

The Role of Social Partnership Relations in the Cooperation between the State and Civil Society Institutions



Enajon Nishanbayeva

Associate Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences, National University of Uzbekistan (NUUz)

ABSTRACT: This article explores the mutual cooperation between the state and civil society institutions in fostering and strengthening social partnership relations. It examines the unique features of these partnerships, focusing on their role in promoting public engagement, enhancing governance, and addressing socio-economic challenges. The study highlights the importance of collaborative frameworks that balance the interests of diverse stakeholders, including the state, non-governmental organizations, and local communities. By analyzing key legislative and institutional developments, the article identifies effective strategies for building sustainable and inclusive social partnerships, emphasizing their critical role in the development of a robust civil society.

KEY WORDS: state, state bodies, civil society, civil society institutions, social partnership, cooperation.

Throughout human history, the development of social partnership in all spheres of life has played a crucial role in strengthening positive relationships formed over centuries and fostering further collaboration between the state and its citizens. For this reason, many developed nations around the world are currently prioritizing the improvement of social partnership relations between government bodies and civil society institutions. Indeed, creating avenues for broad social partnership and collaboration is considered one of the essential conditions for building a strong civil society.

To ensure the equitable and unrestricted development of society, it is vital to organize the interaction systems of all political institutions on the basis of social partnership. This approach helps establish conditions conducive to making balanced and sustainable decisions. Social partnership contributes to the development and revitalization of civil society, while improving the mechanisms of interaction between state institutions and civil society organizations. Its primary objective is to enhance the quality of life for citizens by promoting peace and stability in society.

By employing social partnership frameworks, it is possible to mitigate tensions among different social groups, strata, and classes, and to foster political consolidation between the state and civil society institutions. Achieving stability within society is intrinsically linked to reaching a compromise between state and civil society institutions. Without such collaboration, social and political conflicts are inevitable, leading to public skepticism about the socio-political reforms being implemented in the country.

Ultimately, social partnership serves as a key element in ensuring national unity and integrity, maintaining political and social stability, and regulating social and labor relations effectively. [1]

At each stage of societal development, humanity faces specific goals and challenges, which, in turn, bring about new problems. These shifts lead to changes in the operational directions of civil society institutions and redefine their essence. In developed countries, almost all agreements, declarations, charters, and strategies concerning the partnership between "government and the civil sector" include sections that define the subjects, principles, and directions of social partnership. They also specify tools for cooperation, including funding mechanisms and the distribution of responsibilities between the state and the civil sector.

From a political and legal perspective, the analysis of civil society and social partnership reveals the necessity of regulating the relationships between state institutions and civil society through legislative acts in the field of social partnership. These relationships must fall within the "sphere of influence" of legal regulations. Consequently, it is crucial to refine mechanisms for establishing social-political relations, identifying socio-economic objectives, and implementing forms of social partnership between the state and civil society institutions while considering mutual interests. This approach is essential for strengthening the influence of civil society and social partnership.

Social partnership between civil society institutions and government bodies serves as a reliable tool for ensuring citizens' participation in managing societal and state affairs, alongside the institution of public oversight. Therefore, in the current era, strengthening the policy of developing social partnership systems between state and civil society institutions necessitates addressing the following key issues:

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1. Establishing effective and constructive communication mechanisms between the state and civil society through the successful implementation of social partnership.
2. Expanding research in political science, sociology, and economics to systematically analyze the needs of non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
3. Creating an effective platform for mutual dialogue on critical issues for advancing state and societal development.
 2. Elevating the involvement of non-governmental non-profit organizations (NGOs) in the development and implementation of socio-economic development programs and regulatory legal documents through effective integration of social partnership. This includes thoroughly studying and accounting for the interests of all socio-political groups in society, represented by various NGOs.
 3. Transforming the social partnership system into an effective mechanism of collaboration between state bodies and NGOs to address widespread social issues. This includes advancing citizens' initiatives, particularly those of young people, and promoting modern ideas in practice.
 4. Developing a comprehensive action plan for state support and incentives for active NGOs that propose innovative ideas and operate based on their initiatives to further socio-economic and socio-political development.
 5. Eliminating excessive bureaucratic barriers and requirements in legislation governing the registration and operational procedures of NGOs, ensuring the efficient implementation of the social partnership system.
 6. Enhancing inter-agency collaboration methods used by executive authorities to comprehensively support NGO activities within the framework of social partnership. This includes establishing unified mechanisms for information and data exchange among state bodies.
 7. Improving the material and technical support of NGOs and increasing the volume of state funding allocated to support civil society institutions under the social partnership system.

