

## BASIC ASPECTS OF RURAL SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

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### Abstract

The social infrastructure of rural areas is of particular importance when considering issues of both an economic and social nature. Both production and non-production rural areas necessitate the availability of social facilities. The main purpose of social infrastructure facilities nowadays and in the past of rural and urban areas development is to meet the needs of the population. At the same time, social infrastructure defines the basis for the level and quality of life of civil society. Its condition is an indicator of the territorial development and provides opportunities for innovative development and investment attraction. For many years now, the rural social infrastructure has been in poor condition in Russia. Problems are observed in the living conditions of citizens, in elements of residential properties improvement, undeveloped system of medical and educational services, unavailability of cultural and leisure facilities, and so on. Due to such a negative state of the rural social sphere, problems arise with the demographic situation and the production sphere in terms of the inability to attract highly qualified personnel. The Program for the Sustainable Development of Rural Territories developed by the Government of Russia holds back the general, intensively negative situation, and is fundamentally changing it in some regions of the country. The paper presents the results of the implementation of the main Program directions and gives some recommendations on its further implementation and development of the rural social infrastructure.

**Keywords:** rural sphere, infrastructure, rural areas, socio-economic development, program

The development of rural areas is currently important and is determined by the considerable attention on the part of state authorities from the standpoint of socio-economic development of those areas. A well-known fact is that social infrastructure and its development form the general status and development status of a particular rural territory, as well as the level and quality of life of its population. Therefore, the priority aspect in the rural development is the development of social infrastructure, in particular within the framework of housing and communal services, social and cultural facilities and social services. The development of these components of the rural social infrastructure will lead to a more complete satisfaction of the rural residents' needs

which are an elementary norm of life: good working and living conditions, education, recreation, medical care, etc. (Gafarova et al, 2016).

The formation of social infrastructure is almost directly related to the development of the working environment. Almost all business entities engaged in agricultural production as part of industrial and economic activities are located in close proximity to rural territories. Therefore, there is a close relationship between the development of social and industrial infrastructure.

Along with this, one cannot fail to note the role of the Russian state in managing the agricultural sector and the socio-economic development of rural areas. This is evidenced by the availability of program-targeted management of the agricultural sector of the economy until 2025, within the frameworks of which there are implemented:

- Support in the form of governmental grants and subsidies to agricultural producers;
- Technical and technological modernization of business entities in agriculture;
- Activation of land policy, the purpose of which is the rational use of agricultural land and maintaining land fertility;
- Other measures (Kuzmich, 2019).

The implementation of many program-targeted tools is aggravated by a shortage of highly qualified and professionally trained personnel. Some agricultural producers have a negative impact on the state of economic activity through a shortage not only of highly qualified personnel, but also of the workforce as a whole (Yusufov, 2015). All this negatively and conclusively affects the social component of rural development.

It can be stated that social infrastructure in the system of social reproduction and regional economic growth is of great importance. However, it is practically impossible to talk about social infrastructure as a whole due to its heterogeneity. In particular, rural areas are mostly characterized by underdeveloped social infrastructure. The reasons for such conditions in rural areas are often the following: remoteness from regional centres, i.e. their peripheral nature; the absence or scarcity of facilities in the service sector; lack of transport accessibility to various services - educational, medical, domestic, cultural, etc.

Consequently, all this gives a clear understanding of the need to solve extremely acute and important tasks at the scientific and practical level for the development of rural infrastructure. Currently, the term "infrastructure" is understood as a whole system of interrelated industries and activities that are not related to production, but designed to service the manufacturing sector (material production) and contribute to the scientific, technical and social development of territories (Spanova, 2007). Many scientists reduce the author's hypothesis to the difference between social infrastructures for the production and non-production sectors (Fig. 1) (Kovalenko & Koroleva, 2018).

Based on the classification of social infrastructure facilities outlined in Figure 1, it should be noted that all of them, despite the division into production and non-production purposes, are interconnected and partially interchangeable. Taking into account the affiliation of the subject under study (social infrastructure) to the agrarian sector and rural territories, it should be noted that it is influenced by a number of factors that are characteristic only of rural territories. First of all, these are cultural features, as well as traditions and customs of the population (Muravyova, 2015).

