

PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPMENT OF BRANCHES OF SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN SHEKI-ZAGATALA ECONOMIC- GEOGRAPHICAL REGION OF AZERBAIJAN

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Abstract

The article deals with the study of territorial organization of branches of infrastructure which are playing an important role in meeting of social and aesthetic demands of population in the Sheki-Zagatala economic-geographical region of Azerbaijan Republic. With considering the importance of infrastructure in the regulation of sustainable development, the research is aimed to scientifically substantiation of the priorities of reconstruction of social infrastructure in Sheki-Zagatala.

Keywords: Sheki-Zagatala, social infrastructure, domestic service, trade, healthcare, cultural, enlightenment

1. Introduction

The Sheki-Zagatala economic-geographical region includes Sheki, Zagatala, Gakh, Oghuz, Gabala and Balakan administrative regions, and is encompasses southern slope of Greater Caucasus, the north-eastern part of Republic of Azerbaijan. The region has very favorable economic and political and geographical position. The Yevlakh-Balakan highway and railway lines are playing an important role in the creation of economic relations, considerably contributing the region's economic development.

The territory area of Sheki-Zagatala is 8,96 thousand sq. km. or 10,3% of Azerbaijan's territory, while the population number is 587,7 thousand persons or 6,3% of the country's population. Population density is 67 persons [1]. Sheki-Zagatala shares 185 km-long border with Dagestan Republic of Russian Federation, as well as 150 km-long border with Georgia. This enables region to keep close economic relations with neighboring countries.

Being a significant integral part of an economy, social infrastructure provides access to water, electricity and gas, allow improve living condition, as well as serve for increase of educational and cultural level of population. Infrastructure stands for material base of realization of relations within and between of economic branches, combining production and consumption as a whole system [2].

In Sheki-Zagatala, social infrastructure is represented with such fields as communal facilities, cultural and enlightenment facilities, public catering service, commercial activity, communication and healthcare.

In order to improve housing and communal service, the renovation of living houses, the provision of electricity, gas, heat and water, the reconstruction and improvement of sewerage network, the gathering and utilization of domestic garbage, as well as the rendering of services to consumers at higher level is needed [3].

2. Analysis of development

Housing and communal service is one of fields of economy aimed on the improvement of living. Provision of respective comfort living is considered to be one of topical issues in contemporary world. Necessity for better housing service is increasing in the condition of population growth, while the construction of required housing buildings is being implemented by the public and private companies in Azerbaijan.

After breakdown of Soviet Union, real estate market was established in its new content and rapidly expanded in Azerbaijan. Transition to market economy was targeted whereas strong base for juridical, economic and sociocultural changes was established in the country. In 1993, Program of 'Privatization of Housing Fund' was adopted in order to regulate processes on real estate market, following which the development of this area being accelerated, whereas the activity of realtors (dealing with selling and buying of real estate) was expanded. Meanwhile, companies of assessment, as well as housing and construction cooperative societies, and also private insurance firms and banks were grown in number and capacity.

As of 2012, 62,1% of housing fund of Azerbaijan is concentrated in Baku city, and also in the Aran and Ganja-Gazakh economic regions. The territory area of the commissioned housing buildings makes up 2147 thousand sq. meter, or 1,3 times much more compared to that of 2005. This means in average 17-20 m² per capita.

As for the Sheki-Zagatala region, the overall housing fund makes up 11071,3 thousand m², the territory area of new commissioned housing buildings is 252,1 thousand m², while per capita indicator makes up 18,8 m². In the region, the shown indicators are higher than that of 2005 respectively 11%, 4 times and 0,7 m² as much [1].

Among communal services, provision of houses with electricity, gas, water and sewage pipes, as well as access to communication technologies are considered as main indicators. In Azerbaijan, the energy supply facilities were financed at 494,3 million USD, gas production necessitated assignments at 24,2 million USD, whereas 600,8 million USD and 89,2 million USD were spent to the purification or distribution of water, and collection and processing of sewage respectively.

