



European Commission on Agriculture (ECA)

35/3 Meeting of the Executive Committee

4 March 2015

Espace Gabon

14.00 – 17.00

Agenda Item 4

Update on the Social Protection Network

Gender and Social Protection Network:

A comparative study on social protection for rural population in post-soviet countries

The countries in the focus of this regional research during the soviet past, have enjoyed well developed social protection systems organized into a comprehensive and accessible mechanism.¹ Based on egalitarian principles and universal approach, the soviet social policies aimed to reach the whole population, both women and men, in urban and rural areas, guaranteeing social security throughout human lives. Cash transfers and in-kind benefits covering basic needs such as food, energy, housing, and public transport, were non-contributory and free education and health care were important parts of the overall system. It needs to be mentioned, however, that although this system claimed to be universal, in reality, access to social services and their quality much depended on the types of employment, industry sector, job hierarchy, and other circumstances.

With the transition from centrally-planned economy, this system faced dramatic challenges, becoming incapable to address the emerged risks and vulnerabilities when unemployment and poverty were recognized as a policy issue and strategies and programs developed to address them. The past decades were marked by the efforts to transform the 'old' system of social protection by adapting it to the new realities of market economies. One of the major shifts has been in moving from universal to a targeted approach, more rational in view of its ability to more effectively reach the neediest at the times of budgetary deficits, large economic recessions and political crises. However, the efforts to modernize the social protection mechanisms in all post-soviet countries remain incomplete and there is growing evidence of the differentiated impact of the policies and programs for urban dwellers and women and men living in remote and rural areas.

¹ The focus of the study is on Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

To contribute to the knowledge building and a dialogue on the social protection reforms in the post-soviet countries, the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) has initiated a project entitled “Comparative study on social protection for rural population in post-soviet countries”, which aims to review the current status and trends in the social protection reforms in the post-soviet countries, assess their impact on rural women and men and identify good practices in addressing the specific needs of the poor and vulnerable. The study will provide policy recommendations at the inter-section of social protection and the areas of the FAO’s technical competence and inform the development of the organization’ strategy in the region.

In implementing the project, the FAO Regional Office will actively collaborate with the country-based experts involved in research social protection issues. Twelve experts have been identified to form a Network. These days, the experts are responding to a comprehensive Questionnaire prepared by the FAO Regional Office. Based on the information collected through the Questionnaire and additional desk research, a regional synthesis report will be produced.

The regional report will provide a brief overview of the ‘old’ system of the social protection in the region; review and assess current status and perspectives of existing types of social protection programs; identify key challenges in implementing effective social insurance and social assistance schemes in the region. The focus of the report will be on a comparative analysis of the social protection systems in the region, with emphasis on rural areas, and the needs of rural women and men. The final section will provide policy recommendations for FAO and its national counterparts in the region.

The country-based experts will meet at a consultative workshop to be organized in April 23-24 2015, to exchange information and discuss key issues related to social protection for rural population in the region, including the impact of the on-going reforms; best practices and lessons learnt over the last decades in implementing the social protection schemes in rural areas; the gaps and priorities that need to be addressed. The regional study will be finalized after the workshop and shared with the country-based experts for further feedback and comments. The on-line forum will review the results of the study, to further validate its recommendations.

Tentative Timeframe

Outputs	Deliverables	Time frame/Date
a. The project research framework is approved	Structure of the study to guide the research, identification of the Network experts, recruitment process started	By 25 January 2015
b. Desk research & use of supporting sources	Technical inputs and inventory collecting in-depth data and information	From 1 February to 1 March 2015
c. Draft report with a regional overview, its social protection and development context	Analysis of responses to the Questionnaire and first write ups	By 15 March 2015
d. A Regional consultation	Discussion of the regional	Two day meeting, April 2015

held	study and its dissemination strategy	(tentatively – Baku, Azerbaijan)
e. Produce main analytical report as a result of the study	Draft report reflecting analytical findings and interpretation is submitted for internal discussion	End of April 2015
f. Review the draft regional report, get written advice and comments	Peer review and incorporation of substantive comments and consolidation	By 10 May 2015
g. Submission of the report and short summary of the FAO strategy in the region in the area of social protection	Finalization of the report and proposal of a short summary	By 25 May 2015