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Model Living Standards Measurement Study
Survey Questionnaire for the Countries of the
Former Soviet Union

The Living Standards Measurement Study

The Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) was established by the World Bank in 1980 to explore ways of improving the type and quality of household data collected by statistical offices in developing countries. Its goal is to foster increased use of household data as a basis for policy decisionmaking. Specifically, the LSMS is working to develop new methods to monitor progress in raising levels of living, to identify the consequences for households of past and proposed government policies, and to improve communications between survey statisticians, analysts, and policymakers.

The LSMS Working Paper series was started to disseminate intermediate products from the LSMS. Publications in the series include critical surveys covering different aspects of the LSMS data collection program and reports on improved methodologies for using Living Standards Survey (LSS) data. More recent publications recommend specific survey, questionnaire, and data processing designs and demonstrate the breadth of policy analysis that can be carried out using LSS data.

Model Living Standards Measurement Study Survey Questionnaire for the Countries of the Former Soviet Union

Raylynn Oliver

LSMS Working Paper Number 130

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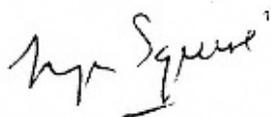
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Foreword

The Poverty and Human Resources Division of the Policy Research Department (PRDPH) of the World Bank is making a concerted effort to disseminate the lessons of the first ten years of Living Standard Measurement Study (LSMS) survey field experience, so that the growing number of surveys with similar purposes can learn from them. The need to measure poverty and guide policy during the economic transition has created demand for LSMS surveys in the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union. However, working from existing materials has been difficult because questionnaires were not available in Russian and because questionnaires from other regions reflected situations that were not applicable in the former Soviet Union. To facilitate the use of LSMS surveys in the countries of the former Soviet Union, PRDPH developed household, community and price questionnaires that reflect the basic institutions and policy concerns of the countries of the former Soviet Union. These questionnaires have been translated into Russian. This represents an important starting point for conducting an LSMS survey. However, the basic questionnaires will have to be tailored for any specific country. This document presents the questionnaires and describes the process required to adapt the questionnaires to local conditions.



LYN SQUIRE, DIRECTOR
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Abstract

This document presents a set of Living Standard Measurement Study questionnaires that have been developed for use in the Russian-speaking countries of the former Soviet Union. These questionnaires are available in English and in Russian. They are also available in electronic form.

This document also describes in detail the procedure that should be followed to modify the questionnaires for use in any specific country. Without careful tailoring, the questionnaires will be frustrating for interviewers and respondents. More importantly, if existing policies, policy concerns, and institutions are not taken into consideration, the survey data will not be sufficient to address the questions for which the survey is undertaken in the first place. To guide the questionnaire writer through the modification process, this document describes the important aspects of LSMS surveys, general modifications that will be required, translation and field testing procedures, and finally a section by section description of the type of modifications that are likely to be required to suit goals and circumstances.

Acknowledgments

This document draws heavily on *Guidelines for Adapting the LSMS Living Standards Questionnaires to Local Conditions*, Ainsworth, Martha and Jacques van der Gaag. Living Standards Measurement Study Working Paper No. 34, 1988. In addition, this document and the questionnaires have benefitted from the experience of the staff of PRDPH, especially Kinnon Scott, Margaret Grosh and Carlo del Ninno. In developing, translating and field testing the questionnaires and understanding the institutions of the former Soviet Union I was aided by Boris Gitman, Djamila Kerimkulova, Luba Logenitsina, Fatima Mamedova, Vugar Matadov, Julia Maronuk, and Elena Pasportnikova.

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Introduction

Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) surveys were developed by the World Bank to provide the data necessary to evaluate policies that affect the living standards of the population. For this purpose the questionnaires aim to collect the data necessary to measure all major aspects of economic well-being at the level of the household and the population point.¹

LSMS surveys have been conducted in nearly thirty countries in the course of the last 10 years. Data from LSMS surveys have been used to measure the extent of poverty, analyze labor market conditions and wage determinants, estimate the impact of schooling on birth rate and child health, evaluate the demand for health care and many other topics of relevance to government Ministries.

Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, there has been increasing interest in conducting LSMS surveys in the newly independent Republics in order to measure the impact of transition of the various groups of the population. The results of an LSMS survey can also provide useful assistance in the development of the policies to help protect the most vulnerable people.

