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PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING OF THE STATE BUDGET



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Abstract: This article presents legal and analytical information on the work carried out within the framework of the «Initiative Budget» process conducted this year through the «Open Budget» information portal organized by the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Uzbekistan, proposals submitted by citizens, voting processes and cases of financing proposals recognized as winners, as well as on the work done within the framework of the «Open Budget» project.

Key words: initiative budget, Open budget, Citizens' budget, information portal, state budget, Citizens' opinion.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada tadqiqotimiz davomida o'rganilgan O'zbekiston Respublikasi Moliya vazirligi tomonidan tashkil etilgan "Ochiq budjet" axborot portali orqali joriy yilda o'tkazilayotgan "Tashabbusli budjet" jarayonlari doirasida amalga oshirilayotgan ishlar, fuqarolar tomonidan bildirilgan takliflar, ovoz berish jarayonlari va g'olib deb topilgan takliflarni moliyalashtirish holatlari yuzasidan huquqiy hamda tahliliy ma'lumotlar, shuningdek tashabbusli budjetlashtirish tizimida galdagi amalga oshirilishi kutilayotgan yangi yo'nalishlar yoritilgan.

Kalit so'zlar: tashabbusli budjet, Ochiq budjet, axborot portali, davlat budjeti, jamoatchilik fikri.

Аннотация: В данной статье представлена правовая и аналитическая информация о работе, проведенной в рамках процессов «Инициативный бюджет», проведенных в текущем году через информационный портал «Открытый бюджет», организованный Министерством финансов Республики Узбекистан, предложениях, внесенных гражданами, процессах голосования и случаях финансирования предложений, признанных победителями, а также о работе, проделанной в рамках проекта «Открытый бюджет».

Ключевые слова: инициативный бюджет, Открытый бюджет, информационный портал, государственный бюджет, общественный мнения.

INTRODUCTION

Today, as a result of the transparency policy pursued in our country, a system for organizing activities in all sectors based on the principles of openness and transparency has been established within the framework of the law. Efforts are being consistently continued to ensure budget transparency, increase citizen participation in the budget formulation process, organize the efficient use of budget funds, enhance taxpayers' budget literacy to increase budget revenues, and improve the effectiveness of expenditures.

In particular, in 2024, the participatory budgeting process was elevated to a new stage: voting procedures became more transparent, the volume of funds allocated based on citizens' opinions was increased, the seasonal cycles were optimized, and legislative norms were revised.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON THE SUBJECT

Participatory budgeting has evolved into a key instrument for enhancing transparency, civic engagement, and accountability in public finance. Early foundations were provided by Gianpaolo Baiocchi, who demonstrated

that participatory budgeting increases deliberative practices, strengthens social inclusion, and improves local decision-making by integrating citizens directly into the allocation of public resources. Building on these findings, Brian Wampler emphasized that successful participatory budgeting requires institutional commitment, clear procedural rules, and equitable access for diverse social groups, noting that these factors significantly shape fiscal outcomes.

Yves Sintomer contributed a systematic typology of participatory budgeting models across countries, highlighting how state budget participation can vary from consultative formats to full co-decision mechanisms depending on political and administrative contexts. His global comparative studies show that participatory budgeting at the state level enhances policy legitimacy and reduces information asymmetry in public finance.

Archon Fung examined empowered participation within democratic governance and argued that participatory budgeting improves government responsiveness when institutions create real opportunities for citizen influence rather than symbolic involvement. Stephen Goldsmith further explained that digital tools and open-government technologies strengthen state-level participatory budgeting by expanding citizen access to information and simplifying monitoring of public expenditures.

