

# Business Process Assessment Survey of 10 Social Security Centers in Yerevan

Armenia Social Protection Systems Strengthening Project

USAID SO 3.4

USAID Armenia 111-C-00-06-00067-00

AECOM International Development  
2008



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# **Business Process Assessment Survey of 10 Social Security Service Centers in Yerevan**

***Final Draft Report***

**Yerevan 2008**

This report was made possible with the support of the American People through the U.S. Agency for International Development. The contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the US Government.

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# 1. General Description of the Survey

## 1.1. Survey objective and aim

The USAID Social Protection Systems Strengthening (SPSS) Project works closely with different government institutions on parametric reforms of the pension system in Armenia, including instituting incremental improvements in administration and processes, while supporting IT upgrades to help with the functioning of the current system. The main counterpart of the SPSS Project, the authority responsible for pension calculation and assignment, as well as for keeping personified records related to social payments, is the State Social Security Service (SSSS). Formerly known as the State Fund for Social Insurance (SSIF), the SSSS was reorganized on the basis of the Government Decree of December 27, 2007 and is the branch of the Ministry of Labor and Social Issues (MLSI) charged with ensuring the functioning of the Armenian pension system.

In August 2007, together with the Academy for Educational Development (AED), SPSS organized a retreat with SSIF staff, during which the SSIF senior management requested an assessment of field offices to see if there might be ways to improve customer service and increase the efficiency of work done at the local level. Since that time, the SPSS project has provided a business process analysis of SSIF's operations, assessed the information system (PARNAS), and made several training and seminars available to SSIF staff. A work plan was also prepared to provide additional business process assessment and produce a report on the current pension system with analysis and recommendations for improvements. In order for the project to have access to SSIF offices and at SSIF's request, an agreement between SPSS and SSIF was signed on December 17, 2007.

After a signed agreement and a decree on reorganization of SSIF into SSSS it was decided to start the survey of the business processes in 10 regional offices located in Yerevan. The main purpose of the survey was to develop a baseline which would be used to help to restructure and adapt business processes in the SSSS, particularly while managing second pillar implementation after pension reform in Armenia. The work was initiated by SPSS in January 2008.

In particular the **main objectives of the survey** were as follows:

- ***Understand business processes as they are performed today***  
It was decided to begin with the pension assignment department because it was a process, which was well established and familiar to SSSS employees. It also is the area that allows for the bulk of the interaction between the public and SSSS officials.
- ***Ascertain the main activities done in each office, and how resources are used to carry out these functions***  
Until this point, there has been no serious attempt to catalogue how work is done in a regional SSSS office. While office managers in the SSSS have reported on numerous occasions anecdotally that a significant amount of their time is spent on responding to public inquiries, the SSSS had not collected data from field offices on the volume of inquiries or what topics were requested. Our work under this objective was to discover the main reasons that people visited Regional Centers and the number and topics of

inquiries from the public, either in person or by telephone, received by the office. This data could be then used to develop more efficient ways of providing information.

- ***Examine standard processes to see if they can be improved***  
Additionally, a process mapping exercise had never been carried out in SSSS offices. Such an exercise would help to compare the basic processes that actually exist in different field offices and see if there lessons that could be transferred to other offices.
- ***Observe the activities of pension specialists***  
Data provided by SSSS (see Box 1 below) suggests that there is substantial variation in the productivity between offices. Using monthly averages over a long period should help mitigate disparities, but it cannot completely eliminate the impact of variability caused by seasonality or population variation. This survey should help to describe work processes and see if variations among offices could explain some of the variation in productivity.
- ***Move towards Implementation of a Model Office***  
One item in the action plan developed in the summer of 2007 was to implement a more efficient workflow in a model office of the pension agency. In particular, it was decided to look at the possibility of specializing work into a front office/back office operation to see if that would improve customer service and office efficiency. This survey would provide a solid basis for how such a model office may look.

**Box 1. Background Information**

According to the data received from the RA SSSS on the number of pension specialists per office, the number of pensions paid, the number of new pensions assigned, and the number of recalculations for 20 months (from January 2006 through August 2007), the SPSS experts developed the chart below that shows the rough productivity measures for the 10 Yerevan offices: i.e. average monthly numbers for new pensions and recalculations divided by the number of specialists. It also calculates the average number of pensions paid by specialists, which was a criterion for distributing staff. The chart is sorted by productivity by work month (PPWM) for new pensions.

NN	The regional SSSS office	Number of pension specialists	Average number of pensions paid	Pensions per specialist	Average number of new pensions	PPWM for new pensions	PPWM for recalculations
1	Shengavit	5	21,649	4,330	98	20	28
2	Shahumyan	5	16,793	3,359	79	16	18
3	Center-1	4	12,762	3,191	62	15	19
4	Erebuni	6	17,404	2,901	88	15	21
5	Davitashen	2	3,491	1,745	29	14	12
6	Nor Nork, Avan	8	26,188	3,274	112	14	28
7	Mashtots	5	15,135	3,027	67	13	15
8	Kanaker-Zeytun	4	10,991	2,748	49	12	17
9	Center-2	4	10,307	2,577	37	9	26
10	Arabkir	7	21,382	3,055	38	5	30

1 **Note:** PPWM - Productivity per work month: Average workload/number of pension specialists

Following the agreement obtained with the SSSS officials the survey team includes representatives both from SSSS and SPSS as follows:

- ✓ Arman Udumyan, Assistant to Head of SSSS RA
- ✓ Christopher Hartwell, Deputy Chief of Party/Public Administration Specialist, USAID/SPSS Project
- ✓ Hasmik Ghukasyan, Poverty Expert/Statistician, USAID/SPSS Project
- ✓ Anna Ter-Ghukasyan, Administrative Process Manager, USAID/SPSS Project
- ✓ Liz Cusick, SPSS Short term Expert on Pension Administration (two visits)
- ✓ Jonathan Tomar, SPSS Short term expert on IT issues (two visits)

Based on an analysis of available background information, the team developed a checklist, which was used as the main template during the visits (See Attachment 1.). All the information provided by the staff members of the regional offices was carefully written down and, together with general observations of the team members, was summarized in the visit reports (Attachment 2). This raw data was in turn transformed into process maps for each office (Attachment 3).

The main findings of the survey were presented briefly to the Deputy Directors of the surveyed Regional Centers during a working meeting on May 8, 2008 at the SSSS headquarters (HQ). The purpose of the meeting was to validate the information collected and observations mapped, as well as to corroborate recommendations, which the team has listed. The presentation of the key findings and recommendations is attached to this report as well (Attachment 4).

As mentioned above, the survey was launched in January 2008 with the first visit to Center 1 Regional SSSS on January 30<sup>th</sup>. Anna Ter-Ghukasyan in collaboration with SSSS team member Arman Udumyan was responsible for arranging the date and time of the visits with the regional offices. The schedule and dates of visits were as follows:

**Table 1: Dates and number of visits to Regional Centers**

NN	Regional SSSS office	Date of the first visit	Number of visits	Comments
1	Center-1	January 30, 3008	2	
2	Center-2	February 1, 2008	2	Second visit was on April 27 <sup>th</sup>
3	Shengavit	February 6, 2008	4	Pilot Center
4	Arabkir	26 February, 2008	2	
5	Nor Nork, Avan	March 5, 2008	2	
6	Erebuni	March 18, 2008	1	
7	Davitashen	March 21, 2008	1	
8	Shahumyan	March 27, 2008	1	
9	Kanaker -Zeytun	March 28, 2008	1	
10	Mashtots	31 March, 2008	1	

After the second visit it was decided to choose one of the Regional Centers as a pilot and study this center's processes more carefully, map them all, and then compare the differences during the following meetings with the rest of the Regional Centers. As Table 1 shows, the third center visited, Shengavit, was chosen as the pilot center due to its size and co-location with the SSSS hotline.

In general at all offices, the meetings went very smoothly: in particular, the staff of the Regional Centers were very open and friendly and sincerely shared their concerns and thoughts on processes and possible improvements in their offices. The following analysis could not have occurred without the active participation of SSSS staff.

The paper is organized as follows: in the next section, we will provide our observations for the offices across a broad range of areas, including staffing, work processes, office conditions, and IT. Following these observations, we will recommend changes that can be undertaken at the SSSS in order to improve service delivery to pension applicants and pensioners in Armenia.

## **2. Observations**

### **2.1 *The Offices: Physical Attributes***

While a well-furnished office is no guarantee of a highly productive office, there are few examples of poorly furnished offices that are indeed productive; too much time is spent on the business of operations, rather than focusing on customer service. Most of the Regional Centers we visited were renovated and furnished under World Bank program support, but many of them were still lacking proper workstations and furniture.

#### **Office accessibility**

One of the first and most important factors of social service provision is easy accessibility to the service provider (particularly important for the elderly and people with disabilities, the main clientele of the SSSS). However, it seems this point was neglected when the premises for social security service providers were rented. Almost every office of the ones we surveyed was difficult to find, with no directories showing the place of pension office and a lack of good signs particularly at entrances. For the most part, this was not the fault of the specific office, as Regional Centers that are located in a municipality or specific administrative building are not allowed to advertise their presence (showing a broader, government-wide problem). However, this lack of adequate signing in most offices creates an immediate problem for applicants. The majority of the surveyed offices had only room numbers printed on paper and taped to the door. Some offices had different information scattered throughout the agency: in the Mashtots office, there were many signs pointing out when lunch time was (for when the office would theoretically be closed), while in Nor-Nork the paper signs on the doors clearly directed the visitors to their particular inspector, as the signs included the inspector's name and addresses he/she serves. The office most in need of improvement was the Kanaker – Zeytun Center that had not one sign directing the public where to go. This lack of information meant that one would need to ask someone or follow a printed paper note to happen upon the pension assignment inspectors' room or the director, the deputy, or the accountant's offices. Kanaker-Zeytun is doubly handicapped as the SSSS office is actually spread out around the building, with half of the offices on one side and half on the other.

In addition to the lack of signage at the regional offices, there was a uniform problem with access, especially in winter time (summarized in Table 2): either the offices were far from a bus station (except Kanaker-Zeytun, Nor Nork-Avan and Arabkir Centers), or they had narrow and slippery (and non-shoveled) walk ways, or they were located in the upper floors of the building

without elevators. None of the offices surveyed had a ramp for handicap access. An example from one of the centers is instructive: while the Shahumyan Regional Center is placed in the building of a private school and occupies the first floor, it is located rather far from the main street. And if an applicant forgets to bring a copy of any of the requested documents, in order to reach the nearest copying office he needs to walk back to the bus station, which is a 20 minute walk one-way.

**Table 2: Office accessibility**

Regional office	SSSS Location	Distance from the bus station	Office floor	Availability of ramps	Signs at entrance
Center-1	Administrative building	10 min walk	1	No	Yes
Center-2	Administrative building	2 min walk	4	No	Yes
Shengavit	Administrative building	15 min walk	3	No	Yes
Arabkir	Administrative building	3 min walk	1	No	No
Nor Nork, Avan	Municipality building	3 min walk	1	No	No
Erebuni	Municipality building	15 min walk	3	No	No
Shahumyan	Administrative building	20 min walk	1	No	Yes
Kanaker -Zeytun	Administrative building	5 min walk	1	No	No
Davitashen	Municipality building	5 min walk	1	No	Yes
Mashtots	Separate building	10 min walk	1	No	Yes

### **Office Appearance**

An office's appearance and general working conditions are also an important factor for quality service provision. Here too our team observed some general problems that were not directly attributable to the SSSS. As with the lack of signs, sharing office space in a municipality or other administrative buildings meant also that offices had to share toilets and water pumps, which in nearly every location were not operating properly. The Kanaker-Zeytun office was perhaps the worst example of this "tragedy of the commons": located on the first floor of the National Academy of Sciences Zeytun branch (NAS), the Branch administration prohibited the Center from putting any signs pointing to the SSSS location at the entrance as well as inside the building. The NAS Branch administration also denied the World Bank project's request to renovate the SSSS premises, so the office remains in a very poor and neglected state. The pension inspectors' office, where interaction with the public takes place and thus should have been the best room, was in fact the most unpleasant, with poor light, broken furniture, and dusty archive shelves. Two inspectors were forced to work in these conditions.

The disparity between government-controlled buildings and private buildings was significant. In particular, the Mashtots Regional Center rents two floors of a separate building (which used to be a kindergarten), and after its renovation has met minimum standards for work. Unlike municipality buildings, the pension division is placed on the first floor, and there is a big sign at

the entrance and signs on the each door. Finally, the office has many of the necessary conveniences, including water supply, toilets, security, and cleaning staff (one drawback observed in centers that were not located in municipality buildings was a lack of air conditioning, due mainly to the high cost).

Beyond the buildings themselves, equipment and furniture issues were one of the most common problems raised by the Regional offices. In every office we visited, there were a number of people that were not currently being waited on but who were waiting for an inspector to become free. It was here that the lack of waiting facilities became obvious, as most offices had elderly applicants and pensioners standing about in the hallways.

Furniture issues were not only urgent for pensioners, but also surfaced in discussions of working conditions for inspectors. The Shengavit, Shahumyan, and Kanaker Zeytun Regional Centers were prime examples of this issue, as the furniture in these offices was old and broken, making it difficult for staff members even to find proper chairs for us to sit. The pension inspectors in these centers were lacking proper tables as well, and, as a result, the computers necessary for data input were placed in separate room from the inspector's desks rooms. For instance, at the Shahumyan center if there was a phone call or a visitor and there was a need to open the customer's file, the pension specialist had to walk to the computer room, where the operator was handling most of computer work, find the file, walk back and only then give a response to the customer. Real-time updating was not possible under this system, and instead, at the end of the day the pension specialists were taking the boxes with their daily processed applications to the computer room and entering new or updated data into the computer.

Finally, a real issue for the centers in providing customer service is the ability to copy documents. The government of Armenia's pension assignment procedure requires copies of all original documents to be attached in the pension case folder, with copies done at the expense of the applicant. This regulation is apparently not widely known, as many inspectors told us that applicants tend to bring just their original documents (passport, social security card, other certificates from the employers etc.) and not the required copies. This does not present too much of a problem for applicants assigned to centers located in municipality buildings, as there are document copying services within the buildings. These services do not belong to the SSSS and are provided at cost. However, for other centers, including the largest at Shengavit, there are no possibilities in the neighborhood to make a copy if the applicant is not prepared. We understand that there are a few offices with commercial copying machines nearby that charge applicants a fee possibly higher than cost. Sometimes SSSS regional centers are not provided sufficient application forms from headquarters, and then SSSS staff members have no choice but to require applicants to pay for copying SSSS documents.

**Table 3: Estimations of office appearance and conveniences**

Regional office	SSSS	Office premises	Air conditioning	Waiting conveniences	Utility core	Working conditions
Center-1		3	0	0	1	3
Center-2		3	3	0	4	4
Shengavit		3	0	0	2	3
Arabkir		3	0	0	2	3
Nor Nork, Avan		4	4	0	2	5
Erebuni		4	3	0	3	5
Shahumyan		3	0	3	2	4
Kanaker -Zeytun		1	0	0	1	1
Davitashen		4	3	0	4	3
Mashtots		5	4	3	5	5

Table 3 summarizes our estimations of office appearance and convenience, using a 5-point scale, where 1 stands for “very bad” and 5 for “very good,” and 0 is non-existent (more detailed information on offices is provided in the visit reports in Attachment 2). As the table shows, there is much room for improvement, and these issues should be considered by not only the headquarters of the SSSS and the MLSI, but by the municipalities in which these offices are located.

## 2.2 Staff Organization

The work at the Regional Centers is first and foremost the duty of employees of the SSSS, and observing the activities undertaken by staff on a daily basis formed the largest part of our survey. On average, 12-15 people were working at the Regional Centers according to the distribution shown in Table 4.

The responsibilities and job descriptions for each position in the Regional Centers are fixed and defined by headquarters, including administration, pension inspectors, personified reporting specialists, operators, and accountants. The position descriptions as generally recognized are:

### *Pension Inspectors*

- Responses to telephone calls;
- Pension assignment and calculation;
- Pension recalculation;
- Explanations of eligibility terms;
- Explanations of individual scores of pensioners in the pension allocation formula;
- Clarifications on years of service and contributions paid;
- Response to applications on social contributions paid by customers during their insured work experience;
- Registration of teachers for partial pension assignment according to requirements of the law;
- Registration, calculation and recalculation of pension for people with disabilities according to certificates received from SMEC offices;

- Registration, calculation and recalculation of pension for families or children who lose the breadwinner or parent;
- Funeral benefit provision to the heirs of pensioners who passed away as documented by certificates from the Death registration offices;
- Recovery of suspended or terminated pensions upon an order received from the HQ;
- Provision of certificates to RSSA and SESA offices for Family Benefits allocation or for unemployment benefits allocation;
- Transfer or acceptance of pensioner's case to/from another regional center;
- Visits to and from HQ for mail delivery;
- Provision of certificate on contributory years of service in cases of written queries from CIS countries;
- Site visit in cases when inspector has concerns on information submitted by customer or organizations regarding years of contributory service and social contributions;
- Query or visit to City or National archives.

**Table 4: Number of employees at the Regional Centers and needs for additional staff**

<b>Regional SSSS office</b>	<b>Number of total staff</b>	<b>Number of pension specialist</b>	<b>Number of personified reporting staff</b>	<b>Cleaners and Guards</b>	<b>Additional personnel desired</b>
Center-1	18	3	11	Cleaner	Secretary
Center-2	13	3	6	Cleaner	Secretary
Shengavit	16	5	5	Cleaning and security	Secretary and Psychologist
Arabkir	19	4 (+2)	8	Cleaner	Lawyer and psychologist, driver, secretary, two data entry specialists
Nor Nork, Avan	15	6	4	-	Lawyer and psychologist
Erebuni	15	4	4	Cleaning and security	Technical staff and secretary
Shahumyan	11	4	3	Cleaner	Technical staff and secretary Psychologist
Kanaker – Zeytun	14	4	4	Cleaning and security	Lawyer
Davitashen	8	1	1	Cleaning and security	
Mashtots	15	4	2	2 Cleaners and 2 security guards	Lawyer

#### *Accountants*

- Verification of proper documentation and authorization for payment of
  - pensions (all types)
  - rewards and monetary compensations for free transportation to participants and veterans of the Second World War
  - survivor benefits to children and parents of participants of Karabakh War paid through All Armenian fund

- benefits to veterans of Karabakh War with First Group of Disability paid through All Armenian fund
- funeral benefits, and payment of pension amounts not received by persons who passed away to their heritors
- amounts needed for repayment of pensions not received for 6-12 months (from depository);
- Verification and authorization of payment receipts submitted to and received from the Payment agency and VTB bank;
- Verification of changes in pension types;
- Salary payment and other accounting.

### *Operators*

- Input of pension payment list-register;
- Verification of amounts to be paid by pension types;
- Acknowledging Director, Deputy Director and accountant in case of inconsistency or mistakes revealed;
- Preparation and on time submission to HQ the lists of monthly payments and financing sources for the past month;
- Preparation and on time submission to HQ the payment orders for coming month;
- Preparation of monthly references on military pensions as per military registration offices requests;
- Preparation of monthly references on World War Two veterans' awards and monetary compensations;
- Registration of deceased pensioners in a special manual in order to show how many funeral benefits were paid for the past month.

However, almost every regional center has reallocated these responsibilities based upon staff skills and availability. For example, in the Arabkir regional center there were 6 pension specialists, but only 4 dealt with customers on pension issues, while the other two were responsible for all “non-pension activities” (including social security card processing and responding to requests received from different agencies from the National Archive, as well as letters received from SMEC and SESA and keeping cards on payments of benefits through the All Armenian Fund to veterans and families of participants in the Karabakh war). The accountant in Arabkir was responsible for salary calculation and pension size determination, and also for the whole accounting in the office; she even helped customers to understand their pension size by calculating it in front of them.

Other centers had similar, ad hoc shifts in responsibility. In the Shengavit regional center, the accountant was responsible for keeping the ledger on benefits paid through the All Armenian Fund and also for funeral benefits and inheritor's rights requests. In the Nor-Nork Avan regional center we saw a joint computer hall for both pension administration and personified reporting. The operator was very skilled and could manage the operation of all computers and the work of staff on computers, and she was also responsible for training newly hired inspectors. All staff in Nor-Nork claimed that they could deal with both pensions and personified reporting (nowhere else did we hear such a sentiment expressed).

In addition to the main tasks of pension inspectors, at each center inspectors were given additional assignments, such as: keeping ledgers for SMEC certificates; overseeing death and funeral benefits and depository payments; overseeing partial pensions registration; overseeing All Armenian Fund pensions; and several other functions. This work apart from the core function of pension assignment and recalculation was assigned and delegated in different ways in almost every office. In the Mashtots center, for example, the Deputy Director together with the pension specialists carries out the main ledger keeping by turn.

In most of centers, the administration has assigned one of the personified reporting specialists to carry out secretarial work. In Kanaker-Zeytun, the two personified reporting operators who were underutilized for personified reporting were mainly handling secretarial work and ledger-keeping, while the Deputy Director was acting as a technical specialist if needed to deal with different sort of repairs or daily operational issues. Similarly, in the Shahumyan regional center, the Director assigned the accountant to carry out secretarial work for him, to register and keep track of incoming and outgoing documents/letters. She was really very busy with this routine work i.e. the day we visited she had processed 35 certificates on social contributions paid, which in other offices the accountant just signs, and she also had to enter these into the relevant ledgers manually.

While there was an *esprit de corps* evidenced in each of the offices we visited, we were told that there was no formal or special procedure for evaluating an employee's performance; the usual answer to this question received from the directors and Deputy Directors was that evaluation was based upon the number of complaints received from the customers on the particular inspector. In almost at all centers the Deputy Directors were responsible for proper operation of all personnel and carefully followed the daily work of inspectors. At the Nor-Nork-Avan regional center, the Director asked for monthly reports from the operator on cases processed by each inspector to estimate their productivity, while at the Shahumyan center the Director reviews the inspectors' work according to mistakes in the pension assignment process. Likewise, at the Erebuni center the Director reviews the inspectors' work according to discipline and mistakes in pension assignment process. In some cases, negative personal evaluations led to some changes in assignment: for example, in the Arabkir regional office, the Deputy Director removed two pension specialists from pension administration activities, and only assigned activities related to certificates and pension requests from the CIS to them i.e. they were prohibited to deal directly with pensioners because of their impolite attitude.

While there are evaluations carried out in a haphazard manner, staff development for the most part is ignored. There are no special courses developed for new hires, and, since most of the centers have had no staff changes since 2004, there was no urgency in developing these courses. Deputy Directors or chief specialists were usually responsible to train the staff if there are any personnel changes, but, at the same time, we were informed that the headquarters organizes regular trainings for the employees and for management if there are legislative changes in pension administration.

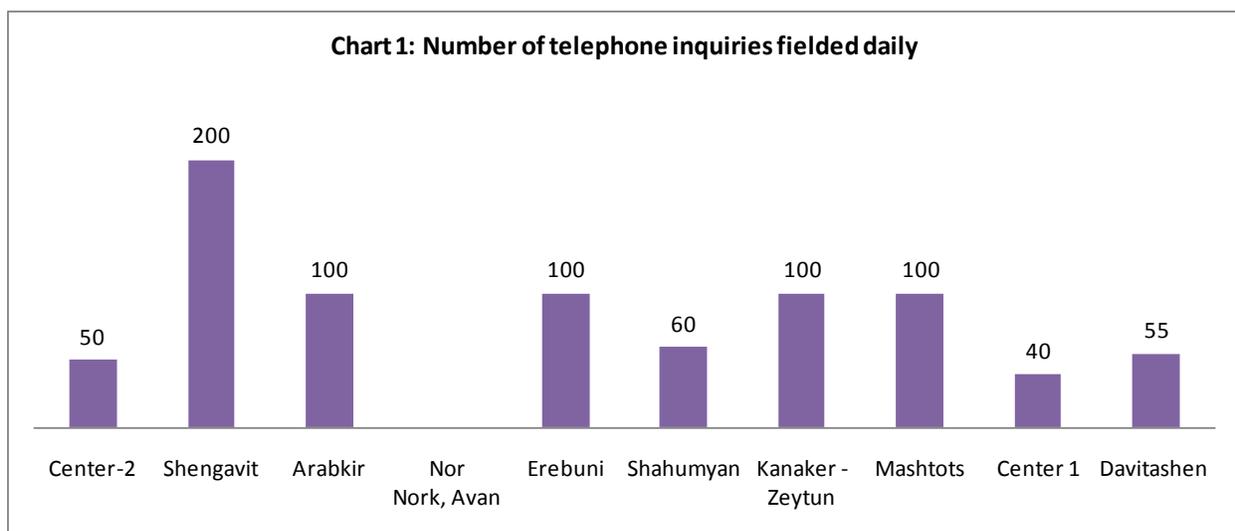
Even with this lack of current staff development, there was unanimity in the need for more staff. As Table 4 showed, almost every center requested to have additional support staff for secretarial work and for everyday technical issues. They also stressed the importance of having a lawyer and a psychologist for advising the staff members.

## 2.3 Work Flows: Front Office Functions

To understand the pension administration processes in place the survey team conducted very detailed interviews with the pension inspectors, operators, accountants, and Deputy Directors of the centers visited. As a result detailed process maps were developed and reviewed with the Deputy Directors. The copies of the process maps are attached to this report (Attachment 3). Throughout our interviews, we sought to ascertain the actual processes that each office carried out, and not just a broad reading of what the law said the SSSS offices should do. The following two sections detail our findings for both areas in which the SSSS regional offices work: the front office, where interaction with the public occurs, and the back office, where other tasks, data handling, and intra-SSSS coordination occurs.

### Phoning and Visiting the Offices

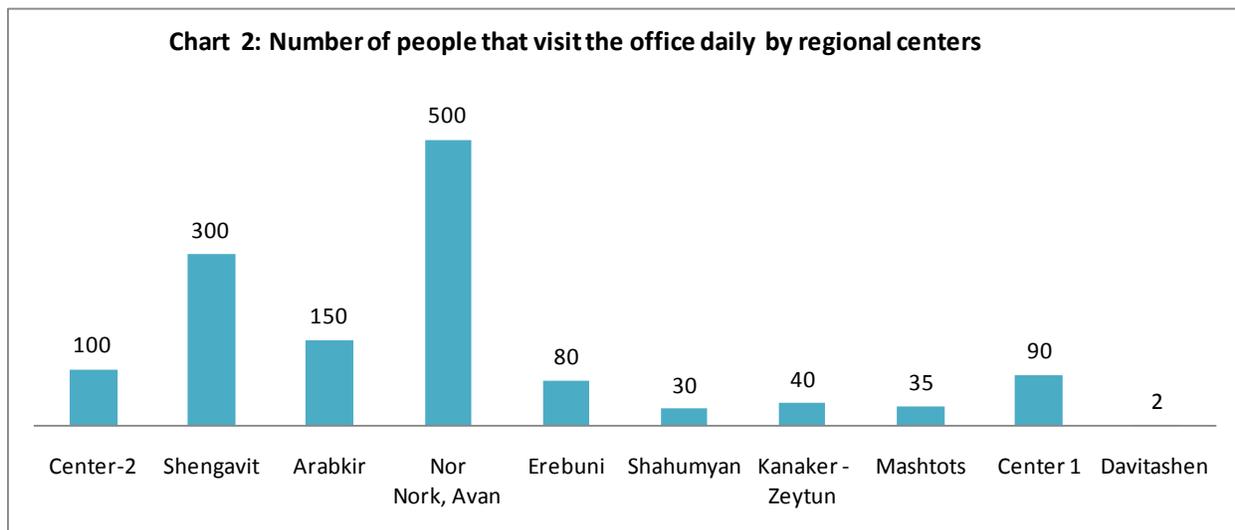
The key purpose of the front office is to provide services to pensioners and other customers of the SSSS, and this interaction usually comes in two ways: over the telephone, and then, necessarily, in person at a Regional Center. A large amount of an inspector's time is spent fielding inquiries via the telephone: the average Center receives approximately 100 phone calls per day (see Chart 1), and, according to inspectors we spoke to, they receive almost "a call every minute" during the first two days of the months for pension payments (the number one reason customers telephoned was to ask about what documentation was necessary for a pension assignment, how to apply and whom and when, and what day pensions were paid). After this payment rush, the calls then begin a slow decline throughout the month until they pick up again as another payday approaches (inspectors said that the heaviest period began 5 days before payments and lasted until 3 days after payment). While calls may last only 2-5 minutes, some inspectors said it was not uncommon to be on the phone for even more than 40 minutes.



