

Every year, hundreds of young teachers in the Southern Tajikistan apply to the authorities to receive the land plots allocated to them, but only a few manage to obtain them.

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*A school teacher in Kushoniyon district Saidshoh Asrorov at a meeting with president Emomali Rahmon. Photo: Ozodi.org*

Teachers apply to authorities referring to a decree of the Government of Tajikistan on benefits for young teachers. However, representatives of the Education Department of Khatlon region and experts confirm that this decree is not executed properly. The text of the decree of the Government of Tajikistan does not indicate the age of the applicants, but employees of the Education Department note that teachers must be provided with land during the first three years of work in educational institutions.

### **Believed the Authorities' Promises...**

Some teachers, believing the authorities' promises, left their homes to other districts hoping to receive land. They have been working for several years now, but promises were not kept.

They do not own houses, which is why most of them are forced to spend their wages on renting an apartment.

Safarali Alishov, 23, the teacher from the city of Kulob in the Khatlon region, arrived to Qabodiyon district by the direction of the Ministry of Education and Science of Tajikistan. For two years, he has been teaching mathematics at school No. 59. The first six months he lived in a rural mosque. Now spends the nights in the territory of one of the institutions that have suspended its activities.



*Safarali Alishov. Photo: CABAR.asia*

He is single and receives 1,200 somoni (about \$130) per month. This money is not enough to buy land or marry. Still, Alishov has to work for three years in a remote area in the Southern Tajikistan.

Numerous futile petitions discouraged Alishov from continuing his teaching activity. The young teacher says that after three years of work, he has either to quit working or to go to another area, where he will be provided with land for building a house.

“According to the legislation requirements, I will receive my diploma after three years of work in educational institutions. I was very happy when I found out about the government decree on providing benefits for young teachers”, says Alishov.

Alishov applied to the relevant authorities of the Qabodiyon district three times.

“Each time, the reply letter said only one thing: at the moment there are no free land plots in the district land fund”, says Alishov.

Sharifjoni Rajabzod, 25, a teacher from the Muminobod district of the Khatlon region, has been working in one of the educational institutions of the Qabodiyon district for 4 years. After learning about a government decree on providing teachers with land, he continued to work with renewed energy and motivation.

When he first applied to the local khukumat (local government - tr.) to get the land, they promised to allocate him a land plot within three months. However, a year has passed and during this time, no one has called teachers to give them certificates for the land. Two more times he applied to the jamoat administration.

“I am still trying to get the land that was promised to me, the written petition is in jamoat. I spoke with the chairman of the district; he said that he would support me. Even despite the lack of housing, I want to continue my work. If the authorities do not provide the land, I will try to buy it myself and build a house”, Rajabzod says.

Holmirzo Safarov, chairman of the Zarkamar jamoat of the Qabodiyon district, said that several young teachers addressed him and the local authorities to obtain land. In this jamoat, the land was provided for only one teacher, but several more people are waiting for their turn.

“There are no free land plots in the district fund. If local authorities allocate land, we can provide teachers with it”, Safarov says.

Since the beginning of 2018 academic year, 34 teachers from other districts have arrived in Zarkamar jamoat of the Qabodiyon district. However, during the year, more than five people left their jobs for various reasons.

Over the past three years, only one teacher has been given land in this jamoat, but two more people are waiting after applications submission.

Tojiniso Sharipova, deputy chairman of Qabodiyon district, says that every young teacher who needs a land has already been provided with it by the authorities. In Nosiri Khusrav jamoat, land plots were provided to eight teachers, in the Navobod jamoat - to another two. Applications were also received from the other jamoats, some of the applicants have already received land, and the rest will receive it gradually.

The Education Department of the Qabodiyon district told CABAR.asia that 2099 teachers work in the district. Today, only 12 more teachers are needed for the district. 44 specialists have been sent here from Kulob and GBAO over the past 4 years.

How many people from among them were provided with land plots is not stated officially, because they do not apply to education departments, but directly to local authorities. In the district khukumat, this data is not specified, since the teachers' applications are not registered separately - all applications from citizens are counted together.

### **Teacher: We Were Sent to a Place Without Water, Electricity, Roads**

The problem of access to land or other benefits for teachers is common in other regions as well. Sherali Madiev is 34, he had to leave his native Shurobod district and travel to the Jaihun district because of insufficient academic workload and low salary at school.

For the last three years, he and his wife have been teaching English. Sherali Madiev is the father of three, and says that he rents an apartment for 100 somoni. Benefits, which are mentioned in the Government decree, motivated him to apply to the chairman of the jamoat for obtaining land and exemption from rent.