Household service is known as one of important branches of social infrastructure. In the country, special attention is laid on the development of household service, because still there is a great difference between cities and urban-type settlements, as well as centers of administrative regions and villages in terms of spread of such services as private sewing of clothes, barber's shop, repair and manufacturing of furniture, technical service for vehicles of transport, dry cleaning, repair of domestic appliances and others.

In 2012, household services at USD 409,7 million or USD 176,40 per capita were rendered to the population of Baku, the capital city of Azerbaijan, while the respective figure by other economic regions of the country is much lower. Thus, it made respectively USD 87,8 million and USD 38,77 million in Aran, USD 47,3 million and USD 37,67 in Ganja-Gazakh, USD 30,6 million and USD 35,44 in Lankaran-Astara, USD 29,1 million and USD 68,58 in Nakhchivan, USD 19,9 million and USD 33,02 in the economic region of Absheron, USD 21,1 million and USD 41,33 in Guba-Khachmaz, USD 19,4 million and

USD 32,72 in Sheki-Zagatala, USD 9,9 million and USD 33,07 in DaghligShrivan, USD 6,1 million and USD 31,55 in YukhariGarabagh (Regions of Azerbaijan. State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan Republic. Baku. 2013). The total amount of services rendered to the population made up USD 159,4 million or USD 267,40 per capita in Sheki-Zagatala, while the share of domestic services within overall paying services makes 12,2%.

Domestic trade (commercial activity) is an important integral part of social infrastructure. In contrary to other types of services, it is widely developed in both wholesale and retail forms in the country. In 2012, overall turnover of trade made up USD 16,7 milliard, of which 38,5% fell to the share of fairs and agricultural market places. Retail sale in the Sheki-Zagatala region made up USD 676,2 million, or 4,5% of analogical figure, observed on the country. As studies show, domestic trade was available due to activity of individuals (87,3%) and legal entities (12,7%) engaged in selling of meat, dairy products, sugar, fruit, vegetable, alcoholic drinks and non-food products. It is remarkable that contemporary condition of domestic trade service is not sufficient as the rendered service is less qualitative in most remote highland villages.

Being another composition part of social infrastructure, **education** system of a country serves for growth of knowledge, education level and enlightenment among population. The educational system of Azerbaijan is represented with pre-school education facilities, secondary schools, lyceums, colleges and higher secondary schools. As of 2012, there are 125 higher educational schools, 85 comprehensive schools, 629 complete secondary schools and 130 incomplete secondary schools per each 1000 persons over 15 years of age in Azerbaijan. The number of registered 1666 pre-school enterprises is 1666, of which 1629 are state-owned and 37 are private that together include 113,5 thousand children, including infants at 1-5 years. Meanwhile, there are 4 homes for infants, 6 homes for children, 10 boarding schools for partially disabled children, 2 boarding schools for mentally disabled children and 22 comprehensive boarding schools. There are 201 pre-schools and 373 comprehensive secondary schools Sheki-Zagatala region which are educating 10110 infants and 81491 pupils respectively. In the meantime, 179 pupils are being educated in one private secondary school.

In the last 10 years, 2700 school buildings were completely reconstructed, and 412 other new ones were constructed. 345 pre-schools and 174 kindergartens were completely reconstructed in Baku city. However, definite challenges are still typical for many education facilities. Thus, most schools located in cities and urban settlements have rather small buildings in contrast of modern requirements despite that they are equipped with necessary technical appliances. In this connection, a series of measures have been put into reality by the government in Sheki-Zagatala (Table 1).

Healthcare service is the relatively developed branch of non-production sector of economy in Azerbaijan. The healthcare system of country is represented by services of hospitals, ambulatory and polyclinics, first aid facilities, as well as medical staff, i.e. doctors and nurses.

Each person has a right to have full and easy access to high-level medical service [4]. The reduction of cases of maternal death, the improvement of first aid service and hospital services, as well as the training of are urgent issues.

