

Introduction

Social protection of people below the poverty line represents one of the focal points for the Government of Georgia and this obligation is acknowledged by the Constitution as well as Georgian legislation and international treaties to which Georgia is a party.

Ensuring Social protection is the most important guaranty for that people who do not have the possibility to take care of health and welfare of their family members and themselves. The mentioned right is protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which entered into force in Georgia from September 15, 1991. According to the Declaration everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.¹ Furthermore, European Social Charter, to which Georgia is a Party from July 1, 2005 states that with a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to social security, the Parties should establish or maintain a system of social security.²

As regards Georgian legislation, Georgian Law on Social Care, which was adopted by the Parliament of Georgia in 2006, regulates the issues in relation to support of socially vulnerable people. The law aims to ensure effective assistance to population by establishing the social care system.³ The system is financed or organized by the state and includes measures that are directed to improve the condition of persons with specific requirements, poor families or homeless persons.⁴

According to the mentioned law, social assistance is a financial or non-financial aid that is aimed at support of persons with specific requirements, poor families or homeless persons.⁵

The law defines the term “poor family” in the following way – a person or persons who live on the separated living space and share household. Furthermore the indicator of their socio-economical conditions should be less than it is determined by the government of Georgia.⁶

¹ Article 25 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

² Article 12 (1) of the European Social Charter;

³ Article 1(1) of the Georgian Law on Social Care;

⁴ Article 4 (j) of the Georgian Law on Social Care;

⁵ Article 4 (i) of the Georgian Law on Social Care;

⁶ Article 4 (q) of the Georgian Law on Social Care;

Millennium Challenges in Georgia – Projects to reduce poverty

The reduction of poverty in Georgia represents one of the key priorities for the Government of Georgia. One of the most important undertakings is the establishment of Millennium Challenge Georgia Fund (MCG) to develop and implement the Millennium Challenge Compact with the US Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). Georgia's Compact has been developed through the intensive public consultation process and is based on the principle that aid is most effective when it reinforces sound political, economic and social policies that promote poverty reduction. The budget of the Fund was defined in the amount of USD 395, 3 million. MCG aims to reduce poverty and promote economic development in the regions of Georgia. For that purpose MCG is implementing the following projects:

1. Regional Infrastructure Development

The Regional Infrastructure Development (RID) Project is aimed at improving municipal service delivery. The Project provides grants to eligible government entities (local self-government, municipal enterprise and central government) for the development of infrastructure. The Project plans to rehabilitate water supply systems in Poti, Kobuleti, Kutaisi, Bakuriani and Borjomi.

As a result of the project, regional population will be provided with safe drinking water; furthermore, it would improve conditions for the development of tourism and small and medium-sized businesses. Consequently, increasing income generation and improving living standards while reducing the maintenance costs of the above-mentioned systems.

2. Energy Infrastructure rehabilitation

The Energy Infrastructure Rehabilitation Project is aimed at rehabilitating the most damaged sites of the North-South gas main pipeline. The Project envisages the rehabilitation of 22 sites. The Project envisages pre-construction studies for a gas storage facility and associated infrastructure within the frameworks of the technical assistance to the Ministry of Energy of Georgia.

As a result energy security and reliability of the energy supply to Georgia and the region will be increased and existing technical losses will be reduced. Furthermore,

pipeline capacity will be increased and gas supply to power stations and industrial sector will become more reliable.

3. Georgia Regional Development Fund

The objective of the Georgia Regional Development Fund (GRDF) is the development of SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) through investing. The duration of the fund is 10 years.

Georgia Regional Development Fund is expected to create new jobs and products, as well as increase services procurement from local suppliers resulting in development of the sales network for local products. Furthermore successful investments of the Fund will attract additional investments to the country.

4. The Agribusiness Development Activity (ADA)

The Agribusiness Development Activity (ADA) aims at transformation from subsistence farming to commercial, profitable agribusiness through the disbursement of matching grants as well as provision of technical and market information assistance.

The Project will promote agribusiness development and the creation of new jobs in the regions of Georgia.

5. The Samtskhe-Javakheti Road Rehabilitation Project

The mentioned project aims at restoring road and transport networks in the region. The project envisages rehabilitation of approximately 223,9km road in Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti regions.

Rehabilitation of roads in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli will facilitate development of trade and business in these regions. It would promote expansion of international and domestic trade, creation of feasible conditions for business development and attract private investment as well as create new jobs. It would allow improving response to the local population's demand for education and health care.

The rehabilitation was launched in spring 2008 and would be completed by the end of 2010.

Educational system

The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia aims at ensuring equal accessibility to education for each citizen⁷. In this regard it plans to:

- Establish the program supporting inclusive education;
- Establish multilingual teaching program;
- Encourage accessibility of general education in the penitentiary institutions;
- Provide pupils from the families below the poverty line with manuals;

Social Assistance and Insurance Programs

The Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia ensures social aid for the socially unsecured families⁸. The aid is delivered to those families that have been identified as socially unsecured according to the procedure/mechanism developed by the Government of Georgia⁹.

In 2009, State program “On Medical Insurance of Population below the Poverty Line” was adopted by the Order of the Minister of Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia¹⁰. According to the mentioned program State ensures medical service including first aid health care and hospital services.

⁷ Article 49 of the Georgian Law on “Budget of Georgia for 2010”;

⁸ Article 52 of the Georgian Law on “Budget of Georgia for 2010”;

⁹ The family (household) must have 70000 or less rating points according to the set requirements, also in special circumstances families having up to 100000 rating points in order to have status of socially unsecured family. The points are calculated based on an interview conducted by a social worker, who fills up specially designed questioner during interview. The outcomes of questioner are transformed into household welfare formula and the rating points are calculated.

¹⁰ 25.03.09 Order of the Minister of Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia “On the Design of Public Health Program for 2009 Year”;