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SOME ASPECTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

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In this article, the development of social infrastructure in the Republic of Uzbekistan, the factors affecting it, regulatory and legal documents aimed at the sustainable development of the sector, the state, trends and dynamic changes of the development of social infrastructure at the level of the republic's regions are analyzed, and scientific proposals and practical recommendations are developed.

KEY WORDS: ***social infrastructure, regional economy, influencing factors, principles, criteria, social object, sustainable development, analysis, methods***

Social infrastructure plays a critical role in shaping the sustainable well-being of a society. It includes a network of institutions, programs and services aimed at meeting the social needs of citizens, such as educational institutions, health care, social welfare, housing, cultural and religious institutions, as well as transport and communications.

Social infrastructure in the Republic of Uzbekistan is an important component of public life, aimed at ensuring the well-being and quality of life of citizens. In recent years, the leadership and government of Uzbekistan have made significant efforts to improve the country's social infrastructure.

Thus, in 2022, Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PP-465 “On measures for the development of social and industrial infrastructure of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2023 - 2025” was adopted, which defined target indicators for the commissioning of social infrastructure facilities in 2023 and target guidelines for 2024-2025 [3].

On September 11, 2023, Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. UP-158 “On the strategy “Uzbekistan - 2030”” was approved, in which one of the main ideas is the creation of an education, medicine and social protection system that fully meets the needs of the people and international standards. To create decent conditions for realizing the potential of each person, the strategy approved the following goals [1]:

- Goal 1.1. “Reforms in the education system,” which includes raising all levels of the education system to a new level, expanding coverage of preschool and higher education, raising the status of teaching staff, developing their knowledge and qualifications in accordance with international standards, etc.;
- Goal 1.2. “Reforms to ensure public health”, the objectives of which are to increase life expectancy of the population, bring primary medical services closer to the population, promote proper nutrition and a healthy lifestyle among the population and the widespread introduction of digital technologies in the field of medicine, etc.;
- Goal 1.3. “Reforms for the provision of social services and poverty reduction,” which provides for improving the system for providing professional social services, creating a new system to support persons with disabilities, improving the social

protection system for children, women and the older generation, etc.;

- Goal 1.4. “Reforms in the directions of state youth policy and sports”, the objectives of which are to create a system for training young people in modern professions and foreign languages, increasing their intellectual potential, expanding the coverage of young people involved in physical education and sports, etc.;

- Goal 1.5. “Reforms to ensure spiritual growth and raise the sphere of culture to a new level”, one of the tasks of which is the comprehensive development of modern theatrical and circus art, the creation of artistic and ideological stage works.

Also set are the tasks of integrated development of the regions, implementation of the urbanization strategy, increasing the level of provision of affordable housing to the population through the construction of residential buildings for 1 million apartments in the regions, increasing the number of Yangi Uzbekistan residential areas to 100, constructing additional housing for 200 thousand families, construction in the republic social houses intended for at least 140 thousand families [1].

In order to implement the tasks defined by the Strategy “Uzbekistan - 2030”, in 2023, Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PP-404 “On measures to develop the social and industrial infrastructure of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2024 - 2026” was adopted, which approved [4]:

Main Parameters for the development of social and industrial infrastructure in 2024 and targets for 2025 - 2026;
the main parameters of the areas financed as part of the development of social and industrial infrastructure in 2024; targets for the creation of new capacities at social and industrial infrastructure facilities in 2024 and targets for 2025 - 2026; address lists of construction, reconstruction, major repairs and equipment of facilities in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, regions and the city of Tashkent in 2024, etc.

One of the priority areas for the development of social infrastructure in Uzbekistan is healthcare. Large-scale reforms are being carried out to improve the availability and quality of health services for all citizens. The country is actively modernizing medical institutions, introducing modern diagnostic and treatment methods, and improving the qualifications of medical personnel. Also, new hospitals are put into operation every year, which increases the coverage of the population with medical services and creates additional places (beds).

