

Analysis of the results of a survey conducted among inspectors of Centers of Labor and Social Protection of Population in Ter-Ter, Barda and Agjabedi regions

Within the framework of a project funded jointly by OSI and N(o)vib **to inform public regarding a mechanism of means-tested social-assistance and to monitor the use of funds allocated from the state budget**, ERC conducted a survey among social inspectors of Centers of Labor and Social protection of Population in Tar-Tar, Barda and Agjabedi.

The main goal of the survey is to assess knowledge and skills and awareness of social inspectors responsible for granting social assistance about the process in the areas selected on a pilot basis, and based on the results of the survey to submit proposals to relevant state bodies on ways of improvement of this work and provision of necessary trainings for these inspectors.

16 inspectors representing relevant centers of 3 regions participated in the survey. Those were 6 delegates from Barda, 6 delegates from Agjabedi and 4 delegates from Tar-Tar. In a questionnaire 20 questions were asked from respondents based on 3 classification groups. First bloc of questions (overall 10 questions) had to do with the level of awareness about the procedures on reviewing family applications, refusal and suspension of granting of means-tested social allowance. According to the legislation, a family applying for means-tested social assistance has to be represented by one family member. The authority of that person has to be certified by a notary office (or by representatives of local executive bodies). The effective legislation puts forward some concrete requirements for a person representing a family (that same person has to be of the full legal age and capable of working). All the inspectors answered correctly to the question about the level of awareness about these requirements.

The results of the survey demonstrate that social inspectors are very well informed about the list of the required documents in order to receive social allowance. Along with documents required from a family applying for social assistance, names of a number of unnecessary documents were specified. Respondents were able to distinguish clearly between required and not required documents.

According to the effective legislation, a person representing a family has to be informed about the admission of documents submitted. Social inspectors were asked three questions regarding the ways of informing applicants about the admission of documents submitted.

1. Applicant is notified verbally
2. Applicant is given official notification letter
3. Applicant is given a special notification

The social inspectors also answered correctly the abovementioned question (applicant is given a special notification). They also had no difficulties and managed to answer correctly the following question: “What is the number of days for the commission to

review the documents submitted” (correct answer – 10 days). 14 out of 16 respondents answered the following question correctly: **If necessary, for how many days can the commission extend the review process?** (Correct answer – 10 days). 2 inspectors from the relevant Centers of Labor and Social protection of Population in Barda and Agjabedi couldn't answer this question.

According to the effective legislation, the commission has a right to directly investigate information presented in documents on sites. However, concrete cases are taken into consideration for these visits (for instance, a declared family income per each family member is 30% less than the total of eligibility criterion, ownership of 2 or more apartments by a family or the requirement put forward by a member of the commission to investigate a situation on sites). The results of the survey show that not all of the respondents were aware of this issue. Only seven of the social inspectors, 1 from Barda, 3 from Tar-Tar and 3 from Agjabedi managed to answer correctly and completely all of these scenarios. The remaining inspectors were not able to distinguish correctly between true and false options among these cases. Next question of the first bloc had to with the identity of a family member not considered upon granting of social allowance. 14 inspectors had comprehensive information regarding this issue, while two of them were only partially informed.

It is clear from the results that the majority of inspectors participating in the survey are not sufficiently aware of the cases leading to refusal of granting of means-tested social assistance. Respondents were given an option to mark each of those cases in empty boxes. It was revealed that only 4 inspectors, 2 from Tar-Tar, one from Barda and Agjabedi had comprehensive information about this issue. The remaining inspectors were not able to provide complete and accurate information. 4 and 5 out of the survey participants were able to indicate one and two cases respectively amongst the 5 cases stipulating refusal to grant social allowance indicated in the legislation. 3 social inspectors only marked 3 of them.

It is interesting that the social inspectors are totally unaware of the maximum timeframe during which a decision on refusal to grant social allowance has to be given to an applicant. In regards to this, the question given to the respondents was as following:

- a) 15 days – **1 inspector (Barda)**
- b) 10 days - **4 inspectors (each from Barda and Tar-Tar and 2 from Agjabedi)**
- c) 1 week - **8 inspectors (1 from Tar-Tar, 3 from Barda and 4 from Agjabedi)**
- d) Immediately – **2 inspectors (one from Barda and Agjabedi)**
- e) Couldn't answer – **1 inspector (Tar-Tar)**

According to clause 3.11 of the “Rules on application for means-tested social allowance, its granting, distribution and refusal of granting, a decision of the commission responsible for granting the allowance has to be presented to a family representative within 3 (three) days latest in the form of a special notice. The analysis of the results of the survey shows that the awareness level of the social inspectors regarding cases of suspension of means-tested social allowance is not bad. The respondents were offered to specify each of those

cases in empty boxes of the questionnaire. 13 inspectors were able to indicate all the cases envisaged in the rules completely, while 3 of them provided partial information (2 from Barda and 1 from Tar-Tar).

Questions from the second bloc (4 total) envisaged to assess knowledge and skills of inspectors in regards to evaluation eligibility and family incomes. **Information covering which periods is required to calculate monthly average income of applicant families?** All of the survey participants answered correctly the abovementioned question. (correct answer 6 month prior to application, 12 months for those involved in seasonal and agricultural work). Only one inspector (Tar-Tar) couldn't answer the question on consideration or non-consideration of natural forms of incomes in family revenues. The remaining respondents answered this question correctly.

Level of awareness of social inspectors on the list of types of incomes not included in family incomes during calculation of means-tested social assistance can't be considered as satisfactory.

