

## PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODERN SOCIAL SERVICE INSTITUTE IN AZERBAIJAN

### ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ РОЗВИТКУ СУЧАСНОГО ІНСТИТУТУ СОЦІАЛЬНОГО ОБСЛУГОВУВАННЯ В АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНІ

*The place and role of sociology of social work in the system of sociological knowledge is analyzed. It is emphasized that the sociology of social work reveals and understands the peculiarities of the activities of various groups of social workers, the activity of non-governmental organizations engaged in social protection, social services and institutions, which contributes to the optimization of organizational and technological aspects of professional and voluntary social work.*

*The article examines issues related to individuals entitled to access social services within the state social service system. Subsequently, various forms of social service provision and the conditions for providing specific types of social services to individuals are discussed. During the examination of these issues, the procedures for applying for the implementation of social services, the rules for the competent authority to make decisions regarding the determination of appropriate types of social services, and matters related to the protection of violated rights in the context of social services are also addressed. The institutional approach to the issue of social services highlights the necessity of analyzing the history of the problem. Throughout the development of human society, all forms of social life implied the existence of a social service institution. Of course, this institution did not emerge immediately. Initially, there were separate elements that, with the formation of the political system of society and the state, constituted the institution of social services. In Azerbaijan, individual services have been provided to the population by private individuals, communities, and later by the state throughout its development. All of these, together, form the fundamental basis for the functioning of the social service institution today. The state, its social policies, and a set of legal norms that ensure social protection of the population play a significant role here. At the same time, the institution of civil society actively contributes to the establishment of various forms of social services, which are crucial for modern individuals. In the context of globalization and the complexity of social relations, as well as the escalation of global issues, the need for improving the performance of the social service institution is evident. In Azerbaijan, various approaches are being implemented today to enhance the human factor, based on which the improvement of the institution of social services and its implementation takes place.*

**Key words:** social service, social protection, social policy, sociology of social work.

*Проаналізовано місце і роль соціології соціальної роботи в системі соціологічних знань. Наголошено, що соціологія соціальної роботи розкриває і осмислює особливості діяльності різних груп соціальних працівників, активність недержавних організацій, які займаються соціальним захистом, соціальних служб і закладів, що сприяє оптимізації організаційних, технологічних аспектів професійної і добровільної соціальної роботи.*

*У статті досліджено питання щодо осіб, які мають право на доступ до соціальних послуг у системі державного соціального обслуговування. Далі розглядаються різні форми надання соціальних послуг та умови надання окремих видів соціальних послуг особам. Під час розгляду цих питань розглядаються порядок звернення за наданням соціальних послуг, правила прийняття уповноваженим органом рішень щодо визначення належних видів соціальних послуг та питання, пов'язані із захистом порушених прав у контексті також звертаються до соціальних служб. Інституційний підхід до проблеми соціальних послуг актуалізує необхідність аналізу історії проблеми. Протягом усього розвитку людського суспільства всі форми суспільного життя передбачали існування інституту соціального обслуговування. Звичайно, цей інститут виник не відразу. Спочатку існували окремі елементи, які з формуванням політичної системи суспільства і держави склали інститут соціального обслуговування. В Азербайджані індивідуальні послуги надавалися населенню приватними особами, громадами, а згодом і державою протягом усього його розвитку. Усе це разом становить основу функціонування закладу соціального обслуговування сьогодні. Значну роль тут відіграє держава, її соціальна політика, комплекс правових норм, що забезпечують соціальний захист населення. Водночас інститут громадянського суспільства активно сприяє становленню різноманітних форм соціальних послуг, які є вкрай важливими для сучасної людини. В умовах глобалізації та ускладнення соціальних відносин, а також загострення глобальних проблем, необхідність покращення діяльності закладу соціального обслуговування стає очевидною. В Азербайджані сьогодні реалізуються різні підходи до посилення людського фактору, на основі яких відбувається вдосконалення інституту соціальних послуг та його впровадження.*

