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CPRO ANALYTICAL REPORT

February 2026

Center For Policy Research and Outreach
Westminster International University in Tashkent

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Contents

About CPRO.....	3
Year in review: CPRO in 2025.....	4
Digest of selected CPRO publications.....	5
CPRO outreach activities: Roundtables and conferences.....	10
Completed and ongoing projects in CPRO.....	14
Future directions for CPRO in the context of policy discussion.....	16

About CPRO

The Center for Policy Research and Outreach (CPRO) is a platform where experts, policymakers, and agencies come together for dialogue supported by evidence, leading to more robust decisions and better operations. The outputs of the Center effectively respond to specific policy and outreach requests of the government, private sector, and civil society by pulling together experts to engage in new, collaborative, and interdisciplinary projects.

Our vision

To be a leading policy research center, driving impactful research that shapes policy decisions across Central Asia and beyond. By fostering research excellence and rigorous analysis, CPRO contributes to evidence-based policymaking and ultimately advances the region's socio-economic development.

Our mission

The mission of CPRO is to enhance the quality and impact of public policy through rigorous research, evidence-based analysis, and multidisciplinary collaboration. The center strives to:

- Provide actionable policy recommendations that address socio-economic challenges.
- Engage with policymakers, industry leaders, and the academic community to foster informed decision-making.
- Promote results-focused research and policy dialogue with external knowledge partners at national and international levels.
- Training the next generation of policy researchers and leaders.

CPRO is structured around four Multisector Research Groups

Human Capital & Decent Work	Agriculture and Rural Development	Silk Road Connectivity	Futures & Foresight
WIUT researchers have long studied agricultural labor, education, skills, and workplace productivity. The national employment strategy emphasizes the need for better jobs.	WIUT has become one of the leaders in agricultural economics and rural policy, addressing migration, service quality, and the impacts on housing, health, and education in rural areas.	Transportation, energy, and trade investments along the Silk Road corridor present ongoing opportunities and questions for multidisciplinary research.	CPRO Futures & Foresight researchers work on methods that aid anticipation of the future in various sectors. We use international experience and techniques to analyze the future potential and prospects of the country's growth.

Year in review: CPRO in 2025

In 2025, the Center for Policy Research and Outreach (CPRO) marked a transformative year in advancing evidence-based policymaking in Uzbekistan through a comprehensive approach integrating rigorous research, strategic partnerships, and active stakeholder engagement. The center published a series of policy briefs addressing the pressing challenges, including public administration reform, administrative justice modernization, critical minerals governance, climate change adaptation in agriculture, and pesticide management frameworks. Each brief provided actionable recommendations grounded in international best practices and adapted to Uzbekistan's institutional context.

Beyond research outputs, CPRO significantly expanded its international network by formalizing memorandums of understanding with leading universities in China, Kazakhstan, and other countries, creating robust platforms for joint research initiatives, knowledge exchange, and collaborative policy analysis. These partnerships facilitate cooperation and enhance the quality of policy recommendations by providing access to international expertise, comparative datasets, and diverse methodological perspectives. CPRO actively facilitated policy dialogue through an ambitious program of roundtables, conferences, and expert consultations that brought together government officials, international experts, civil society representatives, academic researchers, and private sector leaders to engage in substantive discussions on critical policy issues.

CPRO in numbers

20 impactful
publications

5 Memorandum
of Understandings

15 outreach
activities

6 funded
projects

5K worldwide
website visits

2K reads of
publications

Digest of selected CPRO publications

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CPRO POLICY RESEARCH OUTREACH

2025

CPRO ANALYTICAL REPORT

Fostering Resilience for Food Security in Uzbekistan

May 2025

Center For Policy Research and Outreach
Westminster International University in Tashkent

ISBN: 978-9910-8858-4-6

"Tractor cultivating field" photo by Valentin Valkov



CPRO's commitment to practical, rights-based policymaking was reflected in a strong set of publications spanning digital governance, industrial strategy, and farm-sector reform. The last of the year's briefs was "The Digitalization of Public Services in Uzbekistan: How to Avoid the Rigidity" (Kamoliddin Islam).¹ The brief argues that digital transformation must be rooted in legal and procedural integrity, specifically, full compliance with the Law on Administrative Procedures, to safeguard fairness, transparency, and due process in public service delivery. It underscores that digital-first systems should not become digital-only systems: nondigital alternatives, robust safeguards, and clear error-correction pathways are essential so that citizens and organizations are not harmed by system failures or automation bias. A central recommendation is stronger algorithmic accountability, ensuring that decision-making logic and outcomes in digitalized administrative processes remain traceable, reviewable, and meaningfully accessible to the public, while preserving the "human element" necessary for legitimate and responsive governance.

