
Groundbreaking Seminar on Labor Force Statistics Held in Armenia

USAID Armenia Social Protection - 19/6/2007

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Yerevan - An unprecedented working meeting/seminar dedicated to labor force statistics was held on June 19 at the RA National Statistical Service headquarters in Yerevan.

Organized by the National Statistical Service and the USAID Armenia Social Protection Systems Strengthening Project, the training session, titled 'The Value and Uses of Labor Force Data,' brought together some 40 experts from a number of key Armenian-Government agencies and ministries. Institutions represented at the seminar included the Ministry of Labor and Social Issues, Ministry of Finance and Economy, National Statistical Service, State Fund for Social Insurance, State Employment Service Agency, National Institute for Labor and Social Research, State Labor Inspectorate, Nork Information Analytical Center, Social Protection Administration Project, and Armenia CJSC.

The event sought to foster a greater understanding of labor market data as powerful tools for social and economic policymaking on the one hand, and the operations of organizations concerned with social protection on the other. Emphasis was placed on how such data are used by government agencies, international organizations, and private sector organizations, and how enhanced collection, analysis, and utilization of data could lead to improved management and policies within Armenian governmental organizations.

In her welcoming speech, Amy Ramm, who heads the USAID Armenia Social Protection Systems Strengthening (SPSS) project, underscored the critical importance of project coordination with the RA Ministry of Labor and Social Issues and other government bodies engaged in the gathering, analysis, and use of labor force data.

The USAID Armenia SPSS Project, implemented by The Services Group Inc., is a six-year initiative that was launched in October 2006. It aims to strengthen Armenia's social protection systems, assist the Government of Armenia in institutional and human capacity development, and enhance the capacity of social-service NGOs.

The seminar featured presentations by Frank Szumilo, USAID Armenia SPSS Project expert in Household Survey and Labor Force Statistics; Christopher Hartwell, PA Specialist; Sona Harutyunyan, Head of the State Employment Service Agency; and Vardan Marukyan, Head of the National Institute of Labor and Social Research.

Harutyunyan delivered the opening remarks. She thanked USAID and The Service Group for actively contributing to Armenia's bid for social and economic reform, and credited the National Statistical Service for its close cooperation with the State Employment Service Agency. In her overview of current conditions in the Armenian labor market,

Harutyunyan emphasized the need for bolstering labor data collection and analysis efforts.

Opening remarks were also delivered by Marukyan, who pointed out the inextricable link between effective social policies and accurate labor force data.

Data accuracy and reliability were among the several themes and topic tackled by Szumilo and Hartwell, the seminar's main speakers. In their respective presentations, Szumilo and Hartwell illustrated optimal methodologies of gathering, analyzing, and disseminating labor force data, and expounded the critical value of such data in economic policymaking, social reform, and attracting foreign investment. Both presenters emphasized the fact that Foreign Direct Investment, which fundamentally hinges on labor force indicators, is essential to a country's growth, the creation of employment, and strengthening of its labor force.

Hartwell added that as greater emphasis is now being placed on gender differentiation by international organizations such as the United Nations, labor force data provide the information necessary for gauging a country's relative need for involving both men and women in development programs and policy decisions.

The seminar comprised audience participation and feedback on how to improve labor force data gathering and utilization throughout Armenia, focusing on unified standards and indicators, content, survey design, quality control, analysis, data management, and dissemination within the government and to the public alike.

According to The Services Group, such feedback is instrumental in designing future training events and building on USAID's collaboration with the Government of Armenia and Armenian civil society organizations. To this end, it is anticipated that refinements in labor force data gathering and household surveys in the republic will be aided by enhanced IT and administrative systems. The USAID Armenia SPSS Project will contribute to these efforts by also providing targeted trainings and technical support.