Currently, the cooperation between civil society institutions and the state must become a stable mechanism that is not influenced by governmental will or the prevailing political environment. Public demands in many countries emphasize the need for legislatively regulated frameworks for partnership relations. Agreements should not merely reflect the state's obligations toward the civil sector but serve as a robust foundation for collaboration.

In this context, foreign experts are showing significant interest in Uzbekistan's experience in developing social partnership and regulating interactions between the state and the third sector through legislation.

Alongside this, Uzbekistan has developed unique priority directions for implementing social partnership, characterized by a novel approach to democratic values, human rights, freedoms, and the protection of lawful interests, distinguishing it from global practices. These directions aim to promote a balance of interests in social life. Specifically, the legal framework in this area facilitates the delegation of certain state governance powers to public organizations, strengthens public oversight, and supports the activities of self-governance institutions, aligning with national interests and policies.

Currently, Uzbekistan is undergoing significant reforms to achieve its goal of building a democratic legal state and civil society. These reforms focus on enhancing and strengthening the role of civil society institutions, particularly public organizations, in societal life. To this end, during the years of independence, a legislative framework has been established to regulate the activities of civil society institutions, in accordance with international legal standards and democratic principles. The state's policies in this area are aimed at ensuring the consistent and full implementation of constitutional rights guaranteeing citizens the freedom to join trade unions, political parties, and other public associations.

The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan plays a crucial role in regulating the activities of civil society institutions. Many of its provisions solidify the constitutional principles and rules governing these institutions. Article 12 of the Constitution explicitly states the constitutional principle that social life in Uzbekistan develops based on the diversity of political institutions, ideologies, and opinions, and no ideology can be established as a state ideology [2].

In addition, the Presidential Decree of December 12, 2013, "On Additional Measures to Facilitate the Development of Civil Society Institutions" [3], outlined measures to simplify the registration process for non-governmental non-profit organizations (NGOs), streamline reporting procedures, and improve the organizational and legal mechanisms governing the relationships between state bodies and NGOs. Moreover, the decree significantly reduced state duties and fees for the registration of NGOs and their symbols and shortened the timeframe for reviewing registration applications by judicial authorities.

These initiatives demonstrate Uzbekistan's commitment to fostering a legal and institutional environment conducive to the development of civil society, strengthening its partnership with the state, and promoting transparency and citizen participation in governance.

From the early years of independence, the foundational principles for the activities of civil society institutions were enshrined in Uzbekistan's Constitution. These principles have provided a conducive environment for their effective functioning in safeguarding human rights, freedoms, and lawful interests. Today, nearly all civil society institutions in Uzbekistan prioritize democratic

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development, protecting human rights and freedoms in specific fields, and establishing effective oversight over the activities of government bodies as their core operational goals.

Civil society institutions have become an integral and essential element of the democratization and reform processes. Through these institutions, citizens seek to realize various interests and rights. In this context, new responsibilities are emerging for these organizations, such as ensuring citizens' participation in state affairs, fostering positive attitudes toward existing legislation, and nurturing individuals who adhere to partnership principles.

Currently, the system of organizations and institutions actively functioning in Uzbekistan can be categorized as follows:

1. Economic institutions meeting economic interests: private non-governmental organizations, lease-based enterprises, shareholder companies, financial funds and associations, production corporations, entrepreneurs' associations (chambers), and others.

2. Social institutions representing social interests: family-oriented organizations, educational institutions (schools, colleges, universities), public associations, NGOs, self-governing citizen organizations, independent media, national cultural centers, voluntary organizations, institutions for public opinion research, and structures for fair resolution of social conflicts.

3. Political institutions reflecting political interests: political parties, socio-political movements, institutions defending human rights, and others.

These examples highlight that the effectiveness of social partnership largely depends not on political conflicts or differences but on public engagement in socio-political collaboration and their awareness of political rights. From this perspective, the principle of social partnership entails that the state assumes the responsibility of ensuring social justice, citizen welfare, and social protection, prioritizing socially oriented policies as outlined in the Constitution.

Based on this principle, the state, through its organs, consistently implements measures for economic and social development and addresses social issues. The development of the Law on Social Partnership plays a vital role in fostering the dynamic growth of civil society institutions in Uzbekistan and enhancing their contributions to the transparency and efficiency of ongoing reforms.

It is also worth noting that experts in the field actively study international experiences in social partnership, recognizing it as one of the essential tasks for strengthening these institutions' roles and ensuring their alignment with global practices.