¹ Islam, K. (2025). *The Digitalization of Public Services in Uzbekistan: How to Avoid the Rigidity*. CPRO Policy Brief 2025-11/2. <https://doi.org/10.70735/FLMO8508>.

Another strategic publication, “Role of Uzbekistan in the Rare Earth and Critical Minerals Economy” (Bekzod Zakirov)², examines how Uzbekistan can convert geological potential into sustainable national advantage. The brief recommends a balanced, multipolar approach to foreign participation that protects sovereignty over mineral wealth while avoiding overdependence on any single geopolitical bloc. It emphasizes that stronger governance, transparency, and alignment with internationally recognized standards, particularly EITI- and ESG-consistent approaches, are not add-ons, but prerequisites for attracting responsible investment. The brief further argues that the largest gains will come from value addition: building domestic processing capacity and embedding the minerals sector into a broader green industrialization agenda to support diversification, job creation, and bargaining power through regional and global cooperation.

In the agricultural reform portfolio, “Incentivizing Farm Modernization in Uzbekistan: How can land tenure rights stimulate investments?” (Zafar Kurbanov, Dr. Nodir Djanibekov, Prof. Dr. Thomas Herzfeld)³ offers nuanced evidence on how farmers perceive land rights and how those perceptions shape investment behavior. The brief finds that Uzbekistan’s farmers often view key land rights as more restricted than in market-oriented systems, and that management rights, particularly the freedom to organize production, are more important for motivating investment than tenure security or transfer rights alone. It also cautions that expanding use and transfer rights may not automatically increase investment; in strategic crop systems such as cotton and wheat, greater freedom can even discourage investment where economic returns are low and incentives to reinvest are weak. While land tenure security shows only limited links to machinery investment, partly because machinery is movable, the brief notes that perceived expropriation risk may still suppress longer-term planning and diversified investment.

CPRO also deepened its work on decision-making and policy effectiveness through “Behavioral insights for policy design in Central Asia” (Dr. Bekzod Zakirov, Akhtem Useinov).⁴ The brief challenges the assumption that citizens and firms consistently make “rational” decisions and highlights how biases, emotions, and social influences often shape real-world choices. It argues that standard policy tools, tax incentives, regulation, and awareness campaigns, can

² Zakirov, B. (2025). *Role of Uzbekistan in the Rare Earth and Critical Minerals Economy*. CPRO Policy Brief 2025-11. <https://doi.org/10.70735/DEUF7298>.

³ Kurbanov, Z., Djanibekov, N., Herzfeld, T. (2025). *Incentivizing Farm Modernization in Uzbekistan: How can land tenure rights stimulate investments?* CPRO Policy Brief 2025-09. <https://doi.org/10.70735/rkyz3944>.

⁴ Zakirov, B. and Useinov, A. (2025) ‘Behavioral insights for policy design in Central Asia’, MPRA Paper 125051, University Library of Munich. Available at <https://doi.org/10.70735/fuhj5149>.

underperform when they ignore these behavioral dynamics. By introducing the fundamentals of Behavioral Insights (BI), sharing global examples, and proposing recommendations for Uzbekistan, the paper positions BI as a practical complement to traditional instruments, enabling more realistic, evidence-driven policy design across Central Asian contexts.

A closely related contribution, “Small Intervention, Big Impact: Experimental Evidence on Behavioral Change Towards Rational Use of Water and Energy in Uzbekistan” (Nargiza Alimukhamedova, Jushkinbek Ismailov, Laziza Abdullaeva)⁵, brings experimental evidence to the green transition debate. The brief notes that limited public awareness remains a significant barrier to resource conservation, and those current initiatives often lean top-down, targeting producers, while underaddressing household-level inefficiencies, despite households being the largest consumer group. Its core finding is that school-based educational programs that integrate behavioral interventions and interactive teaching methods can measurably improve students’ water- and energy-saving behaviors, with meaningful spillover effects within households. The brief highlights the scalability of these interventions and presents them as a pragmatic pathway to support national sustainability goals by shifting behavior at community level, where resource use is most pervasive.