Russian Language Living Standard Measurement Study Questionnaires have been developed to assist in the implementation of these surveys in the Russian-speaking countries of the former Soviet Union. These questionnaires follow the basic pattern of other LSMS questionnaires but have been substantially altered in order to reflect the living conditions and government policy concerns faced by most of the countries in the region. The English language translation of the LSMS questionnaires for household and population points in the Russian-speaking countries are included in Appendices 1 and 2. The electronic versions of the questionnaires are available in Wordperfect 5.1 for DOS for those seeking to develop new questionnaires.²

The Soviet Union covered an immense expanse of land and contained a wide diversity of cultures. Because of this diversity, it is not likely that the questionnaire as it is will be ideal for each of the countries of the former Soviet Union. Therefore, further refinements and adaptation will be necessary

in most cases to make the questionnaires appropriate for use in the field. These questionnaires are therefore designed as a starting point and this document describes the method for further country-specific refinement of the questionnaires.

In this document, Section 2 describes in more detail the objectives of LSMS surveys. A clear understanding of these objectives will guide the adaptation of the questionnaires to local conditions. Section 3 describes broadly the process of adapting the questionnaires. Section 4 provides general and specific guidelines for adapting the household questionnaire. Section 5 presents guidelines for adapting the population point and price questionnaires. Section 6 concludes.

¹Population point is the term used in the countries of the Soviet Union that means village, village of the town type, or town.

²For electronic files contact LSMS, PRDPH, World Bank, Washington, DC 20433, USA; by electronic mail lsms@worldbank.org; or fax 2025221153.

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Objectives of the LSMS Surveys

The primary objective of the LSMS surveys is to obtain a data base for policy analysis. Because of this, LSMS surveys differ from most single purpose surveys. LSMS surveys gather data on all of the components of the standard of living. For example, a health survey may include a large number of questions on type of illness, symptoms, care received, time and money spent for each illness, but only a few questions regarding household characteristics. In order to conduct policy-relevant research, measures are needed of household income, labor market status, educational attainment, household expenditure on things other than health.

From the objective of gathering the information necessary to conduct policy analysis we derive most of the guidelines and constraints that must be considered when adapting the questionnaires for use in a specific country. When adapting the survey, it is important to keep in mind that although the LSMS questionnaire collects information on health and medical care, it is not a health survey. Similarly, it collects information on agriculture but it is not an agriculture survey. A health survey or an agricultural survey would collect much more detailed information on health or agriculture than the LSMS does. It is not possible to collect information on all major aspects of living in the same detail that would be used in a single purpose survey.

Another characteristic of the LSMS surveys is the emphasis that is placed on reducing non-sampling error. This is reflected in the sample design and in the organization of the field work. Many features of the design of the questionnaires are also intended to minimize non-sampling error. For instance, the questionnaires are almost entirely pre-coded. Interviewers enter the codes onto the questionnaire and data entry operators enter the responses directly from the questionnaire. Another feature is the grids used for collecting individual data that increase the likelihood that all of the information stays together.³

There are 16 sections in the household questionnaire:⁴

0. Survey Information and Interviewer Instructions

1. Roster of the members of the household

2. Housing conditions

3. Education

4. Health

5. Economic Activities

3All aspects of the LSMS surveys and questionnaires are explained in Grosh, Margaret E. and Juan Munoz, 1996, *A Manual for Planning and Implementing LSMS Surveys*, Living Standard Measurement Study Working Paper No. 126, World Bank, Washington D.C.

4There is not a single definition of household. In this questionnaire, the interviewer is instructed to list all individuals who normally live, eat their meals together and share expenses in the dwelling regardless of whether or not the individual was present in the household the day before. Household members include the household head, children born in the last three months, individuals married into the household in the last three months, and other individuals who were absent for fewer than nine months of the last twelve. Servants and paying lodgers and their families form a separate household and should be interviewed separately.

6. Migration
7. Selection of respondents for Round 2
8. Refugees and displaced persons
9. Agricultural Activities
10. Self-employment
11. Expenditures and Durable Goods
12. Food Expenditure and Consumption
13. Childbearing
14. Other Income
15. Credit and Savings

For sections 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6, information is collected for each individual in the household, or for all the individuals of a certain age. For example, the section on schooling is only to be completed for household members over the age of 7. When information is collected for individuals, a grid is used so that all of the information for one household is contained in the same questionnaire page. This eliminates the possibility of the loss of the questionnaires for one or more individuals in the household. The grid format also facilitates the data entry process. In other sections, where the response to a question will be the same for each member of the household, the questions are asked only once, for example section 2 on housing. The grid format is also used in sections 8 through 15. Though, in these sections the unit of observation is not an individual member of the household but a type of crop in section 9 or a type of food in section 11. In some sections, the grid is used for individuals, but not for household members; these include section 1C (children living elsewhere), section 11E (remittances), section 13 (fertility) and section 14A (income from relatives and private persons).

