

Social Protection System and role of social workers in Azerbaijan

AZSWU

AZERBAIJAN SOCIAL WORK PUBLIC UNION



AZƏRBAYCAN SOSIAL İŞ İCTİMAİ BİRLİYİ

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1. Overview

Demographic indicators:

- The population 9 million persons (2010)
- 54% live in urban areas and 45.9% in rural areas
- 22.6% under 15 years and 6.8% over 65 years old

Background:

- The social protection system is inherited from the system of the former Soviet Union:
 - Presumed uniformity of social protection needs
 - Limited reliance on individual responsibility
 - Stable employment
 - Subsidies for many households
 - A wide range of social protection benefits etc.
- After the independence in 1991 the country entered a new phase of reforms.

2. Social Protection System in Azerbaijan

- The country enacted new legislation to establish its own social security scheme.
- According to Article 38 of the constitution:
“Every shall have the right to social security in old age, sickness as stipulated by law, disability, loss of a breadwinner, unemployment and when otherwise specified by law.”
- The new social security scheme reflected circumstances of Azerbaijan and took into account the economic pressures of the transition.

3. Social protection programs

- The current social protection system in Azerbaijan is mainly divided into two programs:

1. Social insurance

Employment related benefits to provide income maintenance in respect of the contingencies of old age, disability, death of a breadwinner, sickness, maternity, and unemployment and financed through social insurance contributions made by the employed population.

2. Social assistance and free services

Cash benefits for the poor and services to the disabled and other vulnerable groups based on an assessment of needs and are non-contributory in nature and financed from the state budget.

4. *Types of Benefits and Services*

Contributory	Non-contributory
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unemployment benefits• Sickness benefits• Maternity benefits• Child-care benefits• Survivor benefits• Funeral benefits• In-kind/cash benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Birth grant (as a lump-sum)• Childcare Benefits• In-kind Benefits• Targeted Social Assistance

5. Support for most disadvantaged

- People with disabilities (there were 432,000 people living with disabilities in Azerbaijan by the end of 2009)
- Disabled children are the most vulnerable group in Azerbaijan. According to different sources there are 49,000 children with disabilities in the country.
- Only 7 nursing and care houses for the elderly and disabled persons in the country with 1,012 available places in these houses
- Children who live in care houses (usually called *Internat*)
- Victims of domestic violence

6. Influence of International Organizations

- The government and ministries prefer to work with large international organizations for seeking expertise such as UNICEF, UNDP, ILO, World Bank, EU, etc.
- Often small NGOs are ignored in program implementation or service delivery
- The European Union also actively participates in reforming the social protection system in Azerbaijan

7. Role of social workers

- The Social Work Fellowship Program (SWFP) by Open Society Institute (OSI) in 1999 developed first qualified social workers in the country (up to 30 graduates)
- Teaching first social work profession at Master's Degree started in 2005 at Baku State University, then first Bachelor's Degree in 2008. Currently, social work is taught at approximately 6 state and private universities
- In 2007, the Government of Azerbaijan established the NGO Support Council, with the goal to provide financial and informational support to Azerbaijani NGOs, as well as to facilitate NGO/government cooperation.
- In December 2011 the National Parliament of Azerbaijan adopted the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Social Services, which defines roles and responsibilities for the social work profession, and especially recognizes social workers' status
- Following this Law, in 2012, the regulation on "state contracting of NGO services" was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers

8. Challenges

- Lack of clear separation between social insurance and social assistance programs due to the non-homogenous nature of poverty, especially in cases related to old-age.
- Most social benefits continue to be distributed based on categorical consideration rather than means-testing, i.e. child benefits, disability pensions.
- The government mainly experiences a problem in the delivery of social services, not in financing. Most social services are delivered by the local representative office or ministry.
- Social services at national and local levels are provided by non-social work personnel, eventually affects the quality, and scale of services
- Sustainability of NGO services due to funding

9. About AZSWU

- Azerbaijan Social Work Public Union (AZSWU) is an association of professional social workers of Azerbaijan.
- Founded in 2006 by the graduates from social work schools in USA.
- AZSWU was registered at the Ministry of Justice as a non-profit organization in 2009.
- In 2012, it became a member of International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW).
- It has up to 250 members in the country.

- **Mission**

The mission of AZSWU is to ensure quality of social work in line with international standards and maintain professionalism and high standards of social work in Azerbaijan with a special focus on promoting social justice principle in the society.

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THANK YOU!