On urban development and financial regulation, “The impact of the transition to escrow plans on the Tashkent development market: a financial modelling perspective” (Andrey Artemenkov, Alessandro Saccal, Omonjon Ganiev, Feruza Yodgorova)⁶ analyzes the economic implications of introducing escrow schemes to finance new residential construction. The brief explains the mechanism through which buyers’ funds held in escrow are released to developers only after construction completion and property registration, reshaping project financing incentives and risk distribution. Using a micro-economic comparative three-statement financial modelling approach applied to a standardized mixed-use, predominantly residential development in central Tashkent, the study evaluates how the shift affects development dynamics, particularly under assumptions linked to the disappearance of DDY-related discounts for advance payments, thereby providing an evidence base for assessing market transition costs and potential stabilizing benefits.

⁵ Alimukhamedova, N., Ismailov, J., Abdullaeva, L. (2025). *Small Intervention, Big Impact: Experimental Evidence on Behavioral Change Towards Rational Use of Water and Energy in Uzbekistan*. CPRO Policy Brief 2025-05-01. <https://doi.org/10.70735/CZLD5460>.

⁶ Artemenkov, A., Saccal, A., Ganiev, O. and Yodgorova, F. (2025). *The impact of the transition to escrow plans on the Tashkent development market: a financial modelling perspective*. CPRO Policy Brief 2025-04. <https://doi.org/10.70735/UIQI2260>.

Local governance reform is addressed in “Opportunities for Reforming Local Government in Uzbekistan: Insights from International Experience” (Isa Khamedov, Igor Tsay).⁷ The brief situates reform momentum in recent constitutional amendments and updates to the Law on Local State Authorities, describing them as a rare window for decentralization and expanded municipal autonomy. It highlights a pivotal conceptual question: whether local governance should primarily function as a representative institution voicing citizens’ interests or as an administrative apparatus implementing state policy. By linking the reform agenda to Strategy–2030, particularly the goals of strengthening self-governance, reinforcing local democratic institutions, and improving service delivery, the brief frames decentralization not only as an institutional redesign, but as a practical route to better municipal performance and accountability.

Finally, two complementary briefs focus on productivity, resilience, and structural transition in agriculture. “Enhancing agricultural resilience in Uzbekistan through farmers’ decision-making autonomy” (Nodir Djanibekov, Hiroyuki Takeshima, Bakhrom Mirkasimov, Kamiljon Akramov)⁸ argues that greater farmer autonomy strengthens resilience in technical efficiency during economic shocks, enabling more adaptive input use, sustained productivity, and flexible crop and resource management. It recommends reducing top-down land allocations, expanding secure land use rights, widening financial and market access, and decentralizing training programs to increase farmers’ capacity to adapt to future volatility. In parallel, “Mechanizing Cotton Harvesting in Uzbekistan” (Muhammad Bilal, Nodir Djanibekov, Abdusame Tadjiev)⁹ finds that mechanization can improve farm technical efficiency, though impacts differ depending on labor availability, practices, and farm size. The brief also flags an important social dimension: while mechanization reduces manual labor needs, it may create rural employment pressures, especially for female workers, underscoring the need for transition measures. It further recommends crop diversification as a pathway to reduce inefficiencies tied to cotton monoculture, stabilize farm incomes, and improve soil outcomes over time.

⁷ Khamedov, I. and Tsay, I. (2025). *Opportunities for Reforming Local Government in Uzbekistan: Insights from International Experience*. CPRO Policy Brief 2025-03. <https://doi.org/10.70735/gykm9524>.

⁸ Djanibekov, N., Takeshima, H., Mirkasimov, B. and Akramov, K. (2025). Enhancing agricultural resilience in Uzbekistan through farmers’ decision-making autonomy. CPRO Policy Brief 2025-01/2. <https://doi.org/10.70735/DUTV1060>.

