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**POVERTY OF POST STATE FARM SOCIETIES
AND PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY OF THE HUMAN CAPITAL**

*UBÓSTWO ŚRODOWISK POPEGEEROWSKICH A AKTYWNOŚĆ
ZAWODOWA KAPITAŁU LUDZKIEGO*

Key words: poverty, post state farm areas, professional activity

Słowa kluczowe: ubóstwo, obszary popegeerowskie, aktywność zawodowa

Abstract. This paper has focused (i) on the problem of how to stimulate the professional activity of the inhabitants of the post State Agricultural Farms (SAF) areas and (ii) the influence of mobility on labor market upon poverty in families. In the research a diagnostic survey was used. The subject of the research were 54 employees of the former SAFs. The results confirmed that the former SAF areas are the most difficult areas regarding professional activity, and the mobility of the people from the surveyed SAF on the labor market is nearly non-existent.

Introduction

On every territory there are certain differences in the standard of living of people. This is determined by the possessed human capital, the way of the formation of resources, their quality and importance in the public life. Due to the system transformation the SAF areas have created a specific environment. State Agricultural Farms comprised 11.6 million ha. They employed 475 thousand people, and – with the families – some 2 million people earned their incomes from SAFs. After liquidating all the SAFs, 350 thousand people lost their jobs. Many of them became unemployed for a very long time. The liquidation was performed without dedication social responsibility measures, there were no job schemes to be offered to the workers, they were not bestowed, they did not receive any compensation nor shares, unlike many of the workers of other privatized companies.

It must be noted that unemployment on former SAF areas causes common poverty ever to increase. The standard of living on post-SAF areas is poor. The population often receives benefit money, budgets of local governments are lower than average, there are not many new investments.

The aim and methodology

The aim of the research was to present the process of simulation of the professional activity of the inhabitants of the former SAF settlements, and the influence of mobility on labor market upon poverty in families. The research was carried out with the use of a diagnostic survey.

The subject of the research were workers of State Agricultural Farms (SAF) living in the area of the village of Chojnaty in the community of Chojnice in Pomorskie province. The village is inhabited by 276 people. There are of 76 households, 11 are individual farming households, and 65 are post-SAF households.

Poverty as a problem of post-SAF areas

A whole group of factors, whether individual, cultural or macrosocial, has caused former SAFs to become a place of concentration of many interconnected phenomena such as unemployment, poverty, marginalization, lack of hope and prospects for the future. The fundamental problem of families living in those areas is still poverty.

According to Olechnicki and Załęcki, authors of the *Sociological Dictionary*, poverty is „lack of sufficient material means to live on; living in abject poverty, below minimal standards of living

[Olechnicki, Załęcki 2004]. It is worth to note that the issue of poverty is in the scope of interest of the science. First of all as an element of the concept of *culture of poverty*, which originated in the 1960s. in the works of O. Lewis. According to Lewis, individuals living in poverty, no matter what the broader culture in which they live is, declare certain same views, accept same norms and attitudes toward the reality in which they happen to live.

Radical worsening of many families' material status has caused an increase in the range of poverty. The phenomenon of poverty is multidimensional and has many aspects. Nonetheless, let us assume that the income or expenditure level is the the most significant factor of the range of poverty. Therefore, a household may be deemed poor if its income is lower than the generally accepted minimum value. Analyses assume various thresholds of poverty (absolute poverty lines: social minimum, level of bare subsistence, relative lines of poverty, subjective lines of poverty) [Zawada 2000].

For a few years, the General Statistics Office has carried out analyses of the range of material poverty in Poland, using the results of the survey of household income. Those analyses assume a few types of poverty thresholds:

- social minimum (poverty warning). Established by the Institute of Labor and Social Affairs, the social minimum is the border which denotes the sphere of poverty. This includes such set of goods and services thanks to which a particular family is able to satisfy its biological, cultural and social needs on the necessary level. It needs to be taken into account that not only is the survival of individuals on a minimal level of subsistence important, but also these individuals' active participation in the public life.
- the so-called relative poverty limit, which constitutes half of the average equivalent expenditure of all households in the country. By determining the relative poverty limit, it is assumed that the occurrence of poverty means a situation of relative lack of means. Note that the situation of relative lack of means is also related to the general standard of living in the society.
- statutory poverty limit, which denotes the limit of income that enables a person to apply for benefits from Social Service.
- level of bare subsistence – denotes dire and abject poverty. It is estimated by the Institute of Labor and Social Affairs on the basis of a permanent set of requirements which guarantee the satisfaction of the most necessary needs such as: austere catering, housekeeping of a small apartment, buying the absolutely most basic household articles, underwear, medicines as well as maintaining the compulsory schooling. This set does not include needs related to work, culture, communication or even television.
- subjective poverty limit, which is set with the use of opinions of surveyed households concerning their needs in terms of income [Zawada 2000].