In 2012, 539 medical objects were provided with 43 thousand bedsteads in the country. As the comparison with data of 2000 shows, the number of medical facilities has been decreased 1,4 times, and the number of hospital bedsteads were reduced 1,6 times as less. The Sheki-Zagatala region shares 3,8% of bedsteads and 10,2% of medical facilities of Azerbaijan. Meanwhile, there is a tendency of reduction in number of maternity welfare clinics, infant polyclinics and ambulatories in the region. This decline was connected with the implementation of needed relevant measures, and conducting of system of centralization. In 2012, the number of doctors per 1000 persons made up 19,9 and the respective figure for nurses was 61,7.

In 2012, about 1,7 million people experienced various kinds of deceases, most of which suffered from respiratory deceases, problems among females during perinatal, childbirth and confined periods, deceases of blood circulation system, inflectional and parasitic deceases, traumas, poisonings and etc. 43,9% of observed deceases were characteristic for males and females under 18 years of age. Most of these patients had health problem regarding respiratory deceases, as well as deceases of digestive organs and definite inflectional and parasitic deceases.

Although some positive changes have been observed in Sheki-Zagatala region in recent years, still some mountainous territories experience lack of medical stations, or high number of qualified doctors and nurses, as well as have not sufficient modern medical equipment.

Information and communication is highly necessary field of non-manufacturing sector of economy in contemporary world. During the first years of independence, considerable lagging was observed in ICT sector of Azerbaijan that lasted until 1997. Program on 'Revival and Development' (1997) and 'Conception of development of post' (1998-2003) were adopted and started to be implemented. Currently, there are 1606 post departments in the country, of which 379 are situated in the cities and the rest 1227 in the villages. These facilities provide delivery of 4,9 million newspapers and magazines, 5,4 million letters, 135 thousand parcels and 200 thousand telegrams.

In Sheki-Zagatala region, 158 post departments are functioning while the number of telephones per 100 families makes 80 in cities as well as 51 in rural settlements.

In the meantime, communication service is one of most rapidly developing area of economy. It serves about 80-90% of population of the country. Mass character of use of mobile communication allows foster competition among operators and increase effectiveness and quality of this service [5]. At present, there are three mobile operators in Azerbaijan, including in the Sheki-Zagatala economic region: Bakcell LTD (since 1994), Azercell Telekom (since 1996) and Azerfon MMC (since 2007).

Within 2005-2012, the volume of services in information and communication technologies increased 2,9 times as much, reaching USD 1,370 milliard. Of this amount, 10,9% was shared by informational service, whereas 89,1% to the share of communication. Informational service includes publishing, compilation and supply of programs, telecast and broadcasting etc. while communication is composed of automated telephone stations, internet supply and others. It is also notable that in 2012, 68% of overall communication service was shared by mobile telephone service.

Cultural and enlightenment facilities are representing very key area of social infrastructure, and this area is a strong factor in elimination of poverty and increase of educational level of a country's population. These facilities are meeting aesthetic needs of population as well. There are 3389 libraries, 2747 clubs and theatres, and also 227 museums of enlightenment importance in Azerbaijan, whereas the number of these facilities is 264, 263 and 21 respectively in Sheki-Zagatala region.

Considerable changes and advancements were observed in recent years in branch structure of infrastructure of Sheki-Zagatala region. The number of people engaged in this field grew as well. However, weak development of infrastructure areas, and less-developed organization of service areas in upland territories have negative influence on complex development of the regions. In this regard, significant works on reconstruction of branches of infrastructure must be conducted in upcoming years.

In general, despite that some advancement was observed in the development of infrastructure, growth of service areas is lower than the growth of population in Sheki-Zagatala. The differences for branches of infrastructure between cities and villages are still being observed. In this regard, special attention to infrastructure should be paid in the next future, with considering role of this area of economy in socioeconomic development [6].

3. Results of implemented works

The implemented economic reforms have an effect in the regions of Azerbaijan. The three state programs on social and economic development of the regions of Azerbaijan Republic (2004-2008, 2009-2013 and 2014-2018 years) have created and continues to create strong base for rapid economic growth in various regions.