**Ключові слова:** соціальне обслуговування, соціальний захист, соціальна політика, соціологія соціальної роботи.

UDC 323+316

DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/2663-5208.2023.50.3>

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**Introduction.** The comprehensive development strategy of the independent Republic of Azerbaijan, initially established by our national leader Heydar Aliyev, has been successfully continued and further improved since 2003 by President Ilham Aliyev. It is particularly noteworthy to emphasize the political course of Mr. President

towards ensuring high levels of social justice principles and establishing a comprehensive social state in our country. Elevating the social well-being of individuals, ensuring a prosperous life, and strengthening the social support of vulnerable segments of society hold crucial positions among the main objectives of this course. President

Ilham Aliyev, who consistently maintains the focus on increasing state care for socially vulnerable population groups and demonstrates a humanistic approach, has stated that the essence of the policy pursued in Azerbaijan revolves around the human factor [1, p. 7]. Strengthening the social support for vulnerable segments of society, of course, necessitates the improvement of the social service system as one of the significant forms of this support.

In the modern era, with the adoption of the "Law on Social Service" of the Republic of Azerbaijan on December 30, 2011, a new stage has been reached in the formation of the social service system in Azerbaijan. The new social service system is being established in accordance with the conditions, requirements, and standards of the modern state in the social sphere and aligning with its new responsibilities. Analysis of legislative acts shows that social service relations, which are based on equal social relations, are regulated by various normative legal acts. However, the existence of certain gaps and contradictions in these legislative acts complicates their practical application. In this regard, there is a need for the systematization of legislation in the field of social service. This is also confirmed by the experience of foreign countries. For example, in Germany, the Social Code is in force, which systematizes various types of social security and social benefits, as well as forms of social assistance. In general, these norms are aimed at realizing the following objectives of the state:

- ensuring a decent standard of living for individuals;
- facilitating the free development of personality;
- protecting the family;
- promoting social justice;
- providing social protection.

In the modern era, the main responsibility of the state in the social sphere is to effectively address the social problems of its citizens. The state should approach all social issues with sensitivity, form social groups based on social problems, and seek solutions to them. The term "social" is used to denote those problems that have negative consequences for society as a whole, and their resolution can only be achieved through the utilization of the state's financial resources and the implementation of legal regulation at the state level [2, pp. 221–259].

The main development indicator of the state depends on its social function. The social function of the state is understood as its activities aimed at ensuring a decent standard of living for all members of society, regardless of their financial status, age, gender, or health capabilities.

For example, this includes the provision of minimum wages, pensions, allowances for the disabled, the poor, students, children, mothers, and the unemployed; allocation of necessary funds for healthcare, cultural leisure, education,

and housing construction. In general, the social function of the state refers to the state's activities that create conditions for every individual to enjoy freedom and a decent standard of living through designated benefits, and protect individuals who are unable to participate in labor relations due to various reasons [3]. The primary purpose of the state's social function is to ensure general welfare and create equal opportunities for everyone to benefit from this welfare. The more successfully this function is implemented, the stronger social stability and progress in society become, and the higher the level of ensuring a decent life for individuals. Additionally, this creates favorable conditions for the fuller realization of people's social rights, resulting in the elimination or prevention of social tensions and conflicts in society.

In recent years, states have been implementing active and consecutive measures aimed at improving the social sector, with a focus on the differential development of social technologies to serve vulnerable population groups. Such policies are conditioned by the goal of equalizing the living standards of socially vulnerable groups and creating suitable environments for individuals with physical disabilities. The implemented structural changes primarily aim to enhance the accessibility of social services, strengthen the approach of addressing needs in the social service system, improve the normalization mechanism of social workers' labor, and specify the value of social services.