To further develop social partnership and successfully implement reforms aimed at democratic renewal and modernization of the country, it is essential to enhance the role and responsibility of local representative and executive authorities. Additionally, creating favorable conditions for involving civil society institutions in resolving socially significant issues within specific regions is crucial. In this regard, the establishment of public commissions on social partnership under the Jokargy Kenes of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, as well as the regional and Tashkent city councils of people's deputies, is of great importance. Similarly, creating targeted funds under relevant regional representative bodies to support NGOs and other civil society institutions participating in social partnership is a key step. These measures will serve as a foundation for strengthening the relationships between individuals, society, and the state through social partnership.

In the context of increasing public awareness and socio-economic activity, social partnership provides an opportunity to establish a unified system of cooperation between the state and civil society. It also reinforces the legal guarantees for their practical engagement in dialogue. The development of this system, in turn, enhances the effectiveness of ongoing efforts to strengthen the role of NGOs and other civil society institutions. Moreover, it ensures that the interests of broad segments of the population are comprehensively considered during the development and implementation of socially significant socio-economic programs and legislative acts.

By fostering these relationships, Uzbekistan creates a framework that not only promotes mutual understanding between the state and civil society but also facilitates collaborative and inclusive policymaking, thereby supporting the country's broader democratic and modernization goals.

In Uzbekistan, civil society institutions benefit from a robust legal framework that ensures their independence and provides material and financial support. This foundation promotes democratization, state-building, and a balance of interests within society. It also strengthens the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in safeguarding human rights, freedoms, and legitimate interests while serving as a counterweight in the socio-political activities of state structures [4].

Historically, social partnership was often understood as a system of relationships between employers, workers, and trade unions, focusing on protecting workers' rights and improving working conditions. However, the concept has expanded significantly in recent years. Social partnership now encompasses the protection of the rights and interests of diverse population groups, addressing socio-economic, socio-political, and environmental issues, promoting a healthy lifestyle, preserving cultural heritage, and fostering national traditions. This collaboration between state and non-governmental organizations extends to advancing reforms and ensuring transparency and efficiency in their implementation.

The state supports civil society institutions in the social partnership process by providing property, information, advisory, organizational, and educational assistance. For example, public organizations involved in social partnership may use state property

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temporarily for specific purposes on a free or preferential basis as defined by law. Legal and physical entities supporting civil society institutions with material assistance are granted tax and other payment exemptions. Furthermore, NGOs and other civil society institutions receive state subsidies, grants, and social orders, alongside state-supported financing of social partnership initiatives.

As noted by B.I. Latipov, "Civil society institutions are independent social associations that form and regulate social relations characteristic of civil society. They promote values, norms, and behavior in line with democratic principles, represent diverse social group interests, and contribute to organizing society democratically" [5]. This perspective underscores that mutual recognition of equality between the state and civil society institutions is a critical factor in enhancing the effectiveness of social partnership. Such recognition ensures mutual respect, solidarity, and the alignment of interests, facilitating successful collaboration.

Under the Law on Social Partnership, provisions are included to establish public funds under the Jokargy Kenes of the Republic of Karakalpakstan and the regional and Tashkent city councils of people's deputies. These funds aim to support NGOs and other civil society institutions at the local level. Additionally, public commissions are tasked with fostering initiatives and strengthening the role of civil society in addressing socially significant issues.

This comprehensive framework for social partnership, rooted in collaboration and mutual respect, ensures that decisions affecting citizens' rights and interests are made in consultation with civil society institutions, reflecting a commitment to democratic principles and inclusive governance.

In Uzbekistan, the implementation of social and public-interest projects through contracts between state bodies and civil society institutions is a key mechanism for advancing social partnership. These contracts, based on state social orders, outline the priority areas of state activities and specify the objectives and terms for executing projects or events. Public funds under the Oliy Majlis or local councils organize competitions to allocate these orders, consolidate proposals, and present them to parliamentary or public commissions. The *Law on Social Partnership* clearly defines the rights and obligations of state bodies and civil society institutions, which are natural participants in these relationships.

Efforts to strengthen the material and technical base of civil society institutions and create conditions for their independent operation have led to a steady increase in the number of such organizations in Uzbekistan. Known as the "third sector," these institutions are playing an increasingly significant role in public oversight of state activities. Their contributions extend to critical areas such as employment, small business development, legal and cultural education, and the preservation of traditional moral and historical values.

As noted by B.I. Latipov, "Social cooperation is rooted in the necessity of fostering interaction between state and public organizations, social strata, and various institutions. It represents a philosophy of compromise, aimed at improving relationships and mutual collaboration among different segments of the population, ultimately strengthening societal stability." Social partnership in Uzbekistan is broadly defined as cooperation between state bodies and civil society institutions across regions, sectors, and domains, reflecting a comprehensive societal approach.