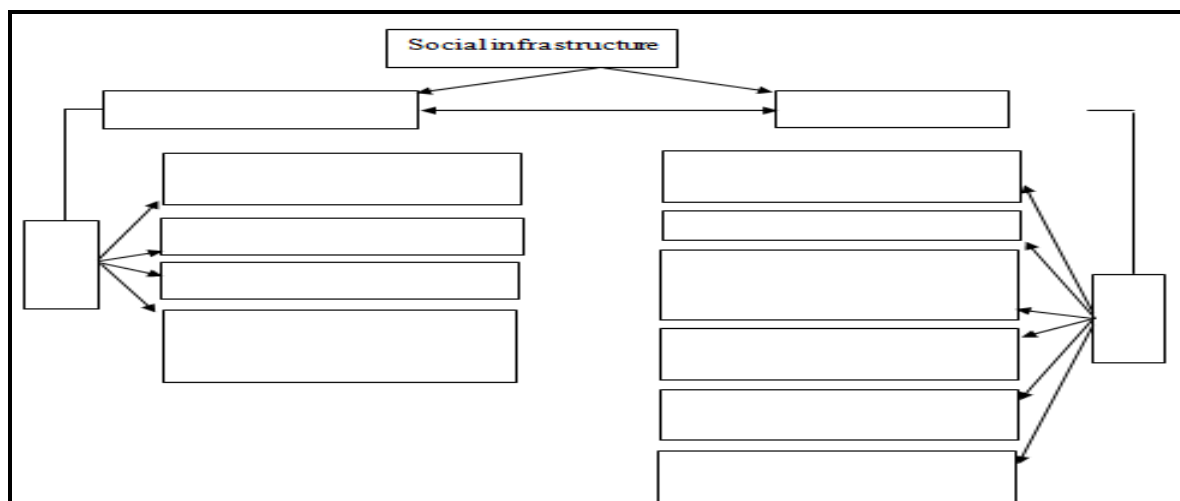


Figure 1- Key elements of social infrastructure

Along with these factors, one should take into account other features that are relevant at the present time, peculiar to rural areas, and cannot belong to urban territories (Yarkova, 2018). For example, in rural areas there is a low population and negative demographic dynamics in relation to migration flows. Also, rural areas are characterized by a low degree of improvement of households, and the number of social services is limited. It is important to consider that the characteristic feature of rural area residents is permanent employment, which is due not only to social work, but also to household management.

However, in determining its functional significance, a social infrastructure is single and has a universal sense of impact. The most significant functions of social infrastructure should be divided into three main blocks.

1st block: Creating a favourable environment for the population by protecting their health and information and advisory services.

2nd block: Training of highly qualified personnel due to formation of public awareness of the attractiveness and significance of labour in rural areas and agriculture, as well as the provision and attraction of scientific developments (projects), and the provision of business services.

3rd block: Reproduction of the working-age population. Within the framework of this block, the distribution and exchange of material goods and the provision of the required consumer services for the population are ensured.

One way or another, but the above social infrastructure functions directly and indirectly confirm the presence of a strong relationship between production and social infrastructure. In Russia, the development of rural social infrastructure sectors is related to almost 40 million residents of Russia (Fig.2).

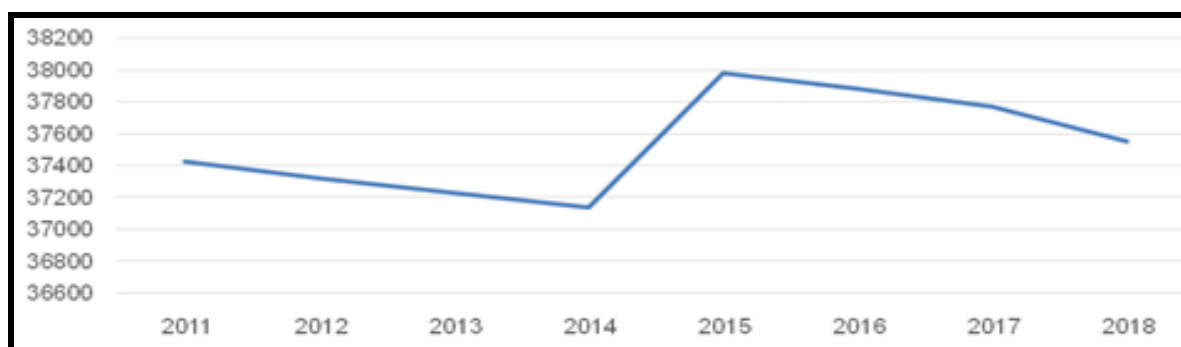


Figure 2 - The rural population of Russia, thousand people

Thus, according to Fig. 1, it can be noted that for the period of 2018, the share of the rural population among the total number of citizens of the Russian Federation is 25% and over the past four years has a decline. So, for example, the number of villagers has been decreased by 218.5 thousand persons over the last reporting period. The main reasons for this negative situation are:

- Natural decline;
- Administrative-territorial transformations;
- Migration outflow.

