



*ECA Poverty Team's Quarterly Newsletter with highlights from recent activities and analytical work on poverty/gender issues in the ECA countries.*

## Women in ECA: Sharing the Growth Dividend?

A workshop on “Women in ECA: Sharing the Growth Dividend” was held on January 24th to initiate the work on a regional gender study. The workshop covered the topics of job opportunities, entrepreneurship, asset ownership, and pension reforms. The speakers—from outside and inside the Bank—shared their global research, especially from countries in Latin America, North America, the EU, and ECA. Some of the ECA presentations covered analysis of business constraints faced by female entrepreneurs, the gender wage gap, and gender implications of pension reform.

The discussions brought out several issues such as:

1. A good approach to look at economic empowerment issues in ECA is to look at some of the big economic trends—such as private entrepreneurship, new sectors of growth and employment, public and private transfers, informality, and asset ownership;
2. The heterogeneity of ECA needs to be recognized, through country typologies and disaggregated analysis over selected target population groups;
3. The work should go beyond the commonly used household budget and labor force surveys to exploit other datasets such as the Life in Transition Survey, new census data, the EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions, BEEPS, etc.;
4. For some questions, a multidisciplinary approach may be better suited than a purely quantitative approach;
5. A key question for the work should be on how the positive egalitarian legacy of socialism can be harnessed to ensure that women share broadly in the growth process;
6. A longer term agenda for work (incl. new surveys) needs to be developed that could enable analysis of key knowledge gaps over time; and
7. Anchoring the analysis in current policy debates and an effective dissemination strategy would help get policymakers interested.

The agenda and presentations are accessible on the ECA Gender website at: [Gender - ECA Gender Workshop](#). For more information, contact Sarosh Sattar.

## New Purchasing Power Parity Exchange Rates for ECA

Preliminary global estimates of Purchasing Power Parities (PPPs) from the 2005 International Comparisons Project (ICP) were released in December. These new PPP-based GDP figures show ECA economies account for 7.5 percent of the world economy compared with 4.6 percent based on GDP converted to US dollars using market exchange rates. The Russian Federation is the region's largest economy, accounting for 41 percent of ECA's GDP. The region's GDP per capita is \$9661 in PPP terms. Hungary, Slovak Republic, and Lithuania have the highest GDP per capita in the region and Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic, and Moldova the lowest.

Comparison of these new PPPs with the 2000 ECA PPPs, and preliminary revisions to our regional poverty estimates suggest the following:

- New PPPs for large countries in ECA are virtually the same as those used earlier (i.e. 2000 PPPs from OECD), except for Ukraine (new/old PPP ratio of 1.53).
- Aggregate ECA poverty estimates therefore do not change by much (change of <1 and ~3 percentage points for the PPP\$2.15 & \$4.30 lines respectively compared to earlier analysis). But there are differences across groups of countries.
- CIS countries (except Russia) now appear somewhat poorer compared to earlier estimates. This is especially true of Ukraine where poverty rates (using PPP\$2.15 and \$4.30 poverty lines) are now much higher.
- Overall EU10 average poverty rates are about the same.
- The western Balkans countries now appear somewhat better-off compared to earlier estimates. The new PPPs provide, for the first time, the opportunity to compare economic aggregates across the sub-region.

More ICP information, including the new PPPs for ECA, is available on the ICP web site: [www.worldbank.org/data/icp](http://www.worldbank.org/data/icp). For ECA-specific poverty rates, contact Salman Zaidi.

## What is the Level of Satisfaction with Public Health Care Services in ECA?

What is the level of satisfaction with publicly provided health services? What are some of the key influences on users' satisfaction with quality and efficiency of medical treatment received? Why are some people more likely than others to use the publicly provided health care system? How does the prevalence of informal payments impact people's decision on using publicly provided health care services, and upon their use? These are some of the questions that a recent paper has explored, using data from the 2006 EBRD-World Bank Life in Transition survey (LiTS).

The paper shows that the satisfaction levels in the Region with publicly provided health care services are quite high, but there is a considerable amount of variation across countries. The EU new member states typically have higher "net satisfaction rates"—the difference between the shares of satisfied and dissatisfied respondents—when compared to the middle-income CIS countries (Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Russia). The low-income CIS countries also performed a little better than the middle-income CIS group.

The paper also shows that utilization rates of publicly provided health care services vary considerably by country, from a high of around two-thirds of all respondents in Albania to one-third only in Slovakia. The elderly, the relatively better-off, and those who have confidence in the government are more likely to use the public health system, while those with compulsory/secondary education as well as those with some tertiary education are less likely to access the system.

One of the key findings of the analysis is that informal payments—reported as needed by only a minority of respondents—adversely affect user satisfaction. And countries that managed to achieve a significant decline over time in reported prevalence of informal payments—Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Armenia—witnessed significant increases in the share of the population utilizing publicly provided health care services, further corroborating the finding that perception of the necessity of informal payments negatively impacts satisfaction levels. [For more information, contact Ramya Sundaram and Salman Zaidi.](#)

## Does Poverty Research in Russia Follow the Scientific Method?

A recent paper presents the first critical review of literature on poverty published in Russia between 1992 and 2006. Using a dataset of about 250 publications in Russian scientific journals, the paper assesses whether the poverty research in Russia satisfies the general criteria of a scientific publication and if such studies could provide reliable guidance to the Russian government as it maps out its anti-poverty policies. The findings indicate that only a small proportion of papers on poverty published in Russia in 1992-2006 follow the universally-recognized principles of the scientific method. The paper also finds no positive trend in the scientific quality of Russian research publications over this period.

What can be done to help Russian research (both in-country as well as those working on the country from abroad) meet international standards of scientific enquiry? The paper argues that several steps could be taken towards this end:

- Russian poverty scientists would benefit from better integration in the world research community.
- Russian government and international organizations should continue supporting the effort of the Russian Statistical Office to enhance open access to the micro-level data and fund other comprehensive surveys (both panel and cross-sectional) of living standards of Russian households.
- There is a need to introduce a standard referee review process in Russian economic journals. Such a mechanism will help develop self-regulating norms within the research community that are crucial for the progress of scientific knowledge.

[For more information contact Michael Lokshin.](#)

### NEW Data Sources

**Russia Household Budget Survey Data:** In a major move to promote open data access, the Russian Statistical Office has made available, online, data for 2003-04. The data can be accessed at <http://www.gks.ru/news/microdata.htm>.

**Life in Transition Survey (LiTS).** Unit-record data as well as related information about this 2006 EBRD-World Bank survey is now available for public access at: <http://www.ebrd.com/country/sector/econo/surveys/liits.htm>.

**For future issues, please send your submission to Judy Wiltshire.**