International organizations such as the World Bank and OECD emphasize the fiscal advantages of participatory budgeting, noting that citizen involvement improves spending efficiency, reduces corruption risks, and supports allocative fairness in major public investment decisions. Their empirical analyses confirm that participatory budgeting, when embedded in state-level budget systems, contributes to more transparent, accountable, and socially responsive fiscal governance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Starting from 2024, the principle of “One citizen – one vote” was introduced in the participatory budgeting process. This serves to ensure that voting procedures are conducted more fairly and transparently, and, in turn, increases citizens’ trust in these processes. Additionally, by assessing citizen participation rates, it becomes possible to analyze the level of public engagement in budget processes across different regions. For example, within the first season of 2024, 34 percent of the country’s population participated in the voting processes. The most active regions were identified as Kashkadarya, Samarkand, and Fergana.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In order to prevent citizens from becoming excessively preoccupied with the vote-collection process throughout the year and to optimize voting procedures, the practice of integrating the “My Way” project with the first season of the Participatory Budgeting initiative was introduced. The project-formation stage was fully digitalized, and a classifier of goods and services was implemented. As a result, opportunities were created to assess the outcomes and effectiveness achieved in implementing winning projects.

In particular, within the framework of the Participatory Budgeting process, a database is being formed that records information such as how many schools have been provided with student desks or how many medical institutions have received medical equipment.

For reference, according to the results of the first season of 2024, 4,646 interactive whiteboards, 68,000 student desks, and 2,700 computers will be purchased for general education schools. As a result, 130,000 students will have access to modern educational opportunities.

g) The volume of funds allocated from approved district and city budgets was increased up to 10 percent (previously 5 percent). Consequently, the number of winning projects in each district and city within a single season increased by 7–8 compared to previous years, reaching an average of 15. This, in turn, resulted in a decline in the number of votes collected for each winning project.

From 2024 onward, according to the relevant Presidential Decree of the Republic of Uzbekistan, at least 50 percent of state budget funds allocated annually for the implementation of the nationwide “Green Space” initiative must be directed, through the “Open Budget” portal, toward financing “My Garden” projects for the creation of “green parks” and “green public parks.”

In May 2024, this process was conducted on the “Open Budget” portal for the first time, during which citizens generated 789 projects. Based on the results of the voting process, 215 projects aimed at creating green parks were selected as winners, and 52 billion soums were designated for financing these projects.

Plans for 2025–2027:

Reforms implemented in this direction will be consistently continued, and measures will be taken to further improve the system by organizing discussion meetings with broad public participation, including citizens’ representatives, bloggers, and journalists. Special attention will be given to fully implementing the mechanism for project submission by initiators on the “Open Budget” portal, enhancing public oversight, strengthening the monitoring of project implementation, and increasing the accountability of regional authorities.

Efforts to combat compulsory participation in vote-collection will be elevated to a new stage. In particular, systematic measures will be introduced to promptly review citizens' complaints during voting processes, provide legal assessment of such cases, and ensure daily coverage of identified violations in mass media. Additionally, to minimize cases of forced voting, measures will be taken to gradually shorten the voting period.

It should be especially noted that, in accordance with the "Uzbekistan–2030" Strategy, the volume of funds allocated to Participatory Budgeting will be gradually increased, with the aim of reaching 24 trillion soums by 2030.¹

To date, citizens are proposing various material incentive mechanisms for campaigning during the voting stages. Such practices are interpreted in different ways and are assessed by some experts as one of the forms of democratic processes.

Increasing transparency and accountability: when citizens invest their own funds in projects, transparency and responsibility in the budget process may strengthen. At the same time, this helps increase public trust in the budgeting process.

Based on the experience accumulated during 2021–2023 and the analysis of international practices in this field, measures are being taken to gradually implement this approach in our country.

According to the Fiscal Strategy for 2025–2027 approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and proceeding from the tasks set in the "Uzbekistan – 2030" Strategy, the following objectives have been identified to ensure macroeconomic and fiscal stability.

In the area of ensuring public welfare:

- Achieving sustained economic growth, entering the group of upper-middle-income countries, reaching a GDP of 160 billion USD and 4 thousand USD per capita;
- Ensuring the prioritization of expenditures on human capital, strengthening the targeting of funds allocated for social protection, and increasing their efficiency;
- Increasing the wages of public sector employees, pensions, and benefits annually by no less than the inflation rate in order to raise the real incomes of the population;
- Reforming the state pension system and developing the social insurance system.

In the area of ensuring macroeconomic stability:

- Keeping the ratio of public debt to GDP below 50 percent by implementing a medium-term public debt management strategy;
- Expanding the revenue base by reducing the "shadow economy";
- Creating equal opportunities for all entrepreneurs, digitalizing and simplifying the tax system;
- Developing green taxation and its implementation mechanisms.