Along with this analytical material, it is also seen that in the period from 2014 to 2015 there was a sharp increase in the number of rural residents, which is explained by the incorporation of the Republic of Crimea into Russia.

Of the total number of rural residents, 47% (17777 thousand people) belong to the economically active population, of which 92% are employed, while their age ranges from 15 to 72 years, and the remaining 8% belongs to the category of unemployed. Regarding the latter category, it should be noted that approximately 25% of the total number of unemployed villagers are parasites, as they are not ready to proceed with it, subject to its availability and do not attempt to search for it.

Currently, against the background of the general negative social situation in the rural areas, it is important to note that some reasons for the migration of the population from rural areas are associated with low incomes in the agricultural sector of the economy (tab.1).

Table 1. Per capita disposable income of households in urban and rural areas, roubles \*

Indicators	Years							Absolute deviation of 2017 to 2011, +/-
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	
<i>At current prices</i>								
Village	11745	13320	14191	15802	16639	16971	18309	+6564
City	18291	20405	23645	25347	25466	26719	27206	+8915
<i>In prices of the base 2011</i>								
Village	11745	12499	12507	12507	11664	11288	11880	+135
City	18291	19147	20839	20062	17851	17772	17652	-639

\* Perone household member

Based on the data in Table 1, it can be noted that a serious gap between the size of the incomes of rural and urban residents is 1:1.33. Meanwhile, the nominal size of

income is growing both in residents of that and another category of locality, but if we consider the most significant indicator of real incomes from a socio-economic point of view that can improve the level and quality of life in terms of consumption, we can note a practically negative situation. In rural areas, real incomes increased slightly - for seven years only by 135 roubles, and for urban residents, it decreased by 639 roubles.

Of course, it is impossible to improve the level and quality of life with income alone. That is why it is important to consider what is the state of the social sphere facilities in Russian hinterland, and how accessible they are to the population.

According to Rosstat, we should note a positive trend (up 8%) for the last 6 years in relation to housing, that is 999 800 000 m<sup>2</sup> to the level of 2017 while about 69% are individual houses, 30% apartment buildings, and the remaining share is in other residential units including dormitories. It is important to note that the increase in the total housing stock in rural areas is proceeding more rapidly than in the city, which is primarily due to individual housing construction, mainly of the wooden type.

This positive situation easily changes in the representation of the state of housing improvement with the help of significant social infrastructure facilities (Fig. 3).

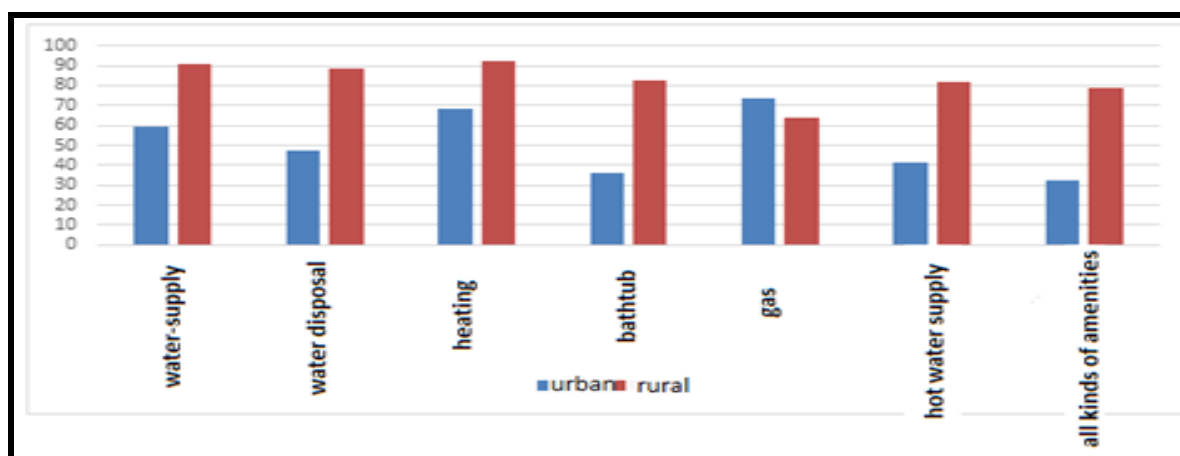


Figure 3. Provision with types of housing improvement of urban and rural residents in 2017,%

Housing in rural areas is improving due to the implementation of the federal target program “Sustainable development of rural territories for 2014-2017 and for the period until 2020” (hereinafter the Program). Currently, this program is somewhat reorganized and included as a subprogram in the State Program for the development of agriculture (Yarkova, 2019; Gerasimov et al, 2019).