Table 1

The measures on development of social infrastructure of the Sheki-Zagatala economic-geographic region implemented as a part of State Program on socioeconomic development (2009-2013)

#	Name of measure and year of implementation	Condition of implementation
Balakan region		
1	Reconstruction and restoration Works in electrical network (2010-2013)	70 transformations were reconstructed, and 12 transformations were completely reconstructed; 6,4 km-long part of air lines of 6-10 V, and 9,55 km-long part of 0,4 KV were repaired.
2	Gasification of human settlements (2013)	9 km-long and 500 mm-diameter gas pipeline was replaced in Balakan city; Katekh village was gasified
3	Enhancement of water supply (2010-2013)	7 wells were drilled and 2700 m-long water network were created in Tulu, Saribulag, Gerekli, Khalatala and Hanifa villages; 18,2 km-long water pipe were replaced
4	Full reconstruction of schools; construction of additional classrooms and new buildings of school	6 school buildings with capacity of 1540 pupils were constructed
Gakh region		
5	Gasification of human settlements (2010-2013)	Gasification of villages of Jalayer, Gipchag, Almali, Daymadaghli, Aghchay, Goraghan, Alibayli and Marsan
6	Enhancement of water supply (2010-2013)	Construction of 10 complete storehouses with total capacity of 5000 cubic meter is finished; 19439 p/m-long water pipe; 160-280 mm-diameter and 19439 p/m-long arterial water pipe; and 110-280 mm-diameter and 79764 p/m-long water pipe were commissioned between the storehouses.
7	Reconstruction of healthcare facilities and construction of new ones (2009-2013)	Reconstruction and installation works in hospital with capacity of 15 bedsteads, and also in medical stations of Gulluk and Gipchag villages were completed
8	Full reconstruction and restoration of historical and cultural monuments (2010-2013)	Reconstruction of architectural monument around 'Sumug gala' place of Ilisu village and the architectural monument 'Gala gapisi and gala divarlari'situated in Ichari Bazar street of Gakh city were implemented; Houses of culture after S.Vurghun and of Gulluk were reconstructed.

9	Full reconstruction of schools, construction of additional classrooms and new school buildings (2013)	New schools in Almali, Baydarli, Gipchag, Zayam and Ambarchay villages were constructed; building of secondary school was fully reconstructed and 2 additional buildings were constructed in Gulluk village; 4 additional class-rooms and new administrative office of Education Department of Gakh region were constructed.
Gabala region		
10	Works of reconstruction and restoration in electric network (2010-2013)	8,28 km-long part of air lines with capacity of 10/6 kV was fully reconstructed; 21,6 km-long part of air lines were reconstructed; 41 semi-stations of transformer with capacity of 10/0,4 kV were fully reconstructed.
11	Gasification of human settlements (2010-2013)	Construction of a new gas pipe elongated up to Gabala city in order to move previous 325 mm-diameter gas pipe from marsh areas to safe zone is completed; Gabala-2 City situated in Zaraghan village was gasified; Place of elongation of pipe is changed bypassing the extended part of highway to International Airport of Gabala city.
12	Reconstruction of cultural buildings and restoration of historical and cultural monuments (2010-2013)	Construction of Building of Culture was completed in Gabala region
13	Full reconstruction of schools, and construction of additional classrooms and new school buildings (2013)	A new school building with capacity of 360 seats in Nij settlement, as well as school building of 180 seats in Tovla village, and of 80 seats in Topbagh village were constructed.
Oghuz region		
14	Gasification of human settlements (2010-2013)	Bujag and Padar villages as well as 'Ganjlik' housing area of Oghuz city reached an access to gas pipeline.
15	Improvement of water supply (2010-2013)	Garabulag village was connected to water pipe
16	Reconstruction of medical facilities and construction of new ones (2009-2013)	New school buildings were constructed in Sinjan, Armanat, Yagublu, Garabulag and Gumlag villages; A new building of kindergarten was constructed in Oghuz city
Sheki region		
17	Gasification of human settlements (2010-2013)	Pipeline of transportation of gas from Jafarabad to Sheki city were constructed; Gas pipe of medium pressure stretched from 'Sheki' gas-distributing station to the city of Sheki was reconstructed; The 'Marhal' guesthouse complex was connected to gas pipe; Jayarli village and Turan urban settlement were gasified.