One of the most positive achievements of SSSS recently implemented in Armenia is the Hotline Service, which provides free answers to inquiries addressed by the public regarding several different topics. However, several people informed us that the Hotline was more difficult to use for some topics than for others; in particular, information on pension assignments was harder to understand. As one SSSS pension specialists mentioned to us, the Hotline information usually does not satisfy the customers and in order to check answers received on the phone, they

additionally call to the Regional Centers and visit them personally for verification (thus taking three steps that the Hotline is supposed to reduce to one).<sup>1</sup> Though all of the Centers agreed that the Hotline reduces the number of calls they receive on average, the persistence of customers who call both the hotline and the individual offices means that calls still take up a large part of the workday.

Having obtained information via the telephone, applicants are still required by Armenian law to come to Regional Centers physically to both receive and register for their pensions. It is here that a clearer picture of business processes emerges, as we observed the number of people who visit the regional offices and for what purpose (Chart 2). The number of visits to Regional Centers varied very much between centers that were visited at the earlier stage of the survey and at the end of the month of March. This is explained by changes in pension size and formula since January 1st of 2008. For instance in Shengavit we were informed that about 300 people were visiting the office every day to understand the change in pension size and recalculation of the pension (visits were paid in early February). In fact, our observation of inspectors' work showed 23 visitors came in a time period just over 30 minutes, which would extrapolate to 368 visitors per day if the visitor flow is steady, verifying the amount that the staff estimated. This was in contrast to the Mashtots Center, where staff said that the average number of daily visits had reduced to merely 35 people, due mainly to the fact that many of the pensioners had already come in for their modification. Once again, the high number of cases (500 per day) at the Nor Nork-Avan center can be explained by the recent merger of two centers, and also because of the fact that the center has a joint computer center for both pension and personified reporting procedures (thus, staff included both pensioners and employers in their daily tally, including employers who were visiting the office just to submit their annual reports on personified reporting). Additionally, as staff at Nor Nork explained, about 30% of their visits were just for verbal consultations.



<sup>1</sup> Most of Deputy Directors stressed that to reduce the call to centers and improve the quality of the hotline service it is important that that the hotline operators were pension specialists. As discussed further below this is not ordinarily best practice for hotlines, which follow scripts.

No matter what the issue, the Centers all reported that their busiest times are between 10 a.m. to 4p.m, with a break from 13.00-14.00 (but even during this period, Deputy Directors were on duty to respond to citizens and answer phones during their lunch time). The heaviest days of the month for the offices were up until the 20th of the month; the last days of the months were dedicated to finalizing the folders opened or processed during the month, and preparing them to be filed in archive, or visiting organizations to respond to CIS queries (see below).

**Table 5: Time spent at the Regional Centers**

Regional SSSS office	How office take long visits	How long it takes to assign a pension	How long it takes to recalculate a pension	How long it takes to suspend or terminate a pension
Center-1	5 min	10 min	10 min	1 day
Center-2	15 min	20 min	15min	5-10 min
Shengavit	5-15 min	5 min if all documents are available	10 min	5 min
Arabkir	2-10 min	20 min	15 min	10 min
Nor Nork, Avan	2-10 min	10 min if all documents are available	10 min	10 min
Erebuni	2-20 min	20 min	15 min	10 min
Shahumyan	5-10 min	10 min if all documents are available	15 min	10 min
Kanaker Zeytun	2-10 min	15 min if all documents are available	5 min if all documents are available	10 min
Davitashen	5 minutes	5 minutes if all documents are available	5-10 min	10 min
Mashtots	2-10 min	10 min	5 min	10 min

Office visits were estimated to be between 5-15 minutes, depending on the person and what topic was covered (Table 5 presents the average time customers spend at the office by each center – more on the topics below). Observations of people entering and exiting each regional center confirmed the brief nature of visits, and at almost all centers staff never left customers waiting an inordinate amount of time; indeed, the longest amount that any center said it would take for a pensioner to perform a transaction was between 20-25 minutes, and no observations of a visit of that length occurred during this study.

The **main reasons** that customers came into the Regional Centers were the same across all offices:<sup>2</sup>

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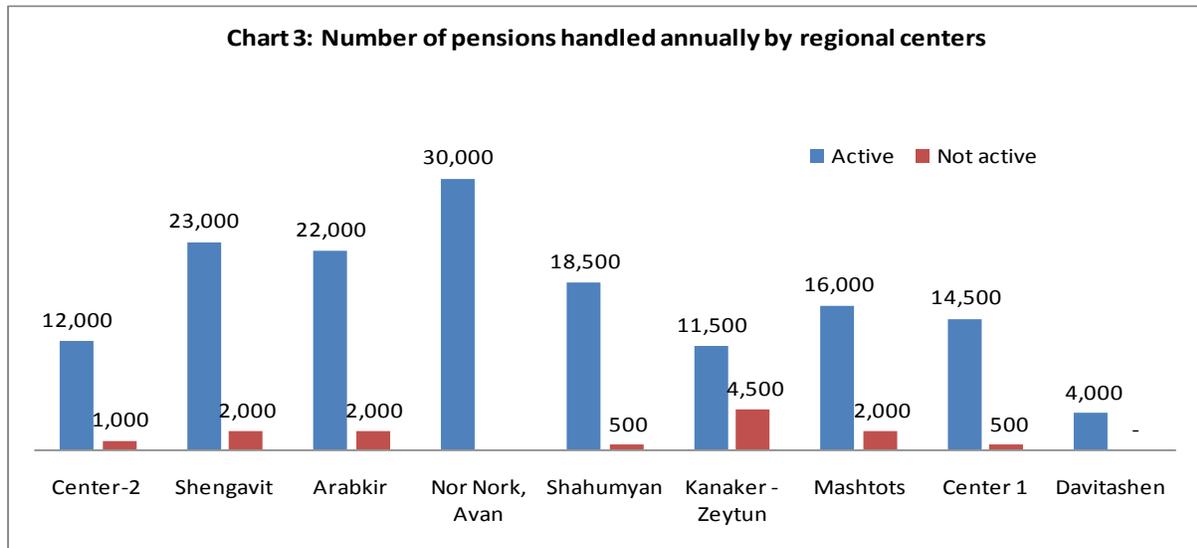
<sup>2</sup> The inspectors reported that, in addition to these pension issues, many pensioners just visit to talk and ask questions, or just to say hello to their inspectors.

- New application for pensions;
- Recalculation of pension size;
- Soliciting information about recent modifications and pension calculations;
- Soliciting information on certificates of pension size or social contributions paid; and
- Receipt of funeral benefits.

The execution of these functions will be handled separately.

**Pensions Assignment and Recalculation**

Without a doubt, the largest portion of the workday of office staff is connected with the assignment or recalculation of pensions. The Regional Centers we visited provided information on their total active and inactive cases in order for us to get a sense of the workload that the average office faces (see Charts 3 and 4). Recently the Nor-Nork and Avan Regional Centers were merged and so the merged office, the largest among centers visited, provided information only on active cases (as can be seen in Chart 3).<sup>3</sup> However the Arabkir center reported the highest numbers of cases handled per inspector, as the 2 of 6 pension specialists were no longer working in pension administration and were dealing only with other certificates or incoming letters (see above).



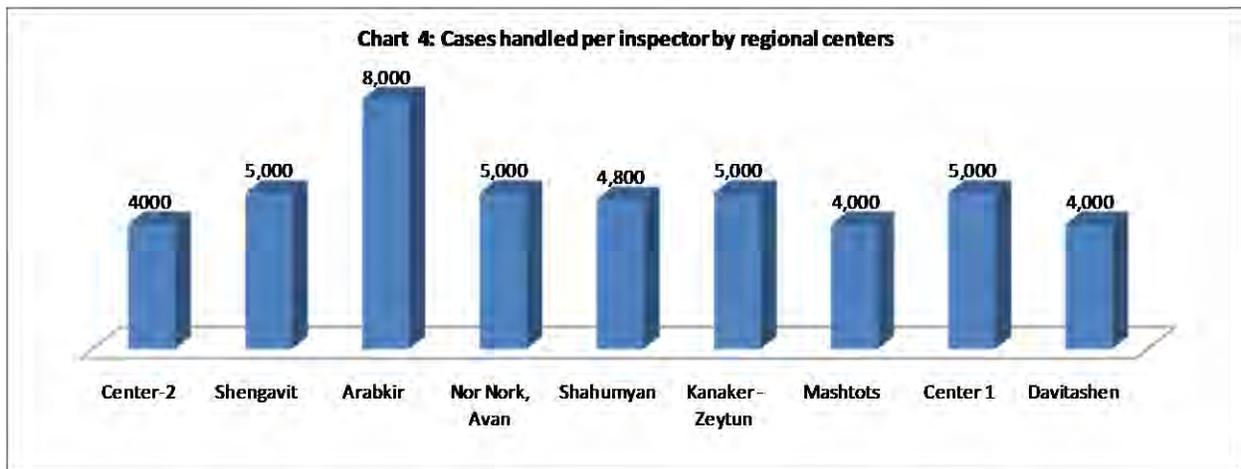
The average time that it takes for a customer to be assigned a new pension is approximately 15 minutes, but only if all the necessary documentation (and copies) is provided.<sup>4</sup> Currently, if an applicant arrives without proper documentation, pension inspectors write down the list of missing documents onto the application, which is then given to the pensioner. Afterwards, it is left upon the applicant to come back with proper documentation: this is of course time-

<sup>3</sup> The charts in this report are presenting information collected during the interviews. Many data may not necessarily correspond to official records at the SSSS HQ, as the information was provided without looking at the documentation. Also some of the centers provide information on annual cases handled, or in other format, so in some cases the charts present information not on all the centers visited.

<sup>4</sup> For older pensioners, the time to complete a new assignment may be longer, but inspectors are authorized to help these pensioners fill out their applications.

consuming for both the inspector and the applicant. In this case, a list of documents that the applicant is required to bring would be helpful and would allow applicants to come prepared in advance. There was only one example of such information being disseminated in this view, at the Mashtots regional center. Here, the Center’s administration developed printed lists of documents needed for pension assignment according to each pension type, and the staff handed these lists to applicants.

Pension recalculation was a relatively quicker process, estimated in the 5-15 minute range. The only difficulty seen during this process is the legal requirement that customer must bring a “certificate on contributions since 1992” from their employer or the archive. Many of Deputy Directors we spoke with were strongly against this requirement, as they believed it harms older applicants and forces them to spend extra money and efforts to reach previous employers or archives for the certificate. As in the case of proper documentation for assigning a new pension, this requirement was also not publicized within the regional offices.



The quickest process that takes place in the Regional Centers is suspension of pensions, mainly due to the fact that it is also the most automated process. When a customer does not collect their pension for 6 months, a computer program automatically suspends and deposits the payment. If a pensioner does not collect a pension for 12 months, the pension is terminated and can only be restored by official notification from the HQ. On average, Centers deal with approximately 50-60 suspension and/or re-activation cases per month.

**When Things Go Wrong**

While these procedures are generally short and require preparation from customers before visiting the office (collecting documents) or work from staff after the customers leave (see back office functions below), there is always a chance that a customer is not satisfied and wishes to complain about the quality of their service. In this case, we asked Deputy Directors about the process of lodging a complaint, and how the complaint was resolved within the particular office. For most of the offices we visited, the majority of complaints from the customers were addressed and answered verbally; however, only written requests could be considered official and be processed further within the SSSS. Customers can provide a written complaint to the Director of the regional center or directly to the Complaints Division of the SSSS headquarters. If submitted to the main office, the letter is then referred to the corresponding regional center with a legal

requirement to provide a full and satisfactory response. If instead the letter is sent directly to the regional center, the complaint is assigned by the Director or Deputy Director to an inspector to provide a written explanation.

Unfortunately, these procedures are not well-publicized by the SSSS, as in nearly all Centers we visited, there were no signs explaining the order on provision of complaints and no boxes for requests placed at most Regional Centers. The only office that informed customers of the necessary rules was the Nor-Nork-Avan center, which placed a large sign on the wall encouraging customers to apply in writing in order to receive written responses.

The confusing nature of this procedure has sometimes resulted in serious disadvantages for applicants. For example, in accordance with the Law on Privileged Pensions, eligible applicants were receiving double rates, but a change in the law cancelled these privileges. Applicants who were not aware of the legal change continued to apply for these pensions in person, but were told verbally that the law had been changed, and thus were not tallied registering an official complaint. Some applicants did actually provide written complaints, however, and the Constitutional Court took this case and restored their privileged pension rights in January 2008. One of the unfair outcomes of that case is that recalculation of pensions to the original rates was made only for the applicants who had applied in written form.

Beyond the process of complaints, we also wished to know why applicants were complaining. The most frequently heard complaints according to SSSS staff concerned one's pension size or years of service, with payment service or eligibility issues coming a close second. Unfortunately, there are no records on the total number of complaints (verbal and written) at each office. On average, the Centers estimated that they received 10 written complaints per month. Complaints tended to increase in tandem with activity in the office, as one Deputy Directors noted that there was a jump in complaints after the January 1 change in pension assignments.

## **2.4 Work Flows: Back Office Functions**

After a customer leaves the office, or even before a customer comes in, there is a myriad of activity that must take place behind the scenes within the SSSS regional center to keep the office functioning smoothly. The functions that do not involve the customer directly include:

- IT and record-keeping;
- Responding to requests from other CIS countries; and
- Reporting to headquarters.

### **IT and Record-keeping**

Although the pension assignment and recalculation processes are computerized, a huge amount of manual and paper work is still required. A lack of unified databases for different social services provided by the MLSI (coupled with an intensely legalistic and bureaucratic mindset) has led social service providers to require reference letters on their customers from each other, thus increasing work burden for the staff and dissatisfaction from the clients. For instance certificates on social contributions paid and pension sizes are required by the Regional Social Services Agencies and Regional Employment agencies. This information is on the SSSS PARNAS database. Regional SSSS centers ask for years of contributory service from applicants,

and this information and supporting documentation has to be brought from other Regional Centers if the work place is has an address under different region, even though all of the information is stored on the same PARNAS database at headquarters. Many of Regional Centers we visited believe that it is not good customer service to ask an applicant to travel and collect all required certificates that justify their employment history; indeed, inspectors we spoke to thought that customers should just apply, bringing their passport, social security card (SSC), diploma, and workbook, and their contributory years of service would be verified by government agencies, via internal communication between SSSS Regional offices and SSSS headquarters. Under this scenario, the customer would come back to get his/her pension book and pension assigned. This should be possible once an overall information strategy that includes inter-agency information sharing within MLSI is in place. However, even before that major change is in place, at the very least, exchanges of information between SSSS offices that use one system – PARNAS - should be carried out internally without requiring the applicant to proceed to multiple offices.

The lack of coordination of documentation and the overlapping process of recordkeeping is personified in the general ledger (the “mother ledger,” as called by center employees), a book in each center where all incoming and outgoing documents were manually registered (usually by the secretary). However, for each individual type of activity in the office, the responsible person keeps a separate ledger where she/he recorded the date and key information on that particular case. In any office, there are ledgers on certificates received from SMEC, certificates provided to SESA and RSSA centers, and citizens on contributory years of service, ledgers on letters received from CIS countries, applicants for transportation benefits and other benefits from the All Armenian Fund, ledgers on funeral benefits and pension payments from depository, and so on. Depending on the assignment of responsibility, these ledgers are handled by different specialists, fragmenting information throughout the office in a non-user-friendly manner.

**Table 6: Availability of Communication**

Regional SSSS office	Number of telephone lines	Internal telephone line	Internet	Availability of copy machine	Availability of scanner
Center-1	2	No	No	No	Yes, not working
Center-2	2	No	No	No	Yes, not working Yes, not working
Shengavit	2	No	No	No	Yes, not working
Arabkir	5	No	No	Yes	Yes, not working
Nor Nork, Avan	4 lines but pension inspectors have no telephone	No	No	Yes	Yes, not working
Erebuni	5	No	No	Yes	Yes, not working
Shahumyan	4	No	No	No	Yes, not working
Kanaker -Zeytun	4	No	No	Yes	Yes, not working
Davitashen	2	No	No	No	Yes, not working
Mashtots	5	No	No	No	Yes, working

The problem of information dispersion in each regional office is exacerbated by the dire need for internal communication, i.e. internal network and telephone lines, as well as Internet (and Intranet) connections. In this area, many of the offices we visited still had a way to go. The center with the least amount of internal communication capabilities was the Shengavit regional

center, which had only two telephone lines – one for the pension division one for the personified reporting division. The other Regional Centers had, on average, 4 telephone lines, but these lines were geared for external use and there was no internal phone communication. This caused inconveniences in particular for the Regional Centers that had staff located on two floors, as external lines were constantly in use, and so, in order to clarify issues, staff members had to walk upstairs/downstairs several times during the day. Several offices reported that a telephone switch system (intercom) was installed many years ago; however no one was operating it at present. Finally, the offices visited were also lacking in internal e-mail communication (Table 6 provides a summary).

Even when data could be delivered and shared, storage of the data in archives remains a very serious issue for almost every regional center. Despite the aforementioned World Bank renovations, the archive rooms remained as they were before: small, unpleasant, and dusty. Unfortunately pension specialists need to deal with archived documents rather often, as frequent changes in legislation result in checking and/or reorganizing files. This causes exposure to dust and pollutants and requires repetitive bending and lifting. In several Regional Centers such as Kanaker-Zeytun and Arabkir the archive shelves stood behind the pension inspectors, with the inspectors constantly exposed to the accumulated dust, while in Kanaker-Zeytun the condition of the archives made it difficult to stay in the room even for a short time. The Nor Nork/Avan Center had the cleanest archives that we observed, as it was fortunate to be located in the building of Marzpetaran; due to its location, the Center received two rooms to place archives, so one in the basement was used for inactive files and one near the inspectors held active files.

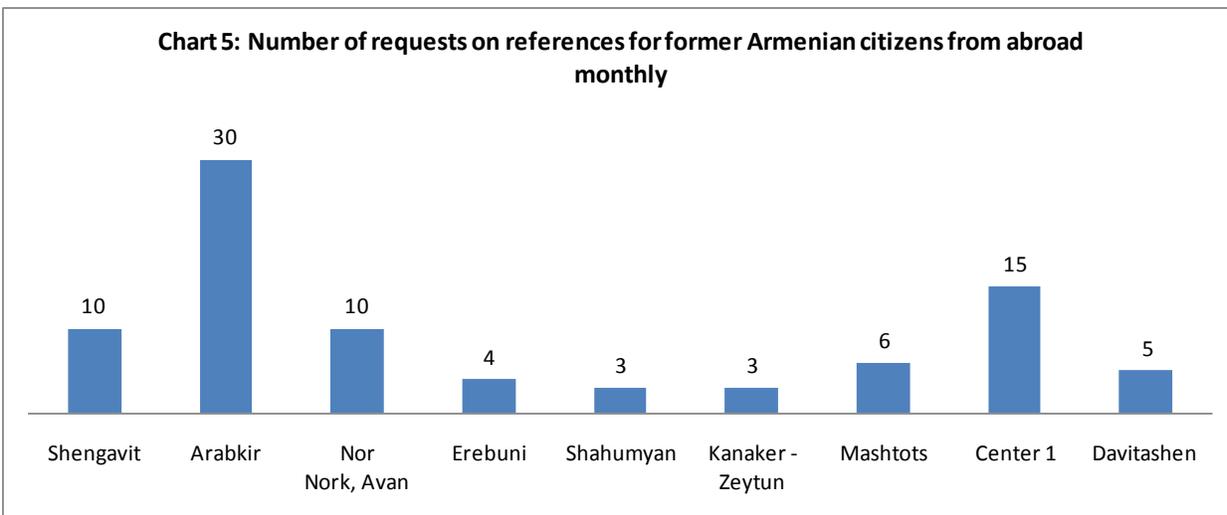
### **Responding to CIS Requests**

SSSS head office requires SSSS regional offices to respond to requests received from CIS countries that have bilateral agreements with Armenia on recognition of contributory years of service. Under this scenario, former Armenian citizens who currently have permanent residence in other countries apply for a pension in their new home country, the relevant pension agency in that country sends a request to Armenia to verify their years of service and the social contributions paid. An inspector then prepares a response, usually the inspector in whose geographic area the place of work is or was located.

While it appears to be a rather simple exercise to perform this verification, there are many difficulties that inspectors encounter. The inspectors are required to check from the personified database on whether the entity referenced for the employee is active, and in many cases the entity is no longer functioning. This requires detective work on the inspectors' part, as they must try to track down contacts from the company and arrange a meeting with the managers to verify the information and prepare the response.

Several Deputy Directors informed us that the Armenian centers send queries very rarely to other CIS countries (no more than one case per month), but, due to continued emigration from this country, the Regional Centers receive about 10 requests per month (see Chart 5). The exception to this average is the Arabkir regional office, which receives orders both from the HQ and from regional offices of all marzes, as the National Archive is located in their district. Normally, inspectors write a request to the National Archive for documents on companies that are no longer operating, and if there is a necessity to verify documents in the archive, they must then apply to

the Arabkir regional center to collect the documents. Thus the Arabkir center receives about 30-40 requests from Yerevan and 10-20 from other marzes to verify with the national archive the information on the employer and the employee mentioned in the CIS request, in addition to requests directly concerned with its geographic area.



### **Reporting requirements**

The last, but by no means final, back office function that we observed in the Regional Centers concerned reporting to the main SSSS office. Reporting on pensions is done mostly on a biannual and annual basis, but every 15th day a report is submitted to the home office on personified reporting. The operator and accountant prepare these regular reports, and information transmitted includes:

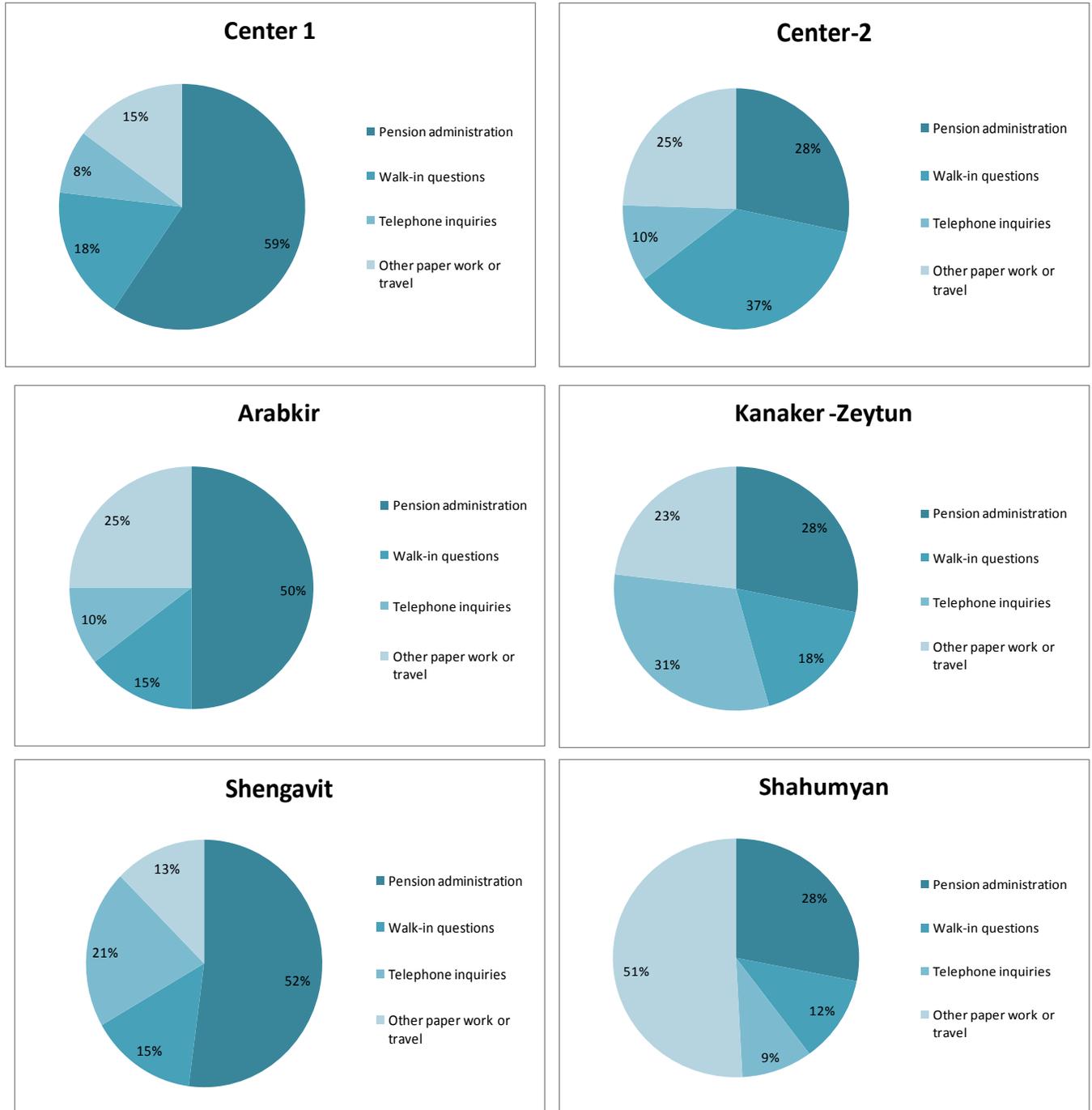
- Payment orders for the coming month
- List of monthly payments and financing sources
- Number of pensioners by pension types and size, average pension;
- Monthly references on World War II veterans' awards and monetary compensation
- Monthly references on military pensions as per the requests of military registration
- Other statistics per HQ request

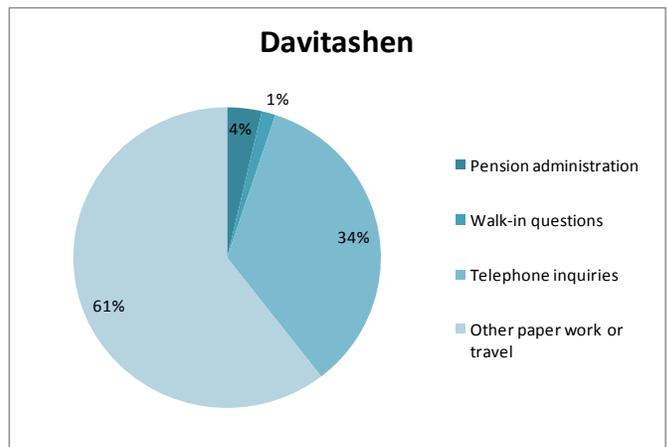
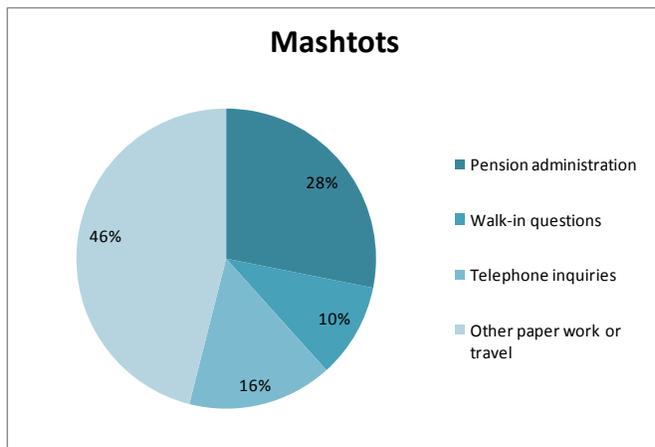
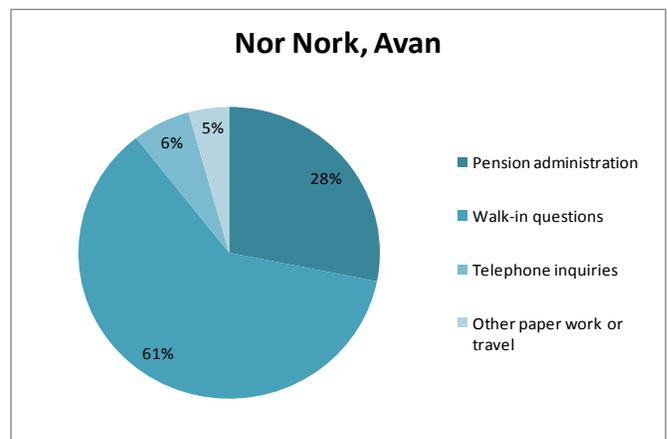
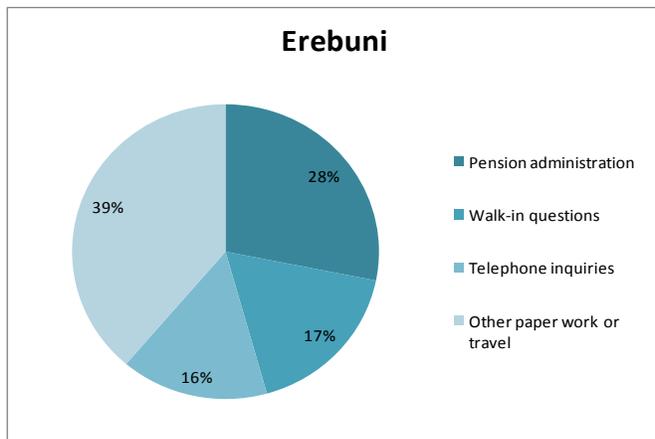
For the most part, there were no complaints or concerns regarding the current reporting system.