Thus, in 2022, 4,190 beds were introduced [10] due to the commissioning of hospitals (Table 1).

Table 1

Number of beds in commissioned hospitals [10]

beds

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
The Republic of Uzbekistan	**6 123**	**7 382**	**5,668**	**6,459**	**4 190**
Republic of Karakalpakstan	75	90	305	325	480
Areas:					
Andijan Region	830	1 185	440	810	380
Bukhara Region	754	416	132	0	480
Jizzakh Region	0	110	190	70	250
Kashkadarya Region	395	508	490	715	639
Navoi Region	280	90	290	0	160
Namangan Region	400	600	640	1 445	210
Samarkand Region	967	145	320	830	330
Surkhandarya Region	895	420	170	550	220
Syrdarya Region	350	643	0	25	250
Tashkent Region	490	1 414	855	405	0
Fergana Region	365	900	525	819	329
Khorezm Region	240	220	557	105	294
Tashkent City	82	641	754	360	168

By region, in 2022, the largest number of beds was introduced in the Kashkadarya region - 639 units. In the Republic of Karakalpakstan and the Bukhara region, 480 beds were introduced. The largest number of beds in the republic as a whole was introduced in 2019. Their number was 7,382. At the same time, 1,414 beds were put into operation in the Tashkent region, and 1,185 beds in the Andijan region. Among the regions, the largest number of beds was put into operation in 2021 in the Namangan region (1,445 beds).

The introduction of additional hospital beds in the regions of the republic plays an important role in

maintaining public health and increasing life expectancy. Thus, life expectancy at birth in the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2018 was equal to 74.6 years, and in 2023 it was 74.7 years (Figure 1).

In 2023, the highest life expectancy at birth was recorded in Tashkent (77.1 years), Bukhara (76.8 years) and Navoi regions (76.1 years). The lowest rate was recorded in the Syrdarya region (71.7 years), the Republic of Karakalpakstan (72.7 years) and the Surkhandarya region (72.8 years).

An increase in life expectancy at birth is also facilitated by an increase in the number of doctors, including an increase in the number of doctors per person (Figure 1).

