

The Impact Evaluation of State Targeted Social Assistance on Households

Report on the surveys results conducted among social assistance assigned families

Within the framework of the project “The public awareness on the mechanisms of the targeted social assistance program and the monitoring of the state budget resources for that purpose” held with financial support of Netherlands’ “N(o)vib”, the Economic Research Center organized surveys among assistance assigned families in Agjabedi, Ter-ter and Barda regions. There survey had 2 objectives:

1. To uncover administrative obstacles during the implementation of targeted social assistance program;
2. To evaluate the impact of targeted social assistance program on households’ living standards;

In general 16 families from 3 administrative areas, 1 from Kocherli village of Ter-ter, 3 from Soganverdiler village of Barda region, 12 from Ranjbarlar village of Agjabedi region, were interviewed. The number of involved family members was 68 persons.

The Surveys Results

Persons chosen for the interview were each a family representative, also appointed by legislation as a legal representative of family for targeted social assistance. Two days were spent on the survey and each householder was interviewed around 20-25 minutes. It is worth to mention that all the respondents have gotten social assistance for 6 consecutive months as stipulated by the law and entirely 16 families have applied to labor and social protection of population centers of relevant regions in order to have the targeted social assistance reassigned. The survey revealed that four of out of the total number of families have no sources of income during the application process other than relying on in-kind assistance by their relatives. Income sources of other 12 families were:

- Income from plot of land – 5 families
- Individual activities – 2 families
- Aliments – 1 family
- Pension – 1 family
- Different state social benefits (benefits for refugees/IDPs and children)

It was found out that the least income household among the survey involved respondents had a total income of 25 AZN manats, while the richest household earned 72 AZN manats. Two families have 2, four families have 3, five families have 4, four families have 5-6 and one family has 9 members. Regardless the fact that there are striking differences among the total amounts of social assistance defined per household, the per capita amount does not vary that across households. The amount of social assistance for households is within the range of:

- **20-40 AZN manats - 6 families**
- **41-70 AZN mantas - 7 families**
- **71-90 AZN manats - 3families**

As is observable, the difference of total per household amounts of assistance makes up approximately 4-5 times, while the difference of per capita amount of that assistance is twice, on average. Thus, the households can be grouped as follows according to the per capita amount of social assistance they received:

- **8-10 AZN manats - 5 families**
- **11-14 AZN manats - 6 families**
- **15-16 AZN manats - 5 families**

Objective 1: To uncover administrative obstacles during the implementation of targeted social assistance program: Respondents were asked to answer to one question which will explain this situation. *Did the households encounter any problems during the definition, assignment and timely delivery of social assistance?*

Conclusion 1: The answers were different. It is possible to classify the answers like:

- *No problems with timely delivery of social assistance to households – 16 families*
- *Social assistance gained through a long red tape – 4 families*
- *The amount of social assistance for the first month was taken as bribe by labor and social protection of population centers after its appointment – 5 families*
- *There is a big difference between actual household incomes and officially set incomes as stated by social inspectors - 13 families*

Respondents didn't complain about timely (every month) receipt of targeted social assistance. Yet, four of them mentioned the red tape with the assistance delivery in the sense that two of them had to go to labor and social protection of population centers averagely 12-14 times, and two of them had to go approximately 7-9 times for finally getting the social assistance. Bribes taken by social inspectors from the assistance applicant people was the main important concern the interview discovered. As is seen from the above-mentioned answers, 5 households (nearly every third person who was assigned assistance) had to give the first month amount of social assistance to the staff of labor and social protection of population centers. The respondents faced with such a practice are sure that if social inspectors had not bargained in this way, it would have been quite impossible to get the assistance. This problem was encountered in Agjabedi and Barda regions.

Difference between actual (as declared by households) and official income rates

Table 1.

Interview location	Family member interviewed	Total amount of monthly income as stated by households	Sources of household income	# of household members	The amount of assistance per household	
					The amount to be set on the basis of family declared income	Actually defined amount
Tar-tar region (Kocharli village)	Zeynalova Tamilla	50 manat	Individual activity	9 person	220 manat	72 manat
Barda region (Soganverdiler village)	Balakishiyeva Nazile	10 manat	Aliment	2 person	50 manat	20 manat
	Nabiyeva Kubra	-	-	3 person	90 manat	30 manat
	Mammadov Agahasan	77 manat	0,64 ha plot of land	4 person	43,2 manat	40 manat
	Mammadov Ismikhan	56 manat	Assistance for refugees and IDPs	7 person	154 manat	80 manat
	Ahmadova Nailya	25 manat	Pension	3 person	65 manat	34 manat
	Huseynov Namig	68 manat	0,60 ha plot of	4 person	52 manat	60 manat

Agjabedi region (Ranjbarlar village)			land			
	Mammadova Nazile	-	-	2 person	60 manat	20 manat
	Mammadov Sabuhi	40 manat	Salary and aid for child	4 person	80 manat	55 manat
	Mammadov Mahmud	30 manat	Individual activity	5 person	120 manat	70 manat
	Najafova Rana	70 manat	Salary and IDP benefits	6 person	110 manat	90 manat
	Quliyev Ramil	72 manat	0,62 ha plot of land	4 person	48 manat	50 manat
	Ismayilova Javahir	-	-	3 person	90 manat	48 manat
	Rahimov Aziz	-	-	4 person	120 manat	66 manat
	Asadov Elshad	57 manat	0,50 ha plot of land	3 person	33 manat	34 manat
Salimov Vugar	72 manat	0,60 ha plot of land	5 person	78 manat	66 manat	

Finally, the major point that the respondents expressed their concern with was the amount of targeted social assistance they were given. In fact, 12 out of total 15 interview respondents argue that the actual incomes of householders were artificially exaggerated by the labor and social protection centers of population to reduce the amount of social assistance, which ultimately led to grave discrepancies between the amount to be paid to households and the actual one officially defined. According to the data in Table 1, assistance for 7 families with a problem of artificially reduced assistance amount was reduced within the interval of 12-42 AZN manats and 50-60 AZN manats for 4 families. One respondent pointed out that the income of household was exaggerated to such a great extent that the family became deprived of 148 AZN manats of state's social assistance which is to be necessarily given to them.