### **3. SPSS Recommendations**

Using all the above information collected, we attempted to estimate the average time an inspector spends at their job doing the various functions that are (and are not) outlined in their job description. The charts below outline our estimations for each office visited. It is important to note that these are only estimations and are approximate, but should offer a sense of what inspectors are engaged in. The comparative charts reveal that the pension specialists on average spent one third of their working hours on pension administration, about one third on responding to visitors and telephone queries, and the last third on different back office functions.

**Chart 6: Proportion of time spent per inspector by Regional Centers**





Within these functions, there were a number of issues that we observed in each of the areas where the SSSS can undertake improvements. While we understand the difficulties related to improvement of building and working conditions, and we also understand that big changes necessitate big expenses, we would like to highlight several points in the work processes in the SSSS offices that could be improved in current pension office operating in current office conditions and which are aimed to improve customer service.

### **Office accessibility**

Short of moving the pension offices or undertaking major capital improvements, there is little that can be done in the short run to improve office accessibility. The priorities for the SSSS in this field should be:

- Locating ramps: as the majority of the offices rent their space in municipal or other administrative buildings, we propose locating ramps in conjunction with the administration of the buildings in order to secure the access of persons with disabilities.
- Directories showing where the pension office is, which floor, and which direction, should be installed at each office, with the main SSSS office working with municipality buildings to allow their installation
- Signs within the office clearly labeling who is in which office, what are the hours of operation, and what the procedure is upon entering an office (who to go to first).

### **Equipment & furniture**

Equipment and furniture also are a difficult area for an agency facing budget constraints, so we will highlight only two areas that can be improved upon:

- Copy machines and an electronic filing system

Everyone we met, from Directors to pensioners, mentioned several times the need for copy machines in order to comply with Armenian legislation and provide copies for personal files.

While the cost of outfitting every single center with a copying machine could be prohibitive, nearly two years ago the World Bank provided each regional office with scanners. The scanners have unfortunately been underutilized since that time, but can provide a solution to the need for copies, as the scanners could be used instead of copy machines. This could be seen as an interim solution, or could be the way to initiate electronic record-keeping. This replacement could be useful not only for the pensioners who need to duplicate required documents but also for SSSS staff. Scanned documents are also easy to keep in electronic form as well as to print them upon request. This form of electronic filing system, if used for every new case, would gradually decrease the paper archive and eventually replace it. Also, movement towards an electronic archive will save time both for customers and pension administration specialists and free up space in the offices (we were happy to learn that after our meeting with the Mashtots center the administration started using the scanner to copy documents, and we hope to see this practice continued elsewhere).

As part of this recommendation, we believe that SSSS needs to prepare a decree of the Government changing the procedures for applying for pensions, allowing for the use of scanned documents as a substitute for copied documents in all possible instances, so that there is no ambiguity on their acceptability. Such an instruction can be created with the assistance of the SPSS Project. This would be in keeping with Government's recent push towards e-governance and need not wait for changes to the pension law. Finally, pensioners should not be made to pay for the scan (or copies, if available), as this service is required by the government and should be provided by the government. Likewise applicants should not be required to pay for making copies of SSSS forms. The Government decree should similarly address this issue.

- Waiting facilities and services

Our observations lead us to recommend that the Regional Centers should have a separate reception area, with two or three employees dealing with inflow and outflow documentation (or at least a secretary / receptionist) and answering the general questions of customers. If this were not a viable solution in the short-term, the minimum would be to provide chairs for pensioners so they do not have to stand while waiting.

### **Need for new staff**

Above, we noted that each Center suggested additional staff that it needed in order to better fulfill its service delivery. The purpose of this exercise was not to identify new staffing needs or recommend the hiring of new staff, but rather to see the processes as currently performed by the current staff in the office. While we agree that certain functions need to be performed in the office, this does not necessarily mean hiring more staff, but could mean a rationalizing of roles within the offices; a more comprehensive examination of staffing in each center would be

necessary to draw these conclusions and is beyond the scope of this analysis. That being said, we could identify some points in the business processes that can be improved through a reassignment of tasks or that need to be clarified through a staffing analysis:

#### *Secretary / Receptionist*

Many offices requested a secretary or receptionist. We believe this is a realistic and important request for improving workflows. Each of the offices, even if they were adequately signed, needs a point of first contact, and a secretary would be able to direct pensioners to the appropriate office. Some offices had already designated a pension specialist as the first contact, and in most offices the Deputy Director acted as the *de facto* receptionist, but having a person to solely service people coming in and presenting information to pensioners will help to improve work flow considerably.

#### *Driver*

This was a logical request, as all the regional offices are provided with cars but no drivers; in reality, this leads to Center Directors personally driving the office cars, and there are only a few offices (Nor Nork-Avan and Shahumyan) where the managers help the staff with business transportation issues and/or drive themselves for the office needs. However, as the most transportation issues refer to post distribution and delivery, we would suggest the SSSS main office centralizes its post delivery service (at the beginning for Yerevan offices only, then rolling out to the regions). This will reduce traveling needs for operational staff as well as their workload.

#### *Technical Staff (cleaners, electricians, plumbing specialists)*

This is a difficult issue as most of the centers share their areas with other municipal or administrative institutions, and such kind of technical issues are regulated by Lease Agreements signed by SSSS administration. This needs to be negotiated between the SSSS and the regional offices, and needs may be mitigated somewhat by the move towards integrated service centers.

#### *Psychologist*

The issue of having a staff psychologist was brought up by several offices as a result of work the inspectors must do with problematic clients. Having analyzed the current situation, we would rather recommend organizing periodical trainings for SSSS personnel to learn “how to serve difficult clients” instead of having permanent psychologists at the offices. Such courses would help to improve the Customer Service as well as would teach how to help the client without hurting him or herself.

#### **Improvement of Current Staff**

In addition to the (possible) addition of new staff, it is more important to maximize the time and abilities of staff that are already working in the Regional Centers. Improving current business processes would require some additional training for current staff:

- Training on business process mapping

This training would help SSSS administrators and managers to better understand the work carried out in their offices and would enable them to make changes in their office structure (if needed) more easily.

- Training of new pension assignment specialists

While making our survey we noticed that the personnel in each center were of roughly the same age, an issue will arise when all current staff will be close to retirement age and ready to be on the other side of the desk. Thus far, there have not been many plans made to deal with this eventuality.<sup>5</sup> For example, during the absence of one pension specialist, the Regional Center Administration prefers to use internal resources to cover that inspectors' work rather than hiring someone from outside (this happens even in case of long-term sick or maternity leaves). This approach has worked to this point because of the professional nature of current staff. However, it is at best an ad hoc solution, and we would recommend SSSS administration begin organizing trainings for new pension assignment specialists in order to be ready for future staff turnover.

- Training of specialists on information technology

In general, the pension specialists of the SSSS have not had the opportunity to become familiar with the application of information technology to administrative processes, a problem compounded by the only recent availability of computers and technology in the workplace in Armenia. In order to fully harness the benefits of IT applied to pension administration, we suggest that the SSSS, and regional centers' administration in particular, help to design computer trainings that can help specialists perform their jobs better. The computer needs in each office may differ substantially, so it is up to the administration to provide input and help design an appropriate schedule for their own employees. Trainings would also need to be recurring in order to adapt to the implementation of the social sector-wide IT strategy.

- Training of specialists on customer service techniques

This includes training on how to handle difficult customers, how to listen well, and other strategies of improving the wellbeing of staff and customers alike.

### **Public awareness and information availability**

There was a general lack of information for the public at every Center we visited (see Table 7): most of the regional offices only had a poster produced at headquarters that informed pensioners about the SSSS hotline. There were notable exceptions to this rule, such as the Shahumyan Center, which had a special board with important information on pensions and hotline service. The Director of the Shahumyan Center encouraged information via posters, as he believed that the more information is provided on the walls, the more customer respect to the agency. While a noble attempt to communicate information, the limited budget of the Shahumyan Center meant that the documents printed were not of the highest quality, and, more troublesome for pensioners who have trouble with their sight, the documents were difficult to read.

A key point in information dissemination is the need to keep pensioners informed of current events and any changes in the system. Despite the significant increase in pensions implemented

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<sup>5</sup> This is clearly a training issue, but may also be a matter of human resources planning. As people retire, a question arises whether they should automatically be replaced, or whether resources should be redirected to other offices. As an example, some areas of Yerevan have the number of pension applications falling because of the composition of the population in the district is changing, as people move out to other areas, where the number of applications is increasing. These patterns should be taken into account in planning for the future, rather than just hiring replacements for current positions, in order to respond most effectively to customer needs.

from January 2008, and the need for pensioners to come into the offices for recalculation, there was no information or explanation of the changes in pension calculations neither on the walls nor with the pension inspectors. This lack of information tracked a weakness in explaining the calculation of pensions in general, as there were no examples of pension calculation formulas that could be given to beneficiaries.

Along these same lines, there was no explanation available in the offices on why certificates for contributory years of service from 1991 to 2004 were required for pension recalculation. To obtain this certificate pensioners must find their employers from these years, a task which is not always easy to do (as many of companies were closed, merged or changed their addresses). Obtaining such a certificate can sometimes require several weeks chasing after them, justifiably raising discontent with the administration (although this is in reality a policy decision).

**Table 7: Availability of written information at the Regional Centers**

Regional office	SSSS	Information board	Posters on the walls	Room signs	Working hours	List of required documentation
Center-1		Yes	Hotline poster	Numbers only	No	No
Center-2		No	Hotline poster	Numbers only	No	No
Shengavit		No	Hotline poster	Yes	No	No
Arabkir		No	Hotline poster	Numbers only	No	No
Nor Nork, Avan		No	Hotline poster, written request requirement	Very detailed signs	Lunch hours	No
Erebuni		No	Hotline poster	Numbers only	No	No
Shahumyan		Yes	Hotline poster, other important information	Numbers only	No	No
Kanaker -Zeytun		No	Hotline poster	No	No	No
Davitashen		Yes	Hotline poster	Yes	Yes	No
Mashtots		No	Hotline poster, other information	Name of the division	Lunch hours	Yes

Other recent policy developments in the pension system were likewise not advertised in the administrative centers. For example, there was a deadline of April 10, 2008 assigned for registration for partial pensions of teachers and other eligible specialties, but no reminders or notices were given neither at the regional offices nor via media outside of the centers. Pension inspectors cited the lack of proper public outreach as a problem. They pointed out that they would face difficulties in providing explanations on further registration impossibility to new applicants who would necessarily appear after the April 10th.

To increase the quality of customer service and also the productivity of the pension administration processes the Regional Centers should have full information available both on the walls and on paper with the pension inspectors. So, the following steps could be initiated in order to find ways to get information to people applying for pensions:

- Prepare and print lists of documents required for assigning each type of pension (as has been done in the Mashtots center)

One of the most time-consuming processes we observed occurred when a pensioner arrived to open a new pension, but did not have the necessary documents. This wasted the pensioner and

the inspector's time, as the pensioner had to make an extra trip to the office. By creating a list of the documents required and widely disseminating it, the SSSS could avoid this. The list would need to be available for pensioners to take home, it would be posted on the wall, it would be available at post offices and on the website, and can be provided by an inspector if all of these other safeguards are missed.

- Develop fact sheets for each type of pension containing proper and relevant information for pensioners, including eligibility criteria (to help each person understand which pension would apply to him/her).

Perhaps our most important recommendation, the development of fact sheets will help to avoid needless questions. Inspectors can use these fact sheets when answering questions, thus lending them an air of authority that pensioners might not believe exists, and every inspector who is asked a question that is answered by a fact sheet provides the same fact sheet to the questioner.

Similar to the document lists, these sheets can also be distributed in the offices themselves, the website, and post offices (which are quite frequently used by the old age population). It is also possible to mail the fact sheets to people who call and ask questions.

- Print posters containing other useful information including modifications in pension assignments and laws.

This will save on phone calls and visits at off-peak times just for answers.

- Use TV and Radio to spread information as well as printing booklets and posters on regular basis.

As part of a regular public outreach campaign, well-placed media can also help diffuse questions and direct traffic more efficiently.

- Provide examples on how to calculate a pension, both in print and on the calculator on the SSSS website.

This would also help the applicants to check and be confident with the pension assigned.

These recommendations can improve the communication from the SSSS to pensioners, but also assist in reducing the amount of time that inspectors have to deal face-to-face with customers. It also reduces the necessity for pensioners to come into the office.

### **Time management and productivity**

The recommendations on public outreach are but a first step towards better management of processes. Several easy steps can be undertaken to increase work efficiency.

First of all, as noted in the information section above, there is a need to communicate clearly the information that is needed by a pensioner, and thus reduce the number of explanations that an inspector has to make. Ways to do this include:

- Improve hotline services

With better hotline information and proper training of current hotline staff (with an experienced pension specialist available when necessary), customers will be provided with professional and reliable answers. Another enhancement to the hotline would be to develop scripted answers to the most common questions. Each hotline call could either be routed to a prepared script, or to a specialist if necessary. Inspectors must also refer pensioners to the hotline, again to give it an air of authority. A final way to direct pensioners to the hotline is more drastic, but worked in the United States: eliminate or change the phone numbers for regional offices, so that pensioners must call the hotline. Only then, if the issue cannot be solved at the central level, can it be passed on to the regional level.

- Develop standard complaint forms and a place to leave complaints

In order to register or process the complaint it has to be submitted in writing, therefore we propose that the other offices encourage their pensioners to submit all complaints, claims, or suggestions in writing as done in Avan and Nor Nork offices. This will also protect them and will help to recover their rights after possible legislative changes (for instance, the decision of the Constitutional Court of January 2008 on privileged pensions).

, Placing boxes for comments and /or complaints can help track areas that are needed for improvement and make it easier to answer the complaints. Having a designated area for complaints can also ease the work of pension inspectors and hopefully reduce telephone calls.

Additional recommendations refer to the organization of development of internal business processes:

- Make it possible for pensioners to schedule a time to come to the office.

While the concept of “the appointment” appears to be somewhat foreign in Armenia, introducing a scheduled time slot for pensioners would help to regulate foot traffic and spread out visitors over the day. This would also reduce waiting times for pensioners. This will, of course, not show dividends immediately, but with rigid enforcement, people will learn that a person with an appointment will be seen before a person without an appointment.

- Introduce other ways of assigning pension specialists

The current method of assigning specialists based on postal code may allow pension specialists the ability to get to know their clients and become familiar with each pensioner’s specific issues, but the method can also be a hindrance to moving people through the office. In particular, the need for each pensioner to see a specific specialist can cause problems if that specialist is sick or on holiday, and the restriction on who can be seen can also cause unnecessary back-ups in the office if several people from the same postal code arrive at the same time. While they are indeed pension “specialists,” should be very knowledgeable on all aspects of pension administration and policy, in dealing with the public they should be generalists and able to serve anyone who comes through the door. In addition, eliminating the assignment of a particular specialist to each applicant would have an anti-corruption effect.

- Improve application forms in a way to reduce the need for handwritten responses

The emphasis on signatures, seals, and multiple hard copies is very crippling to an office, and is hard on the population that the SSSS serves. As a way to reduce the need for handwritten responses, for example, the names of required documents needed to apply for pensions could be printed and numbered on the forms in advance and, if a pensioner forgets any of them, the necessary ones would be marked but not written manually. More importantly, the as noted above, in keeping with its e-governance policy, the Government could instruct SSSS as to which forms can be provided electronically or physically.

- Have pension specialists enter data into the system while they are interviewing the applicant

This would be a significant change, but would eliminate much of the paperwork that now exists (and thus the need for physical archives). Direct entry also avoids the extra step of writing something down and then entering it later (which might introduce errors), and can be checked via a printout at the point of entry. The applicant could be required to sign a printed form. This simple change would move the SSSS towards electronic archiving and processes very quickly, and our observation was that the regional offices have the equipment to sustain such an idea. The saving of time by pension specialists would also allow reorganization of work allocations in the offices.

- Process CIS application information requests from the Head Office or a single office

A great deal of time is wasted by the processing of these requests first at Head Office and then at the regional offices. We propose revising and clarifying this procedure together with the MLSI and SSSS (for instance, to consolidate the functions related to queries to CIS countries).

### **Intermediate IT Enhancements**

SSSS should not have to wait for the information strategy being developed by MLSI (the SPSS project is providing assistance in this regard and we are not restating those efforts here) or for the definitive state of the art corporate network to be provided by the World Bank. Some changes can and should be made immediately to improve the lives of SSSS staff and customers, and these are our final recommendations.

- Edit current software so that it allows for automatic recalculations

The current software package does not give the inspectors a chance to automatically calculate the pension for the given month in case there was an error in calculation or during recovery of deposit amounts (the inspectors have to manually calculate and enter the discrepancy in the computer).

This will also allow for editing the software so that errors may be discovered while the person is still present, in order to improve the accuracy of information.

- Install Internet Connection to all the Regional Centers or have an internal network between Regional Offices and the Head Quarter in order to stop hand delivery of data base updates.

SPSS recognizes that this is a large project that will require a large investment by the MLSI and SSSS, and is being addressed by the World Bank project. But interim less expensive solutions have been proposed (establishment of social services integrated data exchange model) and will not only help with better use of time, but will also reduce issues related to transportation. In order to improve efficiency, this is the biggest and most comprehensive step that the SSSS can take.

- Access PARNAS

All regional offices should have constant access to the updated PARNAS database.

- Provide SMEC decisions to SSSS electronically

SMEC provides its decisions in the form of paper certificates hand carried to the SSSS Regional Centers. At the same time, the original SMEC cards are physically submitted to the local offices by those who claim for disability pension. As soon as SMEC start providing electronic data and there be a social services integrated data exchange model, several intermediary actions will be left out (for instance, automated calculation of pension amount while changing the disability category).

These recommendations can all be undertaken in a fairly quick manner, and together, they can bring advances in productivity for the SSSS offices. We at the SPSS Project look forward to further discussions of these recommendations, and to working with SSSS in their implementation through the course of this Project.

## 4. Attachments

### **Attachment 1: Regional Center Assessment Checklist**

CENTER:

DATE VISITED:

1. *Office staff*  
Total number of \_\_\_\_\_, broken down by:
2. *Number of pensions handled annually/monthly*
3. *Number of people that visit the office daily/annually*  
*How does the intake process work?*
4. *Reasons for visits to the office*  
*How are general questions referred?*
5. *Number of requests on references for former Armenian citizens from abroad*  
*weekly/monthly*
6. *How long office visits take*
7. *Number of telephone inquiries fielded daily*
8. *Reasons for phone calls*
9. *How long the calls are*
10. *How long it takes to assign a pension*
11. *How long it takes to recalculate a pension*
12. *How long it takes to suspend or terminate a pension*
13. *Time devoted to other tasks in the office*
14. *What difficulties are encountered in the office, and what could be improved?*
15. *What kind of complaints from customers are received, in what form*  
*How the answers are processed / Recorded?*
16. *Reports prepared by this office/how often*
17. *How often queries are received from HQ*  
*What types of queries?*
18. *Other Comments*

## Attachment 2: Visit Reports

### REGIONAL CENTER ASSESSMENT

CENTER: **Centre-2, Yerevan**

DATE VISITED: 2.1.08

#### 1. Office staff

Total: 13 (not including the cleaner)

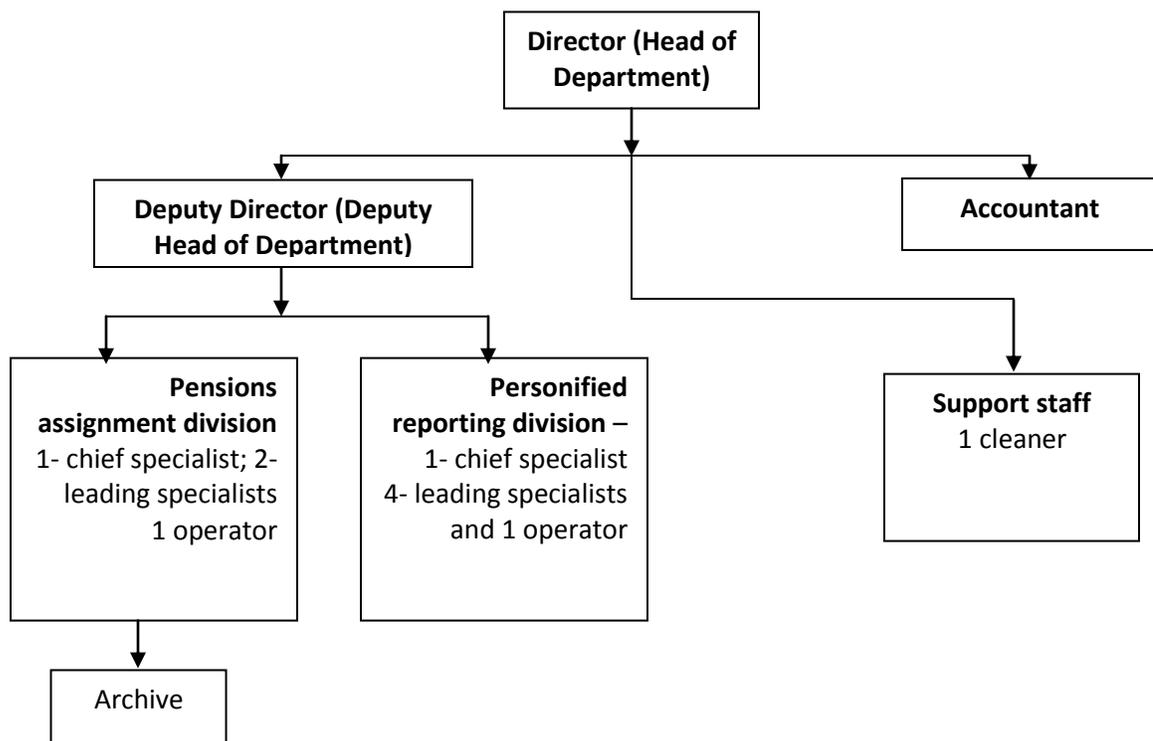
1 Director

1 Deputy Director

1 bookkeeper/accountant

Pension Department: 3 caseworkers or inspectors, plus one computer operator

Personified Recordkeeping Department: 5 specialists plus 1 operator



The Director is a manager, but the Deputy Director seems to be more critical, as he must sign all decisions. Signing authority is split between them, as whenever one is away, the other can sign documents.

#### 2. Number of pensions handled annually/monthly:

13,000 cases, of which 12,000 are active and paid out (in the last year). Cases are split equally by address amongst the inspectors

#### 3. Number of people that visit the office daily/annually:

Estimated at about 100 per day, about 30-35 per inspector (one inspector noted she gets 15-30 per day, with the most she's seen in one day 30 people).

*How does the intake process work?*

- Person enters the front door and goes to room 1 where the inspectors are located (no receptionist or sign)
- No queuing procedure – just a mass of people.
- Person is directed to one of three inspectors, depending on where they live
- Forms filled out according to category (new pension, recalculation, reference on social payment)
- Person sent away and application entered first into log book and then into the computer

4. *Reasons for visits to the office:*

Pensions are about 20 per day per inspector for pensions and recalculations, rest are for references

*How are general questions referred?*

First point of contact is inspectors, so they answer general questions

5. *Number of requests on references for former Armenian citizens from abroad weekly/monthly:*

Did not specify

6. *How long office visits take:*

Between 5-15 minutes; depending on the person, and the lack of information (appropriate forms) and need to explain. Observations of people entering confirmed the brief nature of visits.

7. *Number of telephone inquiries fielded daily:*

“The phone rings constantly” – Deputy Director

No concrete estimate, but phone rang 5 times in Deputy Director's office over the hour we were there, so estimate 45-50 per day

The listed phone number on Spyur goes directly to the inspectors, but still people can reach the Deputy Director via phone

Cell phones used extensively because the landlines are tied up with questions

8. *Reasons for phone calls:*

General questions, including forms needed, how to apply, etc. Deputy Director said there was no change in the volume of calls since the SIF Hotline was created.

9. *How long the calls are:*

They did not have an idea of how long each call takes

10. *How long it takes to assign a pension:*  
Approximately 20 minutes.

11. *How long it takes to recalculate a pension:*  
Approximately 15 minutes.

12. *How long it takes to suspend or terminate a pension:*

13. *Time devoted to other tasks in the office*

Time devoted solely to public interaction, filing, data entry, and lunch break; Deputy Director said, "There is no time for anything else."

14. *What difficulties are encountered in the office, and what could be improved?*

Need of copy machine and air conditioners, necessity of having a secretary and improvement of archives

15. *What kind of complaints from customers are received, in what form:*

Mostly related to the location (4<sup>th</sup> floor)

*How the answers are Processed/Recorded*

Mostly in verbal form.

16. *Reports prepared by this office/how often:*

Done in accordance with the procedures. General reports are prepared quarterly.

17. *How often queries are received from HQ:*

*What types of queries*

Cannot specify

18. *Other Comments:*

- Second office with difficulties to reach – on the fourth floor, difficult for pensioners.
- Reiterated a need for a copying machine – government regulations require pensioners to have copies of their documents, there is no copy machine there.
- Access database used to keep track of pensioners; fairly advanced and built and maintained by the Mathematical Institute.
- Journal system is extensive: journal kept for pensioners and recalculations, journal kept for employers with list of employees, journal kept of deceased pensioners and if next of kin has been paid a lump sum.
- Deputy Director mentioned that the systems in the office were good right now, but she'd like to have less paper in the office – more computerization was a desirable goal
- Deputy Director also liked the idea of inputting directly into computer, then producing a printout as a hard copy. Worry that in case of legal dispute, there would be no hard copy; also noted that the application functions as an inventory of documents (which could also be done electronically).