The issue of social service provision for citizens with disabilities has become both a subject of research in various scientific fields and one of the priority directions of any state's policy. The functioning of state systems is based on the priority of social orientation under the modern conditions. "The declaration of such a state status today not only signifies the high level of the country's economic development but also the high degree of democraticness of political systems, the existence of strong compromise relations among political forces, and the high social protection of citizens, especially vulnerable population groups, from a social perspective.»

**The degree of research on the problem.** As it is known, the extent and implementation level of economic, social, and cultural rights and freedoms largely depend on the economic condition and resources of the state, and therefore, the guarantees of the realization of these rights have developed to a lesser extent compared to civil and political rights [4]. In this regard, without the necessary financial base and organizational structures, the full and effective implementation of the constitutional right to social security, including social services, becomes somewhat difficult or generally impossible. Their establishment is one of the fundamental functions of the welfare state. This is because social security is directly related to the social function of the state [5]. The state

must strive to maximize the efficient and equitable use of available resources in the direction of fully realizing the rights to social security, including social services, in accordance with its obligations. The formation of the institution of social service is being investigated today not only by historians but also by representatives of social work, psychology, and sociology. At the same time, many methodological aspects related to determining the place of the institution of social service in the overall structure of social forms of life are still subject to discussion.

**The aim of this article** is to identify the peculiarities of the formation of social service as an institution in the history of Azerbaijani society.

#### **Methods.**

To achieve this, we have turned to the analysis of individual stages of social development, as well as the current state of social service in the country.

#### **Main content**

#### **About the social function of the state as the basis for the formation of the institution of social service**

After restoring its state independence, Azerbaijan's social function has formed the basis of its activities. The main objective here was to improve the social legislation applied to all members of society and individuals of different categories, to harmonize it with progressive and internationally accepted standards, and thus ensure the socio-economic rights of all individuals. Social services occupy a special place within the modern forms of social security, along with social insurance and social assistance. In order to further improve the existing social service system in any country and align it with progressive global standards, it is necessary to study the social service institutions and legislation in foreign countries that meet modern requirements, and take into account local conditions and national peculiarities to apply positive experiences accordingly.

In order to ensure reliable social protection for the population in the long term, taking into account international development trends, the continuous adaptation of social services to modern demands, and the utilization of the experience of developed countries in this field, the Republic of Azerbaijan has ratified a number of international documents in the relevant area. These documents, both national legislation and the provisions derived from international documents, aim to ensure the provision of high-quality social services to the population, meeting the needs of vulnerable groups, as well as the establishment of specialized human resources potential and strengthening the material-technical base and expansion of networks of social service institutions. Additionally, the development of relevant standards and norms, the implementation of international experience and innovative technologies, and the fulfillment of obligations in this regard are also envisaged [5, p. 145].

In order to create a better social service system in the country, the state should first identify the factors that create social risks, which depend on human will, so that such risks can be prevented in the future. The direction of applying social services should be clearly defined, and subsequently, fair social services should be implemented according to the social situation. The legislation regulating the social service field should be formulated by drawing on international experience. Conditions should be created for private institutions outside the state to be involved in the social service sphere, and they should be supported by the state. This not only streamlines the work of the state but also enhances people's opportunities and the quality of accessing social services.

The Azerbaijani state, as the guarantor of providing social services to individuals, is actively and consistently implementing social policies in the present period. Social policy is one of the main directions of the state's internal policy and an integral part of public life. This field encompasses not only non-production sectors of the economy such as education, science, healthcare, social protection but also various aspects of the production sectors, such as working hours, minimum wage, determining the protection of labor, and so on. The functional role of the social sphere in society includes the creation and deepening of social relations among the population, as well as the fulfillment and formation of their essential needs. Regardless of the level of development, social policy is an important component of state policy towards the socio-economic advancement of society in all countries of the world. The essence of social policy lies in creating conditions for the improvement of the living standards of individual social groups as well as the entire social group, and the formation of economic incentives for their participation in public life.