⁹ Bilal, M., Djanibekov, N. and Tadjiev, A. (2025). Mechanizing Cotton Harvesting in Uzbekistan. CPRO Policy Brief 2025-01. <https://doi.org/10.70735/VCMX2844>.

Japan Is Back in Central Asia, But on Different Terms

Tokyo has earned political trust in the region through its quiet, yet long-standing, economic cooperation.

By **Zakirov Bekzod** and **Alisher Umirdinov**
January 15, 2026



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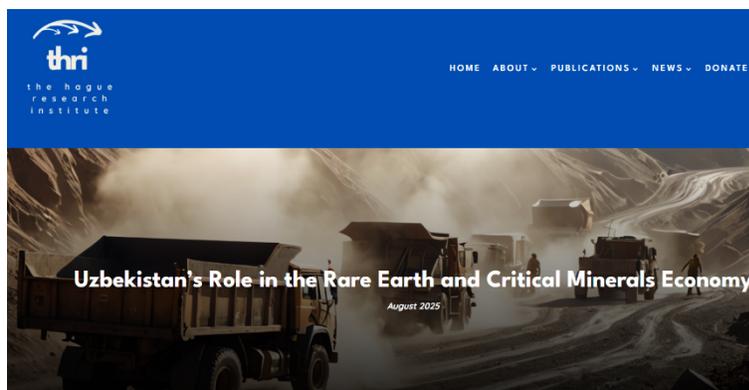
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By **Bekzod Zakirov**
April 01, 2025



Uzbekistan's Role in the Rare Earth and Critical Minerals Economy

August 2025



Bekzod Zakirov
Westminster International University in Tashkent



Foto: Shuhrat Latipov / "Gazeta.uz"

Mulohaza: O'zbekiston mahalliy hokimiyat organlarini isloh qilishning qaysi modelini tanlaydi?

O'zbekistonda mahalliy boshqaruvni isloh qilishning asosiy masalasi — o'zgarishlarga asos bo'ladigan modelni tanlash. Nomarkazlashtirishni ortga surish va to'liqsiz yechimlar tizimli risklarni keltirib chiqaradi, deydi Jamoatchilik huquqi markazi ekspertlari Isa Hamedov va Igor Say o'z maqolasida.

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[Кириллчада](#) [На русском языке](#)

CPRO outreach activities: Roundtables and conferences

In 2025, CPRO strengthened its outreach and policy dialogue through a series of roundtables, training programs, institutional partnerships, and international convenings designed to connect research evidence with reform priorities in Uzbekistan and the wider Central Asian region. A key milestone early in the year was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Westminster International University in



Tashkent (WIUT) and the Institute for Development of Social Protection under the National Agency of Social Protection (7 February 2025). The partnership established a framework for joint scientific and practical seminars, conferences, and training sessions focused on innovation in the social sector, while supporting young professionals and researchers through participation in socio-economic research. The collaboration also emphasized the exchange of national and international best practices through study visits and the development of advanced socio-economic research methodologies to inform improvements in social protection policy.



Policy dialogue with development partners featured prominently throughout the year. On 26 February 2025, the World Bank and the Development Strategy Center convened a roundtable on findings from the Listening to Citizens of Uzbekistan dataset, collected since 2018 with UK support. Discussions highlighted several policy-relevant trends: shifts in income growth patterns toward more pro-poor

outcomes in 2024—especially in rural areas—alongside continued regional and income-group disparities; a relative stability in household food insecurity indicators despite economic pressures; and persistent public concerns about energy tariff reforms initiated in May 2024, with a majority viewing price increases as unreasonable even as reported electricity supply quality improved. The roundtable also suggested broadly positive public perceptions of the

overall direction of reforms and the government’s dialogue with citizens, reinforcing the value of systematic feedback mechanisms in guiding social and economic policy.

CPRO also invested in capacity building as a core outreach priority. From 7–11 April 2025, WIUT hosted the Spring School on Econometric Analysis of Farmers’ Adoption Decisions of Sustainable Agricultural Practices (Part II), bringing together PhD students, researchers, and analysts for hands-on training in Stata and advanced econometric methods, including Ordered/Multivariate Probit, Propensity Score Matching, and



Marginal Treatment Effect models. Organized under the UzFarmBarometer project, a joint initiative by CPRO at WIUT and the Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition Economies (IAMO), the program aimed to strengthen analytical skills for evidence-based agricultural policy and applied research. This momentum continued on 14 April 2025 with a Workshop on Experimental and Behavioral Economics Research, jointly organized by WIUT and IAMO, which introduced core experimental methods, research design, and data analysis using tools such as z-Tree, oTree, R, and Stata. The workshop also advanced discussions on establishing a Behavioral Research Lab at WIUT, supporting faculty-led research and building a sustained community of practice in behavioral and experimental approaches.



