



**FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE
NATIONAL MAHALLA SYSTEM IN
INDEPENDENT UZBEKISTAN**

Juraboyev N.Yu.,

Associate Professor, TDTU

E-mail: juraboyevnosir4@gmail.com

***Abstract.** This article analyzes the formation and improvement of the national Mahalla system in independent Uzbekistan. It examines the historical roots of the Mahalla institution, its legal and regulatory framework, its role in socio-political life, recent reforms, and prospective directions for further development of the Mahalla system.*

***Keywords:** Mahalla, reforms, self-governance of citizens, civil society, citizen assembly, social protection, law, decree, resolution*

Introduction

The Mahalla, the most important component of civil society, occupies a special place in the social, cultural, and spiritual life of Uzbekistan. The Mahalla has undergone a long and complex historical evolution. The term 'Mahalla' originates from Arabic and refers to a locality, clan, or community living in mutual support. Historical sources indicate the existence of Mahallas over a thousand years ago. For instance, Narshakhi in his "History of Bukhara" noted multiple Mahallas in Bukhara 1100 years ago. Alisher Navoi in "Hayrat ul-Abror" described Mahallas as "small cities within a city," while the historian Muhammad Salih in "Tarikhi Jadidi Tashkent" provided valuable information about city neighborhoods and Mahallas. Therefore, Mahallas are not only administrative units but communities united by lifestyle, values, traditions, and customs.

Throughout different historical periods, the responsibilities of Mahallas evolved with political and social changes. Core functions included jointly conducting ceremonies, maintaining public order, educating the younger generation, monitoring traditional norms, punishing offenders, cleaning waterways, constructing streets, and managing community development through collective efforts.

Methods

Since independence, the Mahalla system has become an essential element in state and community governance, serving as a foundation for civil society and enriched with new content. The Constitution formally recognizes Mahallas as self-governing bodies. Mahalla councils are considered the most effective traditional mechanism for direct engagement with citizens. The system, known as citizen self-governance, has been strengthened and institutionalized under President Sh.M. Mirziyoyev, providing proximity to citizens and promoting public participation. As of January 1, 2021, there are 9,168 citizen assemblies in Uzbekistan, including 8,877 Mahalla citizen assemblies, 161 rural assemblies, 89 village assemblies, and 41 city assemblies. Geographically, 1,830 assemblies are located in cities, 1,205 in district centers. Samarkand, Tashkent, and Fergana regions lead in the number of Mahallas, with 1,100, 1,048, and 1,041 Mahallas respectively.

Results

Legal foundations for further improvement of the Mahalla system have been established, particularly through the Law on Citizen Self-Governance, specifying principles, jurisdiction, and responsibilities. Presidential decrees and resolutions in 2020-2022 focused on social

protection, youth and women's engagement, entrepreneurship, employment, and poverty reduction.

In 2023, the "Mahalla Seven" model was introduced, including the Mahalla head, deputy governor, youth leader, women's activist, prevention inspector, social worker, and tax inspector. Key performance indicators (KPIs) were established to evaluate their effectiveness. Initiatives include infrastructure development, tax payer ratings, annual allocations to Mahallas, and collaboration between Mahalla and district authorities. The "Mahalla-by" approach has been implemented for individual household and community engagement, aiming to enhance social welfare and citizen satisfaction.

International recognition of the Mahalla system was highlighted during the first international conference in Samarkand (October 2-5, 2025), attended by UNDP, UNICEF, USAID, UNFPA, and representatives of over twenty countries. The conference emphasized Mahallas' role in entrepreneurship, employment, poverty reduction, and social assistance, leading to a UN-endorsed declaration acknowledging Uzbekistan's Mahalla system.

Discussion

The Mahalla system serves as a social platform transmitting cultural values and traditions across generations, strengthening national identity, civic engagement, and social cooperation. Ongoing reforms aim to enhance institutional capacity, reduce bureaucratic barriers, and support community initiatives. The system's financial independence, expanded responsibilities, and role in sustainable social development reflect its strategic importance.

Presidential initiatives for 2026, declared as the “Year of Mahalla Development and Social Elevation,” include allocation of 20 trillion UZS for infrastructure, targeted funding for 33 districts and 330 Mahallas, and engagement of local authorities in accelerating project implementation. The integrated approach involves all sectors, ensuring rapid resolution of issues and improved public services.

Conclusion. The Mahalla represents the core of Eastern-style democracy in Uzbekistan, embodying national values and serving as a critical unit for civil society. Continuous improvement of the Mahalla system ensures sustainable social development, active citizen participation, and strengthened governance at the local level. The international acknowledgment and systematic reforms underscore Mahallas’ central role in Uzbekistan’s socio-political landscape.

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