

# Unemployment Issue and solutions in the rural areas of the Uzbek SSR (1980-1991)

## (A Case Study of Khorezm Region)

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**Abstract:** In this article, the author examines the issues of unemployment among the population in the villages of the Uzbek SSR between 1980 and 1991, and the factors, causes, problems, and conflicts that led to this unemployment process, using the example of the Khorezm region. Also, the issues of unemployment among all segments of the population, including adults and youth, are analyzed from a historical perspective.

**Keywords:** Uzbek SSR, Khorezm, national economy, unemployment, law, agriculture, collective farm, pensioners, problems and conflicts, complaints and applications.

**Introduction:** It is well known that the political, social, and economic processes and conflicts in the Soviet Union during the 1980s and 1990s had a significant impact on the life of the Uzbek SSR, including Khorezm region. During the 1980s, the issue of unemployment in Khorezm intensified. The region experienced the dominance of cotton monoculture, stagnation in social and economic life, the impracticality of the application of developed socialism ideas, and the ineffectiveness of perestroika. These issues drained the vitality of ordinary people. Additionally, a number of reforms aimed at increasing the availability of cheap labor implemented by the Union led to the problem of unemployment not only in the Soviet Union but also in the Uzbek SSR. These events affected Khorezm as well.

### METHODS

The issue of unemployment among the rural population of the Uzbek SSR during the 1980-1991 period, especially in Khorezm, is a relatively under-researched topic. Soviet-era works, such as the "History of the Uzbek SSR" [1], post-independence research including M. Matniyozov's "History of Khorezm" [2], and Q. Rajabov's work edited by him, "The Social and Political Activity of the Leadership of the Uzbek SSR (1945-1983)" [3], along with "75 Years of Mercy and

Compassion" [4] by A. Mannopov and S. Mirzaahmedova, provide some insights into the social issues, conflicts, and unemployment faced by the rural population of Khorezm during the 1980-1990s. Furthermore, the study used archival materials from the Khorezm Region State Archive (Fond 170 and Fond 651), "Khorezm Haqiqati" newspaper, and materials from the journal "Uzbekistan Social Security" to explore the issue. The research involved the use of methods such as synchronous analysis, comparative historical methods, and structural analysis[5].

**Analysis and Findings.** Between 1980 and 1991, the key issue in Khorezm region was providing employment and creating new job opportunities. During this period, the material and technical base of agriculture in Khorezm was weak, and job opportunities were insufficient. One of the main reasons for this, as revealed during the analysis of archival documents, was the sharp population increase, which exacerbated the unemployment problem among both adults and young people in Khorezm villages. Additionally, starting from 1970, in accordance with the decision of the Soviet Ministers' Council dated December 31, 1969, elderly people receiving pensions in Khorezm's districts and cities were also involved in work in the national economy when necessary, and a new procedure for

pension payments to working pensioners was introduced. As a result, the number of pensioners working in Khorezm increased significantly, which contributed to the rise in unemployment among the general population[6].

Moreover, from an ideological standpoint, the number of unemployed was deliberately concealed to avoid damaging the Union's international reputation. As a result, it was difficult to register the full extent of unemployment. The reports from the Khorezm region labor department only recorded the efforts to place the unemployed, but the total number of unemployed was not fully disclosed. For example, as of January 1, 1980, 637 unemployed youth under the age of 29 in the region expressed a desire to work, along with 1,093 unemployed people over the age of 29 [7]. By 1980, the majority of the unemployed in Khorezm were women with two or more children. These women stated that in order for them to be employed, there should be educational institutions where they could leave their children. Among the unemployed, 575 were women without any professional skills. In 1982, the labor department of the region and district conducted a series of measures to employ temporary unemployed people and those working in household and personal subsidiary farms, successfully employing a total of 1,000 people [8]. However, the unemployment problem also spread among the youth, reflecting the social and economic stagnation of the time. By December 1, 1982, measures taken to address youth unemployment resulted in 6,637 8th-10th grade graduates being employed [9].