In 23-26 September 2025, CPRO organized a capacity-building training for the officials from various agencies and ministries of Uzbekistan based on the funded grant provided by CAREC Institute. This workshop aimed at building capacities in foresight and anticipatory innovation governance as a strategic long-term planning tool, facilitating the transition to more anticipatory and innovative governance models. The workshop primarily focused on national priorities,

including climate change, sustainable urban development, environmental protection, and green transition. Its themes and discussions were centered around the Uzbekistan-2030 Strategy, reinforcing the country’s role in regional cooperation within the CAREC framework.

International cooperation accelerated in autumn. On 14 October 2025, WIUT, IAMO, and the School of Economics at Beijing Institute of Technology (BIT) signed an MoU to establish a joint Behavioral and Experimental Economics Lab as a platform for research, teaching, and outreach in areas including agriculture, rural development, sustainability, and public policy. The Lab is intended to support capacity building through training, workshops, and exchange opportunities, while enabling joint research initiatives, applications for international funding, and dissemination through co-authored outputs.



Building on this collaboration agenda, WIUT and IAMO hosted the international conference “Navigating Change: Agricultural Sustainability and Rural Development in Central Asia” on 14–15 October 2025 in Tashkent. The conference convened over 100 researchers, policymakers, and practitioners across Central Asia, China, Germany, and other countries to address land degradation, water scarcity, and climate variability, and to explore how modern technologies, institutional reform, and market-oriented approaches can strengthen resilience and inclusivity. The discussions concluded with a clear call for closer collaboration between research institutions and decision-makers to advance evidence-based, forward-looking agricultural policies for the region.



On 24 October 2025, CPRO and the University of World Economy and Diplomacy organized a scientific and practical roundtable discussion on “Improving Legislation on Administrative Proceedings in Light of Contemporary Legal Doctrine.” The roundtable aimed to support the work of the Interdepartmental Commission on Improving Legislation on Administrative Proceedings, particularly in preparing a new version of the Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Administrative Proceedings. As part of the event, participants were introduced to a Reference and Methodological Guide titled “Reform of Administrative Proceedings in Uzbekistan in Light of Contemporary Legal Doctrine.”



Completed and ongoing projects in CPRO



UzFarmBarometer. By analyzing farmers' incentives, constraints, and decision-making processes, the UzFarmBarometer project aims to promote the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices in Uzbekistan. Financed jointly by the Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space of Germany and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation of Uzbekistan, the project bridges the gap in high-quality micro-level data by

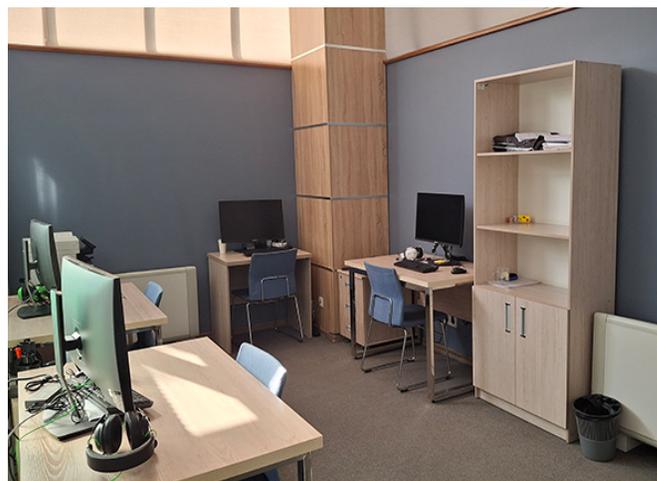
establishing a permanent data collection infrastructure and a nationally representative agricultural survey. The initiative also offers workshops to enhance the capacity of Uzbek analysts and researchers. It advances agricultural research, increases data transparency, and promotes the efficient use of resources, all of which align with Uzbekistan's Agri-food Development Strategy (2020–2030). The project runs until the end of 2026.