In the area of ensuring fiscal stability:

- Keeping the consolidated budget deficit below 3 percent of GDP;
- Aligning tax, customs, and budget policies with WTO requirements;
- Improving tax administration and enhancing its efficiency.

In the area of ensuring the effectiveness of expenditures:

- Gradually transitioning to result-oriented budgeting;
- Maintaining the social orientation of State Budget expenditures to establish education, healthcare, and social protection systems fully aligned with public needs and international standards;
- Introducing gender and "green" budgeting principles;
- Continuing reforms aimed at increasing the efficiency and transparency of the public finance management system according to international requirements;
- Enhancing the inclusiveness of budget expenditures.

The strategy for improving the public finance management system over the next five years is planned to cover the key aspects of improving the public financial system, including priorities of tax–budget policy, strengthening fiscal discipline, improving medium-term budget planning, increasing the effectiveness of public expenditures and investments, harmonizing budget accounting standards with international standards, improving internal audit systems in public institutions, and other priority areas.

Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public expenditures and investments identifies the effective implementation of a result-oriented budgeting system and strengthening institutions and procedures for enhancing the efficiency of public investments as key factors.

By Presidential Decree No. PF-60 dated 2022-yil 28-yanvar, the "State Program for Implementing the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026 in the Year of Honoring Human Dignity and Active Mahalla" was adopted.

¹ O'zbekiston Respublikasi Prezidentining Farmoni, 11.09.2023-yildagi PF-158-son

The State Program promotes issues such as enhancing human dignity, building a people-centered state through the further development of a free civil society, implementing fair social policy, and developing human capital.

Today, we can observe positive changes being implemented in many sectors aimed at creating convenience for citizens and improving living standards.

In many Latin American countries, “Participatory Budgeting” processes are legally institutionalized and regulated through national constitutional norms granting “citizens the right to participate in preparing municipal budgets and developing municipal investment projects.”

Additionally, to broaden citizen engagement in “Participatory Budgeting” processes and increase choice, each citizen is allowed to cast one vote for each direction during the voting stage, enabling them to simultaneously vote for one proposal in each category. What do these mechanisms offer?

- They further increase transparency;
- Prevent artificially inflated votes for a single proposal;
- Enable a citizen to address several of their problems at once;
- Help increase citizens’ interest and responsibility toward various social issues.

Since 1 January 2022, individuals who register purchase receipts with QR codes in the “Soliq” mobile application receive a 1 percent cashback from the purchase amount. The 1 percent cashback is paid to individuals who register the QR-coded online cash-register receipt in the “Soliq” mobile application for purchases made at retail, public catering, and household service establishments.²

This mechanism is contributing to an increase in state budget revenues through public participation and is fostering the development of the tax system’s operations. In addition, according to the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PQ-128 dated 2021-yil 14-fevral “On further increasing the efficiency of state budget expenditures and improving the activities of state financial control bodies,” a task was set to introduce a mechanism for incentivizing individuals starting from February 2022, with the purpose of broadly engaging the public in identifying legal violations in the field of state financial control.

The main objective of this initiative is not only to increase the accountability of state institutions but also to further strengthen the ongoing transparency policy and serve as a bridge in addressing systemic issues between citizens and state organizations.

In 2024, due to improvements in the financial and living conditions of the population, 939 thousand individuals were removed from the “Unified Social Protection Registry,” resulting in a 40 percent reduction in social assistance payments. This change affected 188 thousand citizens, and targeted work was organized based on an “individual program” to increase their income.

Within the framework of the “From Poverty to Prosperity” program, 3.2 trillion soums are allocated to implement projects aimed at improving the infrastructure of vulnerable neighborhoods in 1,024 mahallas, including providing irrigation water for household plots, ensuring reliable electricity supply, improving internet quality, and repairing internal roads (Table 1).