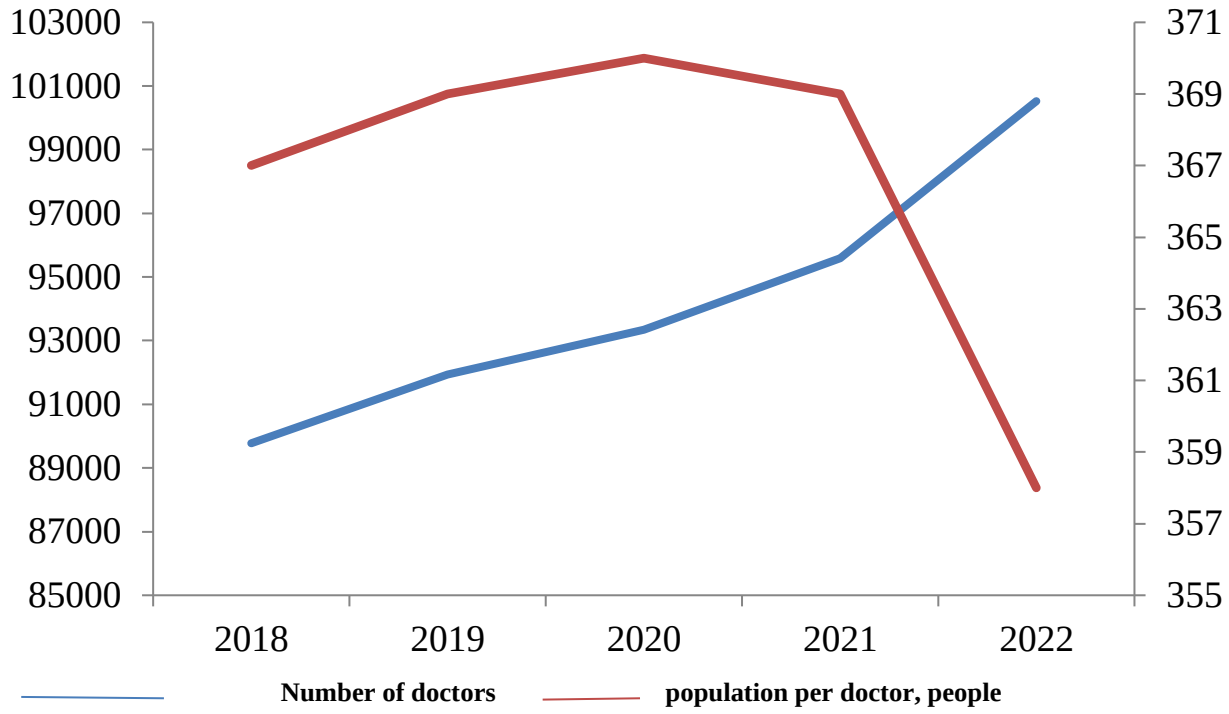


Figure 1. Number of doctors and population per doctor, people [11]

As can be seen in the graph, there is a steady increase in the number of doctors in the Republic of Uzbekistan. So, if in 2018 their number was 89.8 thousand people, then in 2019 their number increased by 2.2 thousand people, in 2020 - by 1.4 thousand people, in 2021 - by 2.3 thousand people and finally in 2022 reached the mark of 100.5 thousand people.

The population per doctor, on the contrary, decreased by 9 people compared to 2018. Thus, in 2018 there were 367 people per doctor, then this figure increased, and by 2020 it reached 370 people. In 2022, there was a sharp decline and the population per doctor dropped to 358 people.

In addition to the commissioning of new healthcare institutions, the Republic of Uzbekistan is creating conditions for investing in the development of medical infrastructure, reconstructing existing medical institutions and providing them with modern equipment.

Particular attention is paid to the development of primary health care, which makes it possible to provide the population with affordable and high-quality medical services at the local community level. Active work is underway to prevent the spread of infectious and non-infectious diseases, as well as control epidemics. The country is consistently taking measures to prevent, treat and control non-communicable diseases and their risk factors, reduce premature mortality and morbidity of the population [5], ensure that citizens have access to medical services at minimal cost, and there are well-developed political and legislative mechanisms to solve problems of non-communicable diseases, especially aimed at combating risk factors [7].

In addition to healthcare, education is an important component of social infrastructure. Education in the Republic of Uzbekistan has undergone significant changes in recent years. The country's authorities are actively working to modernize the educational system, striving to improve the quality of education and its accessibility for all citizens.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, work is underway to develop educational institutions and improve educational programs. Much attention is paid to improving the quality of education and expanding access to it for all segments of the population. The content of education is being revised in order to more effectively meet the requirements of the labor market and the challenges of the modern world, digital

technologies are being actively introduced into the educational process, which helps to increase the accessibility of education and improve the quality of training.

In addition, the government of the Republic of Uzbekistan actively cooperates with international organizations and development partners to exchange experiences and attract additional resources to improve the educational system.

Uzbekistan is actively investing in higher education, expanding the number of universities and institutes, as well as improving the quality of teaching and research activities. Schools are also being put into operation, through which additional student places are created (Figure 2).

As can be seen in the graph, there is an annual increase in higher education institutions. So, if at the beginning of the 2018/2019 academic year their number was 98 units, then by the 2022/2023 academic year this value reached 191 units, i.e. 93 higher education organizations were re-established.

The creation of new higher educational organizations may be a consequence of the implementation of the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On approval of the concept of development of the higher education system of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030," which identifies priority areas for systemic reform of higher education in the Republic of Uzbekistan, also including the tasks of introducing advanced standards of higher education, in particular, a gradual transition from education, the curricula of which are aimed at obtaining theoretical knowledge, to an education system aimed at developing practical skills, based on international experience [2].