- She mentioned that many times inspectors have to fill out the forms for pensioners, because they have “poor eyesight.” This would also argue for direct input.

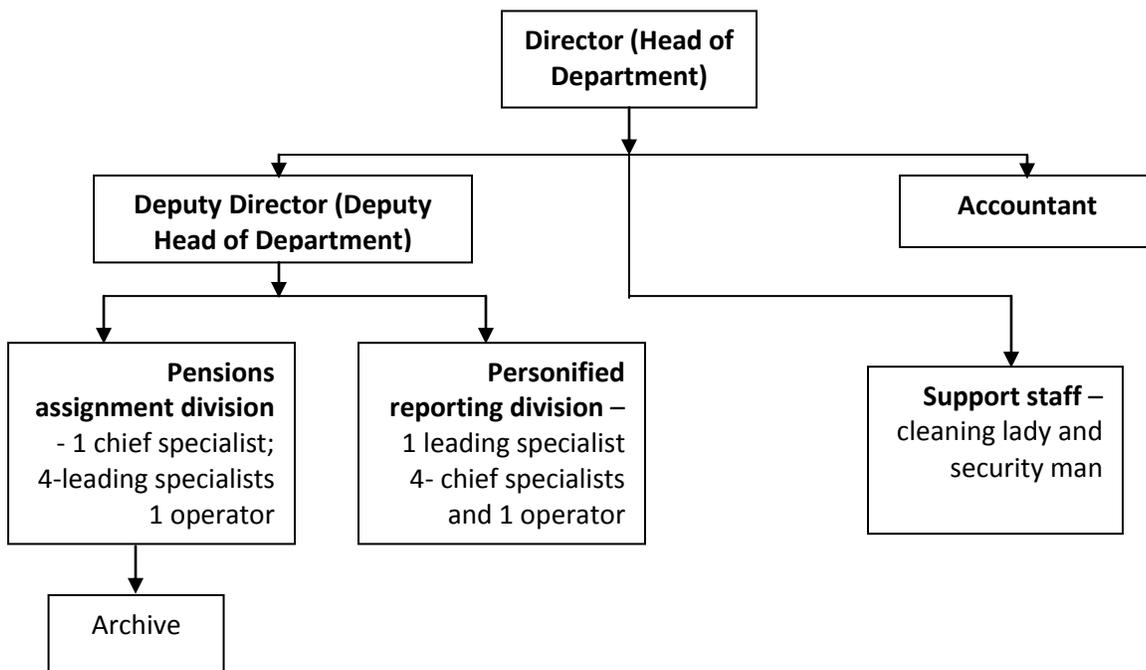
## REGIONAL CENTER ASSESSMENT

CENTER: **Shengavit**, Yerevan  
 DATES VISITED: 2.6.08, 2.7.08  
 Telephone – 44-20-41

### 1. Office staff

Total number given as 16, broken down by:

Director -  
 Deputy Director (DD) - Martirosyan  
 Accountant – T. Hakobyan  
 6 pension people (1 operator and 5 specialists - 4 chief specialists, 1 leading specialist)  
 6 personified reporting people (of which 1 operator, 1 chief specialist, 4 leading specialists)  
 Cleaning Lady  
 Security



(n. B. it took about 10 minutes to get this number and the breakdown, and it still wasn't right – they said that they had 5 personified people and then gave us a breakdown of 6.)

### 2. Number of pensions handled annually/monthly

25,000 case files present in the office, of which 23,000 are active.  
 DD noted that each inspector handles 5,000 cases (active and inactive).

3. *Number of people that visit the office daily/annually*

Estimated at about 300 daily for all functions (pensions, recalculations, references), with 120 new pensions done per month.

The busiest times are between 10-4 (with a break from 1-2 – however, the DD is still on duty and so may answer phones and receive customers).

Observation of inspectors' work showed 23 pensioners come in over 30 minutes, some of which overlapped with lunch (the Deputy Director said this was a "slow time"). This would extrapolate to 368 visitors per day, so their number is probably accurate.

*How does the intake process work?*

- According to the DD, signs on the ground floor direct people to the correct floor. Then they can either go to the DD or the inspectors. Signs were observed but were not very visible (and were only printed on paper and taped up).
- Upon entering the inspectors' room, a pensioner goes to the appropriate inspector. They are divided by address and postal code, with the postal code written on a sign above the inspectors' heads. The Director said general questions could be answered by anyone, but apparently not pensions (while Hasmik spoke with an inspector, two people waited behind her, even though other inspectors were free – one even sat at another inspector's desk with the inspector there).

4. *Reasons for visits to the office/Functions of the Office*

- Pension assignment and calculation for new retired persons
- Explanations on eligibility terms especially for women (there was no poster on the wall explaining this information)
- Explanations on individual score of pensioners in the pension allocation formula (also no poster on the wall or information available)
- Recalculate pension size after every modifications in formula or legislation (according to the regulations received from the HQ and changes made in the software)
- Every two years recalculate pension size for pensioners who continue to work
- Response to applications on social contributions paid by customers during their insurance work experience
- Clarifications on years of service and contributions paid
- Put record on the size of recalculated pension in the pension books of customers
- Registration of teachers for partial pension assignment according to requirements of the law
- Registration, calculation and recalculation of pension for people with disabilities according to certificates received from SMEC offices
- Registration, calculation and recalculation of pension for families or children who loss the breadwinner or parent (no certificate is needed if child remains with mother or father, in case of other relatives a court decision on guardianship is needed)
- Funeral benefit provision to inheritors of pensioners who passed away according to the certificates received from the Death registration offices
- Recovery of suspended or terminated pensions upon the order received from the HQ.
- Provision of certificates to RSSA and SESA offices for Family Benefits allocation or for unemployment benefits allocation
- Transfer or acceptance of pensioners case to/from another RSIF office

- Provision of certificate on contributory years of service in cases of written queries from abroad – mostly from Russia
- Site visit in cases when inspector has concerns on information submitted by customer or organizations.
- Query to city or national archive
- Provision of payment request to Payment agency on 25<sup>th</sup> of each month

*How are general questions referred?*

The Deputy Director is the first office on the floor, and people either stop in to him or go directly to the second door, where the inspectors are.

Any inspector can answer general questions.

5. *Number of requests on references for former Armenian citizens from abroad weekly/monthly*  
SSSS regional offices receives requests from the customers for clarifications of contributory years of service, as well as receiving orders from HQ to respond to requests from countries having bilateral agreements with RA on contributory years of service (for former Armenian citizens currently having permanent residence in other countries and applying for a pension).

Approximately 2-3 per week come in, and the inspectors are required to actually go to the workplaces noted in the letters to verify the employment of these people. In most cases, the turnaround for these requests is only 10 days.

The process:

- The request is registered with the secretary and passed to the Director. The requests can be either for a certificate justifying that the person really works with the mentioned entity or for years of contributory service and salary received.
- Director refers it to Inspector who according to the work distribution scheme is responsible for this activity.
- The inspector registers the request letter in the special registration book manually
- The inspector attempts to contact the HR department of the mentioned entity.
- If the entity is active and functions properly, the inspector makes an appointment with both HR and accountant,
- Visits the entity, looks through the records if they exist
- Receives an official statement from the business
- Writes a response (in Armenian for local use and in Russian for out-country use), and submits for Directors signature and stamp,
- If the records are not at the entity, the inspector comes back and writes an official request to City or Republican Archive.
- Give the request for Directors signature, sends and waits for response.
- If there is a response, they write a response, submit to the Director.
- If the company is no longer active (the search of the entity may take more than a week) the inspector tries to get any information on the entity. If it failed to apply to National Archive or there is no official response from the Archive, the inspector writes an official response of non-verification.

6. *How long office visits take*  
Estimated at about 5 minutes. Observation confirmed most visits took between 2-10 minutes.

7. *Number of telephone inquiries fielded daily*  
Deputy Director said “without exaggeration,” 200 phone calls per day.

While in the Director's office for an hour, phone rang 3 times; while in the inspectors' room for 30 minutes, phone rang 7 times.

There is one phone number for pension assignment division one phone number for personified reporting division. Phone calls go to receptionist, who transfers to one of the two other lines – personified reporting or the DD/inspectors.

Most heavy phone call days – 5 days before payments and 3 days after payment

According to the DD, of the phone calls, 20% of queries are directed to hotline while 80% of Shengavit district questions are directed and responded by inspectors.

8. *Reasons for phone calls*

Number one reason was asking for what documentation was necessary for a pension.

9. *How long the calls are*

Unknown.

10. *How long it takes to assign a pension*

5 minutes, if all documentation is there. May take longer for older pensioners; inspectors are authorized to help them fill out the application.

*Process of assigning a pension*

- Customer calls to know or visits to find out what type of documentation is needed for pension assignment.
- Having the documents required (employment book, passport, Social security card, photos, Diploma, army record book (for males if they served in the army), certificate on disability group from SMEC if disabled, documents required in case of lost of breadwinner, reference on social payments from the companies the person worked for after 1992, and copies of all of these documents) the customer visits the office, writes an application (the SIF/SSSS standard application form, which sometimes the inspector helps the customer to fill in).
- If some of documents are missing the inspector puts a note in the application, agrees with the customer on the day the customer should bring them.
- For new pensioners, the inspector opens a new folder, fills all available information manually and attaches the application. Puts the folder in the corner of the table. For existing cases she goes to archive and brings the folder, attaches the application, and puts aside.
- If all documents are complete the customer is requested to take the application and requested documents to the Deputy Director for his approval for further processing.
- The customer brings the signed application with documents back to inspector and is asked to revisit after 10 days.
- If Deputy Director finds any inconsistency, he explains the problem to the customer and asks for additional or proper documents, then sends the application back to the inspector
- The Inspector puts the approved application into the relevant folder at the end of the room, where all papers for Director signature are collected and, at the end of the day or early morning the next day, the Deputy Director takes the bunches of applications received during the day to Director for his revision and signature.
- After receiving the Director's signature on the applications, the inspector records them in his record book manually, gives a number to the applications and enters the information into the

- computer. For new pensioner, the inspector opens a new case in the software, while for an existing one the inspector enters new information in the existing file.
- The software calculates the pension; the output is printed and attached to the set of relevant documents (this is called a Calculation-order).
  - The inspector brings the bunch back to Deputy Director for approval.
  - The Deputy Director compares information in the output with the one in the attached hand-written documents. If correct, he approves, if not asks to correct and reprint for approval
  - Once approved the inspector marks the case in the computer as accepted. In the software there are two parts for each case – the inspecting part and accounting part. The inspector fills in both parts. Inspector completes work with inspecting part, saves it, and then opens the accounting part and inputs relevant information. If there is no preference of the customer, the inspector notes that the pension should be paid by Payment service; in cases where the customer has a bank account (only VTB), the inspector enters the bank account in the proper fields and saves the changes. The case is ready for processing by the accountant, who verifies and sends to operator to be processed for monthly payment lists (see accountant process map).
  - The printout of this work is attached to customer's folder and kept in archive.
  - The customer returns after 10 days, receives his or her passport, social card, other documents, and pension book stamped by the Director
  - The inspector puts a stamp in the labor book of the customer that he/she is a pensioner.
  - If the pensioner continues working, the inspector informed that after 2 years the pensioner should revisit the office to recalculate the pension size. The inspector cannot initiate a special notification, as the software does not provide the possibility to remind either the inspector or the pensioner. The inspectors in Shengavit suggest that the best option is for the employer of the pensioner to remind the pensioner of this step.

11. *How long it takes to recalculate a pension*

May take longer than 5 minutes, but no time was given.

*Process of recalculation*

Similar to a new pension.

12. *How long it takes to suspend or terminate a pension.*

In case a customer does not receive a pension for 6 months, the computer program automatically suspends and deposits it. Any pension that has not been received for 12 months is terminated and can only be restored by HQ. In order to reinstate a pension:

- Inspectors or other SSSS regional staff members go to the HQ General Department 2 times a week (Tuesday and Thursday) and receive all post including notifications on restoration of terminated pensions.
- Registers restored pension case in special manual
- Finds the case in depository section of the computer and brings the folder from the archive
- Restores the file in computer (inspecting section)
- Compares since when the pension was unpaid
- Makes calculations accordingly
- Sends case for payment

13. *Time devoted to other tasks in the office*

- Queries to city or national archives – upon request from CIS countries or customers to check their work experience – includes writing a letter, signature of the Director, - 10-15 min

- Provision of certificates to RSSA and SESA offices for Family Benefits allocation or for unemployment benefits allocation – depends on the list of beneficiaries – 20-30min once the request from SESA or RSSA received.
- Verification of years of service – can be more than 2 hours: usually 10-15 min
  - The customer visits the office and asks to verify the years of his/her service within his workbook.
  - The inspector looks up the customer's file in the software and tells the customer the number stated there and the list of records (where and when the customers worked).
  - If the customer agrees with this report, the process ends
  - If the customer is not satisfied, the inspector refers the customer to the Deputy Director,
  - After speaking with the DD, if the customer is satisfied, the process ends (this happens most frequently). If the customer is not satisfied, they are requested to write an official request to HQ or to clarify with his/her former employers
- Registration of death and funeral benefits:
  - The customer applies to the Payment Service with appropriate documents of the person who passed away and with their Death Certificate,
  - The Payment Service checks the documents, provides the application form and refers the customer to the appropriate regional SSSS
  - The customer visits the SSSS office and brings the death Certificate and other documents requested: if the application is for funeral benefit the documents requested are Death certificate and passport and Social Card of the person who is receiving the benefits; If it is for pension the death person does not received for last month/months (before the 7<sup>th</sup> of the month), the requested documents are: Death certificate, applicants passport and Social card, certificate from the Registration Office that the person is habiting in that address. If the person is registered with the same address they could receive e the pension amount next month, if not registered they can receive the amount after 6 months with authorization of the Notary. In this case the process is handed by the Accountant, who has proper ledger for registration of applications authorized by the notary. See accountant part
  - The inspector who is assigned for this action receives the documents and applications, then brings the folder from the archive and opens the file on the computer.
  - The inspector compares the last pension payment to the died person, notes in the computer that the case is terminated,
  - Put the amount to be paid in the appropriate field of the accounting part of the software case and saved the case. Print the summary case (Ñ³ßÇí i»Õ»İ³.Çñ) signs and attached to the case folder.
  - The inspector attached the copy of Death Certificate to the folder too, while the original copy, the second copy and the whole package is handed to the customer, who is asked to go to Deputy Director
  - The deputy Director stamps the Death Certificate and gives it to the customer while he signs the summary case and asked it to take back to the inspector.
  - The customer takes the folder back to inspector
  - The inspector gives the original Death Certificate and its copy to the customer and tells to go to payment office next month to get the funeral benefit and pension the death person had not received. Note: without the SSSS stamp on Death Certificate the customer cannot get funeral benefit.
  - While the inspector gives the summary case and the folder to accountant for revision

- The accountant checks the papers and if all correct asked the operator to include the case in the payment lists: funeral benefits separate list and pensions not paid in other list.
- The operator entered the case in appropriate lists and printed the payment request. Every Thursday and Tuesday the SSSS operator sends a payment list on funeral benefits to Payment Agency – see operator process map.
- The accountant signs the case summary and gives it back to inspector
- The inspector puts the case in archive. – End of process
- Partial Pensions:
  - Teachers and those who are entitled to partial pension should visit the SSSS office early before they turned to 55 and be registered as eligible (*before April 1<sup>st</sup> 2008*).
  - When the time for pension allocation comes, the customer visits the office with a special form from the organization he/she was employed with and the pension assignment process starts.
- People with disabilities visit SSSS to be registered as pensioners or to recalculate their pension according to the results of the commission
  - A SMEC employee brings the extracts to SSSS
  - The relevant SSSS inspector registers them in the manual and signs the SMEC manual to confirm the receipt
  - If the person is a new customer, the inspector opens a new a new folder and waits for the person to visit (proceeding with the new pension process as described above)
  - If the customer is already registered, the inspector takes the customer’s folder from the archive and waits for the person to visit, proceeding with the pension steps noted above.
- The office also handles cases where citizens change their places of residency:
  - They apply to the SSSS office to transfer their files to the SSSS office of their settlement.
  - The customer calls or visit to know what papers are needed, the inspector asks for a written request, with a certificate on the place of residency, passport, social card
  - SSSS office receives an written request from the citizen with requested papers
  - The relevant inspector registers the request in the special manual
  - The inspector accesses the customer’s file in the archive and opens the file in the computer,
  - The inspector marks the case in her computer as terminated, prints 2 copies of the attestation, and sends it for Directors signature.
  - One copy is kept in the customer’s file in the archive (5 years at SSSS, then they are passed on to the National Archive). The second is handed to the customer with the rest of documents
- Restoration of rights of inheritance
  - If a person who applied for a pension amount that was not received by a deceased pensioner is a relative not registered with the same address as the pensioner, he/she should bring an authorization letter from a Notary, the Death certificate, the applicant’s passport, and the Social card.
  - The accountant provides an application form, which the relative fills in and the accountant then registers it in her special manual.
  - The operator opens the file on the computer and checks how many months the pension was not paid.
  - She writes on the application form the amount to be paid and signs it
  - The applicant takes the application to deputy director and director for approval

- The approved application comes to accountant, who signs it and gives it to the operator
- Operator runs the payment request – following the payment process
- The accountant keeps the copies of Death Certificate and application and Notary authorization in a special folder – end process.
- Operator takes the payment lists to payment service every Tuesday and Thursday – end process.
- Payment of benefits funded by the All Armenian Fund
  - No computer processes, just a manual registration and manually recorded cards submitted from ALL Armenian Fund to SSSS and from SSSS to Post Office for payment (only the accountant is responsible for this process). The SSSS receives the list of beneficiaries from All Armenian Fund and the amount of benefit to be paid. The beneficiary is registered with SSSS at the accountant office in her ledger, and has file with copies of relevant documentations.
- If the citizen has an unpaid debt to the State
  - The SSSS receives an official letter from the Office of Compulsory Execution of Judicial Acts, where the name of the pensioner who had a debt to the State is mentioned, with amount of the debt and amount the SSSS had to cut from the pension and pay to the Bank account mentioned in the letter each month, the package includes also Court Decision and copies of other documents needed.
  - The Accountant is responsible for processing these cases. She registered the letter in her ledger.
  - The accountant together with operator are verifying whether the mentioned pensioner is registered with their SSSS or not, If not they prepare appropriate letter give Director to sign and send back – end process,
  - If the pensioner is registered with their SSSS the accountant calculated what percent of the pensioners benefits should be deducted and for what period.
  - The operator put the percent in the appropriate field of the case file
  - The letter is attached to the special folder and is kept with accountant.
  - The inspector has nothing to do with this case, she just see the change in the software and calculates the pension payment for the next month upon that change
  - The operator is responsible for debt payments: she is running the software, which automatically produced a list for similar cases, where the amount which the pensioner will get from the Payment service or Bank is mentioned; the amount that should be paid on account mentioned in the letter received from the Office of Compulsory Execution of Judicial Acts is mentioned and how much has been already paid and how much is left to be paid.
- The debt amount is not paid on monthly bases. Every 3 month the operator transfers the accumulated amount to the bank account mentioned in the letter received from the Office of Compulsory Execution of Judicial Acts.
- If the debt is paid the SSSS informed in written to the Office of Compulsory Execution of Judicial Acts and also restore the pension in their software.
- The process can be terminated if the pensioners die (no money is taken from the funeral benefit); and if the pensioners himself/herself pays the debt and brings the bank receipt to SSSS.
- The same process is carried out also in case of alimony and is terminated in case the child turns 18.

14. *What difficulties are encountered in the office, and what could be improved?*

- Requests from Russia are the hardest and most unpleasant work

- Repeated explanations on changes and modifications are provided and can be simplified through providing posters and handouts
- Customer flow is huge, while the inspectors' room is small and noisy,
- There is only one phone station for 6 people

15. *What kinds of complaints from customers are received, in what form? How the answers are processed/Recorded?*

- The customer provides a written complain on pension size or years of service or other areas to Director or to HQ Complaints division.
- The letter is assigned to corresponding inspector for written explanation
- Director signs and the customer could get the response either from regional or HQ office.

In addition, the DD tells pensioners that any complaints they have regarding inspectors can be brought back to him immediately.

16. *Reports prepared by this office/how often*

Reporting is done to HQ on biannual and annual basis

Reports handled by the accountant include:

- Preparation and on time submission to HQ of the lists of monthly payments and financing sources for past month
- Preparation and on time submission to HQ of the payment orders for the coming month
- Preparation of monthly references on average pensions as per RSSA requests and Preparation of Acts for RSSA representative
- Preparation of monthly references on the receipt of pensions as per SESA's request
- Preparation of monthly references on military pensions as per military registration offices requests
- Preparation of monthly references on World War Two veterans' awards and monetary compensation

17. *How often queries are received from HQ*

*What types of queries?*

See above.

18. *Other Comments*

- Third office visited with difficulties to reach – on the third floor, difficult for pensioners to ascend stairs.
- Deputy Director has huge role in this office– he supervises the activities of two divisions (pensions and personified reporting) but mostly is involved with the pension assignment division's work. He also provides advice or directs/refers customers to right inspector or provides consultation in cases when inspector is busy or out of the office or if the customer is not satisfied with explanations provided by the inspector.
- It is important that the inspectors should know even the laws and procedures that are no longer active, as many people needs to be explained in details what has changed since Soviet times. New inspectors not always know and face problems with providing explanations (probably we should also ask how it goes with new hired inspectors and how often they pass trainings and receive updates and materials)

## **Operator**

### Main responsibilities:

1. Input of pension payment list-register,
2. Verification of amounts
3. Acknowledging Director, deputy director and accountant in case of inconsistency or mistakes revealed
4. Preparation and on time submission to HQ the lists of monthly payments and financing sources for past month
5. Preparation and on time submission to HQ the payment orders for coming month
6. Preparation of monthly references on average pension as per RSSA requests Preparation of an Act for RSSA representative
7. Preparation of monthly references on receipt of pensions in as per SESA's request
8. Preparation of monthly references on military pensions as per military registration offices requests
9. Preparation of monthly references on World War Two veterans' awards and monetary compensations.
10. Registration of deceased pensioners in a special manual in order to show how many funeral benefits were paid for the past month.

### Workload:

References from 1-10<sup>th</sup> of each month

Comparison of payments with provided lists from 15<sup>th</sup>

Preparation of payment lists from 25 - 28<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> of following month

### A. Input of pension payment list-register

1. Receives payment registers and Acts on total payments from Payment services and Saving Banks
2. Inputs information into computer system accordingly
3. Compares total figures in operator established payment lists and payment registers submitted by Payment Services and Saving Banks
4. In case of inconsistency of total amounts starts checking each payment register or even pensioner's payment if needed (for new assignments checks if the pensioners are in the system)
5. Makes an Act on comparison for Payment services and Saving Banks accordingly
6. Reports on discrepancies to Deputy Director (Deputy Department Head), Accountant and Director
7. If there are particular pensioner related inconsistencies sends information to appropriate inspector for checking
8. Checks, verifies all payments in the system
9. Establishes a distribution list on Insured Pensions for Payment services and Saving Banks accordingly
10. Establishes separate lists on pensions, rewards and monetary compensations for free transportation to participants and veterans of the Second World War, funeral benefits, amounts needed for repayment of pensions not received for 6-12 months (from depository),
11. Revises and verifies the lists, identifies the ways of payment (through Payment Service or Saving Banks)
12. Compares lists with ones for previous months
13. For all established lists gets signatures from Deputy Director, Accountant and Director
14. Prepares references to each person

15. Makes an Act on how many of the requested people were given references and how many of them not.
16. Prepares payment orders
17. Submits payment orders to HQ

## **Accountant**

### Main responsibilities:

1. Verification of proper documentation and authorization for payment of:
  - a. pensions (all types)
  - b. rewards and monetary compensations for free transportation to participants and veterans of the Second World War,
  - c. survivors benefits to children and parents of participants of Karabakh War paid through All Armenian fund
  - d. benefits to veterans of Karabakh War with First Group of Disability paid through All Armenian fund
  - e. funeral benefits, and payment of pension amounts not received by persons who passed away to their heritors
  - f. amounts needed for repayment of pensions not received for 6-12 months (from depository),
2. Verification and authorization of payment receipts submitted to and received from the Payment agency and VTB bank
3. Verifies the changes in pension types

### Verification Process

1. At the end of each month – 21-22<sup>nd</sup> day the inspectors submitted the cases in folder that required pension assignment or changes in pension types or pension size to accountant (about 100 cases each month each case takes 10-15 min).
2. The accountant verifies whether the information in summary case is fully corresponding to the information of documents submitted (usually the passport and social security numbers are printed incorrectly or many other similar small omissions)
3. If the case is correct the accountant signs it, submitted Deputy Director for final signature and gives it back to inspector to put into archive also informed the operator that the case is OK can be processed.
4. If there is a mistake, the accountant asked the inspector to take the case back and revise and informed the operator not to process the case.
5. The inspector revises the case both in hard and soft copy and submitted to accountant
6. The accountant signs the case, takes the case to Deputy Director explains the reason of changes and getting his signature gives the hard copy back to inspector and asked the operator to process the case.
7. At the end of each month (22-23<sup>rd</sup>) the operator run the payment request program and prints the list of payments to be paid by each case with distribution – type of payment amount, period.
8. Checks all names in the list, if there is missing information (no payment in front of the case) informed the Deputy and appropriate inspector to revise, if there is no missing case she printed the payment request and submitted the accountant for verification.
9. The accountant is signing and passing to Deputy for verification,
10. The deputy is signing and passing Director for verification
11. The operator takes the signed and stamped payment list both in soft and hard copy to HQ for approval.
12. If the data are fully compile with the ones at HQ software the operator get the signed and stamped lists and verified soft copy, brings it back to SSSS

13. She printed the payment lists in the proper format for the Payment Service and VTB bank (includes list of pensioners, type of payment and amount to be paid also a roster that contains the total amount due to pay, number of beneficiaries, field where the Payment agency writes down the amount paid, number of recipients and sum left unpaid, the roster is returned to SSSS after the payments are completed 10<sup>th</sup> of the next month) – end process

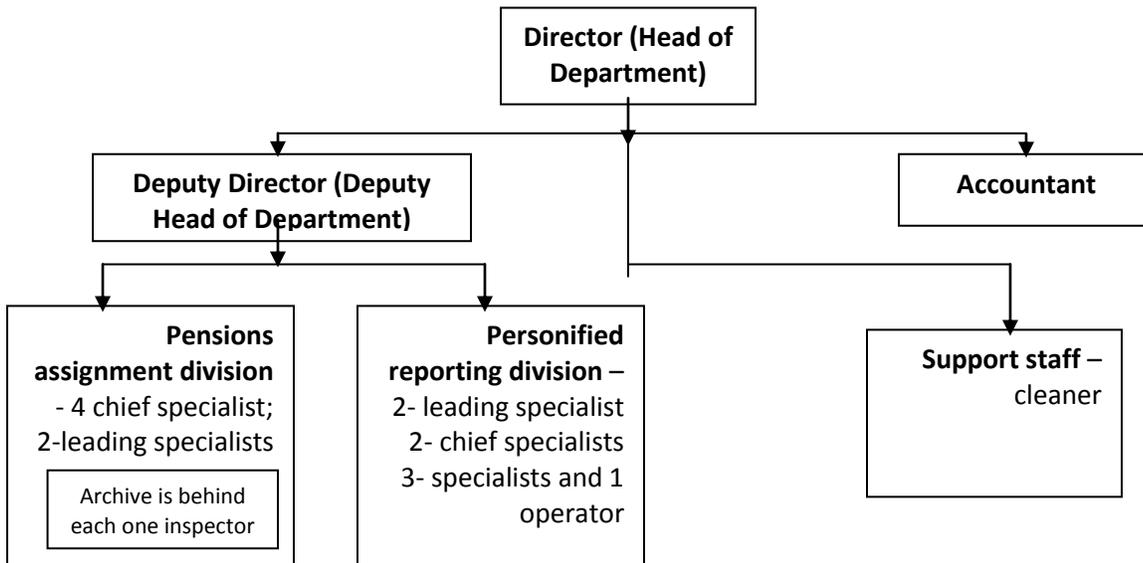
## REGIONAL CENTER ASSESSMENT

CENTER: **Arabkir**, Yerevan  
 DATES VISITED: 26.02.08 and 29.02.08  
 Telephone

### 1. Office staff

Total number given as 19, broken down by:

Director – Hovhaness Hovhanissyan  
 Deputy Director (DD) – Anahit Azaryan  
 Accountant – Arevik Abrahamyan  
 7 pension people (1 operator and 6 specialists - 4 chief specialists, 2 leading specialist)  
 8 personified reporting people (of which 1 operator, 2 chief specialist, 2 leading, 3 specialists)  
 Cleaning Lady



*(n. B. The Director asked secretary to print the list of employees; we received the list in 10 min. As usual, the Director knows everything but Deputy Director is the most important link between director and inspectors and customers and inspectors. She also is always in her place – the first door once you enter to the office and so she knows who is coming, why they’re coming, and to whom people are coming to see. The Director briefly described the functions of all his employees, stressing that he has a manager’s qualification and knows how to distribute the jobs and workload among employees. So: accountant is responsible for salary calculation and pension size*

determination, and for the whole accounting in their office. She even supported the customers to understand their pension size by calculating in front of the customers their pension size if needed.

