society (Dicke & Ott, 2023, pp. 210–220).

Recent reforms in Uzbekistan have been aimed at digitalizing NGO activities and enhancing their transparency. In particular, the introduced “NGO Openness Index” and the ranking of the “20 Most Active Organizations” formed on the basis of its results play an important role in identifying effective actors of social partnership (Tulyakov, 2020, pp. 121–125). The vouchers and certificates awarded within this system may provide youth organizations with additional advantages when applying for state grants. In turn, this mechanism may contribute to the development of a digital monitoring system capable of facilitating the practical implementation of the principle “youth interests through the eyes of youth.”

Furthermore, expanding the participation of NGOs in the implementation of the state’s social function concerning youth and improving the institutional and legal mechanisms of their activities may bring the protection and realization of youth rights in Uzbekistan to a qualitatively new level. In this process, combining the institutional capacities of the state and non-state sectors and developing their relations on the basis of mutual trust and cooperation should be regarded as a priority.

In conclusion, improving the activities of NGOs in ensuring the social rights of youth contributes not only to the development of civil society but also to creating the necessary social and legal conditions for the socio-economic development of young people

throughout the country. It also contributes to strengthening the rule of law and democratic values. In turn, these processes may serve as important factors in strengthening Uzbekistan's international standing, improving its investment attractiveness, and ensuring sustainable development.

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