

HOUSING PROVISION, COMMUNAL AND HOUSEHOLD SERVICES FOR THE POPULATION OF QASHQADARYO: CURRENT SITUATION AND CHALLENGES

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Annotation: This scientific work examines the provision of housing for the population of Qashqadaryo region, the formation and development of communal service systems, the household service infrastructure, and the existing problems in these areas. The research analyzes demographic growth in the region, urbanization processes, the construction of new housing, and the condition of communal services such as drinking water, electricity, and gas supply. In addition, the study considers the activities of household service enterprises under market economy conditions, privatization processes, and reforms aimed at improving service quality. The scientific significance of the work lies in assessing the real state of communal and household infrastructure in Qashqadaryo region and identifying ways to eliminate existing problems.

Keywords: Qashqadaryo region, housing provision, communal services, household services, infrastructure, urbanization, drinking water, gas supply, electricity, socio-economic problems, service quality, reforms.

One of the most urgent tasks is improving the living standards of rural residents—who play an invaluable role in the development of the country—so that their lives meet modern criteria. To achieve this, improving housing construction, communal services, and household services plays an essential role in the socio-economic development of rural areas. As Sh.M. Mirziyoyev stated: “Ensuring that New Uzbekistan enters the ranks of the world's developed, socio-economically stable, and human-capital-rich democratic states constitutes the essence and meaning of our sustainable development strategy.”

Since 49.4 percent of the country's population lives in rural areas, the issue requires increased attention. It is well understood that the standard of living of the population largely depends on the development of service systems and the conditions of social and production infrastructure in the regions. In this regard, analyzing access to education, healthcare, housing, communal services, clean drinking water, natural gas, roads, and other essential needs provides necessary results. Ensuring the improvement of rural living standards is also one of the main conditions for enhancing the quality of agricultural products and achieving positive outcomes in economic reforms.

In the first quarter of 1993, 22.6 million soums from the local budget were allocated to housing and communal services in Qashqadaryo region. As in other regions, in Navoi region it was planned to construct 233 thousand square meters of housing in rural areas between 1991 and 1993 (including 70.4 thousand square meters financed by the state budget).

One of the key factors in improving living conditions was ensuring access to clean drinking water and gas for rural households. For example, as early as 1992, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted a Resolution “On providing the rural population with drinking water and natural gas.” Following this resolution, several measures were developed and implemented in the regions. In Qashqadaryo region alone, during the first 11 months of 1992, 244.3 km of water pipelines were laid, of which 112 km were put into operation. In Samarkand region, 1,100 km of gas pipelines and 50 km of water supply networks were constructed and commissioned during 1991–1992. Natural gas supply to households in the Republic—specifically through district gas enterprises operating under the territorial gas supply organizations of Karakalpakstan and the regions—grew significantly. A total of 3.934 million



households were supplied with natural gas nationwide, accounting for 82.2 percent of all households; in rural areas alone, 2.069 million households (74 percent) were gasified.

Especially commendable progress was made in Samarkand region's Narpay, Urgut, Jomboy and Chelak districts in providing rural residents with drinking water and natural gas. In 1992, the regional Gasification Department constructed 175 km of gas pipelines of various pressure levels and supplied natural gas to 20 thousand households. In the same year, 530 km of pipelines were built and 21 thousand households received gas services.

Between 1991 and 1993, 25,750 rural households in Qashqadaryo region were supplied with natural gas. In 1993, due to the implementation of the Presidential Decree aimed at improving the provision of drinking water and natural gas to the rural population of Bukhara region, many positive developments were achieved. In particular, 206 km of drinking water pipelines and 648 km of gas pipelines were constructed. Noteworthy progress was made in G'ijduvon, Bukhara, Qorako'l, Romitan, and Shofirkon districts. Despite the significant negative impact of economic difficulties on capital construction, 2.5 billion soums worth of capital investments were utilized in Bukhara region within 11 months. Construction and installation works totaling 1.315 billion soums were completed. Additionally, 340.5 thousand square meters of housing were commissioned through private funding. Nevertheless, this was considered a major shortcoming that needed addressing.

Several factors contributed to the shortcomings in the sector. These issues resulted, first, from material difficulties during the transition to a market economy, and second, from irresponsibility and lack of competence among sector employees.