Present poverty in Poland is strictly related to unemployment (although we also have in Poland the phenomenon of *working poor* which means people work for very low salary).

The definition of unemployment is based on the social and economic criteria. In the sociological view, the emphasis is on the role of consequences of this phenomenon for an individual and its closest environment. In social research on unemployment not only is the situation of particular individuals emphasized, but also certain types of the origin of communities or social groups that are deprived of work and means for a living. While examining some features of individuals or groups of unemployed, we can focus on their attitudes and stereotypes, the structure of unemployment, social and demographic factors, or sources of income [Woźniak 1995].

In the sociology of social structures the group of the unemployed is considered part of a segment called *social layers*, according to their attitude toward consumption. The factor that constitutes a group of the unemployed is the particular kind of sources of income, paid from the system of benefits that arise from (i) the rest of the working society or (ii) the capitalized, self-paid insurance premiums in the time preceding the loss of work [Morawski 2005].

Unemployment in the economic view is an analytical category, so it means insufficient use of one of the productive factors (unsatisfied supply or demand, or a workplace) [Begg, Fischer, Dornbusch 1996].

In case of a job loss, there comes a change in expectations and way of life of the whole family, which now has to adjust to the new conditions. Kotlarska-Michalska observes a very important phenomenon in sociology. It turns out that families of the unemployed live in a day-to-day, planless, taskless kind of way, thus promoting and passing on a claiming attitude of own family toward

the state and its institutions. This kind of situation favors creating outside-driven personalities, devoid of self-realizing or self-driving elements [Pilch, Lepalczyk 1995].

It is most obvious that unemployment corrupts the realization of the economic-consumption function. Sudden lack of income from work causes a rapid decrease in the standard of living of the unemployed person and their family. This leads to poverty.

The post-SAF accumulation of difficult social issues (apart from poverty there are lack of jobs, low level of education, lack of prospects for the young, limited mobility, difficulty in communication with the outside world) makes it difficult to counteract it and favors processes of continuous marginalization. Both local (village and town enclaves of poverty, poor neighborhoods) and regional concentration of poverty favors the processes of preservation or even social inheriting of those negative features. [Tarkowska 2007].

[Marks-Bielska 2006] rightly argues that post_SAF circles are a different social group in the rural areas. Although several years passed since the liquidation of SAFs, this group has not lost its distinction and does not tend to disappear; on the contrary, mechanisms and attitudes are preserved that impede the social assimilation of this environment.

This is not exactly optimistic.

Poverty and mobility of the inhabitants of former SAFs on the labor market

The present situation of former SAF workers and their children is not only a result of changes in the farming sector of the state, but it also arises from the effects of the past, closely related to the very idea of a SAF.

54 people participated in the survey: 29 men and 25 women.

Among those surveyed inhabitants of the village of Chojnaty, most people younger than 45, so at the age of the highest professional mobility, often children of the former SAF workers (Tab. 1).

Despite quite a young age of the surveyed, their level of education is very low. As much as 72.2% of the examined population holds elementary education (40.7%) or vocational certificate (31.5%). It can therefore be assumed that the inhabitants of the former SAF are not very well educated, which does not favor the activity on the labor market (Tab. 2).

The occupational structure of the surveyed was as follows: with women – shop assistant, hair-dresser, with men – farmer, forester, machinist, locksmith, turner.

The level of income the surveyed declare per person per month is very low. Only 13% of the surveyed declared that their income amounts to more than 351 zł. All other families live on the verge of poverty (Tab. 3).

The surveyed could describe the material status of their families by using a few expressions below:

- „there is money for everything, no special saving” – this was the description that 3 respondents chose (5,5%),
- „we live sparingly and have enough for everything” – 2 respondents (3.7%),
- „there’s money only for the basic needs (food and clothes)” – 8 people (14.8%),

Table 1. Age of the surveyed

Age [years]	Surveyed	
	number	%
Up to 25 years	5	9.3
26-35 years	18	33.3
36-45 years	16	29.6
46-55 years	11	20.4
Over 55 years	4	7.4
Total	54	100

Source: own research.

