



USAID ARMENIA, SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING PROJECT

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SUCCESS STORY

SPSS Study Drives Improvements in Pension Services



Photo: SPSS

New conditions seem to induce more willingness to provide better services to the customers.

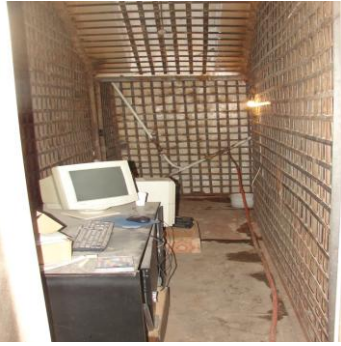


Old office conditions speak for themselves: the pensioner is using another employee's seat

Varduhi Gevorgyan is the Head of Kanaker-Zeytun State Social Security Service (SSSS) office. She passionately embraces the Business Process Assessment done by the USAID' SPSS project: "The reports became the basic instrument to get better facilities which can be easily accessed by our basic customers, pensioners".

In January 2008, USAID Social Protection Systems Strengthening (SPSS) Project began a thorough Survey on Business Processes in 10 SSSS offices located in Yerevan. This purposeful initiative took into consideration the recommendations of SSSS management as well as international best practice standards, to assess possible ways of improving customer services while increasing its efficiency and productivity. The result, a joint effort made by the SSSS staff and SPSS Social Insurance Component staff and two short-term experts, identifies main activities in each office and the use of resources to implement these activities, observes the work carried out by pension specialists and, proposes necessary measures to implement international standard services at very little additional cost.

When Ms. Gevorgyan was appointed the Head of Kanaker-Zeytun office in August 2008, first thing she did was to search for better office facilities and location. "The phrase used in the report - "tragedy of the commons" to describe that office, just hit the point and equipped me with more determination to get an office with more humane working conditions within earliest terms". The former office was located on the first floor of the National Academy of Sciences Zeytun branch, and the building administration prohibited any signage. The pension inspectors' office, with the public area dealing with pensioners, was the most unpleasant, with poor light, broken furniture, and dusty archive shelves. The archive, where most of the basic documents for pension administration were kept, was in miserable condition, and sometimes documents would get lost. These could, and for most cases they actually did, cause distrust towards the institution in general, as its beneficiaries are one of the most vulnerable groups of the population. The new office is in an easily accessible location with clear, though temporary, signage, with proper SSSS title. It has big windows that make the whole interior bright and hospitable. Ms. Gevorgyan's efforts, using the survey as reinforcement, resulted in an accessible and clearly signed office.



No wonder archived documents are being lost



... and they are found only here

Based on the detailed business process maps of pensions administration procedures, the report estimated the average time an inspector spends at various functions outlined in his job description. The Head of Kanaker – Zeytun SSSS office finds this section particularly helpful in assessing staff productivity. She went even beyond that, assigning the staff to assess their own performance. The mapping tool aided her to maximize the time management skills of the staff.

Even now, any observer cannot but notice numerous gaps in this, like many other SSSS offices: lack of clear signs and directions, lack of appropriate descriptions of pension assignment procedures, no air conditioning, telephones, internet connectivity, or ramps etc. It is apparent, that the very fact of making the move to a better building filled the staff with hope and determination to take further steps towards more significant improvements.

USAID Social Protection Systems Strengthening Project supports USAID Strategic Objective – investing in people, Program Element 3, Social Services and Protection of Especially Vulnerable Populations.