Objective 2: To evaluate the impact of targeted social assistance program on households' living standards. The following questions were asked so as to be clear on the situation.

1. Which important needs that you were initially unable able to cover have become possible to be met at the expense of the received social assistance?
2. What kind of vital needs are you still unable to cover even after the receipt of the social assistance?
3. Should you be unhappy with the amount of the assistance, then how much assistance per capita would you expect to meet your most vital daily needs?

Conclusion 1: Grouped by each question, the answers of respondents are presented separately.

A) Which important needs that you were initially unable able to cover have become possible to be met at the expense of the received social assistance? Classification of answers due to question:

1. Covered health expenses of family members – 4 families
2. Rental expenses– 1 family
3. Enough only to cover bread, sugar and tea expenses– 9 families.
4. Made it possible to buy meat each week along with covering bread, sugar and tea costs– 1 family.
5. Made it possible to cover electricity expenses along with bread, sugar and tea costs– 1 family.

B) What kind of vital needs are you still unable to cover even after the receipt of the social assistance?

1. The most important daily food needs – 9 families
2. Cover also utility expenses together with food expenses – 15 families

C) Should you be unhappy with the amount of the assistance, then how much assistance per capita would you expect to meet your most vital daily needs?

This question was initially intended to be answered only by those householders who argued that the social assistance amount did not contribute that much to their living standards. The survey found out that the assistance provides an opportunity to cover only a very small part of food needs of households. The respondents answered the question in the following way:

- a. 35 AZN manats – 6 families
- b. 40 AZN manats – 7 families
- c. 45 AZN manats – 3 families

Most of the respondents – 13 persons – anticipate that they would be able to cover their minimum daily needs was the amount of social assistance 35-40 AZN manats.

The Major Survey Findings

First, almost all respondents are sure that the labor and social protection of population centers are interested in small amount of social assistance which is why they exaggerate the amount of actual incomes of households. According to Table 1, 13 respondents out of 16 take such a stand.

Second, the similarity of defined social assistance amount across households leads us to conclude that the regional centers of labor and social protection of population tended to rather regulate the amounts of targeted social assistance and number of beneficiaries than their actual living standards and ability to make income. For example, as is shown in Table 2, all respondents from Barda region received 10 AZN manats as social assistance. Similarly, the amount of social assistance doesn't exceed over 10-16 AZN manats in Agjabedi. The fact that the regional centers of labor and social protection of population did not review the applications given by families other than the respondents involved in this survey over the course of the past six months saying that the applications will be reviewed only after the current beneficiaries lose their right to this benefit within the period of 6 months as stipulated by the law affirms this position.

Difference between household income per capita and official need criteria

Table 2.

Interview location	Family member interviewed	Per capita amount of social assistance	Total per capita income combined with assistance	Difference between need criteria and per capita income (+; -)
Tar-tar region (Kocharli village)	Zeynalova Tamilla	8 manat	13,5 manat	16,5 manat
Barda region (Soganverdiler village)	Balakishiyeva Nazile	10 manat	15 manat	15 manat
	Nabiyeva Kubra	10 manat	10 manat	20 manat
	Mammadov Agahasan	10 manat	29 manat	1 manat
Agjabedi region (Ranjbarlar village)	Mammadov Ismikhan	11,4 manat	19,6 manat	10,6 manat
	Ahmadova Nailya	11,3 manat	19,6 manat	10,4 manat
	Huseynov Namig	15 manat	32 manat	(+) 2 manat
	Mammadova Nazile	10 manat	10 manat	20 manat
	Mammadov Sabuhi	13,6 manat	23,7 manat	6,3 manat
	Mammadov Mahmud	14 manat	20 manat	10 manat
	Najafova Rana	15 manat	26,6 manat	3,4 manat
	Quliyev Ramil	12,5 manat	30 manat	—

	Ismayilova Javahir	16 manat	16 manat	14 manat
	Rahimov Aziz	16,5 manat	16,5 manat	13,5 manat
	Asadov Elshad	11,3 manat	30 manat	—
	Salimov Vugar	13,2 manat	27,6 manat	2,4 manat

Third, according to the survey results, unless all elements of the systems of social protection and social maintenance will be properly operational, it seems unrealistic to think that any particular component of this system will provide effective social protection of the poor. Under the results of the survey, 25 % (4 people) of respondents target their received social assistance to health problems. Lack of mentioned mechanisms changes the setting of targeted social assistance and its essence is misinterpreted – in reality the resources which can be used to cover daily physical needs, is used to cover health protection.

Forth, according to the results of survey, targeted social assistance doesn't have impact on living standards of people to cover their main needs. All householders participated in interview noted that with the social assistance they are able to cover only some of the needed food. Nevertheless, 12 types of non-food products and services and 40 types of food products were shown as minimum structure of consumer goods in 23 June 2005 dated Order # 118 of Cabinet of Ministers on "Ratification of minimum structure of consumer goods in Azerbaijan Republic".

And the last, the survey was held in one region and involves not so many people. But, the seriousness of found out problems allow note that conducting analogical survey in several regions and involving more people will assume great importance in terms of socialising the issue and to see the real picture of problem.