**Main difference from Shengavit:** 4 inspectors are working on pension administration, while 2 are responsible for social security card processing and responding to requests received from different agencies: these 2 deal with all other inquires, letters received from SMEC, SESA, RSSAs, and are also responsible for keeping cards on payments of benefits through the All Armenian Fund to veterans and families of participants in the Karabakh war. What is interesting is that these two inspectors were taken from the pension administration i.e. prohibited to deal directly with pensioners because of their impolite attitude to pensioners.

Again there is no internal communication between the Personified reporting team and the pension administration team, but one of the employees of the Personified reporting division was assigned as a secretary to support Director. The Director used to clarify issues related to changes in pension administration directly with the Head of SSSS)

**Very important: they have 5-6 telephone lines**

2. *Number of pensions handled annually/monthly*  
24,000 case files present in the office, of which + or - 2000 are inactive.  
Thus, each inspector handles about 8,000 cases (active and inactive).
3. *Number of people that visit the office daily/annually*  
Estimated at about 100-150 daily for all functions (pensions, recalculations, references). Though Arabkir center has a relatively small number of new pension assignments, they have more work in pension recalculation. During our interview with the Deputy Director, almost every second or third minute she accepted a visitor; different queries, complains, for signature, her staff, payment office driver; but what was interesting was that during our 2 hour interview, her phone rang 4 times but not one was related to pensions. In Shengavit the DD was answering to telephone call almost every other minute.

Observation of the inspectors' work showed 4 pensioners come in over 30 minutes. This was on second half of the day after 4PM (first day of interview) so may not represent the actual volume (as this would mean only about 64 people a day).

**Like in Shengavit**, the busiest times are between 10-4 (with a break from 1-2 – however, the DD is still on duty and so may answer phones and receive customers).

*How does the intake process work?*

- According to the DD, signs on the ground floor direct people to the correct floor. Then they can either go to the DD or the inspectors. Signs were observed and were very visible compared to Shengavit (and were only printed on paper and taped up).
  - Upon entering the inspectors' room, a pensioner goes to the appropriate inspector. They are divided by address and postal code, with the postal code written on a sign above the inspectors' heads. **Similar to Shengavit**
4. *Reasons for visits to the office/Functions of the Office: Similar to Shengavit*
    - Pension assignment and calculation for new retired persons
    - Explanations on eligibility terms especially for women (again there was no poster on the wall explaining this information)

- Explanations on individual score of pensioners in the pension allocation formula (also no poster on the wall or information available)
- Recalculate pension size after every modifications in formula or legislation (according to the regulations received from the HQ and changes made in the software\_ every day they have a person assigned to go to HQ to take the post and bring post from HQ, no car is provided)
- Every two years they recalculate pension size for pensioners who continue to work – no notification is sent to beneficiaries.
- Response to applications on social contributions paid by customers during their insurance work experience (this information is available from 2004, from 1992 to 2004 they referred the customers to National archive to bring the statement on contributions)
- Clarifications on years of service and contributions paid
- Put record on the size of recalculated pension in the pension books of customers
- Registration of teachers for partial pension assignment according to requirements of the law
- Registration, calculation and recalculation of pension for people with disabilities according to certificates received from SMEC offices (**difference from Shengavit:** in a policy instituted by the DD, once inspectors receive the cards from SMEC, the inspectors call the beneficiaries who are then invited for pension recalculation. At the end of the month the DD checks the appropriate folder whether there are cards left unprocessed and the inspector reports the reason).
- Registration, calculation and recalculation of pension for families or children who lose the breadwinner or parent (no certificate is needed if child remains with the mother or father, but in the case of other relatives a court decision on guardianship is needed)
- Funeral benefit provision to inheritors of pensioners who passed away according to the certificates received from the Death registration offices
- Recovery of suspended or terminated pensions upon the order received from the HQ.
- Provision of certificates to RSSA and SESA offices for Family Benefits allocation or for unemployment benefits allocation
- Transfer or acceptance of pensioners case to/from another RSIF office
- Provision of certificate on contributory years of service in cases of written queries from abroad – mostly from Russia (**difference from Shengavit:** the inspectors who deal with pension administration do not travel for these quires. The above mentioned two inspectors deal with outside requests and contact with employer site visits only in cases when there are concerns on information submitted by customer or organizations; Query to city or national archive). The pension inspectors travel only in cases when the applicant for pension is disabled and had no possibility to visit the office and has no one who can be authorized to process their case.
- Provision of payment requests to Payment agency on 25<sup>th</sup> of each month

*How are general questions referred?*

The Deputy Director is the first office on the floor, and people either stop in to her office or continue directly to the third door, where the inspectors are. The doors are numbered, but only in order rather than by process (i.e. door number 1 is the Deputy Director instead of a receptionist or the inspectors).

Any inspector can answer general questions.

5. *Number of requests on references for former Armenian citizens from abroad weekly/monthly*

There are about 30-40 for Yerevan and an additional 10-20 from other marzes to verify with the national archive, which is located in the Arabkir district. ***Difference from Shengavit and other offices***

Arabkir SSSS regional offices receives orders from HQ to respond to requests from countries having bilateral agreements with RA on contributory years of service (for former Armenian citizens currently having permanent residence in other countries and applying for a pension) and from regional offices of all marzes of RA, as the National Archive is in their district. Last year they were also forced to apply to the National Archive for cases of other Yerevan offices, in addition to their own. But as the DD informed us, she finally won the struggle with HQ and now the Yerevan offices write a request letter directly to National Archive.

The process:

- The request is registered with the secretary and passed to the Director. The requests can be either for a certificate justifying that the person really works with the mentioned entity or for years of contributory service and salary received.
- Director refers it to the inspector who is responsible for this activity.
- The inspector registers the request letter in the special registration book manually
- The inspector attempts to contact the HR department of the mentioned entity.
- If the entity is active and functions properly, the inspector makes an appointment with both HR and accountant, sometimes it takes 2-3 visits to meet the appropriate person if the entity is not active or works is seasonal.
- Visits the entity, looks through the records if they exist
- Receives an official statement from the business
- Writes a response (in Armenian for local use and in Russian for out-country use), bring to DD for verification and submits for Directors signature and stamp,
- If the records are not at the entity, the inspector comes back and writes an official request to City or Republican Archive.
- Brings to DD for verification and gives the request for Directors signature, walk to archive with daily post and waits for response.
- If there is a response, they write a response, submit to the Director.
- If the company is no longer active (the search of the entity may take more than a week) the inspector tries to get any information on the entity. If it failed to apply to National Archive or there is no official response from the Archive, the inspector writes an official response of non-verification.

6. *How long office visits take*

Estimated at about 5 minutes. Observation confirmed most visits took between 2-10 minutes.

7. *Number of telephone inquiries fielded daily*

According to the Director, of the phone calls, they “don’t have time to track” the number of phone calls or their reason daily, but to a “certain extent” there was a slight drop-off due to the HQ hotline. Inspectors said “without exaggeration,” more than 100 phone calls per day.

**Difference from Shengavit:** There are two phone numbers for pension assignment division, one phone number for personified reporting division; one phone number for deputy, and one for director.

8. *Reasons for phone calls*

The number one reason was asking about what documentation was necessary for a pension.

9. *How long the calls are*  
Unknown.

10. *How long it takes to assign a pension*

5 minutes, if all documentation is there. May take longer for older pensioners; inspectors are authorized to help them fill out the application. *Similar to Shengavit*

*Process of assigning a pension*

- Customer calls to know or visits to find out what type of documentation is needed for pension assignment.
- Having the documents required (employment book, passport, Social security card, photos, Diploma, army record book (for males if they served in the army), certificate on disability group from SMEC if disabled, documents required in case of lost of breadwinner, reference on social payments from the companies the person worked for after 1992, and copies of all of these documents) the customer visits the office, writes an application (the SIF/SSSS standard application form, which sometimes the inspector helps the customer to fill in). The application form consists of two parts, the first part is filled and left with inspector, and the second part is filled and submitted to customer. The second part contains field where the inspector writes down what documents are missing, and when the customer had to bring them, when the application was submitted and when the customer could come to take the pension book,
- If some of documents are missing the inspector puts a note in the application, agrees with the customer on the day the customer should bring them.
- For new pensioners, the inspector opens a new folder, fills all available information manually and attaches the application. For existing cases she takes from archive the folder, attaches the application and new documents.
- Asks the customer to see the DD for signature
- The customer brings the bunch of documents and application to DD, she looked at the application, verifies the customer and passport photo, signs on the top of the application, which means that she has seen the pensioner, and gives it back to customer to take back to inspector. If the pensioner is working she asked the pensioner to write on the application that she/he was informed to revisit the office after two years to recalculate the pension size.

*Difference from Shengavit*

- The customer brings the application and folder back to inspector.
- *Difference from Shengavit:* If all documents are complete the customer is requested to come back in 7 days while the inspector takes all the package to the secretary at the end of the day for stamp, and for Director's approval
- After Directors signs it goes to Deputy for final revision and approval.
- If Deputy Director finds any inconsistency, she asks for additional or proper documents, then sends the application back to the inspector
- After receiving the Deputy Director's signature on the applications, the inspector records them in her record book manually, gives a number to the applications (no codes are used, just a number assigned sequentially) and enters the information into the computer. For new pensioner, the inspector opens a new case in the software, while for an existing one the inspector enters new information in the existing file.
- The software calculates the pension; the output is printed and attached to the set of relevant documents (this is called a Calculation-order).
- The inspector brings the bunch back to Deputy Director for approval.

- The Deputy Director compares information in the output with the one in the attached hand-written documents. If correct, she approves, if not asks to correct and reprint for approval
- Once approved the inspector marks the case in the computer as accepted. In the software there are two parts for each case – the inspecting part and accounting part. The inspector fills in both parts. Inspector completes work with inspecting part, saves it, and then opens the accounting part and inputs relevant information. If there is no preference of the customer, the inspector notes that the pension should be paid by Payment service; in cases where the customer has a bank account (only VTB), the inspector enters the bank account in the proper fields and saves the changes. The case is ready for processing by the accountant, who verifies and sends to operator to be processed for monthly payment lists (see accountant process map).
- The printout of this work is attached to customer's folder and kept in archive.
- The customer returns after 7 days, receives his or her passport, social card, other documents, and pension book stamped by the Director
- The inspector puts a stamp in the labor book of the customer that he/she is a pensioner.

11. *How long it takes to recalculate a pension*

May take longer than 5 minutes, but no time was given. The only difficulty is the certificate on contributions that, since 1992, they ask the customer to bring from employer or archive. The **Arabkir DD** was strongly against this procedure, as she believes it harms the old pensioners and forces them to spend extra money and efforts to rich the previous employer or archive for the certificate.

*Process of recalculation*

Similar to a new pension.

12. *How long it takes to suspend or terminate a pension.*

In case a customer does not receive a pension for 6 months, the computer program automatically suspends and deposits it. Any pension that has not been received for 12 months is terminated and can only be restored by HQ. In order to reinstate a pension:

- **Difference from Shengavit:** Every Monday and Thursday the SSSS regional staff members (the DD assigns a duty for every inspector both pension or personified report to travel to HQ. no transportation costs are reimbursed) go to the HQ General Department and receive all post including notifications on restoration of terminated pensions. Responses are submitted to HQ every (Tuesday and Friday)
- Registers restored pension case in special manual
- Finds the case in depository section of the computer and brings the folder from the archive
- Restores the file in computer (inspecting section)
- Compares since when the pension was unpaid
- Makes calculations accordingly
- Sends case for payment

13. *Time devoted to other tasks in the office*

- Queries to city or national archives – upon request from CIS countries or marz offices – includes writing a letter, signature of the Director, - 10-15 min letter, 2-3 days site visits,
- **Provision of certificates to RSSA and SESA offices for Family Benefits** allocation or for unemployment benefits allocation: if the request refers to customers who are registered in other offices the requests are provided by the lists and the operator is responsible for responding to that list. She filled the list, DD signs, Director stamps, Division 6 inspector

- registered in her ledger and sends to RSSA or SESA. If the customer is registered with their district of service, the operator prints a statement where she mentioned the pension size, the DD signs, the director stamps, the Division 6 inspector registered in her ledger, keeps one copy with her and gives the original statement to the customer. Time for operator depends on the list of beneficiaries – 20-30min once the request from SESA or RSSA received. Time for individual cases – 5 min, time for customer 15-20 min
- Verification of years of service – can be more than 2 hours: usually 10-15 min
    - The customer visits the office and asks to verify the years of his/her service within his workbook.
    - The inspector looks up the customer's file in the software and tells the customer the number stated there and the list of records (where and when the customers worked).
    - If the customer agrees with this report, the process ends
    - If the customer is not satisfied, the inspector refers the customer to the Deputy Director,
    - After speaking with the DD, if the customer is satisfied, the process ends (this happens most frequently). If the customer is not satisfied, they are requested to write an official request to HQ or to clarify with his/her former employers
  
  - Registration of death and funeral benefits:
    - The customer applies to the Payment Service with appropriate documents of the person who passed away and with their Death Certificate,
    - The Payment Service checks the documents, provides the application form and refers the customer to the appropriate regional SSSS
    - The customer visits the SSSS office and brings the death Certificate and other documents requested: if the application is for funeral benefit the documents requested are Death certificate and passport and Social Card of the person who is receiving the benefits; If it is for pension the death person does not received for last month/months (before the 7<sup>th</sup> of the month), the requested documents are: Death certificate, applicants passport and Social card, certificate from the Registration Office that the person is habiting in that address. If the person is registered with the same address they could receive e the pension amount next month, if not registered they can receive the amount after 6 months with authorization of the Notary. In this case the process is handed by the Accountant, who has proper ledger for registration of applications authorized by the notary. See accountant part
    - The inspector who is assigned for this action receives the documents and applications, then brings the folder from the archive and opens the file on the computer.
    - The inspector compares the last pension payment to the died person, notes in the computer that the case is terminated,
    - Put the amount to be paid in the appropriate field of the accounting part of the software case and saved the case. Print the summary case (Ñ³ßÇí ï»Ö»İ³.Çñ) signs and attached to the case folder.
    - The inspector attached the copy of Death Certificate to the folder too, while the original copy, the second copy and the whole package is handed to the customer, who is asked to go to Deputy Director
    - The deputy Director stamps the Death Certificate and gives it to the customer while he signs the summary case and asked it to take back to the inspector.
    - The customer takes the folder back to inspector
    - The inspector gives the original Death Certificate and its copy to the customer and tells to go to payment office next month to get the funeral benefit and pension the

death person had not received. Note: without the SSSS stamp on Death Certificate the customer cannot get funeral benefit.

- While the inspector gives the summary case and the folder to accountant for revision
- The accountant checks the papers and if all correct asked the operator to include the case in the payment lists: funeral benefits separate list and pensions not paid in other list.
- The operator entered the case in appropriate lists and printed the payment request. Every Thursday and Tuesday the SSSS operator sends a payment list on funeral benefits to Payment Agency – see operator process map.
- The accountant signs the case summary and gives it back to inspector
- The inspector puts the case in archive. – This ends the process.
- Partial Pensions:
  - Teachers and those who are entitled to partial pension should visit the SSSS office early before they turned to 55 and be registered as eligible (*before April 1<sup>st</sup> 2008*).
  - When the time for pension allocation comes, the customer visits the office with a special form from the organization he/she was employed with and the pension assignment process starts.
- People with disabilities visit SSSS to be registered as pensioners or to recalculate their pension according to the results of the commission ***Different from Shengavit***
  - A SMEC employee brings the extracts to SSSS to secretary
  - The relevant SSSS inspector is called and signs in the SMEC ledger that she receives the cards
  - The cards are stamped and the inspector takes them
  - Registers them in the manual and ask the appropriate pension inspector to come and take the card
  - The inspector signs in the ledger that she receives the SMEC card and goes to her office
  - The inspector starts calling the customer and invites to office to be registered if it is a new case and to recalculate pension if it is repeated commission
  - If the person is a new customer, the inspector opens a new folder (proceeding with the new pension process as described above)
  - If the customer is already registered, the inspector takes the customer's folder from the archive, proceeding with the pension steps noted above.
  - At the end of each month the DD checks how many cards are left unprocessed and why. She is very strong in this issue.
- The office also handles cases where citizens change their places of residency:
  - They apply to the SSSS office to transfer their files to the SSSS office of their settlement.
  - The customer calls or visit to know what papers are needed, the inspector asks for a written request, with a certificate on the place of residency, passport, social card
  - SSSS office receives an written request from the citizen with requested papers
  - The relevant inspector registers the request in the special manual
  - The inspector accesses the customer's file in the archive and opens the file in the computer,
  - The inspector marks the case in her computer as terminated, prints 2 copies of the attestation, and sends it for Directors signature.
  - One copy is kept in the customer's file in the archive (5 years at SSSS, then they are passed on to the National Archive). The second is handed to the customer with the rest of documents

- Restoration of rights of inheritance
  - If a person who applied for a pension amount that was not received by a deceased pensioner is a relative not registered with the same address as the pensioner, he/she should bring an authorization letter from a Notary, the Death certificate, the applicant's passport, and the Social card.
  - The accountant provides an application form, which the relative fills in and the accountant then registers it in her special manual.
  - The operator opens the file on the computer and checks how many months the pension was not paid.
  - She writes on the application form the amount to be paid and signs it
  - The applicant takes the application to deputy director and director for approval
  - The approved application comes to accountant, who signs it and gives it to the operator
  - Operator runs the payment request – following the payment process
  - The accountant keeps the copies of Death Certificate and application and Notary authorization in a special folder – end process.
  - Operator takes the payment lists to payment service every Tuesday and Thursday – end process.
- Payment of benefits funded by the All Armenian Fund *Difference from Shengavit* this is done by one of the 2 inspectors of division 6 not by accountant
  - No computer processes, just a manual registration and manually recorded cards submitted from ALL Armenian Fund to SSSS and from SSSS to Post Office for payment (only the accountant is responsible for this process). The SSSS receives the list of beneficiaries from All Armenian Fund and the amount of benefit to be paid. The beneficiary is registered with SSSS at the division 6 inspector's office in her ledger, and has file with copies of relevant documentations.
- If the citizen has an unpaid debt to the State *similar to Shengavit*
  - The SSSS receives an official letter from the Office of Compulsory Execution of Judicial Acts, where the name of the pensioner who had a debt to the State is mentioned, with amount of the debt and amount the SSSS had to cut from the pension and pay to the Bank account mentioned in the letter each month, the package includes also Court Decision and copies of other documents needed.
  - The Accountant is responsible for processing these cases. She registered the letter in her ledger.
  - The accountant together with operator are verifying whether the mentioned pensioner is registered with their SSSS or not, If not they prepare appropriate letter give Director to sign and send back – end process,
  - If the pensioner is registered with their SSSS the accountant calculated what percent of the pensioners benefits should be deducted and for what period.
  - The operator put the percent in the appropriate field of the case file
  - The letter is attached to the special folder and is kept with accountant.
  - The inspector has nothing to do with this case, she just see the change in the software and calculates the pension payment for the next month upon that change
  - The operator is responsible for debt payments: she is running the software, which automatically produced a list for similar cases, where the amount which the pensioner will get from the Payment service or Bank is mentioned; the amount that should be paid on account mentioned in the letter received from the Office of Compulsory Execution of Judicial Acts is mentioned and how much has been already paid and how much is left to be paid.

- The debt amount is not paid on monthly bases. Every 3 month the operator transfers the accumulated amount to the bank account mentioned in the letter received from the Office of Compulsory Execution of Judicial Acts.
- If the debt is paid the SSSS informed in written to the Office of Compulsory Execution of Judicial Acts and also restore the pension in their software.
- The process can be terminated if the pensioners die (no money is taken from the funeral benefit); and if the pensioners himself/herself pays the debt and brings the bank receipt to SSSS.
- The same process is carried out also in case of alimony and is terminated in case the child turns 18.

14. *What difficulties are encountered in the office, and what could be improved?*

- They need a lawyer very much
- Requested a psychologist for both customers and employees
- New hires are trained by the director, with no proper procedures or standardization for training
- They “need” a driver. No transportation is available for travel to HQ or site visits to companies, they use public transport to travel.
- Need a secretary as separate position
- Need an additional two data entry specialists
- Have a backload of applications for personified reporting, though have additional support from HQ. (Check for how many)

15. *What kinds of complaints from customers are received, in what form? How the answers are processed/Recorded?*

- The customer provides a written complain on pension size or years of service or other areas to Director or to HQ Complaints division.
- The letter is assigned to corresponding inspector for written explanation
- Director signs and the customer could get the response either from regional or HQ office.
- Most question rise after the changes in pension assignments and not clear public awareness campaigns.

16. *Reports prepared by this office/how often*

Reporting is done to HQ on biannual and annual basis, but every 15<sup>th</sup> day a report is submitted on personified reporting

Reports handled by the accountant include:

- Preparation and on time submission to HQ of the lists of monthly payments and financing sources for past month
- Preparation and on time submission to HQ of the payment orders for the coming month
- Preparation of monthly references on average pensions as per RSSA requests and Preparation of Acts for RSSA representative
- Preparation of monthly references on the receipt of pensions as per SESA’s request
- Preparation of monthly references on military pensions as per military registration offices requests
- Preparation of monthly references on World War Two veterans’ awards and monetary compensation
-

17. *How often queries are received from HQ*

*What types of queries?*

See above.

18. *Other Comments*

- No real difficulty in reaching this office, as it is on the first floor.
- Deputy Director has huge role in this office again– she supervises the activities of two divisions (pensions and personified reporting) but mostly is involved with the pension assignment division’s work. She also provides advice or directs/refers customers to the right inspector or provides consultation in cases when inspector is busy or out of the office or if the customer is not satisfied with explanations provided by the inspector.

## **Other Workers and their Responsibilities in the Office**

### **Operator**

Main responsibilities:

- Input of pension payment list-register,
- Verification of amounts
- Acknowledging Director, deputy director and accountant in case of inconsistency or mistakes revealed
- Preparation and on time submission to HQ the lists of monthly payments and financing sources for past month
- Preparation and on time submission to HQ the payment orders for coming month
- Preparation of monthly references on average pension as per RSSA requests Preparation of an Act for RSSA representative
- Preparation of monthly references on receipt of pensions in as per SESA’s request
- Preparation of monthly references on military pensions as per military registration offices requests
- Preparation of monthly references on World War Two veterans’ awards and monetary compensations.
- Registration of deceased pensioners in a special manual in order to show how many funeral benefits were paid for the past month. ***In Arabkir the Accountant does this.***

Workload:

References from 1-10<sup>th</sup> of each month

Comparison of payments with provided lists from 15<sup>th</sup>

Preparation of payment lists from 25 - 28<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> of following month

The Operator’s work is more cyclic. It can be divided to 3 stages:

- A. Pension post payment activities
- B. Pending activities
- C. Pension pre-payment activities

- A. Pension post-payment activities

18. Authorized person from Payment services brings payment registers as well as “summary-reference” with corresponding information on post offices and total amounts paid to the

pensioners to the accountant to check based on the working procedures (in Shengavit they provide it directly to the Operator). The same time the registers from Saving Banks are also received.

19. After checking the accountant passes the registers to the Operator in order to input the information on unpaid pensions.
20. Operator inputs information into computer system accordingly.
21. Checks each page based on total amounts
22. After inputting all information the Operator compares total results with data in "summary-reference". Note: the program allows composing Acts on payments after all inputs are done.
23. Makes an Act on comparison for Payment services and Saving Banks accordingly.
24. Together with Accountant checks and compares them, if everything is right closes the acts. The Accountant and the Director should sign the Acts.
25. The acts are printed in 3 copies for a) payment services b) Regional Center c) HQ, Information Department
26. In case of inconsistency of total amounts starts checking each payment register or even pensioner's payment if needed (for new assignments checks if the pensioners are in the system)
27. Reports on discrepancies to Deputy Director (Deputy Department Head), Accountant and Director
28. If there are particular pensioner related inconsistencies sends information to appropriate inspector for checking

#### B. Pending activities

1. Preparation of monthly references on average pension as per RSSA requests
2. Preparation of an Act for RSSA representative
3. Preparation of monthly references on different types of pensions / benefits:  
Note: "Araks" allows separating payments in accordance with the pension types. So the Operator prepares the following lists accordingly:

- *Military pensions as per military registration offices requests;*
- *World War Two veterans' awards and monetary compensations;*
- *All types of pensions except old-age and social pensions as per SESA's request*
- 4. Preparation of an Act on given references
- 5. 1-2 times a week printing of lists on funeral benefits for HQ and monthly lists for Payment Services (***In Shengavit full procedure is done by the operator***)
- 6. ***Termination of cases. Reasons:***
  - *Death of the beneficiary,*
  - *Change of address; case moving*

#### ***Death of beneficiary***

- After registration of death in special journal, one of two inspectors brings the journal to the Operator, who verifies the receipt of information in the journal,
- Operator opens pensioner's card in computer,
- Inputs data on date of death, death certificate number as well as personal data of funeral benefit applicant,
- Terminates the case in the system;

#### ***Change of address; case moving***

- Similar to abovementioned process

7. Clarification of amounts needed for restored cases (from depository)
8. Restoration of disability right

Note: In case if there is a need for rehabilitation of disability right (the exact data is always mentioned in SMEC's certificate) but the person does not apply for it for some reasons, this person loses his right on privileged pension. His file is sent to the archive. As soon as the person rehabilitates his rights on disability (it can be done within 6 months), the case in Regional Center is also restored (the details are similar to other SMEC's procedures and disability pension assignment). The restoration of the case in "Araks" is done by Operator by recovering the file from archive, comparing and checking the period during which the person was not paid).