**The Institute of Social Service in Azerbaijan.** The Institute of Social Service in Azerbaijan has a long history of development. Since ancient times, human communities have sought to share services and expand their range. All of this was related to the needs of people, social conditions, and the peculiarities of social-demographic development. Even before the division of labor, support was provided to children, the sick, and the elderly to maintain social stability. However, there were limitations associated with perceptions of health, the value of children and the elderly, living conditions, migration, entertainment, etc.

With the division of labor, the spheres of public life expanded. Consequently, the need for social service grew and transformed. For example, there were more opportunities to meet material and spiritual needs, and the number of individuals capable of doing so increased. Thus, the possibility of organizing social services began to

be utilized more widely. This can be evidenced by historical facts. Services were provided by teachers, doctors, childcare providers, and domestic tasks were carried out (such as shoe and clothing repairs, food preparation, and so on). In different social formations, the systematic nature of this work was achieved through market forces, competition, and the eventual formation of a social structure based on income levels.

With the development of the political organization of society, social needs began to be regulated by the state. Thus, the state gained the ability to control the market of social services and even transfer some of these services to private individuals. With the increase in population and the complexity of social relations, the opportunity for the development of the social institution of social service greatly expanded. This work was conducted in conjunction with other areas of social development related to the institutions of family, household, education, health, religion, and so on. One example of such work can be seen in the activities of the Red Crescent Society: "The Azerbaijan Red Crescent Society, which has a glorious history of over 100 years, is the largest humanitarian organization in the Republic, with its role defined by state law. As a member of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which is the world's leading humanitarian institution, the National Society (AzRCS) plays an equal and full-fledged role in our country. The employees and volunteers of the Azerbaijan Red Crescent Society have been providing humanitarian assistance to people since 1920, without discrimination based on nationality, race, religion, social class, or political beliefs" [8].

Over time, the social service has expanded its authority thanks to the active support of the state and charitable organizations. In particular, the forms of service provision to the population expanded during times of war and natural disasters, such as floods, earthquakes, landslides, and so on. It should be noted that the possibilities of social service provision were directly related to the level of social security, including minimum wage, employment of the population, urban and rural population ratio, level of infrastructure development, and the legal framework for ensuring social service provision.

For example, during the period of tsarist rule, there were possibilities for providing social assistance, but they were not used for the needs of the population:

«According to the new land law that came into force in 1901, rural dwellers were required to pay certain taxes related to their lands. Instead of the traditional land tax known as "per land", which was based on perpetual land use, a state fee, representing 10-12% of income, was introduced for the lands they utilized. In addition, they were also obligated to pay a district assembly (zemstvo) fee,

which encompassed all lands, for the lands they used. The district assembly fee was collected to cover the expenses of education, healthcare, veterinary services, and other expenditures. However, it was mainly used for financing the police. During that period, as before, peasant landowners were subject to various obligations towards their landlords, including contributing a portion, ranging from 1/10 to half of the produce, as compensation for land use, grass tax for wintering livestock, compensation for erecting yurts, garden tax for cultivating gardens and vegetables, and others. Overall, the system of social service formation had a historical nature, meaning it changed depending on the development conditions of society itself.

Furthermore, the nature of social service was also directly determined by the social structure of society, the ratio between the middle class and the underprivileged individuals and families. During the years of Soviet rule, the possibilities for social protection of the population and the formation of social service were limited:

"Between 1922 and 1927, primarily in Azerbaijan, as it was a period of restoring the national economy, establishing village associations, and laying the foundations of socialism, the duties of the Commissariat of Social Welfare were carried out by the Azerbaijan People's Commissars and separate councils. This Commissariat primarily worked on improving and enhancing the social welfare system, granting privileges to disabled and working citizens. As a result of the work accomplished, in August 1927, the "Corporation for the Disabled" was established in Baku to address the issues of disabled individuals. Within the system of the Commissariat of Social Welfare, hundreds of disabled individuals were provided with employment in various specialties through 25 collective farms. The responsibility for overseeing the pension system in the Republic was assigned to the People's Commissariat of Social Welfare."