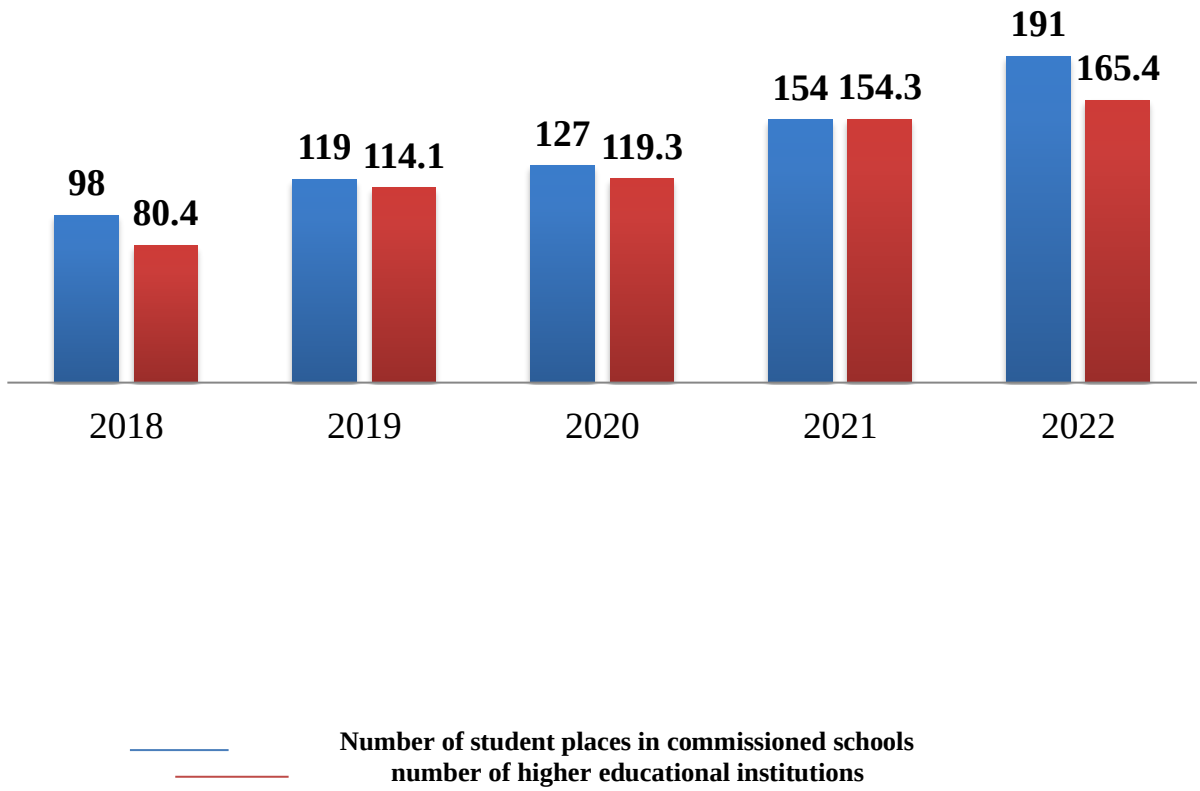


Figure 2. Number of student places in commissioned schools and the number of higher educational institutions [11]

Also, the number of student places in commissioned schools is growing every year. In 2018, 80.4 thousand student places were introduced, in 2019 - 114.1 thousand student places, in 2020 - 119.3 thousand student places, in 2021 - 154.3 thousand student places, and in 2022 – 165.4 thousand student places. The introduction of new places in schools is associated with the stable growth of the population of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Also, stable population growth is a source of new challenges, such as providing the population with housing. State programs for the development of housing construction and social support have helped to significantly improve the situation in this area.

There is active investment in the construction of new housing for the population, which includes the mass

construction of apartment buildings and individual residential buildings. As part of population support programs, existing housing is reconstructed and repaired in order to improve its condition and increase comfort for residents. In addition to the residential buildings themselves, work is underway to develop the infrastructure around them, including landscaping the territory, arranging children's playgrounds, constructing social infrastructure facilities, etc.