In present regulations 6 types of assistance and benefits (assistance provided to families as a result of natural disasters and force-majeur situations, burial allowance, allowance paid for child-birth, monthly allowance for child till he/she reaches 1 year of age and etc) are not considered in family incomes. The respondents were offered to note each one of those types of income in empty boxes. Only two of the respondents (1 from Tar-Tar and 1 from Barda) were able to note 4 of those types of income. 7 inspectors (3 from Agjabedi, 2 from Tar-Tar and 2 from Barda) showed 3 types of income, 3 inspectors (2 from Agjabedi and 1 from Barda) noted two types of incomes and 2 inspectors (1 from Agjabedi and 1 from Barda) managed to underline one type of income. One of the inspectors couldn't answer this question (Tar-Tar) and the response by one of the inspectors (Agjabedi) was incorrect (he answered that all types of income are considered in family incomes).

The last question of the second bloc was about the assessment of the level of awareness on application of procedures for calculation of family income obtained from individual subsidiary farming. As it was already known this process is regulated by the procedure approved by the Cabinet of Ministers to calculate family incomes obtained from individual subsidiary farming. According to this procedure, annual net incomes of a family are determined on the basis of percentage calculation depending on the type of product (obtained) of individual subsidiary farming. The analysis of the results of the survey shows that the social inspectors are not duly informed on this issue either. Only 4 inspectors (3 from Barda and 1 from Agjabedi) gave correct answers and provided concrete examples to the following question: **"In what form do incomes from individual subsidiary farming are calculated?"** 5 respondents were not able to answer this question (3 from Tar-Tar, 2 from Agjabedi) and the responses of the remaining 7 inspectors were incorrect.

Questions of the last bloc (6 total) envisaged to assess individual creative capacity of social inspectors and problems encountered by them in the current stage of application of means-tested social assistance as well as suggestions for future improvement. The first

question given to inspectors in this bloc was about their preferences for sources of information while evaluating correctness of information on family incomes. All of the respondents noted that they prefer to receive information from both official and non-official sources. **“Should you use non-official information, what are the main sources you get the information from?”** This question was answered as following:

- **Neighbors – 14 inspectors (Agjabedi 5, Barda 6, Tar-Tar 3);**
- **Community organizations – 5 inspectors (Agjabedi 4, Barda 1)**
- **Municipalities – 9 inspectors (Agjabedi 5, Barda 2, Tar-Tar 2)**
- **Reliable individuals – 11 inspectors (Agjabedi 5, Barda 5, Tar-Tar -1)**

The last two questions of the survey had to do with the approach applied by social inspectors to problems emerged in application of the mechanism of means- tested social assistance and learning of their opinion regarding elimination of these problems. **“What problems do you observe in the first stage of application of means-tested social assistance?”** The respondents answered as following:

1. People are not sufficiently informed - 6 inspectors (Barda 1, Agjabedi 2, Tar-Tar 3)
2. Despite all measures geared to public awareness, people didn't show any interest to this process – (Barda 2)
3. In majority of cases applicants try to conceal their real revenues – 10 inspectors (Barda 2, Agjabedi 6, Tar-Tar 2)
4. Due to high normative prices of lands, the access of population to the mechanism of means-tested social assistance is limited – 12 inspectors (Barda-5, Agjabedi -4, Tar-Tar -3)
5. Due to low eligibility criterion, the access of population to the mechanism of means-tested social assistance is limited (Barda 2)

Social inspectors had the opportunity to provide their own answers along with correct answers provided in the questionnaire. Only two of the social inspectors noted the problems experienced by people in employment centers and certain shortcomings in documents related to allowance. Only 1 inspector selected none of these options.

As it can be seen from the responses, only three-fourth of the inspectors participating in the survey (12) noted as the main problem high normative prices of lands limiting the access of low income population to the mechanism of means-tested social assistance. The second most important problem is insufficient awareness of the population in regards to new mechanisms. This option was selected approximately by one-third of the respondents (5). 2 social inspectors selected each of the remaining options.

How do social inspectors perceive elimination of these problems and ways of improvement of the mechanism in general? More than the half of the respondents –

10 didn't answer this question. The answers of the remaining social inspectors were as following.

1. Enlightenment of population – 5 inspectors (Barda 1, Agjabedi 2, Tar-Tar 2)
2. Creation of guaranteed wage system - 1 social inspector (Barda)
3. Provision of natural forms of assistance along with pecuniary aid – 1 inspector (Tar-Tar)
4. Reduction of normative prices of lands or application of a better organized mechanism – 5 inspectors (Barda 2, Agjabedi 2, Tar-Tar 1)
5. Increase of the amount of eligibility criterion – 4 inspectors (Barda 1, Tar-Tar 1, Agjabedi 2)

As it can be seen, a significant number of the social inspectors participating in the survey (4 and 5) mainly focused on 3 issues to increase outreach of low income population to means-tested social assistance and to improve the new mechanism. Those are the application of a better organized mechanism to evaluate real income of population gained from land, public awareness and increase of the amount of the eligibility criterion. The following suggestions are offered to increase knowledge and competency of social inspectors based on the analysis of the conducted survey:

1. Organize regular trainings in order to master the normative-legal framework and changes made in the field of means-tested social assistance;
2. Use interactive methods during trainings to evaluate correctly and completely incomes from family household and financial situation of a family;
3. Invite trainers from countries which already gained success in this field and/or organize training trips for social inspectors using a method of regional division and further distribute this knowledge gained by these inspectors (TOT)
4. Provide exchange of experience among the listeners;
5. According to the relevant legislation, organize certification among these social inspectors and based on the results of this certification implement relevant measures (awards, professional growth or penalty).