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**USAID ARMENIA, SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING PROJECT**

**FACT SHEET** FY 2008-4

July, 2008

**OVERVIEW**

The USAID Armenia, Social Protection Systems Strengthening (SPSS) Project promotes integrated social protection and labor market policies in Armenia through improved social-insurance delivery, job-market reforms, occupational safety standards, and services to reduce vulnerable citizens' dependence on public support. Implemented by AECOM International Development doing business as The Services Group, Inc. (TSG), since 2007, SPSS brings together four main tracks of social protection:

- Social Insurance
- Employment Services
- Occupational Safety and Labor Protection
- Social Assistance

**ARMENIAN COUNTERPARTS**

***The Ministry of Labor and Social Issues (MLSI)***

**Agencies:**

- State Social Security Service (SSSS)
- National Institute for Labor and Social Research (NILSR)
- NORK Information-Analytical Center
- State Employment Services Agency (SESA)
- State Labor Inspectorate (SLI)
- Youth Professional Orientation Center

***Other Partners***

- RA Government's Pension Working Group (PWG)
- Central Bank of Armenia (CBA)
- Ministry of Finance (MoF)
- Ministry of Economy (MoE)
- Ministry of Territorial Administration (MTA)
- National Statistics Service (NSS)
- A large number of NGOs

**2007-2008 ACHIEVEMENTS**

**SOCIAL INSURANCE**

- Support provided to PWG in strategic development of multi-pillar pension reform, learning from other countries' experience.
- Built and delivered a statistical model for pension reform scenarios exploration by all GOAM partners.
- Trained GOAM experts in the use of the Project's model.
- Proposed enhancements and modernization of the SSSS pension administration business process.
- Legislation drafted according to the PWG White Paper proposals.
- Legislative Drafting Training for all MLSI agencies, MoF, MoE, GOAM and NGOs

**EMPLOYMENT SERVICES**

- Supported establishment of a Performance-based SESA management system with a long-term action plan.
- Strengthened SESA capacity to forecast and publish data on labor market demand through better employer relations, and supply through job-seekers surveys.
- Developed SESA and other partners' capacity to stimulate the labor market with action measures: job-search skill training, job clubs, job fairs, and employer services.
- Created 3 model regional offices able to give a full range of employer and job-seeker services.
- Fostered action oriented public discussions of labor market challenges like rural markets and the supply/demand mismatch.

## 2007-2008 ACHIEVEMENTS

### OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND LABOR PROTECTION

- Supported SLI to become a full and participating member of the International Association of Labor Inspectorates (IALI) and trained inspectors on international good practices.
- At request of the MoE and MLSI, drafted Regulations on Safety in Petroleum Stations and for Bulk Storage of Petroleum.
- Baseline survey of 200 firms conducted throughout Armenia on perceptions of the Inspectorate and the Labor Code.
- Engaged SLI in objective data analysis to identify high injury risk work-places so it can be efficient with inspection resources and finalized Access-based data management system.
- Offered to GOAM an analysis of international practices in inspectorate coordination that gives guidance to 17 inspection agencies.
- In a step promoting Labor Inspectorate transparency, a first edition of 1000 copies of a handbook for employers regarding occupational safety and health was distributed.

### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

- Assessed the Targeting efficiency of the GOAM Family benefit (cash transfer) program in a report to MLSI.
- Elaborated Monitoring and Evaluation indicators for elderly, orphanage, family benefit, and grant-matching programs at MLSI through a series of workshops and training sessions.
- Social Worker's Ethics Code draft version was issued and circulated for comment.
- Outsourcing capacity building with MLSI enabled five NGOs to provide community day care services for people with disabilities.
- Training series provided to four pilot communities for community-based social planning and identification of priorities for outsourcing social service to NGOs.
- Published, along with MLSI, materials to promote more transparent administration of Social Assistance and Social Services: Family Benefits and services to the Elderly and Disabled.
- Identified weaknesses in the current Legal framework for social contracting and assisted NGOs to bring these issues to Ministry of Justice.

### INFORMATION EXCHANGE CAPACITY BUILDING

- Training and technical assistance provided to move toward efficient electronic data management in the social protection sector.
- Introduced a Strategy for Strengthening Management Information Systems in the Social Protection Sector.
- Upgrades of data management systems provided to assist occupational safety, people with disabilities, and MLSI document flow.
- Specification revised for a Social Protection corporate network and provided interim connectivity for SESA and SLI field offices.