#### C. Pension pre-payment activities

1. Checks payments in the system (especially new or terminated cases)
2. Establishes distribution lists in accordance with types of pension
3. Compares lists with ones for previous months
4. For all established lists gets signatures from Deputy Director, Accountant and Director
5. Prepares payment orders
6. Submits payment orders (printed lists and electronic files) to HQ
7. HQ checks, compares the lists with previous month report and says it's "OK" to print final payment lists.
8. Operator prints final lists (the procedure repeated),
9. Accountant revises once more and sorts out the lists according to Payment Services and Saving Banks. Note: they are to be very careful in order to avoid printing of payment lists for more than one time)

### **Accountant**

#### Main responsibilities:

4. Verification of proper documentation and authorization for payment of
  - g. pensions (all types)
  - h. rewards and monetary compensations for free transportation to participants and veterans of the Second World War,
  - i. funeral benefits, and payment of pension amounts not received by persons who passed away to their heritors
  - j. amounts needed for repayment of pensions not received for 6-12 months (from depository),
5. verification and authorization of payment receipts submitted to and received from the Payment agency and VTB bank
6. verifies the changes in pension types

#### Verification Process

- 14.** At the end of each month – 21-22<sup>nd</sup> day the inspectors submitted the cases in folder that required pension assignment or changes in pension types or pension size to accountant (about 100 cases each month each case takes 10-15 min).
- 15.** The accountant verifies whether the information in summary case is fully corresponding to the information of documents submitted (usually the passport and social security numbers are printed incorrectly or many other similar small omissions)
- 16.** If the case is correct the accountant signs it, submitted Deputy Director for final signature and gives it back to inspector to put into archive also informed the operator that the case is OK can be processed.

17. If there is a mistake, the accountant asked the inspector to take the case back and revise and informed the operator not to process the case.
18. The inspector revises the case both in hard and soft copy and submitted to accountant
19. The accountant signs the case, takes the case to Deputy Director explains the reason of changes and getting his signature gives the hard copy back to inspector and asked the operator to process the case.
20. At the end of each month (22-23<sup>rd</sup>) the operator run the payment request program and prints the list of payments to be paid by each case with distribution – type of payment amount, period.
21. Checks all names in the list, if there is missing information (no payment in front of the case) informed the Deputy and appropriate inspector to revise, if there is no missing case she printed the payment request and submitted the accountant for verification.
22. The accountant is signing and passing to Deputy for verification,
23. The deputy is signing and passing Director for verification
24. **One of the inspectors who are on duty** takes the signed and stamped payment list both in soft and hard copy to HQ for approval.
25. If the data are fully compile with the ones at HQ software the operator received a call from HQ
26. She printed the payment lists in the proper format for the Payment Service and VTB bank (includes list of pensioners, type of payment and amount to be paid also a roster that contains the total amount due to pay, number of beneficiaries, field where the Payment agency writes down the amount paid, number of recipients and sum left unpaid, the roster is returned to SSSS after the payments are completed 10<sup>th</sup> of the next month) the Payment office came and take and later brings back the payment lists, while operator takes the payment lists to VTB bank, and the bank only brings the payment lists back (**special agreement, different from Shengavit**)– end process

## REGIONAL CENTER ASSESSMENT

CENTER: **Nor Nork/Avan Yerevan**  
 DATES VISITED: 5.03.08 and 6.03.08

### 1. Office staff

Total number given as 15, broken down by:

Director – Aram Martirosyan

Deputy Director (DD) – Gayane Ghazaryan

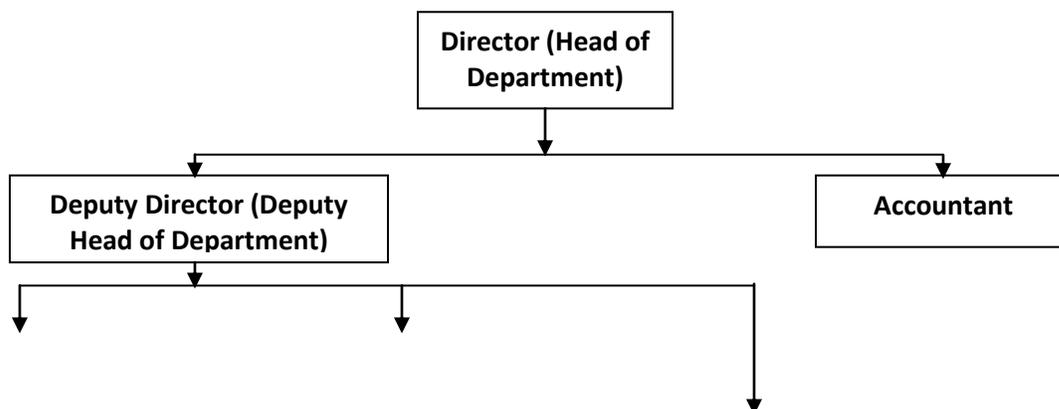
Accountant – Nora Mkrtchyan

7 pension people (1 operator and 6 specialists)

4 personified reporting people (of which 1 very important computer lady, with longer years of service, one specialist also provides legal clarifications)

No cleaning Lady – is provided under the contract with Municipality building administration.

One car – provided by the HQ but no driver – the Director is driving if needed.



**Pensions assignment division**  
- 4 chief specialist;  
2-leading specialists  
1 operator

**Personified reporting division – 4**

2 archives: one for active one for inactive customers

*(n. B. There is no sign in entrance to Municipality building to direct where the SSSS office is. The Director is the only one among the others so far who knows the processes very well. We find out that he has promoted from inspector to Deputy Director and then to director; is very young and energetic person. By his own initiative he tries to improve the labor productivity. He asked for monthly reports from the operator on cases processed by each inspector to estimate their productivity (**new one never cited**). Deputy Director has also an important role. Her previous assignment was in Abovyan city. And as she pointed customers in regions are much more trustful to inspectors and very few recheck the procedure with DD or Director. So the work in regions is easier, compared to Yerevan.*

**Main difference compared with other offices** is the joint computer hall for both pension administration and personified reporting. Inspectors have neither computers nor telephones in their rooms. They walk to computer hall if they need to enter data into computer or to accountant office if the customers were asking for specific clarifications by phone, which the accountant cannot provide. All staff could deal with both pensions and personified reporting. There were 3 rooms for pension inspectors, rooms are very small and customers had to wait for their turn standing back of the door in the corridor. There was one archive for personified reporting which was full of folders: here it was a huge mass of folders on personified reporting. Each employer may have numerous folders each time they have changes in their staff.

*Each of inspectors has additional assignments and keeps the ledger: SMEC; deaths and depository; partial pensions registration; Labor injuries; All Armenian Fund; transferred cases (takes out of the ledger; puts in the envelop and delivery-copy in archive).*

**Important: they have 4 telephone lines, internal selector again not working**

2. *Number of pensions handled annually/monthly*  
30,000 cases; each inspector handles about 5,000 cases (active).
3. *Number of people that visit the office daily/annually*  
Estimated at about 500 cases monthly but 30% of visits are verbal consultations. There were signs on each inspector room requesting the customer to apply in written and receive written response. We have very long interview with Director and DD but almost no calls interrupt our meeting.

Observation of the inspectors' work showed 6 pensioners waiting for inspectors once they had to go to computer hall to check the information. 3 employers were waiting for providing their files on personified reporting. We heard no phone calls...

*As usual*, the busiest times are between 10-4 (with a break from 1-2 – however, the DD is still on duty and so may answer phones and receive customers).

*How does the intake process work?*

- Signs on doors direct people to the correct inspector. Signs were observed and were very visible compared to Shengavit (and were only printed on paper and taped up).

- A pensioner goes to the appropriate inspector - divided by address and postal code, with the postal code written on a sign of the door. *Difference*
4. *Reasons for visits to the office/Functions of the Office: Similar*
- Pension assignment and calculation for new retired persons
  - Explanations on eligibility terms especially for women (again there was no poster on the wall explaining this information)
  - Explanations on individual score of pensioners in the pension allocation formula (also no poster on the wall or information available)
  - Recalculate pension size after every modifications in formula or legislation (according to the regulations received from the HQ and changes made in the software\_ every day they have a person assigned to go to HQ to take the post and bring post from HQ, (no transportation costs are covered but have car which is droved by director if there is urgent necessity)
  - Every two years they recalculate pension size for pensioners who continue to work – no notification is sent to beneficiaries.
  - Response to applications on social contributions paid by customers during their insurance work experience (this information is available from 2004, from 1992 to 2004 they referred the customers to National archive to bring the statement on contributions)
  - Clarifications on years of service and contributions paid
  - Put record on the size of recalculated pension in the pension books of customers
  - Registration of teachers for partial pension assignment according to requirements of the law
  - Registration, calculation and recalculation of pension for people with disabilities according to certificates received from SMEC offices (similar to Swehngavit).
  - Registration, calculation and recalculation of pension for families or children who lose the breadwinner or parent (no certificate is needed if child remains with the mother or father, but in the case of other relatives a court decision on guardianship is needed)
  - Funeral benefit provision to inheritors of pensioners who passed away according to the certificates received from the Death registration offices
  - Recovery of suspended or terminated pensions upon the order received from the HQ.
  - Provision of certificates to RSSA and SESA offices for Family Benefits allocation or for unemployment benefits allocation (**Difference:** this center provide services to 2 RSSA and 2 employment services – very heavy workload)
  - Transfer or acceptance of pensioners case to/from another RSIF office
  - Provision of certificate on contributory years of service in cases of written queries from abroad – mostly from Russia.
  - The pension inspectors travel only in cases when the applicant for pension is disabled and had no possibility to visit the office and has no one who can be authorized to process their case.
  - Provision of payment requests to Payment agency on 25<sup>th</sup> of each month

*How are general questions referred?*

The office is on the first floor and the doors have signs with inspectors name and addresses under their service. The Lunchtime is also pointed out. The Deputy Director is the first floor too opposite to inspectors' rooms. People either stop in to her office or continue directly to the inspectors' doors.

General questions can be answered by any inspector or even by accountant.

5. *Number of requests on references for former Armenian citizens from abroad weekly/monthly*  
**(Difference:** they also sent queries to Russia and other CIS country. Get regular responses except from Georgia).

They have about 10 cases per month. They write a request to national archive and if there is a necessity to verify documents in the archive they apply Arabkir RSIF

The process:

- The request is registered with the secretary and passed to the Director. The requests can be either for a certificate justifying that the person really works with the mentioned entity or for years of contributory service and salary received.
  - Director refers it to the inspector who is responsible for this activity.
  - The inspector registers the request letter in the special registration book manually
  - The inspector attempts to contact the HR department of the mentioned entity.
  - Visits the entity, looks through the records if they exist if needed
  - Receives an official statement from the business
  - Writes a response (in Armenian for local use and in Russian for out-country use), bring to DD for verification and submits for Directors signature and stamp,
  - If the records are not at the entity, the inspector comes back and writes an official request to City or Republican Archive.
  - Brings to DD for verification and gives the request for Directors signature, walk to archive with daily post and waits for response.
  - If there is a response, they write a response, submit to the Director.
  - If the company is no longer active (the search of the entity may take more than a week) the inspector apply to National Archive.
6. *How long office visits take*  
Estimated at about 10 minutes. Observation confirmed most visits took between 2-**20** minutes. 50% always forget to bring all proper set of documents, but if the passport is with the customer they accept the application and put the list of requested documents and agreed on the day the customer will bring them.
7. *Number of telephone inquiries fielded daily*  
**Difference** Inspectors do not have phones. Mainly DD and accountant are responding to questions. If needed they ask inspector to come and explain.
8. *Reasons for phone calls*  
The same, and recheck what the hotline says.
9. *How long the calls are*  
Unknown.
10. *How long it takes to assign a pension*  
5 minutes, if all documentation is there. May take longer for older pensioners; inspectors are authorized to help them fill out the application. **Similar**

***Process of assigning a pension similar – double cycle is due – the bunch of daily applications with cases are submitted to accountant every day, but ask the pensioner to come after the pension book on 25<sup>th</sup> of the month.***

- Customer calls to know or visits to find out what type of documentation is needed for pension assignment.

- Having the documents required (employment book, passport, Social security card, photos, Diploma, army record book (for males if they served in the army), certificate on disability group from SMEC if disabled, documents required in case of lost of breadwinner, reference on social payments from the companies the person worked for after 1992, and copies of all of these documents) the customer visits the office, writes an application (the SIF/SSSS standard application form, which sometimes the inspector helps the customer to fill in). The application form consists of two parts, the first part is filled and left with inspector, and the second part is filled and submitted to customer. The second part contains field where the inspector writes down what documents are missing, and when the customer had to bring them, when the application was submitted and when the customer could come to take the pension book,
- If some of documents are missing the inspector puts a note in the application, agrees with the customer on the day the customer should bring them.
- For new pensioners, the inspector opens a new folder, fills all available information manually and attaches the application. For existing cases she takes from archive the folder, attaches the application and new documents.
- Asks the customer to see the DD for signature
- The customer brings the bunch of documents and application to DD, she looked at the application, verifies the customer and passport photo, signs on the top of the application, which means that she has seen the pensioner, and gives it back to customer to take back to inspector.
- The customer brings the application and folder back to inspector.
- **Difference:** If all documents are complete the customer is requested to come back on 25<sup>th</sup> while the inspector takes all the package to the secretary at the end of the day for stamp, and for Director's approval
- After Directors signs it goes to Deputy for final revision and approval.
- If Deputy Director finds any inconsistency, she asks for additional or proper documents, then sends the application back to the inspector
- After receiving the Deputy Director's signature on the applications, the inspector records them in her record book manually, gives a number to the applications (no codes are used, just a number assigned sequentially) and enters the information into the computer. For new pensioner, the inspector opens a new case in the software, while for an existing one the inspector enters new information in the existing file.
- The software calculates the pension; the output is printed and attached to the set of relevant documents (this is called a Calculation-order).
- The inspector brings the bunch back to Deputy Director for approval.
- The Deputy Director compares information in the output with the one in the attached hand-written documents. If correct, she approves, if not asks to correct and reprint for approval
- Once approved the inspector marks the case in the computer as accepted. In the software there are two parts for each case – the inspecting part and accounting part. The inspector fills in both parts. Inspector completes work with inspecting part, saves it, and then opens the accounting part and inputs relevant information. If there is no preference of the customer, the inspector notes that the pension should be paid by Payment service; in cases where the customer has a bank account (only VTB), the inspector enters the bank account in the proper fields and saves the changes. The case is ready for processing by the accountant, who verifies and sends to operator to be processed for monthly payment lists (see accountant process map).
- The printout of this work is attached to customer's folder and kept in archive.
- The customer returns after 25<sup>th</sup>, receives his or her passport, social card, other documents, and pension book stamped by the Director

- The inspector puts a stamp in the labor book of the customer that he/she is a pensioner.

11. *How long it takes to recalculate a pension*

May take longer than 5 minutes, but no time was given. The only difficulty is the certificate on contributions that, since 1992, they ask the customer to bring from employer or archive.

*Process of recalculation*

Similar to a new pension.

12. *How long it takes to suspend or terminate a pension.*

In case a customer does not receive a pension for 6 months, the computer program automatically suspends and deposits it. Any pension that has not been received for 12 months is terminated and can only be restored by HQ. In order to reinstate a pension:

- **Similar to Arabkir:** Every Monday and Thursday the SSSS regional staff members (the DD assigns a duty for every inspector both pension or personified report to travel to HQ. no transportation costs are reimbursed) go to the HQ General Department and receive all post including notifications on restoration of terminated pensions. Responses are submitted to HQ every (Tuesday and Friday)
- Registers restored pension case in special manual
- Finds the case in depository section of the computer and brings the folder from the archive
- Restores the file in computer (inspecting section)
- Compares since when the pension was unpaid
- Makes calculations accordingly
- Sends case for payment

13. *Time devoted to other tasks in the office*

- Queries to city or national archives – upon request from CIS countries or marz offices – includes writing a letter, signature of the Director, - 10-15 min letter.
- **Provision of certificates to RSSA and SESA offices for Family Benefits** allocation or for unemployment benefits allocation: if the request refers to customers who are registered in other offices the requests are provided by the lists and the operator is responsible for responding to that list. She filled the list, DD signs, Director stamps, Inspector registered in her ledger and sends to RSSA or SESA. If the customer is registered with their district of service, the operator prints a statement where she mentioned the pension size, the DD signs, the director stamps, the inspector registered in her ledger, keeps one copy with her and gives the original statement to the customer. Time for operator depends on the list of beneficiaries – 30-50min once the request from SESA or RSSA received. Time for individual cases – 5 min, time for customer 15-20 min
- Verification of years of service – can be more than 2 hours: usually 10-15 min **similar**
  - The customer visits the office and asks to verify the years of his/her service within his workbook.
  - The inspector looks up the customer's file in the software and tells the customer the number stated there and the list of records (where and when the customers worked).
  - If the customer agrees with this report, the process ends
  - If the customer is not satisfied, the inspector refers the customer to the Deputy Director,

- After speaking with the DD, if the customer is satisfied, the process ends (this happens most frequently). If the customer is not satisfied, they are requested to write an official request to HQ or to clarify with his/her former employers

- Registration of death and funeral benefits: **similar**
- Partial Pensions: **similar**
- People with disabilities visit SSSS to be registered as pensioners or to recalculate their pension according to the results of the commission **similar to Shengavit**
- The office also handles cases where citizens change their places of residency: **similar**
- Restoration of rights of inheritance **similar**
- Payment of benefits funded by the All Armenian Fund **Difference from Shengavit** this is done by one of the inspectors not by accountant
  - No computer processes, just a manual registration and manually recorded cards submitted from ALL Armenian Fund to SSSS and from SSSS to Post Office for payment (only the accountant is responsible for this process). The SSSS receives the list of beneficiaries from All Armenian Fund and the amount of benefit to be paid. The beneficiary is registered with SSSS at the inspector's office in her ledger, and has file with copies of relevant documentations.
- If the citizen has an unpaid debt to the State **similar**

14. *What difficulties are encountered in the office, and what could be improved?*

- They need a lawyer very much
- **Requested a psychologist for both customers and employees**
- New hires are trained by the lady from the computer hall, with no proper procedures or standardization for training
- Regularly participate in trainings organized by HQ
- Believe that unified computer center will support the work productivity.
- Annually have 12000 documentation flows.

15. *What kinds of complaints from customers are received, in what form? How the answers are processed/Recorded?*

- The customer provides a written complain on pension size or years of service or other areas to Director or to HQ Complaints division.
- The letter is assigned to corresponding inspector for written explanation
- Director signs and the customer could get the response either from regional or HQ office.
- Most question rise after the changes in pension assignments and not clear public awareness campaigns.

16. *Reports prepared by this office/how often*

Reporting is done to HQ on biannual and annual basis, but every 15<sup>th</sup> day a report is submitted on personified reporting

Reports handled by the accountant include:

- Preparation and on time submission to HQ of the lists of monthly payments and financing sources for past month
- Preparation and on time submission to HQ of the payment orders for the coming month
- Preparation of monthly references on average pensions as per RSSA requests and Preparation of Acts for RSSA representative
- Preparation of monthly references on the receipt of pensions as per SESA's request

- Preparation of monthly references on military pensions as per military registration offices requests
- Preparation of monthly references on World War Two veterans' awards and monetary compensation

17. *Other Comments*

- No real difficulty in reaching this office, as it is on the first floor.
- Director has huge role in this office and also DD and computer lady– they supervise the activities of two divisions (pensions and personified reporting). They also provides advice or directs/refers customers to the right inspector or provides consultation in cases when inspector is busy or out of the office or if the customer is not satisfied with explanations provided by the inspector.

**REGIONAL CENTER ASSESSMENT**

CENTER: **Erebuny**, Yerevan

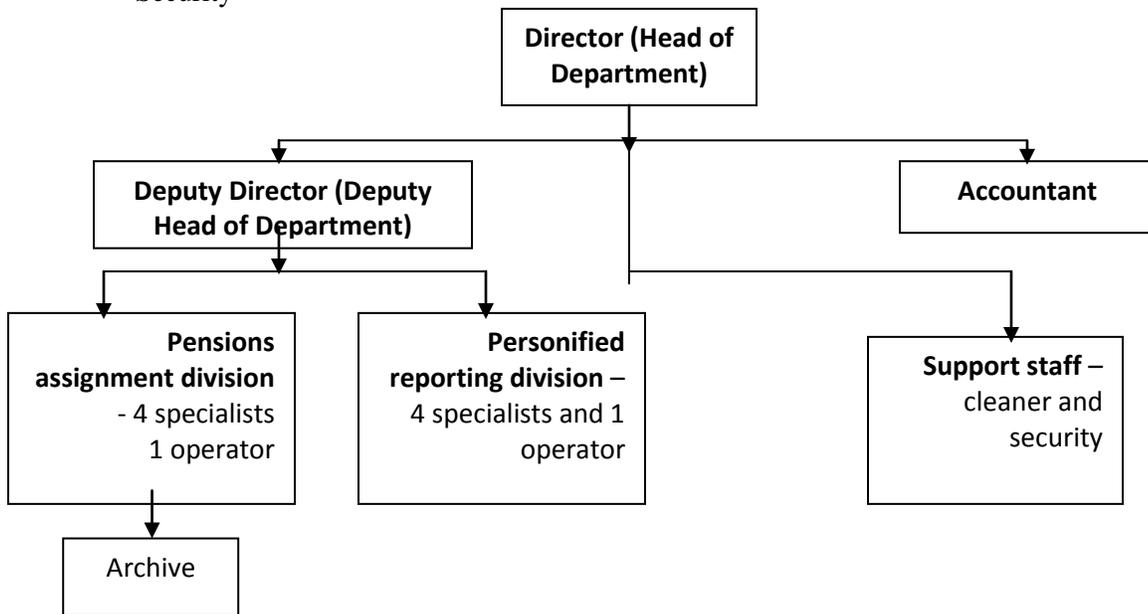
DATES VISITED: 18.03.2008

Telephone: 57-58-26; 63

1. *Office staff*

Total number given as 15, broken down by:

- Director- Sahakyan
- Deputy Director (DD)
- Accountant
- 5 pension people (1 operator and 5 specialists)
- 5 personified reporting people (of which 1 operator)
- Cleaning Lady
- Security



(n. B. Processes and work organization are similar to Shengavit. The Director worked previously as Director in Shengavit and Arabkir offices. The Regional office is settled in the Municipality building, where almost all services are allocated: Payment service; FB, Tax Service, community and etc. The entrance was very poor and unpleasant with no proper signs on SIF at the front door. We were informed that the humanitarian assistance is also distributed from this building and the office was in the first floor. The SIF office is on the second floor together with Tax Service. With the support of the WB the SIF office premises were renovated and as the Director and the staff members stated, now they feel respected working in these better conditions. However the toilet issue was not solved yet. The Director assigned one of the personified reporting inspectors to carry out secretarial work for him, to register and keep track for the incoming and outgoing documents/letters. During the heavy period for personified reporting: January-March he assigns a pension specialist for secretary job or to support with personified data input. Usually there is no any relationship between pension and personified reporting divisions, except cases when people apply for certificate on social contributions paid. Toilet and water conditions were again terrible, and archive was in very poor state, have no any technical staff to arrange some daily repairs like changing the light bulb, they ask some customers to do this for them).

2. *Number of pensions handled annually/monthly*

Almost 5800 filed cases were processed during the year 2007.

3. *Number of people that visit the office daily/annually*

Estimated at about 50 people who apply and application is processed (for pensions, recalculations, references other programs) during the month. More than 30 visits per day on different issues: in addition to pension certificates on pension size or social contributions paid, funeral benefits and etc.; many just visit to talk and ask questions, once they came for other issues: FB, humanitarian assistance etc, or just to say hello to heir inspectors.

The busiest times are between 10-4 as usual, (with a break from 1-2 – however, the DD is still on duty and so may answer phones and receive customers). However the DD here was not as dedicated as in Shengavit and Arabkir offices.

Heaviest days are: for calls – first days of the month; for pensions – up to 20<sup>th</sup> of the month; last days finalize the folders opened or processed during the month, and prepared them to be filed in archive, also support with personified data input, or visit the organizations to respond to CIS queries.

*How does the intake process work?*

- **Different from other office** – except the room number no any signs were on the doors and the pensioners upon entering just open a door and ask where to go or they already know their inspector's room and go directly to that room.
- Two inspectors are sitting in each room and have one computer.
- The DD said general questions could be answered by anyone, but only the relevant inspector responds on the pension issues. From the response we understand that they usually not replace each other, except for holidays.

4. *Reasons for visits to the office/Functions of the Office **Similar***

5. *How are general questions referred?*

**Different from Shengavit and Arabkir and similar to Nor Nork-Avan:** signs direct people to inspectors, and very few apply DD for just questions.

6. *Number of requests on references for former Armenian citizens from abroad weekly/monthly*  
30-40 annually: SSSS regional offices receives requests from the customers for clarifications of contributory years of service, as well as receiving orders from HQ to respond to requests from countries having bilateral agreements with RA on contributory years of service (for former Armenian citizens currently having permanent residence in other countries and applying for a pension.

The inspectors are required to check from the personified database whether the entity is active, take the contacts and call to make a meeting arrangement with managers.

Different from Shengavit and similar to Nor-Nork Avan, the case is managed by the inspector under whose area the entity is located.

Very few cases when the RSIF apply to CIS countries to check the information on pension: about one case per month.

The process **similar to Nor-Nork-Avan:**

7. *How long office visits take*  
Estimated at about 5 minutes. Observation confirmed most visits took between 2-10 minutes.

**Very important:** they never leave the customer to wait during our visit try to respond quickly the same as in Shengavit, Arabkir and Nor-Nork, Avan

8. *Number of telephone inquiries fielded daily*  
Inspectors receive almost every minute a call during the first two days of the months on pension payments, and then the calls declain but again stay very high for inspectors and less for DD and Director. 100 phone calls on average per day.

There are 5 phone lines: Director, DD, accountant, one phone number for pension assignment division one phone number for personified reporting division; One fax number.

Hotline reduces the number of call, but still there are pensioners who call both hotline and office.

9. *Reasons for phone calls*  
Number one reason was asking for what documentation was necessary for a pension.

10. *How long the calls are*  
Depends on the case

11. *How long it takes to assign a pension*  
5 minutes, if all documentation is there. May take longer for older pensioners; inspectors are authorized to help them fill out the application.

*Process of assigning a pension similar to Shengavit*

12. *How long it takes to recalculate a pension*  
May take longer than 15 minutes.

*Process of recalculation*

Similar to a new pension. Only difference is that the folder is taken from archive.

13. *How long it takes to suspend or terminate a pension.*

In case a customer does not receive a pension for 6 months, the computer program automatically suspends and deposits it. Any pension that has not been received for 12 months is terminated and can only be restored by HQ. In order to reinstate a pension:

- Inspectors or other SSSS regional staff members go to the HQ General Department 2 times a week (Tuesday and Thursday) and receive all post including notifications on restoration of terminated pensions.
- Registers restored pension case in special manual
- Finds the case in depository section of the computer and brings the folder from the archive
- Restores the file in computer (inspecting section)
- Compares since when the pension was unpaid
- Makes calculations accordingly
- Sends case for payment

14. *Time devoted to other tasks in the office*

- Queries to city or national archives – upon request from CIS countries or customers to check their work experience – includes writing a letter, signature of the Director, - 10-15 min
- Provision of certificates to RSSA and SESA offices for Family Benefits allocation or for unemployment benefits allocation – depends on the list of beneficiaries – 20-30min once the request from SESA or RSSA received.
- Verification of years of service – can be more than 2 hours: usually 10-15 min
- Registration of death and funeral benefits:
- Partial Pensions:
- People with disabilities visit SSSS to be registered as pensioners or to recalculate their pension according to the results of the commission
- The office also handles cases where citizens change their places of residency:
- Restoration of rights of inheritance
- Payment of benefits funded by the All Armenian Fund
- If the citizen has an unpaid debt to the State

15. *What difficulties are encountered in the office, and what could be improved?*

- Need a technical staff and a secretary
- No need much a lawyer
- Important to reduce paper work with customers, they think that the customer should apply once with his/her request and then came for response, and there should be no further referrals to other offices for different types of certificates. The SSSS office should do this through its own links.

