

Monday, September 29, 2008

[Vouchers for Childbirth | A Field Study](#)

CRRC fellow Simon Gabrichidze and his research partner Tamar Trapaidze evaluated the implementation of a newly launched State Assistance Program (SAP) by the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs aimed at providing better health services for people living under the poverty line in the Samegrelo and Adjara regions.

The fellow conducted focus groups with stakeholders and structured interviews with 320 mothers living in the abovementioned regions who gave birth in Zugdidi and Batumi between June and September of 2007. Gabrichidze compared three female target groups, those who:

1. Were in the database of people living under poverty line;
2. Were not in the database but applied for a "voucher" that covers delivery expenses;
3. Did not apply for any assistance from the state and paid all the expenses related to child delivery themselves.

According to the findings, the general population is aware of the health benefits envisaged by SAP, however, the level of awareness is rather low: only 57% of patients in Batumi and 60% in Zugdidi knew that a voucher for free medical service fully covers all the expenses related to child delivery; the rest of the respondents thought that the voucher only partially covers costs.

The main reasons for mothers not using the State Assistance were the regulations of the program. The study showed that trust in health care professionals was the lowest in this last group, those that paid all for themselves. So that people (curiously even those in need of the social assistance program) preferred to pay money for child birth, rather than visit doctors and health care service provides unknown to them. The respondents from the first group were most satisfied with medical service, while the ones from the second and third groups were more dissatisfied with out of pocket payment and financial affordability of the program.

According to doctors and social agents, very often comparatively rich pregnant women request voucher from the State; as the fellow recommends, the government should introduce more strict criteria for identifying beneficiaries of this group (or completely abolish it) and direct funds to the people that really need such assistance.

Here is the PowerPoint (although, note, this was for a verbal presentation, not specifically for the web).

[Vouchers for Obstetric Care in Georgia](#)