In Qashqadaryo region, 405 km of gas pipelines were planned for installation in rural districts in 1996, and 415 km in 1997. Similarly, in Navoi region, 250 thousand square meters of residential buildings, 79 km of water pipelines, and 180 km of gas pipelines were constructed. In addition, the commissioning of water pipelines in rural areas reached 97.5 percent. Communal service delivery to the population improved significantly.

In the 1997 State Program "The Year of Human Interests," measures were also identified to improve housing and communal services. In accordance with this program, 410.7 thousand square meters of housing were constructed in rural areas of Surkhandarya region. However, housing construction financed by various enterprises in rural areas did not reach the expected level. Such shortcomings resulted from the indifferent attitude of local leaders toward their duties and the lack of clearly defined tasks in planning.

In Navoi region, the level of access to drinking water among the rural population reached 64.2 percent, while natural gas supply reached 66.3 percent. Had similar work been carried out in the rural districts of Qashqadaryo region that year to provide the population with natural gas and clean drinking water, the targeted indicators could have been fully achieved. Yet, as in previous years, the situation remained unchanged. A regional analysis revealed that conditions in Qashqadaryo were comparatively better. In particular, in 1997, 59.7 percent of the rural population in the region was provided with clean drinking water. In 1996, rural areas of Surkhandarya region were supplied with clean drinking water at a level of 74 percent and with natural gas at 45 percent. As a result, the planned targets for improving communal services in the region's villages were not fulfilled.

In the year 2000, 743.9 thousand square meters of housing were commissioned in Qashqadaryo region. With the expansion of housing in rural areas, opportunities to bring living conditions closer to those in urban settings increased. Moreover, in Samarkand region, 781 thousand square meters of housing, 231.3 km of clean drinking water pipelines, and 501.7 km of gas pipelines were constructed and put into operation in 2000. Particular attention was given to constructing multi-room and two-story residential buildings that included separate bathrooms,



kitchens, bedrooms, and living rooms. In addition, instead of using adobe or raw brick, many rural houses began to be built with baked bricks. During the first six months of 2000, housing provision for the population reached 3,420.11 thousand square meters. Despite this, in Navoi and Syrdarya regions, local authorities paid insufficient attention to organizing individual housing construction, fulfilling only 30–32 percent of assigned tasks. Likewise, allocated budget funds were barely utilized in these regions.

There were notable improvements in housing provision in rural areas of Bukhara region. A total of 460.4 thousand square meters of housing was constructed from all financial sources, including 420.2 thousand square meters in rural areas. Of this amount, 456.7 thousand square meters were built by individual homebuilders. To construct and commission engineering-communication networks in individual housing areas, 68 million soums were allocated from the state budget, of which 50 million soums' worth of work was completed by 2000. The "Housing Savings Bank," established on the President's initiative, built 3,850 square meters of housing and commissioned two houses. The total expenditure amounted to 307.6 million soums, of which 153.8 million soums (50 percent) came from the state budget, 99.6 million soums (32.4 percent) from long-term bank loans, and 54.2 million soums (17.6 percent) from the population. This clearly demonstrates the state's significant support in improving the housing conditions of the population.

On September 17, 2003, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted a Resolution "On additional measures to improve the provision of drinking water and natural gas to rural residential areas." According to this resolution and in line with the Cabinet of Ministers' earlier Resolution No. 278 of June 1, 1999, 14,698 km of gas pipelines and 7,579 km of water pipelines had been constructed nationwide between 1999 and 2002. As a result, the coverage of rural residential areas with natural gas increased to 86.3 percent, and access to drinking water reached 78.2 percent.

The resolution also noted that the targets for providing drinking water to rural residential areas in Qashqadaryo, Bukhara, and Syrdarya regions had not been met. The document further stated that the Asian Development Bank would allocate US\$25 million in 2004–2005 to implement a project aimed at improving the water supply of rural residential areas in Qashqadaryo and Navoi regions. Thus, funds from foreign banks were also attracted to improve living conditions in rural areas of Uzbekistan.

On October 7, 2003, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted a Resolution "On measures to increase the level of access to quality drinking water for the population of Qashqadaryo and Bukhara regions." The resolution instructed the Department of Foreign Economic Relations and Foreign Investments of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Foreign Economic Relations Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and the Ministry of Economy to develop measures for attracting a US\$15 million loan from the Asian Development Bank in 2004–2005 to implement a project aimed at improving the water supply of rural settlements in Qashqadaryo region.

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