The living situation changed from period to period, which also affected the implementation of tasks in social service. During transitional periods of social development, the number of individuals in need has been rapidly increasing, compelling government structures to intensify their efforts in providing social assistance to the population. Our country has experienced several such periods in its history. In the 20th century, these include the First and Second World Wars, the transitional period during the establishment of Soviet power, the Armenian-Azerbaijani and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts, and the period of transition to independent development. Each of these periods has had specific contradictions related to the standard of living, human and material losses of society, as well as civilizational and regional peculiarities. Today, war veterans receive the necessary support: "On the occasion of the anniversary of the Victory in the

Second World War, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan annually signs a Decree to provide one-time financial assistance to the participants of that war, widows of fallen or deceased fighters, and individuals who were awarded orders and medals for their dedicated service on the rear front during the war. The amount of one-time assistance intended for them is increased periodically to meet the changing needs" [11].

It should also be noted that the general direction and development of social institutions associated with the civilizational process also influenced the institution of social service, as a set of conditions related to ensuring human rights and the basic conditions of human existence. The influence on the nature, content and forms of functioning of the institute of social service of other institutions, such as the family, the education system, health care, labor organization, and so on, also changed. The researchers write that «while policy makers widely recognize the fact that education serves as an engine for economic growth through the accumulation of human capital, education is also strongly associated with boosting levels of social capital. Indeed, an important justification for the large expenditures on education within many democratic nations is its social, and not just economic, impact – the benefits an educated electorate brings to civil society» [12]. The worldview of people, depending on social circumstances, forms attitudes and orientations that affect the nature of the functioning of a particular social institution, its role in social development. Thus, the institution of social service, being formed as an independent phenomenon, is at the same time strongly influenced by other aspects of social life, thus it is given the opportunity to develop and change.

The modern level of development of the social service institution indicates significant changes taking place here, related to new approaches in ensuring people's decent life. There is a clear connection between government structures, non-governmental organizations, and charitable programs. This can be judged, at least, by the extensive work that our country has done in providing necessary assistance to all those in need during the post-war period. This includes support for families of the deceased, the wounded, and overall individuals in need of social protection. The following statistics testify to this: "During the post-war period, monthly social payments were provided to 115,000 individuals, including family members of martyrs and war veterans, and insurance payments were made to 3,565 individuals. Services were provided to 83,700 individuals, including family members of martyrs and war participants, at the unified communication centers, etc. Overall, the social support package provided during the post-war period covered 124,000 individuals, with 285,000 services provided to support them" [13].

In general, the institution of social service has a historical character. Today, its formation involves not only official government structures that operate based on adopted laws and legislative acts but also private companies and firms that provide social services. It should be noted that an increasing number of people are resorting to their services. This work is carried out at a professional level. Thus, it can be said that the state's social policy is aimed at ensuring that individuals in need of social protection are fully provided for both through government agencies and by utilizing the opportunities of civil society. Consequently, the social service is becoming sufficiently diverse, in accordance with the richness of social life and various spheres of activity. Work in this direction continues today. Overall, among the forms of social development, the institution of social service is emerging as one of the leading forms of working with people.

**Conclusions.** The establishment of the institution of social service holds great importance for improving the lives of people, especially those in vulnerable groups. At the same time, it is a significant part of the social structure of society as it serves as a connecting element between all spheres of social life. Studying the history of its development and its current state contributes to the improvement of work in the field of social policy as a whole. As a result, numerous forms of social service are formed, which are essential for people. In Azerbaijan, various directions of this service are being developed based on population categories, areas of activity, people's needs, implementation technologies, and so on. Consequently, the culture of consumption and leisure is enhanced, communication skills and continuity in social experience, necessary for the upbringing of the younger generation, are developed. We believe that qualitative development of education at all levels is necessary to enhance the level of social service. Through this, it is possible to shape a new human capital that meets the modern challenges of the time and is capable of elevating national development to a universally human level.

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