Sherali Madiev says that now they earn enough money to support their family, but when the children grow up, this money will not be enough.

“Once we were invited to the jamoat to receive land. We were very happy that we would become owners of residential property. However, we were given a place without water, electricity, and transport. The improvement of this area may take decades. Now we are satisfied with our life, but if we do not succeed in obtaining a land plot, we will have to stop teaching and leave for labor migration. On money earned in migration, my classmates bought their own housing”, notes Madiev.

A decree of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan “On determining benefits for the young teachers” was adopted in May 2006. It was adopted in accordance with Article 41 of the Law of the Republic of Tajikistan “On Education” in order to strengthen the social protection of young specialists in the field of education and their involvement in teaching activities.

The law required “from January 1, 2007, to establish for young teachers with higher pedagogical education and working in various types of general education schools, during the first three years of work, the following benefits:

- in an extraordinary order allocate the land for housing;
- if possible, allocate the land in mountains areas for gardening and agriculture;
- provide concessional loans for the purchase of dairy cattle or breeding of 20 hives.”

The local executive bodies of state power together with the State Committee for Land Management of Tajikistan were obliged to decide on the allocation of land plots.

There is no land right in Tajikistan. In accordance with the country’s Constitution, land is the exclusive property of the state. All relationships in land use are governed by the norms of the Land Code of the Republic of Tajikistan, which was adopted in 1996. In 2012, certain amendments were made to this regulatory act; in particular, a point on equal access to land for both men and women was added.

## “Perhaps, Hundreds of Teachers Are Waiting for the Land”

Experts say that despite the low wages and difficulties in teaching, teachers will continue their work. Amonjon Mahkamov, an expert in the Khatlon region, says there may be hundreds of teachers who wait for the land plot.

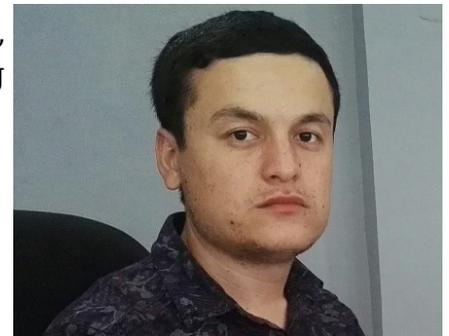
The mentioned government decree provides for not only the provision of a land plot, but also concessional loans at very low interest rates. Most teachers are not aware of their benefits and cannot easily use them.

Banks do not grant loans to citizens without collateral security, still, there are teachers who have neither housing nor anything of value to provide banks for loans.

Mahkamov stressed that the decree of the Government of Tajikistan states that teachers should be provided with land in the first place.

“The observations show that in most cities and regions this decree is executed very badly. At the same time, teachers spend certain funds on gathering a package of documents, but their efforts remain unsuccessful”, said Mahkamov.

He believes that this decree gave hope to many teachers. According to him, if it were not for the hope of its implementation, then many teachers would have left the profession.



*Amonjon Mahkamov. Photo: CABAR.asia*



*Mokhkalon Sultonzoda. Photo: CABAR.asia*

Mokhkalon Sultonzoda, a leading specialist in the Education Department of Khatlon region, told CABAR.asia that during her working visit to the cities and districts of the region she revealed that the implementation of this government decree was “ineffective in some regions”.

There are teachers who apply to the Education Department of the region, refusing both soft loans and agricultural and household plots. Failure to comply with this decree leads to teachers’ frustration or retirement from the profession.

“I cannot say if they can bring a case to court in terms of the law, I do not know. However, they should not give up their work. Finding a job is complicated, they must make every

effort to get the land that is allocated to them”, says Sulonzoda.

Mukhiddin Shirinov, chairman of the Committee of the Education Workers Union of the Khatlon region, in an interview with CABAR.asia, noted that in accordance with a government decree, teachers can apply for land only during the first three years of professional activity. After three years, they will not have those benefits. If during the first three years they are not provided with land, they have the right to bring a case to court under the current legislation.

Two years ago, a teacher received a personal plot of land through a court.

“The problem of failure to comply with this decree is that teachers are allocated land for building houses in places where there are no power yet, these are desert areas where it is very difficult to live”, says Shirinov.

In the Khatlon region, there are more than 43.8 thousand teachers, of whom over 22 thousand are women. From 2007 to 2018, homestead land was allocated to 2,532 teachers.



Mukhiddin Shirinov. Photo: CABAR.asia

For 6 months of 2019, only in the Muminobod district, two young teachers received the land, but in other areas, no teacher received the coveted land.

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