18	Improvement of telephone service (2009-2013)	Mounting capacity of the local communication network was raised to 25753 numbers, while capacity of using was raised to 25478 numbers. The number of telephone subscribers of broadband communication service was increased up to 5865.
19	Enhancement of water supply (2010-2013)	New sub-artesian wells were commissioned in Kondalan, Goynuk, Okhud, Gokhmug, Zunud and Bash Goynuk villages, and the 'Olimpia' area of Sheki city
20	Reconstruction of healthcare facilities and construction of new ones (2009-2013)	A hospital with capacity of 100 bedsteads in Sheki, another hospital with capacity of 15 bedsteads in AshagyGoynuk village, medical points in Bash Goynuk and Bideyiz village, and also maternity hospital of Sheki were reconstructed.
21	Reconstruction of cultural objects and restoration of cultural and historical monuments (2010-2013)	Repair and reconstruction works were completed in City Library of Sheki city; Reconstruction of home-museum of M.F.Akhundov were completed; Reconstruction works were conducted in Sheki State Theatre of Drama and Shekikhanov's house.
22	Full reconstruction of schools, construction of additional classrooms and new school buildings (2013)	Construction of secondary schools #12 and 14 in Sheki, the school with capacity of 360 seats in AshagiLayisgi village, the school with capacity of 80 seats in Alyar village, the school with capacity of 180 seats in Chalabikhan village, the school with capacity of 360 seats in Sorsu village were finished. New school buildings were constructed in Goybulag and Bash Goynuk villages.
Zagatala region		
23	Reconstruction and restoration works in electric network (2013)	381 unfit bearings were replaced with modern iron-concrete ones; 32 complex transformers point with capacity of 10/0,4 kV, and 20 transformers with capacity of 10/0,4 kV were reconstructed.
24	Gasification of urban settlements (2010-2013)	Aliabad settlement, as well as the villages of Danachi, Yukhari Tala, Uzuntala, Mosul, AshaghiChardakhli were connected with gas pipeline.
25	Improvement of water supply (2010-2013)	Water pipeline of 530 mm-diameter and 180 p/m-long, and water pipeline of 159 mm-diameter and 600 p/m-long were constructed.
26	Reconstruction of healthcare facilities and construction of new ones (2013)	Medical point was constructed in Zilbah village; maternal building of hospital was reconstructed in Danachi village.
27	Reconstruction of cultural objects and restoration of historical and cultural monuments (2010-2013)	Home of culture was fully reconstructed in Zagatala city
28	Full reconstruction of schools and construction of additional classrooms and new school buildings (2010-2013)	Full secondary schools were constructed in the villages of Judulubineh, Alasgar, YeniSuvagil, Tala, Danachi, Chobankol and Behmetli

Source: Social and economic development of regions (2009-2013 years). State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan Republic. Baku. 2014.

The implementation of State Programs in 2003-2008 and 2009-2013 years allowed the regions develop their non-oil sector, create new workplaces and provide employment. In the meantime, considerable measures were put into reality regarding development of social infrastructure, including increase of output and quality of service. The implemented works played significant role in the increasing of level of living and reduction of poverty as well. In 2012, 4,6% of new opened workplaces (5545) fell to the share of Sheki-Zagatala region. Most part (4569) of the workplaces was opened in healthcare system, construction, water supply, education etc. Further development of different kinds of infrastructure will serve for the effective organization of the economic branches and increase their efficiency, the elimination of sharp social differences between cities and rural settlements, the elevation of educational and medical culture of the population, the reduction of infant mortality, the enfeebling of migration of population from Sheki-Zagatala economic region.

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