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

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SUCCESS STORY

5000 Job Seekers at Job Fair in Yerevan

“Find What You Seek” Job Fair



Photo: SPSS Project

13 partners collaborate, among which USAID SPSS and CAPS projects, and the State Employment Service Agency, to bring together labor market demand and supply sides.



A young job seeker, clutching a stack of job leads she had just gathered, exclaimed, “I am glad there are so many jobs around!” She is one of 5000 eager young and old job seekers attending the “Find What You Seek” job fair sponsored by the USAID Armenia, Social Protection Systems Strengthening (SPSS) project and the State Employment Service Agency (SESA) on 13 October 2007 in Yerevan, where 96 employers advertized vacancies. NGOs and Universities also provided information on adult learning opportunities.

There are 1.1 million “economically active” citizens, and 84,000 are officially registered as unemployed in Armenia. The real number of unemployed and underemployed citizens is much higher than the official figures reflect, as some people have seasonal work, are discouraged and no longer looking for work, or avoid registration as unemployed because the small temporary unemployment allowances affect eligibility for other benefits. Most job seekers express little hope for finding suitable jobs; most believe there are no jobs to be found.

Job seekers learned of many jobs in demand, which skills are required and what are the current needs of employers. Employers gained immediate access to eager job seekers and created a long-term database of potential employees. Value-added benefits include students learning how to better prepare for in-demand jobs, older people were able to learn about adult vocational training and retraining possibilities; everyone was networking, building job search skills and making strong employer contacts.

Two middle-aged “varpets” (construction stone masters), Levon and Bagrat, attended together. They were pleased to see high demand for their skills. They got invitations from a number of companies, and did not have to take the first offer.



Photo: Bars Media

The job fair in Yerevan brings together over 5000 job seekers and around 90 employer representatives.



20-year-olds Elina and Nelly in a year will be graduates of a tourism school. They came prepared, left resumes in relevant stands and were hopeful to get interviews. “You know, I learned today that knowledge of English as a foreign language is not enough to be competitive in this market. There is a big demand for Arabic language also, and I am going to use this final year at school to master it.”

The job fair created a job seeker friendly environment irrespective of age, nationality or physical condition. A group of 14 young graduates of a specialized school for persons with deafness or hearing problems was accompanied through the fair by sign language interpreter provided by USAID/SPSS. They were surveying the market for appropriate career options. Many of this group saw their future in some design-related area. They were able to identify training institutions and potential financial assistance.

This job fair, attracting considerable media attention, offered benefits to job seekers through quick and easy access to 96 employers, while employers had meaningful contacts with hundreds of qualified applicants. A contact with a potential employer led to deeper understanding about the Yerevan labor market for both job seekers and employers.

The myths of no jobs and no quality applicants were destroyed; belief in working together for the good of Armenia was felt and understood. During the year since the October 2007 Yerevan job fair, SESA has organized seven more job fairs throughout Armenia. Job fairs are now an important part of SESA's more active approach to the labor market.

The USAID Social Protection Systems Strengthening Project, TSG has been engaged in building the capacity of State Employment Service Agency staff to implement active labor market measure programs.

SPSS Project supports USAID/Objective – Investing in People, Program Element 3, Social Services and Protection of Especially Vulnerable Populations. This intervention brings together employers and job seekers promoting a fast networking process and job matching, and builds the capacity of Armenian institutions to conduct future job fairs independently.