In this context, public commissions on social partnership have been established under local councils to enhance collaboration between NGOs and local authorities. These commissions facilitate regional development, support civic initiatives, and help direct the capacity of public organizations toward achieving priority objectives. This approach aligns with the distinctive priorities of Uzbekistan's social partnership model, which integrates global democratic values with unique national perspectives.

The cornerstone of social partnership in Uzbekistan is the delegation of certain state powers to public organizations, the reinforcement of public oversight, and support for self-governance institutions. These efforts are guided by laws that ensure the transparency and efficiency of reforms, promoting balance and inclusivity in societal interests.

The success of social partnership lies in the mutual recognition of state bodies and civil society institutions as equal participants. The alignment of their interests, readiness to collaborate, and adherence to agreed legal frameworks are essential. The transition from a "strong state" model to a "strong civil society" model in Uzbekistan highlights the increasing importance of civil society institutions in governance. This gradual evolution supports sustainable legal, political, social, and economic development.

In this regard, the cooperation between the state and NGOs in Uzbekistan is distinguished by its commitment to openness, transparency, and systematic analysis of civil society processes. The theoretical and methodological foundations established through research, training, and public forums contribute to further enhancing social partnership, ensuring that Uzbekistan's progress remains inclusive and democratic.

The system of self-governance plays a crucial role in implementing social partnership, offering both a platform for collective resolution of local issues and a broad scope of authority for citizens' assemblies. While non-governmental non-profit organizations (NGOs) often operate within a single area of focus based on their charters, citizens' assemblies have the capacity to implement diverse social projects across multiple sectors.

For instance, the "Mahalla" Charity Public Fund exemplifies the versatility of self-governing institutions. Whether in education, healthcare, utilities, or human rights, addressing these areas forms the core mission of self-governance bodies. The fund's collaboration with state and non-state organizations through contracts is a vivid example of social partnership in action. The adoption of the *Law on Social Partnership* has provided a solid legal foundation for this cooperation, ensuring its efficiency and underscoring the growing influence of the *mahalla* in balancing interests and maintaining mutual accountability.

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The activities outlined in the law are closely tied to the daily operations of citizens' assemblies. Furthermore, the *Law on Self-Governing Citizens' Bodies* includes provisions that emphasize collaboration between citizens' assemblies, their councils, and state or other organizations on specific issues. This partnership is rooted in the principle that the state assumes responsibility for social justice, citizen welfare, and robust protection, while prioritizing socially oriented policies.

In practice, *mahallas* and citizens' assemblies work in concert with the state on initiatives such as comprehensive regional development, improving the sanitary conditions of localities, approving plans for community infrastructure improvements, and providing targeted social support to residents. They also contribute to cultural and social cohesion through guidance on weddings and other ceremonies, further demonstrating their integral role in societal development.

The *Law on Social Partnership* formalized the legal framework governing social partnership between citizens' assemblies and state bodies. The law stipulates that partnership agreements and contracts for implementing social projects must outline mechanisms for execution, financial support, and the rights and obligations of both parties. This structure ensures transparency and accountability in social partnership.

Overall, the legal and operational synergy between self-governing institutions like the *mahalla* and state bodies underscores the significance of inclusive governance. It reinforces the role of citizens' assemblies not only in local development but also in fostering societal stability, accountability, and mutual cooperation across all levels of governance.

From this perspective, enhancing the relationship between self-governing bodies and state authorities significantly contributes to building a robust civil society in Uzbekistan. Social partnership serves as a mechanism through which civil society institutions and state bodies complement each other, effectively safeguarding citizens' rights, freedoms, and lawful interests [9].

Deepening the collaboration between the state and civil society institutions is a contemporary developmental imperative. Strengthening the role of self-governing bodies, such as the *mahalla*, requires transforming them into centers for targeted social support, fostering private entrepreneurship and family businesses, and expanding their oversight functions over state governance activities. Recognizing the substantial contribution of self-governing bodies to societal development and the implementation of crucial socio-economic programs, it is essential to refine their legal foundations, broaden their responsibilities, and promote closer collaboration with state authorities.

Developing social partnership relations further involves creating new opportunities and frameworks for collaboration between state bodies and civil society institutions. This approach enhances the role of social partnership as a system for realizing citizens' rights and freedoms, making it a cornerstone of governance. Strengthening such relationships not only supports the ongoing modernization and democratization reforms in Uzbekistan but also ensures their success by fostering a more inclusive and participatory society.

In conclusion, advancing the social partnership system and effectively implementing it requires stronger cooperation between state authorities and civil society institutions. This collaboration is key to refining the mechanisms of social partnership, reinforcing its impact as a tool for protecting citizens' rights and freedoms, and ensuring the success of reforms aimed at modernizing society and democratizing public life.

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