Table 1. Funds allocated for improving the infrastructure of the most vulnerable mahallas under the “From Poverty to Prosperity” program

No.	Region name	Allocated funds (mln soums)
1.	Republic of Karakalpakstan	40,078
2.	Andijan region	15,006
3.	Bukhara region	18,141
4.	Jizzakh region	25,204
5.	Kashkadarya region	28,785
6.	Navoi region	10,070
7.	Namangan region	17,456
8.	Samarkand region	36,343
9.	Surkhandarya region	21,122
10.	Syrdarya region	11,471
11.	Tashkent region	23,615
12.	Fergana region	23,731
13.	Khorezm region	8,978

² O'zbekiston Respublikasi Davlat soliq qo'mitasi rasmiy veb-sayti (<https://soliq.uz/>)

The stable and high economic growth rates achieved in the country enabled a reduction in the poverty level from 11 percent in 2023 to 8.9 percent in 2024 (719 thousand people were lifted out of poverty in 2024). A decline in poverty levels was recorded across all regions.

For reference: The Center for Economic Research and Reforms, in cooperation with the World Bank, analyzed the poverty level in Uzbekistan for 2024. The poverty rate was calculated based on budget monitoring of more than 16,000 households.

The largest reductions were observed in Bukhara region (from 11.8 percent to 8.7 percent), Samarkand region (from 10.5 percent to 7.5 percent), Namangan region (from 10.4 percent to 7.6 percent), and the Republic of Karakalpakstan (from 13.6 percent to 10.8 percent) (Figure 1).

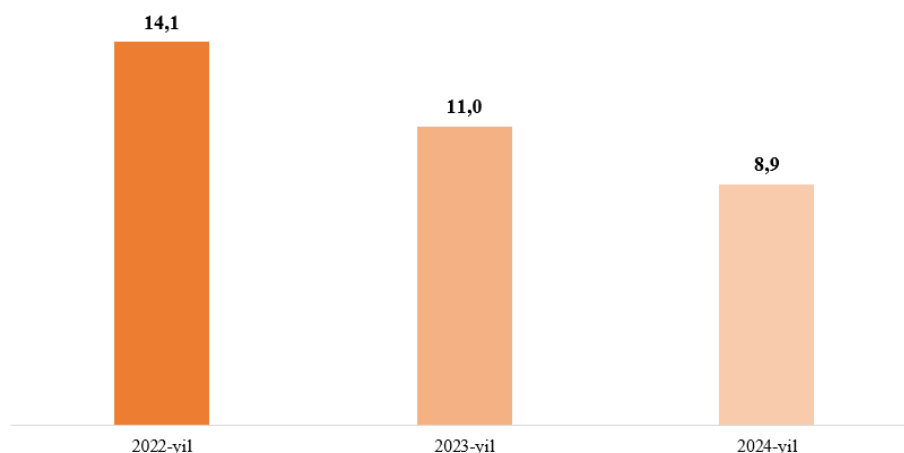


Figure 1. Results of Assessing the Poverty Level in Uzbekistan ³

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Despite the complex situation observed in the global economy in recent years, high economic growth rates have been maintained in 2024 as well, owing to the continued implementation of reforms aimed at economic liberalization, as well as the execution of programs and prompt measures directed at the development of sectors, industries, and regions.

Reducing poverty and improving the well-being of the population play an important role in the country's socio-economic development. In Uzbekistan, the adoption of presidential decrees and resolutions aimed at reducing poverty and improving living standards has served to systematize and accelerate the efforts being carried out in this direction.

In particular, the Presidential Decree No. PF-143 dated 23.09.2024 "On taking measures to bring poverty reduction and improvement of the population's well-being to a new stage," as well as the Presidential Resolution "On priority measures for implementing the 'From Poverty to Prosperity' program," adopted to ensure the execution of this Decree, have been approved.

In turn, the above-mentioned Decree identifies the main objective as elevating to a higher level the measures aimed at improving living conditions in the regions, developing entrepreneurship, reducing poverty, and ensuring the effectiveness of social support programs by introducing new approaches and applying accumulated national experience.

Considering that the mahalla institution is the primary link in effectively organizing these processes, the responsibilities of the "mahalla yettiligi" in reducing poverty and improving the well-being of the population have been clearly defined.

Based on the assessment carried out by the "mahalla yettiligi" regarding the social conditions of low-income households and the causes of their poverty, the National Agency for Social Protection will form a Registry of Low-Income Households.

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³ O'zbekiston Respublikasi Iqtisodiyot va Moliya vazirligi (Byudjetnoma nashri)

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