16. *What kinds of complaints from customers are received, in what form? How the answers are processed/Recorded?*

- The customer provides a written complain on pension size or years of service or other areas to Director or to HQ Complaints division.
- The letter is assigned to corresponding inspector for written explanation
- Director signs and the customer could get the response either from regional or HQ office.
- Receive at least 10 complains per month.

In addition, the DD tells pensioners that any complaints they have regarding inspectors can be brought back to him immediately.

17. *Reports prepared by this office/how often*

Reporting is done to HQ on biannual and annual basis

Reports handled by the accountant include:

- Preparation and on time submission to HQ of the lists of monthly payments and financing sources for past month
- Preparation and on time submission to HQ of the payment orders for the coming month
- Preparation of monthly references on average pensions as per RSSA requests and Preparation of Acts for RSSA representative
- Preparation of monthly references on the receipt of pensions as per SESA's request
- Preparation of monthly references on military pensions as per military registration offices requests
- Preparation of monthly references on World War Two veterans' awards and monetary compensation

18. *Other Comments*

- Sixth office visited with difficulties to reach – on the second floor, difficult for pensioners to ascend broken stairs. Dirty entrance not pleasant no signs.
- Deputy Director has again huge role in this office– she supervises the activities of two divisions (pensions and personified reporting) but mostly is involved with the pension assignment division's work. She also provides advice or directs/refers customers to right inspector or provides consultation in cases when inspector is busy or out of the office or if the customer is not satisfied with explanations provided by the inspector.
- In addition to pension assignments each of the inspectors has assignment to carry out the ledger and process of SMEC certificates (by areas under service), All Armenian Fund benefits; social security cards;
- Director reviews the inspector's work according to established discipline and notes mistakes in pension assignment process.
- No special courses for new hires, but they even do not need as all employees are working for more than 10 years.
- Post is delivered or brought by inspectors or DD or Director or personified reporting operator.

## **REGIONAL CENTER ASSESSMENT**

CENTER: Shahumyan, Yerevan

DATES VISITED: 27.03.2008

Telephone:

1. *Office staff*

Total number given as 11, broken down by:

Director- Martirosyan

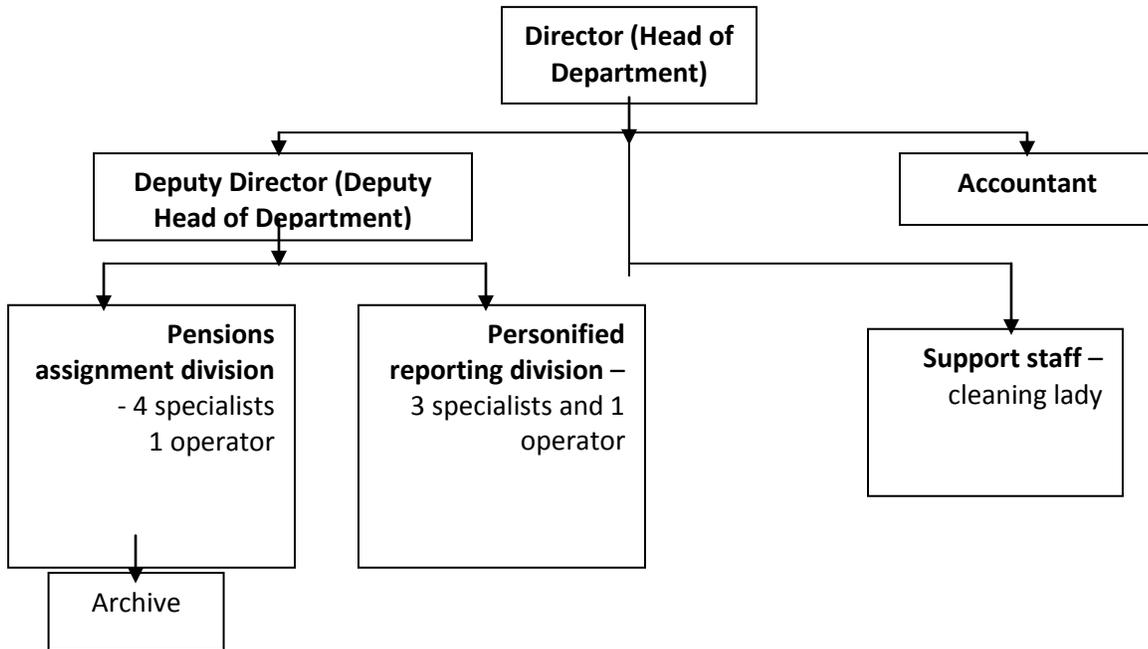
Deputy Director (DD) - Safaryan

Accountant – V Gasparyan

4 pension people (1 operator and 3 specialists)

3 personified reporting people (of which 1 operator)

Cleaning Lady  
No Security



(n. B. The director was very smart and impressive. He knows the whole system well as was a member of working group on introducing the SSC and personified reporting system understands the importance and clearly explains his staff how to arrange the work. The Regional office is very far from the bus station, the way to office remind labyrinth, with no proper entrance for people with disabilities, also very hard for old people to get the office. There was no copy machine either in the building or in the neighborhood. If the pensioner forgets to bring a copy of any of document, certificate, they need to walk back to bus station to get the nearest copying office. It takes 20-min to walk one end. The office is settled in the building of a private school. It occupies the first floor. There was a big sign at the entrance. There was an information board with important information on pensions and hotline, but the quality of posters was very poor, at least very hard to read for old men. Director believes that more information is provided on the walls the more is respect and confidence of customers to services. There were also 3 chairs in the corridor. The toilet and water supply is an issue. The heating and cooling is an issue too. Processes and work organization are similar to Avan-Nor-Nork. The pension specialists have no furniture to put computers close to them. The computer office was separate with operator handling most of computer work. If there is a phone call or a visit and there is a need to open the customer's file the pension specialist had to walk to the other room find the file in the computer walk back to her room and then response to customer. At the end of the day the pension specialists were taking their boxes with daily processed applications to computer room and enter the data and changes into computer. They do not register new applicants after 27<sup>th</sup> of the month. The Director assigned accountant to carry out secretarial work for him, to register and keep track for the incoming and outgoing documents/letters. She was really very busy with this routine work i.e. the day we visited she had processes 35 certificates on social contributions paid, which in other offices the accountant is just signing, while here she had also to enter into the relevant ledger manually.

Usually there is no any relationship between pension and personified reporting divisions, except cases when people apply for certificate on social contributions paid. The director feels that it is not proper to replace personified and pension specialists with each other as the skills and requirements are different (*not the case in other offices*). Archive was in very poor state.

Personified reporting office premises were better than in Nor Nork-Avan. One operator was accepting the returns while the other two were entering into computer. They have very few unprocessed returns from the past and mostly because they were not properly compiled. They have 5000 registered employers and 3000 are active. Only 15 supply returns electronically. They agreed that the big employers should submit their files electronically, and many more wanted to apply new option but are lacking skills. So the personified reporting operators sometimes train the employers to use the software.

2. *Number of pensions handled annually/monthly*

19,000 case files present in the office, of which 18,500 are active. Each inspector handles 4800 cases (active and inactive).

Almost 1000 new and 1200 recalculation cases were processed during the year 2007, including 210 special pensions as awards and 320 allowances.

3. *Number of people that visit the office daily/annually*

Estimated at about 30 people visits per day on different issues: pension certificates on pension size or social contributions paid, funeral benefits and etc.

The busiest times are between 10-4 as usual, (with a break from 1-2 – however, the DD is still on duty and so may answer phones and receive customers).

Almost 15 calls per day receive each inspector. Call may last 2-5 minutes, but may last even more than 40 minutes. Heaviest days are: for calls – first days of the month; for pensions – up to 20<sup>th</sup> of the month; last days finalize the folders opened or processed during the month, and prepared them to be filed in archive, also support with personified data input, or visit the organizations to respond to CIS queries.

*How does the intake process work?*

- Except the room number no any signs were on the doors and the pensioners upon entering just open a door and ask where to go or they already know their inspector's table and go directly to her. Addresses were printer in very small letter not readable from distance.
- Three inspectors are sitting in a room. The customer is accepted by relevant inspector, if there is a need to open the existing file, she left the pensioner and walked to operators room to look into computer and walk back with response, May need to walk more than once.
- The DD said that anyone can answer general questions, but only the relevant inspector answers SSC, and pension issues.

4. *Reasons for visits to the office/Functions of the Office **Similar to others***

5. *How are general questions referred?*

**Similar to Shengavit and Arabkir apply either to inspectors, or DD.**

6. *Number of requests on references for former Armenian citizens from abroad weekly/monthly*

5-6 cases per month: SSSS regional offices receives requests from the customers for clarifications of contributory years of service, as well as receiving orders from HQ to respond to requests from

countries having bilateral agreements with RA on contributory years of service (for former Armenian citizens currently having permanent residence in other countries and applying for a pension.

The inspectors are required to check from the personified database whether the entity is active, take the contacts and call to make a meeting arrangement with managers.

Different from Shengavit and similar to Nor-Nork Avan, the case is managed by the inspector under whose area the entity is located.

The process: Similar to Shengavit

7. *How long office visits take*

Estimated at about 5 minutes. Observation confirmed most visits took between 2-10 minutes.

**Very important:** they never leave the customer to wait during our visit try to respond quickly the same as in Shengavit, Arabkir and Nor-Nork Avan **different from Mashtots.**

8. *Number of telephone inquiries fielded daily*

Inspectors receive almost every minute a call during the first two days of the months on pension payments, and then the calls reduced but again stay very high for inspectors and less for DD and Director. 100 phone calls on average per day.

There are 4 phone lines: Director, DD, one phone number for pension assignment division one phone number for personified reporting division; One fax number.

Hotline reduces the number of call, but still there are pensioners who call both hotline and office.

9. *Reasons for phone calls*

Number one reason was asking for what documentation was necessary for a pension.

10. *How long the calls are*

Almost 15 calls per day receive each inspector. Call may last 2-5 minutes, but may last even more than 40 minutes. Heaviest days are: for calls – first days of the month; for pensions – up to 20<sup>th</sup> of the month;

11. *How long it takes to assign a pension*

5 minutes, if all documentation is there. May take longer for older pensioners; inspectors are authorized to help them fill out the application.

*Process of assigning a pension Similar to Shengavit*

12. *How long it takes to recalculate a pension*

May take longer than 15 minutes.

*Process of recalculation*

Similar to a new pension. Only difference is that the folder is taken from archive.

*13. How long it takes to suspend or terminate a pension.*

In case a customer does not receive a pension for 6 months, the computer program automatically suspends and deposits it. Any pension that has not been received for 12 months is terminated and can only be restored by HQ. In order to reinstate a pension:

- Inspectors or other SSSS regional staff members go to the HQ General Department 2 times a week (Tuesday and Thursday) and receive all post including notifications on restoration of terminated pensions.
- Registers restored pension case in special manual
- Finds the case in depository section of the computer and brings the folder from the archive
- Restores the file in computer (inspecting section)
- Compares since when the pension was unpaid
- Makes calculations accordingly
- Sends case for payment

*14. Time devoted to other tasks in the office*

- 20% of total daily time
- Queries to city or national archives – upon request from CIS countries or customers to check their work experience – includes writing a letter, signature of the Director, - 10-15 min
- Provision of certificates to RSSA and SESA offices for Family Benefits allocation or for unemployment benefits allocation – depends on the list of beneficiaries – 20-30min once the request from SESA or RSSA received.
- Verification of years of service – usually 10-15 min
- Registration of death and funeral benefits:
- Partial Pensions:
- People with disabilities visit SSSS to be registered as pensioners or to recalculate their pension according to the results of the commission
- The office also handles cases where citizens change their places of residency: the have 3 new cases entered during the last month
- Restoration of rights of inheritance
- Payment of benefits funded by the All Armenian Fund
- If the citizen has an unpaid debt to the State The SSSS receives an official letter from the Office of Compulsory Execution of Judicial Acts, where the name of the pensioner who had a debt to the State is mentioned, with amount of the debt and amount the SSSS had to cut from the pension and pay to the Bank account mentioned in the letter each month, the package includes also Court Decision and copies of other documents needed.

*15. What difficulties are encountered in the office, and what could be improved?*

- Need a technical staff and a secretary
- No need much a lawyer but a psychologist
- New building with better access for customers
- Water supply, heating and toilet issues
- Important to reduce paper work with customers, they think that the customer should apply once with his/her request and then came for response, there should be no further referrals to other offices for different types of certificates. The SSSS office should do this by its own links.

16. *What kinds of complaints from customers are received, in what form? How the answers are processed/Recorded?*

- The customer provides a written complain on pension size or years of service or other areas to Director or to HQ Complaints division.
- The letter is assigned to corresponding inspector for written explanation
- Director signs and the customer could get the response either from regional or HQ office.

In addition, the DD tells pensioners that any complaints they have regarding inspectors can be brought back to him immediately.

17. *Reports prepared by this office/how often*

Reporting is done to HQ on biannual and annual basis; the director, who is less busy, handles the other requests.

Reports handled by the accountant include:

- Secretary work **Different**
- Manage the ledger of incoming and outgoing cases: 237 cases were closed and send to other SSSS and 30 to CIS country.
- Preparation and on time submission to HQ of the lists of monthly payments and financing sources for past month
- Preparation and on time submission to HQ of the payment orders for the coming month
- Preparation of monthly references on average pensions as per RSSA requests and Preparation of Acts for RSSA representative
- Preparation of monthly references on the receipt of pensions as per SESA's request
- Preparation of monthly references on military pensions as per military registration offices requests
- Preparation of monthly references on World War Two veterans' awards and monetary compensation

18. *Other Comments*

- Seventh office visited with accessibility difficulties – see the front note
- Deputy Director has again huge role in this office– he supervises the activities of two divisions (pensions and personified reporting) but mostly is involved with the pension assignment division's work. He also provides advice or directs/refers customers to right inspector or provides consultation in cases when inspector is busy or out of the office or if the customer is not satisfied with explanations provided by the inspector.
- In addition to pension assignments each of the inspectors has assignment to carry out the ledger and process of SMEC certificates (by areas under service), All Armenian Fund benefits; social security cards;
- Director reviews the inspector's work according to mistakes in pension assignment process and notices if there are complaints or noises if there is a customer in the pension office. There should not be queues.
- No special courses for new hires, they have no staff changes since 2004. DD And D are responsible to train the staff if there are changes.
- Post is delivered or brought by Director who drives the car (similar to Avan-Nor Nork) but sometimes accountant, personified reporting and other inspectors may carry.

## REGIONAL CENTER ASSESSMENT

CENTER: **Kanaker Zeytun**, Yerevan  
DATES VISITED: 28.03.08

### 1. Office staff

Total number given as 14, broken down by:

Director –

Deputy Director (DD) – Arthur Sukiasyan

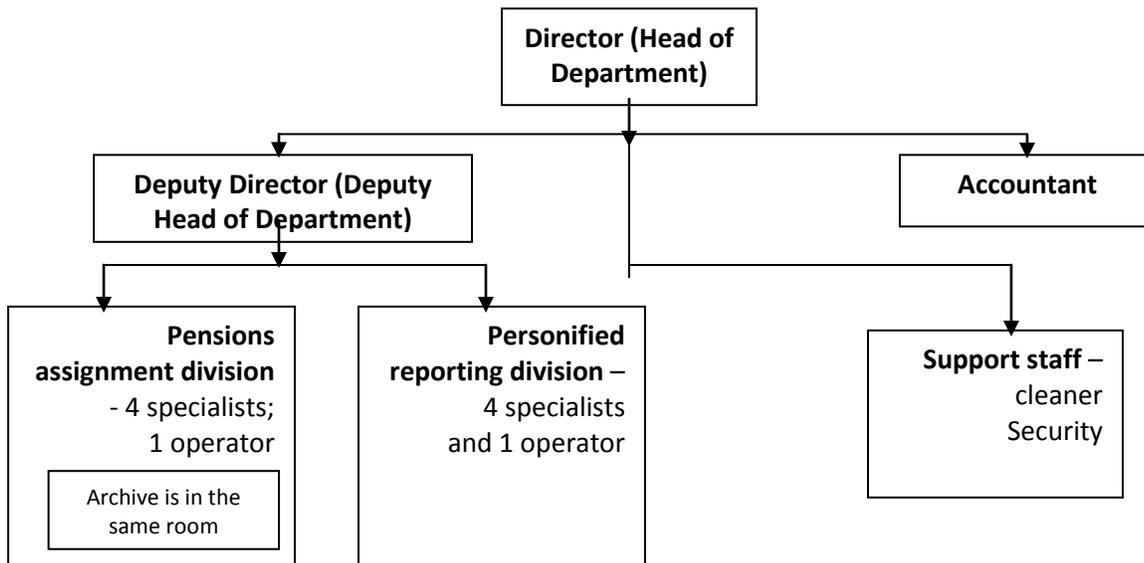
Accountant –

4 pension people (1 operator and 3 specialists – of which one was on maternity leave)

5 personified reporting people (of which 1 operator, 2 specialists are extra no much work for them)

Cleaner

Security



*(n. B. Meeting was solely with DD, very smart and progressive person, it was a very open and sincere interview. As usual, Deputy Director is the most important link between director and inspectors and customers and inspectors and the only person who solved all types of administration issues. The office car is serving only director, while DD had to regulate the post delivery by himself or asking the inspectors, accountant or operator to carry out (mostly in all offices except for Avan-Nor\_Nork and Shahumyan). The Office is located on the first floor of the National Academy of Sciences Zeytun branch. As DD informed that the Branch administration prohibited the installation of proper signs with information about SSSS in this building. So no sign directs people to pensions departments. One needs to ask someone or just walk in and find a paper sign on a very poor-looking door open it and find that this is the pension assignment inspector's room. The rest of the office is located on the opposite side of the building again with no signs to direct to DD, director or accountant offices. The Branch administration prohibited the WB project request to renovate the SSSS premises, so the office looks very poor, with old furniture (except Directors room), no proper toilets (men room was on the first floor, without*

windows and the female room was on the third floor), water was just allowed to use, but the pipe was in a room which was under reconstruction and no conveniences were offered. No ant chairs in the corridor, but DD said that there is no need as they have not big flow of customers. However during our interview he accepted at least 5 customers per 10 minutes. He never allowed the customer to wait! The pension inspector's office was the most poor and unpleasant one we have seen so far. The light was very poor, the furniture was very broken and the archive shelves were very dusty. Two inspectors were working in that big unpleasant room but have computers and separate phone line. The pensioners had to walk that long distance from pension's inspector's room to DD or accountant or Director's office for signature, but at least there was a copy machine available in the building.

**Process organization was very close to Shengavit**, however the two personified reporting operators who were not much required for the personified reporting activity were mainly handling the secretary work and ledger keeping. **Difference:** teachers for privileged pensions are registered with DD, he is responsible for this activity as pointed that for pension inspectors it is hard to explain the differences in the eligibility criterion. After accepting the application he passes it to the appropriate inspector according to the settlement address.

Again there is no internal communication between the Personified reporting team and the pension administration team. DD believes that the pension specialist can replace the personified reporting specialist but the later have no proper skills to replace the pension specialists.

**Very good ideas:** the DD believes that it is not good quality of service when they ask the customer to travel and collect all required certificates that justify the employment history. He thinks that the customers should just apply, bring passport, SSC, diploma and workbook. The contributory years of service should be verified by the government agencies, via internal communication. The customer should come back to get his/her pension book and pension assigned. The DD is also receiving the applications for funeral benefits and passed them to operator, who processes the case (see below) and then gives to the appropriate inspector to attach the certificate to the file and archive .

2. *Number of pensions handled annually/monthly*

16,000 case files present in the office, of which 11,500 are active.

Thus, each inspector handles about 5,000 cases (as in fact 2 inspectors are working).

3. *Number of people that visit the office daily/annually*

Estimated at about 40 daily for all functions (pensions, recalculations, references).

New assignments are about 5-60 cases monthly or about 700 annually, recalculations are about 100-200 monthly.

Observation of the DD's work showed 5 customers come in over 10 minutes. This was on the first half of the day.

As usual: The busiest times are between 10-4 (with a break from 1-2 – however, the DD is still on duty and so may answer phones and receive customers).

*How does the intake process work?*

- Different than the other offices as the pension office and the rest of the rooms are located in different sides of the building.
- The customers go either right to get pensions office to left to ask where they can find the pension office.
- Upon entering the inspectors' room, a pensioner goes to the appropriate inspector. They are divided by address and postal code, with the postal code written on a sign above the inspectors' heads. **Similar to Shengavit** (signs are again only printed on paper and taped up).

- Most questions are directed to DD on the left hand of the building.
4. *Reasons for visits to the office/Functions of the Office: Similar to Shengavit*
- Pension assignment and calculation for new retired persons
  - Explanations on eligibility terms especially for women (again there was no poster on the wall explaining this information)
  - Explanations on individual score of pensioners in the pension allocation formula (also no poster on the wall or information available)
  - Recalculate pension size after every modifications in formula or legislation (according to the regulations received from the HQ and changes made in the software\_ every day they have a person assigned to go to HQ to take the post and bring post from HQ, no car is provided)
  - Every two years they recalculate pension size for pensioners who continue to work – no notification is sent to beneficiaries.
  - Response to applications on social contributions paid by customers during their insurance work experience (this information is available from 2004, from 1992 to 2004 they referred the customers to National archive to bring the statement on contributions). **Most of the visits are on this issue.**
  - Clarifications on years of service and contributions paid
  - Put record on the size of recalculated pension in the pension books of customers
  - Registration of teachers for partial pension assignment according to requirements of the law
  - Registration, calculation and recalculation of pension for people with disabilities according to certificates received from SMEC offices (**difference**: the registration is done by one of the personified reporting ladies).
  - Registration, calculation and recalculation of pension for families or children who lose the breadwinner or parent (no certificate is needed if child remains with the mother or father, but in the case of other relatives a court decision on guardianship is needed)
  - Funeral benefit provision to inheritors of pensioners who passed away according to the certificates received from the Death registration offices **Different** (DD is receiving and passes to operator who processes the case but the final file is managed by the inspector to attach the copy of death certificate and put the file in archive)
  - Recovery of suspended or terminated pensions upon the order received from the HQ.
  - Provision of certificates to RSSA and SESA offices for Family Benefits allocation or for unemployment benefits allocation (**difference**: the registration is done by one of the personified reporting ladies)
  - Transfer or acceptance of pensioners case to/from another RSIF office
  - Provision of certificate on contributory years of service in cases of written queries from abroad – mostly from Russia
  - Provision of payment requests to Payment agency on 25<sup>th</sup> of each month
5. *How are general questions referred?*
- Except the room number no any signs were on the doors and the pensioners upon entering just ask where to go or find either pension office or left side of the SSSS or they already know their inspector's table and go directly to her. Addresses were printer in very small letter not readable from distance.
  - Two inspectors are sitting in a room. No need to walk for computer. They have computers in front and have entire network.

- The DD said general questions could be answered by anyone, but SSC are referred to one of the personified reporting ladies, and only the relevant inspector responds on pension issues.
6. *Number of requests on references for former Armenian citizens from abroad weekly/monthly*  
About 2-3 cases per month: SSSS regional offices receives requests from the customers for clarifications of contributory years of service, as well as receiving orders from HQ to respond to requests from countries having bilateral agreements with RA on contributory years of service (for former Armenian citizens currently having permanent residence in other countries and applying for a pension).

The inspectors are required to check from the personified database whether the entity is active, take the contacts and call to make a meeting arrangement with managers.  
Different from Shengavit and similar to Nor-Nork Avan, the case is managed by the inspector under whose area the entity is located.  
The process: is similar

7. *How long office visits take*  
Estimated at about 5 minutes. Observation confirmed most visits took between 2-10 minutes.  
**Very important:** he never leave the customer to wait during our visit try to respond quickly the same as in Shengavit, Arabkir and Nor-Nork Avan **different from Mashtots.**
8. *Number of telephone inquiries fielded daily*  
The phone calls are especially heavy during the payment days about 100 calls per day, There are 4 phone lines One for pension assignment division, one phone number for personified reporting division; one phone number for deputy and accountant, and one for director. As DD informed the Branch office does not allowed them to install the telephone cable in the building, so they had to install it outdoors and in winter times DD had to reinstall it for dozen times.
9. *Reasons for phone calls*  
The number one reason was asking about what documentation was necessary for a pension. In most cases the call are about the day when they can receive the pension. There are also calls to ask where they can apply for other social issues. Calls are directed to pension inspectors or to DD. Hotline reduces the number of calls but not essentially as it is important that the hotline operators were pension specialists.
10. *How long the calls are*  
Unknown.
11. *How long it takes to assign a pension*  
15 minutes, if all documentation is there. May take longer for older pensioners; inspectors are authorized to help them fill out the application. **The customer can get the pension book in 7 days.**  
*Process of assigning a pension Similar to Shengavit*
12. *How long it takes to recalculate a pension*  
May take longer than 5 minutes, but no time was given. The only difficulty is the certificate on contributions that, since 1992, they ask the customer to bring from employer or archive. Like **Arabkir DD** this DD was also strongly against this procedure, as he believes it harms the old pensioners and forces them to spend extra money and efforts to rich the previous employer or archive for the certificate. The agencies should communicate between each other.

*Process of recalculation*

Similar to a new pension.

