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USAID ARMENIA, SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING PROJECT

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CASE STUDY

Data Raise Safety Questions at Armenian Companies

The USAID/SPSS project supports State Labor Inspectorate of Armenia to maintain professional data base for injury risks estimates



PHOTOLUR

Estimates based on international trends show that in Armenia as many as 98% of work-related short-term disabilities, probably, just are not reported.

CHALLENGE Identifying companies at safety risks is the basic target for the RA State Labor Inspectorate (SLI). To reach this goal the SLI is adopting new approaches in inspection planning. The purpose of the Social Protection Systems Strengthening (SPSS) Project in the field of occupational health and safety is to raise the SLI's capacity through better administrative processes. Work has already begun with the SLI in moving towards a "risk-based" analytical planning system, concentrating inspections on the most hazardous industries, and establishing a basis for further inspections through available data analysis.

INITIATIVE In July, 2008 SPSS Project expert Robert Kusiak was invited to Yerevan to elaborate a methodology for a "risk-based" analytical planning system. It has been taken into account that data and circumstances on fatalities and long-term disabilities available at the RA Ministry of Health and the Agency of Medical and Social Expertise at the RA Ministry of Labor and Social Issues (MLSI) may not reflect completely the actual situation of risk at a firm or in an industry. Meanwhile, short-term disabilities may indicate the presence of different types of hazards at an enterprise, and it is these statistics that should be investigated to prevent further serious cases. Examining these statistics requires a comprehensive database which, by international standards, is centralized; however, in Armenia this data is spread over several state agencies. Considering these limitations Mr. Kusiak analyzed data from State Social Security Service (SSSS) and SLI on employers' social contributions, short-term disability costs, employee numbers and accidents for identifying companies with occupational safety risks.

RESULTS Amongst the 25,000 Armenian businesses surveyed, 985 firms had costs of short-term disability exceeding 10% of their social contributions. Consequently, these businesses were recommended to be the focus of the SLI's planned inspections in 2009. More remains to be done in this sphere and better data collection needs to be implemented by RA government agencies. This experiment has shown that combining data from different government sources may be implemented with success, and may result not only in estimating but also preventing potential hazards to the employees in their work-places. Adopting such an approach will also help the SLI to better marshal its resources and target areas that are of greatest risk to Armenian workers.