The state provides various forms of social support to the population in the field of housing, including preferential loans for the purchase or construction of housing, as well as subsidies for the payment of housing and communal services.

Uzbekistan is also working to increase housing affordability for all segments of the population, including young families, low-income citizens and people with disabilities. As a result of the measures taken, the average level of housing provision for the population is increasing (Table 2).

Table 2
Average level of housing provision for the population [10]
Housing Area Per Capita, sq.m.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
The Republic of Uzbekistan	15.8	16.0	16.0	18.2	18.5	19.0
Republic of Karakalpakstan	18.9	16.6	16.5	16.7	17.1	17.4
Areas:						
Andijan Region	10.4	10.3	10.3	13.9	15.7	15.7
Bukhara Region	15.9	16.9	17.4	17.5	17.4	17.4
Jizzakh Region	13.9	14.1	14.3	17.0	17.0	17.7
Kashkadarya Region	16.7	16.9	16.7	16.5	16.6	16.7
Navoi Region	22.0	22.4	22.4	23.8	24.0	26.5
Namangan Region	15.2	16.0	16.5	17.0	17.0	16.8
Samarkand Region	15.1	15.1	15.1	19.6	19.4	20
Surkhandarya Region	12.7	12.7	12.8	13.9	13.7	13.5
Syrdarya Region	14.8	15.5	15.4	18.9	18.8	19.9
Tashkent Region	15.2	15.5	15.9	16.7	17.6	22.3
Fergana Region	13.3	13.2	13.1	20.9	20.8	20.6
Khorezm Region	23.9	24.5	24.3	24.3	24.1	24.0
Tashkent City	21.4	22.3	22.0	22.3	22.8	22.8

Due to the construction of new residential buildings, the supply of housing to the population is growing from year to year. So, if in 2018 there were 15.8 square meters per capita, then by 2023 this figure increased by 3.2 square meters. and amounted to 19 sq.m. per capita. At the same time, in January-December, housing with a total area of 14,057.9 thousand square meters was commissioned.

An increase in housing provision throughout the period under review was observed in Navoi, Tashkent and Jizzakh regions.

The highest supply of housing throughout the period under review was recorded in Navoi, Khorezm regions and Tashkent city. Moreover, if in 2018 the housing supply in the Khorezm region was higher, then already in 2023 the opposite picture is observed and the average level of housing provision in the Navoi region in 2023 was 26.5 sq.m. per capita, and in the Khorezm region - 24.0 sq.m. per capita.
The lowest supply of housing throughout the period under review was noted in Surkhandarya and Andijan regions. Moreover, if in 2018 the housing supply in the Andijan region was the lowest (10.4 sq.m. per capita), then in 2023 the lowest housing supply was observed in the Surkhandarya region (13.5 sq.m. per capita).

Despite the fact that significant progress has been made in the development of healthcare, education, housing construction and the provision of housing for the population and noticeable improvements have occurred in these areas, challenges still remain, such as a lack of schools and housing, the need to increase the availability of medical services in remote areas of the country, improving the quality of services and ensuring sustainable financing of the education and health care systems.

One of the main principles of sustainable development is to ensure accessibility of social infrastructure for all segments of the population. This means not only the physical presence of social institutions, but also their accessibility in terms of financial, geographical and cultural access. Access to education, health care and other social services should be equal for all citizens, regardless of their social status, race, gender or place of residence.

Electronic management systems in healthcare, online education, digital social services - all this makes the

social infrastructure more flexible, efficient and user-friendly.

Thus, in the modern world, social infrastructure is becoming an increasingly important factor for attracting investment and economic development. High-quality and accessible social infrastructure attracts qualified personnel, improves the health and education of the population, and increases labor productivity and living standards. Therefore, investing in the development of social infrastructure should be a priority for any society striving for sustainable and equitable development.

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