Information on the town or village in which the household is located is also collected because the level of services and other conditions in the vicinity can have an important impact on the quality of life for the residents. There are 8 sections in the population point questionnaire:

1. Demographic Information

2. Infrastructure
3. Economy
4. Refugees and Displaced Persons
5. Education
6. Health
7. Agriculture
8. Institutions
9. Prices

3

Adapting the Questionnaires for a Specific Country

The adaptation of a questionnaire involves much more than the translation of the questionnaire into the local language and the addition of country-specific response categories. In order for the questionnaire to provide information that can be used to address the important policy concerns in a particular country at a particular time, the questionnaire must be adapted for use in consultation with a broad range of policy makers. These consultations can serve two purposes. The first is to ensure that the correct data are collected in the survey. The second is to familiarize potential users of the data and the analysis of the type of information that will be collected and of its potential uses.

The second stage of the adaptation of the survey instruments for use in a specific country involves a thorough field test of all questionnaires. Questionnaires must be tested in enough households and communities to be sure that the desired information can be collected in a variety of circumstances.

In most of the countries of the former Soviet Union, adaptation of the Living Standard Measurement Survey will also require that all questionnaires be translated into one or more national languages spoken by the population of that country. Preparing the questionnaire in a second language will often require modifications in the original questionnaire.⁵

3.1 Making the Questionnaires Relevant to Policy

To successfully adapt the LSMS questionnaires and ensure that the data will be able to support policy-relevant analysis, it is necessary to consult with government officials, policy advisors and others who are involved in designing and evaluating policies. Each section of the questionnaire must accurately reflect the structure of local institutions, programs and policies. Each section must also contain the questions necessary to gather the data required to analyze the usefulness and effectiveness of those institutions, programs and policies.

For example, if increasing employment is an important objective of the

government and one of the policies that has been implemented to achieve that goal is the provision of job training courses then the questionnaire writer will need to know: what types of courses were offered, who was eligible to participate, where were these courses offered, what subjects were offered and if the participants were required to pay for the courses or accept certain jobs, or fulfill other obligations to participate in the training. If there was a fee for the courses then the policy makers are likely to want to know if that fee was an obstacle that prevented eligible individuals who would have benefitted from the course from taking it. On the other hand, policy makers may be most interested to know if eligible individuals were aware that the course was available. Knowledge of all aspects of the program will allow the questionnaire writers to define properly the questions that need to be included and will guide the list of coded responses to be provided.

5For example, in the Russian there is no one single word for Mother-in-law. There are separate words for a man's mother-in-law and a woman's mother-in-law. If an important social distinction corresponds to the language distinction, then questionnaires in both languages should include the two relations as separate categories. Similar problems arose in the categorization of foods in the consumption module.

The formation of a base of data for policy formulation and evaluation is the main goal of the LSMS and so the questionnaires should first of all focus on the effects of existing policies that have an impact on living standards. Questions measuring the use of government services or the benefits received by the households from such programs should appear throughout the questionnaires. Answers to these questions allow the policy analyst to determine the extent of benefit provided by these programs and also to determine which households would be most affected by a change in the program.

The questionnaires should also gather data on household expenditures on all types of government, public and private services. Answers to these questions can be used to analyze government pricing policies, consumers' willingness to pay, and possible alternative financing mechanisms.

Even the content of sections that do not seem to be directly related to any specific policy must be developed to address policy concerns. For example, in order to measure household consumption, all items must be aggregated into a relatively small set of commodity groups. To some extent, logic and current consumption indicate how commodities should be grouped. However, from a policy point of view it is important to distinguish between taxed and non-taxed items, between imported and domestic items, and between items sold at government-controlled prices and those sold at market-determined prices. The division of items among groups will vary from country to country. For example bread prices are still subject to government support in several of the countries of the former Soviet Union.

Finally, the data gathered by an LSMS survey can help policy makers to identify geographical regions of the country or types of households that will be the target of new policies. This will only occur, however, if there are extensive talks regarding both the current policies and policies under consideration between the questionnaire writers and the policy makers.

3.2 Field Testing the Questionnaires

After the questionnaires have been adapted to reflect local policy considerations, they must be tested in the field on actual households and population points. A team of experienced interviewers and the writers of the questionnaires go into the field to ask all or part of the questionnaires to as many as a hundred households of different types and in different parts of the