Laboratory for Public Law and Governance. During 2025, the Laboratory advanced a focused agenda on local governance and administrative justice reform in Uzbekistan by convening expert dialogue and producing practical, research-based outputs. These were the activities of the Lab in 2025:

- round table to discuss contentious issues in developing the Concept for Reforming Local Governance to 2030, and presented the Laboratory's work alongside a reference-and-methodological compilation on local governance reform
- doctrinal and comparative expert assessment of the national Concept for improving administrative court proceedings legislation (Decree UP-33 of 30 January 2025) and translated this analysis into scientifically grounded, implementable proposals aligned with international best practice and domestic institutional realities
- recommendations to the draft new edition of the Code on Administrative Court Proceedings and a dedicated round table on modernizing administrative court proceedings through contemporary doctrine and leading foreign experience and developed information-analytical materials supporting reform efforts.

At the same time, the Laboratory improved public communication and policy awareness by publishing a series of structured media articles and analytical products. These ranged from doctrinal questions about administrative justice reform and problems with drafting the new Code to the evaluation of Uzbekistan's anti-corruption environment, the role of legal experimentation in resolving administrative disputes before trial, and the use of the principles and institutions of the Law "On Administrative Procedures" to monitor and evaluate integrity in public administration. The series concluded with an analytical note and a year-end roundtable on the role of modern administrative law in shaping and evaluating the national anti-corruption environment.

Lab for Behavioral and Experimental Research. Under the grant project of UzFarmBarometer, WIUT established a new Lab for Behavioral and Experimental Research within CPRO structures in 2025. The lab has specialized computers, lab equipment, and licensed software for conducting research projects with subjects. The lab aims to develop new frontiers in behavioral research in Uzbekistan and apply research insights to such areas as consumer finance, tax compliance, health and policy enforcement. In 2025, the lab conducted a workshop with faculty members to introduce the basics of experimental research methods using existing research examples. In 2025, the lab established a collaboration with Central Bank of Uzbekistan to conduct behavioral experiments on the repayment issues of loans with the help of human subjects.



Future directions for CPRO in the context of policy discussion

As Uzbekistan navigates complex global and regional challenges, CPRO is committed to shaping policy initiatives to drive sustainable development and enhance the nation's competitive edge in the global economy. Here are the future directions for CPRO in key areas.

Sustainable agriculture and rural development. CPRO will intensify its focus on supporting Uzbekistan's green transition, with particular emphasis on climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies for small landowners in the agricultural sector. Recognizing that smallholder farmers are vulnerable to climate impacts, CPRO will conduct targeted research on accessible climate-smart agricultural practices, affordable green technologies, and financing mechanisms that enable small-scale producers to adopt sustainable farming methods.

Public administration and governance: Building on successes, the Lab will prepare an article exploring alternative pathways for developing pre-trial administrative justice, develop and finalize a comprehensive methodological guide on the pre-trial resolution of administrative disputes, publish a media article outlining prospects and directions for further administrative justice reform, and compile an integrated information-and-analytical collection that consolidates the Laboratory's 2025–2026 research and expert recommendations into a single, practical resource for practitioners and policymakers.

Regional connectivity and critical raw materials: CPRO will analyze Uzbekistan's strategic positioning in regional connectivity networks, with specific focus on the critical raw materials sector and the Middle Corridor's implications for regional development. CPRO will examine how Uzbekistan can leverage its geological endowments to become a key player in regional and global value chains. Along with the Middle Corridor's potential to enhance Uzbekistan's connectivity between East and West, CPRO will assess how critical minerals governance and cross-border trade facilitation can collectively contribute to regional economic integration and position Central Asia as a vital bridge in global supply chains.

Human capital and labor market. CPRO will analyze labor market trends and post-graduation employment patterns to inform education policy and workforce development strategies. This research will examine the alignment between educational outputs and labor market demands, identifying skills gaps and emerging employment opportunities in Uzbekistan's evolving economy. CPRO will provide evidence on which skills and qualifications translate into productive employment and which sectors offer growth potential for young workers.



Get Involved

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