By 1984, unemployment in the districts and villages of Khorezm sharply increased. The district labor departments

organized the employment of the unemployed, with most of them being male workers. The employment rate of unemployed youth in Khorezm was 4,610 as of December 1, 1984 [10], but by December 1, 1985, this number decreased to 3,515 [11]. This indicates that the regional and district labor departments were unable to effectively resolve the unemployment issue. Disturbingly, during this period, unemployment was not limited to the youth; it also spread among adults. The increase in the number of unemployed nationwide further exacerbated the already difficult situation. By the end of the 1980s, the number of unemployed in the Uzbek SSR reached one million. The worsening socio-economic conditions and the continuous increase in unemployment led to rising crime, especially among the youth [12]. The primary task of the Khorezm region executive committee and the labor department was to provide employment for the unemployed in the region. However, during the winter months, it was particularly difficult to provide jobs for the unemployed. By 1990, the unemployment problem in the rural areas of Khorezm became even more severe, as described in archival documents: The majority of the unemployed at this time were women with three or more children, young people who had graduated from school, and young people who were seeking employment under the condition that they could leave their children at pre-school institutions. The most viable solution to employment during this period was to involve the unemployed in agricultural work. For example, in Khonqa district of Khorezm in 1990, contracts were signed with 540 unemployed women, 292 of whom were issued workbooks, while the remaining 248 women were illegally employed in agricultural work [13].

#### **Khorezm Region Unemployment Report as of August 1, 1990 [14]**

	<b>Names of district</b>	<b>Unemployed population in Khorezm region as of August 1, 1990</b>
1.	Urgench	2360
2.	Khiva	2249
3.	Shovot	1946
4.	Gurlan	1774
5.	Xonkha	2377
6.	Qoshkopir	2808
7.	Yangibozor	916
8.	Khazorasp	6264

9.	Bogot	2909
10.	Yangiarik	1844
	Total unemployment:	25447

As of the end of 1990, a total of 25,447 unemployed individuals resided in the region. By 1991, a series of measures were introduced to address unemployment and provide employment opportunities. Specifically, the initial steps towards independence and the

achievement of independence contributed to the creation of new job opportunities in Khorezm region. The following table shows the job opportunities created in the districts and rural areas of Khorezm region during the first half and the end of 1991.

**Table: Created Employment Opportunities in Khorezm Region in 1991**

№	Names of cities and districts	Jobs created to provide employment to the unemployed population as of July 1, 1991 [15]	Jobs created to provide employment to the unemployed population as of December 31, 1991 [16]
1.	Urgench	58	112
2.	Khiva	114	288
3.	Xonkha	483	570
4.	Khazorasp	226	423
5.	Shovot	799	848
6.	Gurlan	98	101
7.	Qoshkopir	295	554
8.	Bogot	401	564
9.	Yangiarik	119	185
10.	Yangibozor	42	149
	Total :	2635	3794

By the end of 1991, the number of job opportunities created for the unemployed in the Khorezm region had increased, reaching a total of 3,794 across the districts, as compared to 2,635 by July 1, 1991. These efforts reflect the region's focus on providing jobs to the growing unemployed population during the early stages of Uzbekistan's independence.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, despite several social measures taken by the Soviet government to improve the social conditions of rural workers between 1980 and 1991, stagnation, poverty, and unemployment remained prevalent in the rural areas of the Uzbek SSR. In particular, the rapid population growth in the rural regions of Uzbekistan, especially in Khorezm, exacerbated the problem of unemployment. One of the key factors contributing to

the increase in unemployment was the December 31, 1969, decision by the Soviet Council of Ministers, which allowed pensioners in the Khorezm region to continue working while receiving full or partial pensions. This policy, though aimed at providing additional workforce during economic necessity, ultimately led to an increase in unemployment rates in the rural areas of Khorezm during the 1980s and 1990s.

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