13. *How long it takes to suspend or terminate a pension.*

50-60 cases per month In case a customer does not receive a pension for 6 months, the computer program automatically suspends and deposits it. Any pension that has not been received for 12 months is terminated and can only be restored by HQ. In order to reinstate a pension:

- Every Tuesday operator and the rest day mostly DD or he assigns a duty for every inspector both pension or personified report to travel to HQ. (no transportation costs are reimbursed) go to the HQ General Department and receive all post including notifications on restoration of terminated pensions. Responses are submitted to HQ every (Tuesday and Friday)
- Registers restored pension case in special manual
- Finds the case in depository section of the computer and brings the folder from the archive
- Restores the file in computer (inspecting section)
- Compares since when the pension was unpaid
- Makes calculations accordingly
- Sends case for payment

14. *Time devoted to other tasks in the office*

- Queries to city or national archives – upon request from CIS countries or marz offices – includes writing a letter, signature of the Director, - 10-15 min letter, 2-3 days site visits,
- **Provision of certificates to RSSA and SESA offices for Family Benefits** allocation or for unemployment benefits allocation: if the request refers to customers who are registered in other offices the requests are provided by the lists and the operator is responsible for responding to that list. She filled the list, DD signs, Director stamps, inspector registered in her ledger and sends to RSSA or SESA. If the customer is registered with their district of service, the operator prints a statement where she mentioned the pension size, the DD signs, the director stamps, the inspector registered in her ledger, keeps one copy with her and gives the original statement to the customer. Time for operator depends on the list of beneficiaries – 20-30min once the request from SESA or RSSA received. Time for individual cases – 5 min, time for customer 15-20 min
- Verification of years of service – can be more than 2 hours: usually 10-15 min
- Registration of death and funeral benefits:
- **Partial Pensions: Are handled by DD**
  - Teachers and those who are entitled to partial pension should visit the SSSS office early before they turned to 55 and be registered as eligible (*before April 1<sup>st</sup> 2008*).
  - When the time for pension allocation comes, the customer visits the office with a special form from the organization he/she was employed with and the pension assignment process starts.
- People with disabilities visit SSSS to be registered as pensioners or to recalculate their pension according to the results of the commission ***Different from Shengavit***
  - A SMEC employee brings the extracts to SSSS to secretary
  - The relevant SSSS inspector is called and signs in the SMEC ledger that she receives the cards
  - The cards are stamped and the inspector takes them
  - registers them in the manual and ask the appropriate pension inspector to come and take the card
  - the inspector signs in the ledger that she receives the SMEC card and goes to her office

- the inspector starts calling the customer and invites to office to be registered if it is a new case and to recalculate pension if it is repeated commission
- If the person is a new customer, the inspector opens a new folder (proceeding with the new pension process as described above)
- If the customer is already registered, the inspector takes the customer's folder from the archive, proceeding with the pension steps noted above.
- At the end of each month the DD checks how many cards are left unprocessed and why. She is very strong in this issue.
- The office also handles cases where citizens change their places of residency:
  - They apply to the SSSS office to transfer their files to the SSSS office of their settlement.
  - The customer calls or visit to know what papers are needed, the inspector asks for a written request, with a certificate on the place of residency, passport, social card
  - SSSS office receives an written request from the citizen with requested papers
  - the relevant inspector registers the request in the special manual
  - the inspector accesses the customer's file in the archive and opens the file in the computer,
  - the inspector marks the case in her computer as terminated, prints 2 copies of the attestation, and sends it for Directors signature.
  - One copy is kept in the customer's file in the archive (5 years at SSSS, then they are passed on to the National Archive). The second is handed to the customer with the rest of documents
- Restoration of rights of inheritance
- Payment of benefits funded by the All Armenian Fund
- If the citizen has an unpaid debt to the State *similar to Shengavit*

15. *What difficulties are encountered in the office, and what could be improved?*

- Very important: if someone in GOA decided to make amendments and new laws it is desired to consult with regional office staff to have an idea how that initiative will look not on the paper but in real life.
- No need for journalist or not professionals to comments on laws or amendments, otherwise the staff at regional offices had to spent months to explain the people the main core of the change.
- Suggested to reorganize the staff of regional offices to have proper distribution of work
- Much need a lawyer not a psychologist
- New building with better access for customers
- Water supply, heating and toilet issues
- Important to reduce paper work with customers, they think that the customer should apply once with his/her request and then came for response, there should be no further referrals to other offices for different types of certificates. The SSSS office should do this by its own links.

16. *What kind of complaints from customers are received, in what form? How the answers are processed/Recorded?*

- Main complains on pension size
- Complains on payment service
- Even complains related to FB system
- The customer provides a written complain on pension size or years of service or other areas to Director or to HQ Complaints division.
- The letter is assigned to corresponding inspector for written explanation

- Director signs and the customer could get the response either from regional or HQ office.

17. *Reports prepared by this office/how often*

Reporting is done to HQ on biannual and annual basis, other requests are handled by one of the two personified reporting ladies.

Reports handled by the accountant include:

- Preparation and on time submission to HQ of the lists of monthly payments and financing sources for past month
- Preparation and on time submission to HQ of the payment orders for the coming month
- Preparation of monthly references on average pensions as per RSSA requests and Preparation of Acts for RSSA representative
- Preparation of monthly references on the receipt of pensions as per SESA's request
- Preparation of monthly references on military pensions as per military registration offices requests
- Preparation of monthly references on World War Two veterans' awards and monetary compensation

18. *Personified reporting – have fewer cases than the other offices: 800 LTDs and 600 sole entrepreneurs. 23 000 workers filed only 30 files electronically. The operator accepts returns, and verifies the returns with former ones. If the operator finds inconsistencies, the operator asks for changes and for the return to be resubmitted.*

19. *Other Comments*

- No real difficulty in reaching this office, as it is on the central street but was hard to find the office in the building, no signs.
- Deputy Director has huge role in this office again– he supervises the activities of two divisions (pensions and personified reporting) He also provides advice or directs/refers customers to the right inspector or provides consultation in cases when inspector is busy or out of the office or if the customer is not satisfied with explanations provided by the inspector. Provides most of admin support activities too.

## REGIONAL CENTER ASSESSMENT

CENTER: Mashtots Yerevan

DATES VISITED: 31.03.08

Telephone 39-07-03

1. *Office staff*

Total number given as 15, broken down by:

Director – Polaryan

Deputy Director (DD) – Asatryan

Accountant –

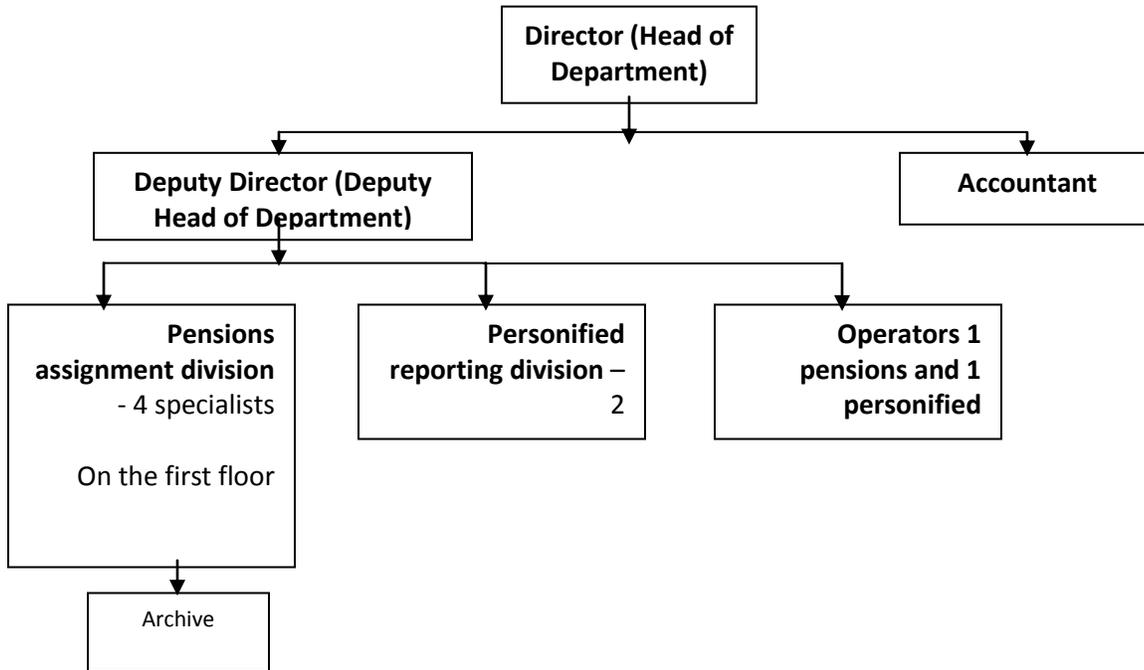
4 pension people

2 personified reporting people

2 operators (of which 1 for pensions issues and 1 for personified reporting)

2 cleaning Ladies and two security persons

One car – provided by the HQ but no driver – the Director is driving.



*(This was the only one out of 10 offices visited where almost all working conditions were very satisfactory, nice and pleasant. The office was located in a separate building (old kindergarten building) on two floors, with pension division on the first floor, very easy to get in but not proper for people with mobile limitations. There was a big sign in entrance to the building and signs on the each door to direct DD, Directors, accountant and personified reporting offices. The Director's office was very good furnished and nice. Total office has all conveniences: water toilet, security cleaning. Only point is that there was no copy machine and copying opportunity in neighborhood. DD was again very active, knows the processes very well. She was the DD of Shengavit 5 years ago. She was very dedicated to her job, but here all staff could easily leave the customers to wait in front of the doors. There were big signs on lunch break and no one was working during the lunchtime.*

**Main difference:** if it is a pension recalculation DD does not required the pensioner to see her for signature, the pension specialist is processing case and file is signed by DD and D and accountant only once.

**Also, here they have printed lists of documents needed for pension assignment on each pension type separately and give the applicant to visit the office.** There was written information available on the walls too.

Each of inspectors has additional assignment and keeps the ledger: SMEC; deaths and depository; partial pensions registration; Labor injuries; All Armenian Fund; transferred cases (takes out of the ledger; puts in the envelop and delivery-copy in archive). Also together with DD the pension specialists carry out the main ledger keeping by turns.

Backup of the Araks database is done every month and Parnas database every week.

**Important: they have 6 telephone lines, and fax scanner is not working**

2. *Number of pensions handled annually/monthly*  
18.500 cases and 16000 active; each inspector handles about 4,000 cases (active).
3. *Number of people that visit the office daily/annually*  
Estimated at about 120 cases filed during a month and 30 new assignments.

Observation of the inspectors' work showed 2 visits on personified reporting, one SSC and 2 pensions in 10 minutes.

***As usual***, the busiest times are between 10-4, with a break from 1-2.

*How does the intake process work?*

- Signs on doors direct people to the correct inspector. Signs were observed and were very visible (and were only printed on paper and taped up).
- A pensioner goes to the appropriate inspector - divided by address and postal code,

4. *Reasons for visits to the office/Functions of the Office: **Similar***
5. *How are general questions referred?*  
The pension office is on the first floor and is easy to access for everyone who enters the building. Any inspector can answer general questions.
6. *Number of requests on references for former Armenian citizens from abroad weekly/monthly*  
There are about 5-6 cases per month. They write a request to national archive and if there is a necessity to verify documents in the archive they apply Arabkir RSIF
7. *How long office visits take*  
Estimated at about 10 minutes. But customers often wait here. Observation confirmed most visits took between 2-10 minutes.
8. *Number of telephone inquiries fielded daily*  
3-4 calls per 10 minutes. Most calls to DD and inspectors
9. *Reasons for phone calls*  
The same: teachers registration for privileged pension, child benefit issues lump sum payment issues and other social issues, and also recheck what the hotline says.
10. *How long the calls are*  
Unknown.
11. *How long it takes to assign a pension*  
15 minutes, if all documentation is there. May take longer for older pensioners; inspectors are authorized to help them fill out the application. ***Similar***

***Process of assigning a pension similar – double cycle is due – the bunch of daily applications with cases are submitted to accountant every day, but ask the pensioner to come after the pension book on 25<sup>th</sup> of the month.***

12. *How long it takes to recalculate a pension*  
May take longer than 5 minutes, but no time was given. The only difficulty is the certificate on contributions that, since 1992, they ask the customer to bring from employer or archive.

*Process of recalculation* - Similar to a new pension.

13. *How long it takes to suspend or terminate a pension.*

Operator is responsible with support of relevant pension inspector. In case a customer does not receive a pension for 6 months, the computer program automatically suspends and deposits it. Any pension that has not been received for 12 months is terminated and can only be restored by HQ. In order to reinstate a pension:

- **Similar:** Every Monday and Thursday the SSSS regional staff members (the DD assigns a duty for every inspector both pension or personified report to travel to HQ. no transportation costs are reimbursed) go to the HQ General Department and receive all post including notifications on restoration of terminated pensions. Responses are submitted to HQ every (Tuesday and Friday)
- Registers restored pension case in special manual
- Finds the case in depository section of the computer and brings the folder from the archive
- Restores the file in computer (inspecting section)
- Compares since when the pension was unpaid
- Makes calculations accordingly
- Sends case for payment

14. *Time devoted to other tasks in the office*

- The operator prints the main certificates.
- Queries to city or national archives – upon request from CIS countries or marz offices – includes writing a letter, signature of the Director, - 10-15 min letter.
- **Provision of certificates to RSSA and SESA offices for Family Benefits** allocation or for unemployment benefits allocation:
  - Verification of years of service – can be more than 2 hours: usually 10-15 min **similar**
  - Registration of death and funeral benefits: **similar**
  - Partial Pensions: **similar**
  - People with disabilities visit SSSS to be registered as pensioners or to recalculate their pension according to the results of the commission **similar to Shengavit**
  - The office also handles cases where citizens change their places of residency: **similar**
  - Restoration of rights of inheritance **similar**
  - Payment of benefits funded by the All Armenian Fund *Difference from Shengavit* this is done by one of the inspectors not by accountant
  - If the citizen has an unpaid debt to the State **similar**

15. *What difficulties are encountered in the office, and what could be improved?*

- They need a lawyer very much
- **To have fixed customer service hours, to have also time for paper work**
- Important to reduce paper work with customers, they think that the customer should apply once with his/her request and then come for response, and there should be no further referrals to other offices for different types of certificates. The SSSS office should do this by its own links.
- More dedicated work from pension specialists

16. *What kinds of complaints from customers are received, in what form? How the answers are processed/Recorded?*

- The customer provides a written complain on pension size or years of service or other areas to Director or to HQ Complaints division.
- The letter is assigned to corresponding inspector for written explanation
- Director signs and the customer could get the response either from regional or HQ office.
- Most question rise after the changes in pension assignments and not clear public awareness campaigns.

17. *Reports prepared by this office/how often*

Reporting is done to HQ on biannual and annual basis, but every 15<sup>th</sup> day a report is submitted on personified reporting

Reports handled by the operator and accountant include:

- Preparation and on time submission to HQ of the lists of monthly payments and financing sources for past month
- Preparation and on time submission to HQ of the payment orders for the coming month
- Preparation of monthly references on average pensions as per RSSA requests and Preparation of Acts for RSSA representative
- Preparation of monthly references on the receipt of pensions as per SESA's request
- Preparation of monthly references on military pensions as per military registration offices requests
- Preparation of monthly references on World War II veterans' awards and monetary compensation

18. *Other Comments*

- This office is very convenient for work environment and has all conveniences, except archive, but the dedication of employees was lower than in Shengavit, Shahumyan, Avan-Nor Nork.

## **REGIONAL CENTER ASSESSMENT 10**

**CENTER: Centre-1, Yerevan**

**DATE VISITED: 1.30.08**

1. *Office staff*

*Total: 18*

*1 Director*

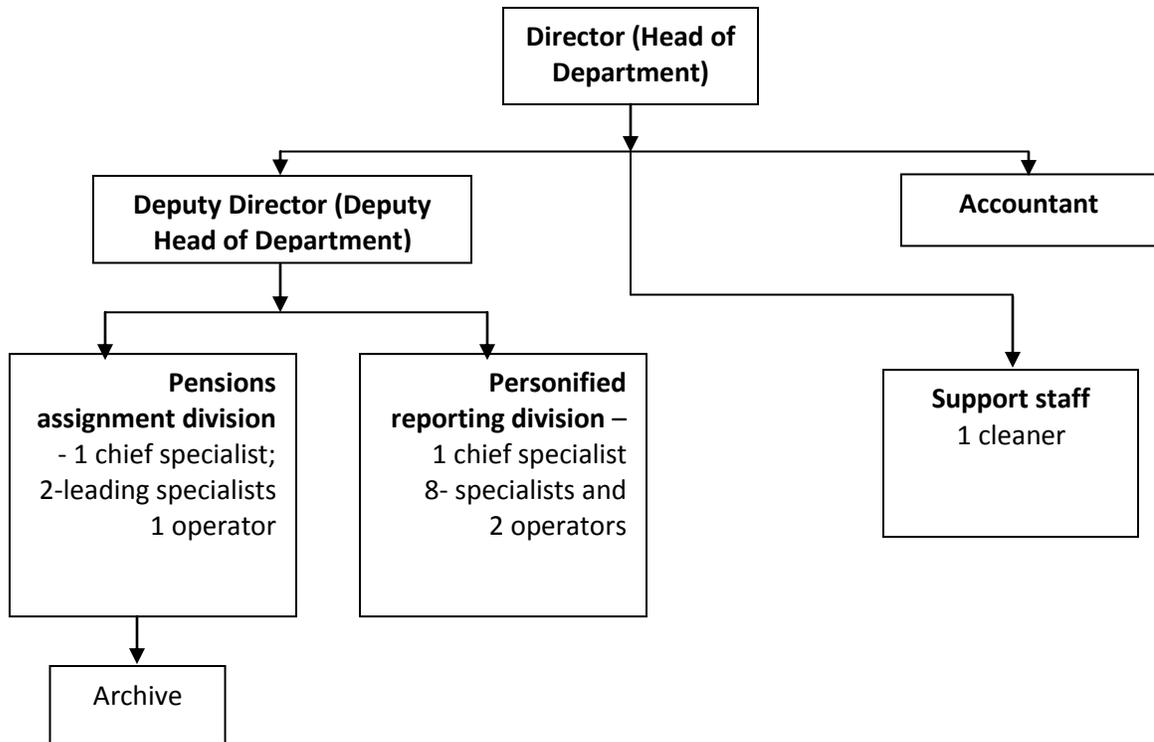
*1 Deputy Director*

*1 bookkeeper/accountant*

*1 Cleaner*

*Pension Department: 3 caseworkers or inspectors, plus one computer operator*

*Personified Recordkeeping Department: 9 specialists, 2 computer operators*



Note: “computer operators” do not do all computer work, they print out materials, provide summary reports, do general things and are really assistants overall.

The Director is a manager. The Deputy Director seems to be more critical, as he must sign all decisions. The Deputy Director appears to do many of the same tasks as inspectors. He answers phone calls and verifies most decisions. Only the Deputy Director can make some decisions, when he is Acting Director. However, each pension award decision is signed by three people: first by the Accountant and the Deputy Director, and finally by the Director.

2. *Number of pensions handled annually/monthly*  
15,000 cases, split equally by region amongst the inspectors  
14, 500 cases - active
3. *Number of people that visit the office daily/annually*  
Estimated at between 80-100

*How does the intake process work?*

- Person enters the front door and knocks on doors
- Person is directed to Room 6, where the inspectors sit
- Person is directed to one of three directors, depending on where they live
- Forms filled out according to category (new pension, recalculation, reference on social payment)
- Person sent away, possibility of coming back (if needs to provide additional documents)

4. *Reasons for visits to the office*

Pensions, recalculations, reference (approximately 20-40 people per day, or 25-40% are references)

*How are general questions referred?*

Whoever is asked first

5. *Number of requests on references for former Armenian citizens from abroad weekly/monthly*

15-20 per month

6. *How long office visits take*

Between 5-10 minutes; depending on the person and the lack of information (appropriate forms) and need to explain, could take longer. Older pensioners often like to talk as a way to interact with people, whether or not it's pension-related. Observations of people entering confirmed the brief nature of visits.

7. *Number of telephone inquiries fielded daily*

Estimated at between 30-50 per day

Government hotline helps to keep phone inquiries down

Phone calls are made to one of several numbers, person then either answers or transfers appropriately

8. *Reasons for phone calls*

General questions, including forms needed, how to apply, etc. Deputy Director said the public level of knowledge is very low.

9. *How long the calls are*

They did not have an idea of how long each call takes

10. *How long it takes to assign a pension*

Between 5-10 minutes. The steps are as above, except:

- Person enters the front door and knocks on doors
- Person is directed to Room 6, where the inspectors sit
- Person is directed to one of three inspectors, depending on where they live
- Forms filled out for a new pension
- Documentation checked; if documentation not complete, a note is made on the file and the pensioner is given 3 months to complete their file. Regardless, the pension is valid from the date of the application.
- Person is sent away, can return in 5-7 days to receive their pension certificate (like a passport) that has information on their allowances, years of service, etc.
- Beginning the next month, they receive pensions.
- Inspector goes across the hall and enters information in a computer
- Hard copy filed away

11. *How long it takes to recalculate a pension*

Between 5-10 minutes. The steps are:

- Person enters the front door and knocks on doors
- Person is directed to Room 6, where the inspectors sit
- Person is directed to one of three directors, depending on where they live
- Forms filled out for recalculation
- Worker must provide proof of the job; if lives in a different region of Yerevan but works in this one, worker must get certification from this office then go to other regional office to apply for pension.
- Person sent away, new pension begins starting next month
- Inspector goes across the hall and enters information in a computer
- Hard copy filed away

12. *How long it takes to suspend or terminate a pension*

1 day

13. *Time devoted to other tasks in the office*

N/A – time devoted solely to public interaction, filing, data entry, and lunch break; Deputy Director also must sign reference certificates.

14. *What difficulties are encountered in the office, and what could be improved?*

Renovation of toilets, increasing server capacity, purchase of copy machine, improving archives, hiring secretary / receptionist

15. *What kind of complaints from customers are received, in what form*

There are no complaints.

*How the answers are Processed/Recorded*

Would request in writing if any.

16. *Reports prepared by this office/how often*

Any reports upon request and in accordance with the policy and procedures

17. *How often queries are received from HQ*

Not very often.

*What types of queries?*

Any

18. *Other Comments*

- Need for a copying machine – government regulations require pensioners to have copies of their documents, there is no copy machine there, no budget to help people get copies and the public “considers it corruption”
- 12 computers in the office, filing system a mess of papers on shelves
- Entrance to the office is hidden and on inclement-weather days (i.e. today) pensioners have major problems reaching the office
- Problem of archiving mentioned again and again, as deceased records have nowhere to go but a large cold room.

- Unclear demarcation between the inspector’s job and the people working on personified reports.
- Sometimes people come or call regional center in order to socialize, tell about personal problems etc. Therefore it can take longer than 5-10 minutes to serve such people.

## REGIONAL CENTER ASSESSMENT

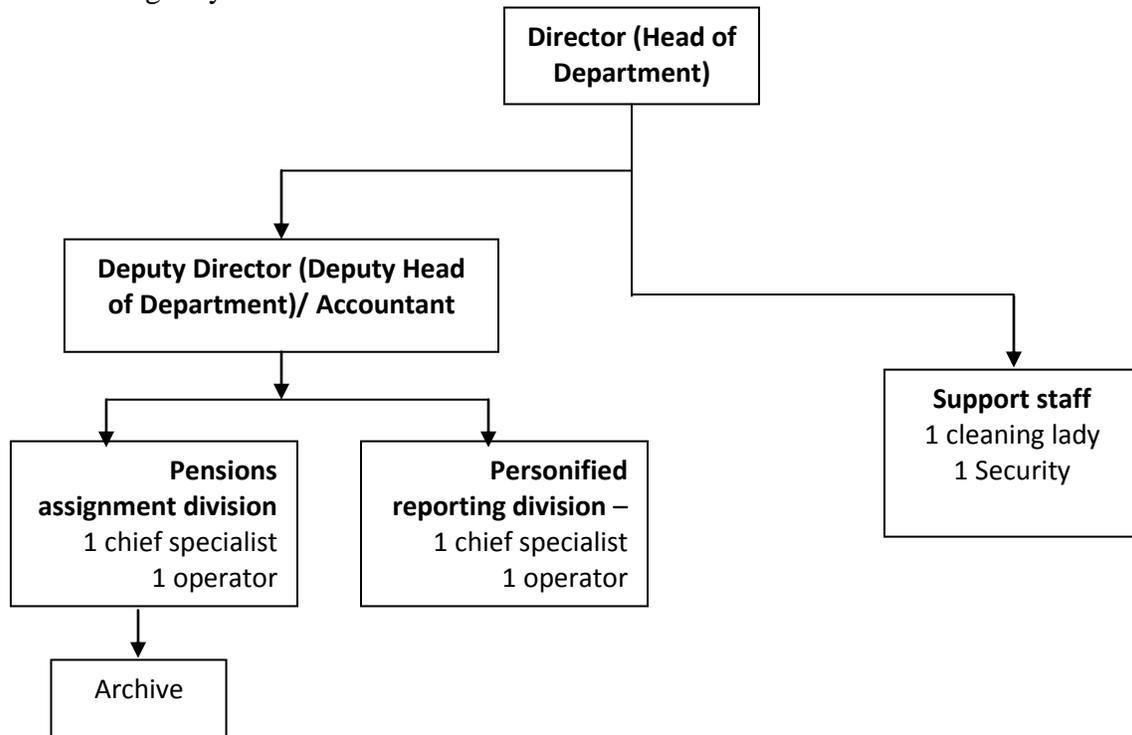
CENTER: **Davitashen**

DATE VISITED: 3/21/2008

### 1. Office staff

Total number of 8, broken down by:

- 1 Director
- 1 inspector
- 1 personified reporting specialist
- 2 operators (1 pensions, 1 personified reporting)
- Accountant
- Security
- Cleaning lady



- ### 2. Number of pensions handled annually/monthly
- 4,000 files, all active

3. *Number of people that visit the office daily/annually*

30-40/month, so approximately 1.0-1.3 people per day (only 1 person observed coming in)

Director noted that it is a small community and the bulk of people who come in are for disabled payments and not old age pensions.

Busiest time of the month is around pension payouts (end of the month)

*How does the intake process work?*

Person enters, goes to the specialist room (third door in), and begins the application process. Printed signs on the doors.

Once application is completed, it is verified and inputted into computer by the operator

There is no DD for oversight, the Director does the signoff

4. *Reasons for visits to the office*

- Disability
- Old age pensions
- Asking about documents necessary for pension
- Transfer of records due to move

Said that the split between new pensions and recalculations was heavily weighted in favor of new pensions, perhaps 80%/20%.

*How are general questions referred?*

Small size of office means that everyone handles general questions

5. *Number of requests on references for former Armenian citizens from abroad weekly/monthly*

Approximately 4-5 a month

If the specialist is out checking references, the accountant takes the specialist's place for pension applications. Alternately, the accountant can also be enlisted to help check on references.

6. *How long office visits take*

If pensioners have all documents, takes about 5 minutes, and almost all pensioners coming in have their correct documents. This is due to the fact that most people visit the office TWICE – once to inquire about the documents, and then once to actually fill out an application.

7. *Number of telephone inquiries fielded daily*

50-60/day, but “only around pension time”

The Director's phone number is the listed number

If he knows the answer to a caller's question, he answers, if not, he transfers it (it's the same and only phone line)

8. *Reasons for phone calls*

Asking about payment of pensions, questions on why pensions are late

Some ask about documents, but much less since the hotline opened

9. *How long the calls are*  
unknown
10. *How long it takes to assign a pension*  
5 minutes with documents
11. *How long it takes to recalculate a pension*  
About the same amount of time (5-10 minutes)
12. *How long it takes to suspend or terminate a pension*  
Not answered
13. *Time devoted to other tasks in the office*  
Disability pensions account for about 25% of all files (1,000)  
Workers moving accounts for about 15 cases a month (he said 10 move out, 5 move in a month)  
Death payments also occur but are a very small bit of their work
14. *What difficulties are encountered in the office, and what could be improved?*  
Director said leakage on one of the walls; otherwise, no real complaints (said they had computers, Xerox machine was nearby)  
Staff said the office car had no gas and the Director used it himself to get to and from home.
15. *What kind of complaints from customers are received, in what form*  
No information  
*How the answers are processed/Recorded*  
Complaints go to the Director, who calls in the specialist and the concerns are addressed.  
If the complaint comes in written form, the pensioner gets a written response.
16. *Reports prepared by this office/how often*  
Monthly reports to HQ
17. *How often queries are received from HQ*  
in "constant connection," also ask for money once a month  
*What types of queries*  
Sometimes pensioners "don't believe" what they hear in the office and write to HQ; these queries then come back to the office, about 5-6 a month
18. *Other Comments*  
45,000 -50,000 people in the region, "Very few" businesses, at most about 250  
Difficult to find the office, signs only on the inside of the building, no reception, and low hanging phone wires inside the building  
Director mentioned that pensioners would "not be pleased" if they called for information and got a recording. He said that "attitude is very important" when dealing with pensioners, as they're like "small children."  
Director also noted that "everyone is interested" in how their pension is calculated.

**Attachment 3: Process Maps**

(Separate file, see: [SPSS\\_FY08Q3\\_May8\\_ProcessMaps](#))

**Attachment 4: Presentation of key Findings and Recommendations**

(Separate file, see: [SPSS\\_FY08Q3\\_May5\\_SSSSAsstRecoms\\_eng](#))