In both urban and rural areas, the problem with pre-school educational institutions remains urgent. In particular, over the past seven years, their number in rural areas has decreased by 15.6% (3 thousand units). Within the framework of public-private partnerships and against the background of grant support, a private form of preschool educational institutions is developing, but their number is still small and amounts to only 0.5% (108 organizations) with a total number of 6065 pupils. Along with this, statistics also show a decrease in the number of middle-level educational institutions, the main reason for this, for the most part, is the process of enlargement (association). The situation with regard to schools remains critical, as evidenced by elementary statistics indicating an acute shortage of schools. Thus, on average 18 schools are accounted per 100 villages in Russia.

Today, more and more propaganda is being conducted on the need to form a digital economy, familiarity with the elements of which should be provided in schools. Meanwhile, in Russian secondary schools there is an availability of access to the Internet as the basis of information resources at the level of 85%, and only half of educational institutions have their own websites.

Along with education, the health problem remains unresolved in rural areas. Rosstat notes the more intensive dynamics in the reduction of local medical and obstetrical stations (MOSs), by 980 units from 2012 to 2017. Hospitals of medical districts are of predominant significance, but their number was also declining, by 53 hospitals in the period of 2012 – 2017.

On the whole, the education and medicine fields in rural areas are problematic not only in terms of providing facilities themselves, but also in terms of personnel potential, the deficit of which sometimes is the main problem in a particular locality.

Along with primary needs, the villagers also need social and cultural enrichment. In rural areas, more than 37.6 thousand cultural and leisure facilities are currently operating. If compared to 2012, this figure was equal to 38.5 thousand units. However, it should be noted that the restructuring of the Program funds allowed the situation in the field of culture in the rural areas since 2015 to change, when the number of studied facilities was reduced to 535.4 thousand units. It should be noted that the total number of employees of these organizations during the Program period has decreased, but the number of key specialists in cultural and leisure activities is growing dynamically and makes up 67.8% of the total labour force in 2017, against 45.6% in 2012.

The planned implementation of the directions of the Program for Sustainable Development of Rural Areas makes it possible to maintain throughout the entire period of its activity the field of physical education and sports through the construction of new sports facilities, including plane open sports facilities at the level of 19.2 thousand units and 65.9 thousand units respectively. The attention of the state and the Government regarding the implementation of this direction of the Program and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle in rural areas make it possible to involve an increasing number of rural residents in sports due to the availability of sports facilities for social infrastructure. For example, in 2017, in rural areas there were 30% of residents who are constantly involved in sports, while in 2012 this value was only 20%.

Funds allocated from budgets of different levels for the implementation of the Program are quite voluminous, but require more and more control over their use, as well as the quality of the results of socio-economic development in rural areas (tab. 2).

Table 2. Financing the main directions of the Program in 2014-2017

Program Directions	Actually financed funds, million roubles			
	Total	including		
		federal budget	the budgets of the subjects of the Russian Federation	extra budgetary sources
Improving the living conditions of residents in rural areas	64589.32	16193.46	19,242.94	29152.92
Gasification in rural areas	11370.19	4390.36	5756.27	1223.56
Water supply development	11,965.96	4955.17	6387.23	623.56
Development of a network of educational organizations	6925.99	1672.37	5232.52	21.1
Development of a network of medical and obstetrical stations	2523.12	665.96	1726.26	130.9
Development of a network of plane sports facilities in rural areas	1198.3	510.86	651.79	35.65
Development of a network of cultural and leisure facilities	1200,13	575.05	624.87	0.21
Road network development	29045.82	16575,48	12444,5	25.84
Implementation of projects for the construction of compact housing sites	7258.93	3398,42	3677.07	183.44
Grant support for local citizens' initiatives	1078.21	294.71	476.74	306.76

Based on the data in Table 2 and in general on the results of the target Program, it can be stated that the Program focuses on the relationship between the economy and the social sphere in rural areas. Firstly, the development of social infrastructure gives attractiveness to the rural areas, the desire to live and work there, which means that the

production sector minimizes or eliminates the problem with an acute shortage of qualified specialists. Secondly, the objects of social infrastructure themselves create an image and an opportunity for rural areas to be innovative and investment attractive. Thirdly, it is an opportunity to create more jobs for the population.

The following strategic measures to improve social infrastructure should be:

- Continue to provide rural settlements with modern paved roads;
- Create a comfortable and at the same time optimal transport connection with other objects of social infrastructure;
- Provide ubiquitous telephone communications and Internet resources;
- Improve the condition of housing and provide it with all necessary communal amenities;
- Everywhere to ensure the accessibility of institutions of medicine, education, cultural and leisure type, etc.

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