Table 2. Level of education

Education	Surveyed	
	number	%
Primary	22	40.7
Vocational	17	31.5
General secondary	11	20.4
Technical secondary	4	7.4
College/university	-	-
Total	54	100

Source: own research.

Table 3. The Income per 1 person per month in a household according to the individuals surveyed

The Income [PLN]	Surveyed	
	number	%
Up to 200	31	57.4
201-350	16	29.6
351-500	4	7.4
501-750	2	3.7
Over 750	1	1.9
Total	54	100

Source: own research.

- „there’s money only for food, not even for clothes” – 20 respondents (37.0%),
- „there’s not enough money for food” – 21 respondents (38.8 %).

Among the surveyed, only 5 have steady jobs and 12 odd jobs. This is mostly work on construction sites, or planting trees. The remainder receive unemployment benefit (35.2%) or do not work. All unemployed people are registered unemployed.

The unemployed were also asked whether they took part in any of the projects of the County Job Office (CJO) in Chojnice. 9 people admitted that they participated in the project „*Increase My Chances*”. It had been designed on the basis of previous experience in realization this kind of projects by the CJO in Chojnice. After recognizing the needs and abilities of the participants, some advice or support was given as follows – the participants were directed to driving training – according to the expectations of employers, vocational training at actual factories for those with little or no qualifications to be able to return to the labor market, promoting active attitudes on the labor market, teaching the participants skills enabling them for a quick adaptation to the market and making the participants aware of their own capabilities and possibilities.

Those up and coming who applied for a subsidy, had a chance for self-employment.

The offered kinds of support included needs and capabilities of the participants as well as the expectations of the employers.

The support is addressed to 169 unemployed over 25 years old, for not longer than 12 months, except unemployed school-graduates and people over 25 years old, permanently unemployed for between 12 and 24 months.

Those were chiefly (i) former workers of SAFs and members of their families, coming from the rural areas and having primary, vocational or general secondary education or professions for which there is no demand on the local market, (ii) people with little or no qualifications, (iii) women who remained jobless because of the situation in the family and never acquired any professional experience or lost their mobility due to changing requirements on the market. Acquisition of new abilities in the form of professional training under the supervision of the employer has increased their chances of finding themselves back on the market.

The results of the project were as follows:

1. Activating 169 who were in danger of permanent unemployment and its consequences.
2. Extending professional qualifications of 15 participants and adjusting them the demands of the labor market through training in hazardous material transportation, which gave them additional qualifications.
3. Acquiring professional experience and practical abilities by 148 unemployed thanks to the participation in vocational training;
4. Granting 6 subsidies for setting up own enterprises.

Thanks to the realization of the above, the end beneficiaries have new qualifications, adjusted to the current demands of the market, they also acquired professional experience in the course of the vocational training, thus increasing their chances for employment.

Moreover, apart from acquiring the new professional skills and increasing motivation for work as well as raising the sense of responsibility, the beneficiaries gained greater self-confidence and trust in their own skills and possibilities. For many, these were higher personal or professional ambitions. The project was fully financed from the public means.

Of 9 people who participated in the project, 3 managed to find jobs.

Only 14 people (26%) answered *yes* to the question if they actively sought employment in the last 24 months. Therefore, 74% of the respondents did not show any mobility on the labor market.

To sum up, it must be stated that even though the surveyed live on the verge of poverty, do not try and find jobs (with very few exceptions), which would improve their material status.

Table 4. Types of employment of the surveyed

Type of employment	Surveyed	
	number	%
Steady job	5	9.3
No job	18	33.3
Benefit	19	35.2
Odd jobs	12	22.2
Total	54	100

Source: own research.

Conclusions

At present, the percentage of unemployed among the former SAF workers is falling. This is mainly due to the fact that most of them are past the retirement age. The areas of the former SAFs still has a lower level of economic development and escalation of many negative phenomena. The post-SAF areas are the most difficult areas to be activated professionally. They have the highest percentage of unemployment. The high unemployment in these areas is caused by the distance from big urban areas, low level of industrialization and very low qualifications of the local people. The research carried out confirmed this state of matters. The mobility of the inhabitants is nearly non-existent. The local populace have chosen this style of life and do nothing to change it.

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Streszczenie

W badaniach zastosowano metodę sondażu diagnostycznego. Posłużono się kwestionariuszem ankiety, który wypełniali byli pracownicy państwowych gospodarstw rolnych (PGR). Celem badań było zapoznanie się z przebiegiem aktywizacji zawodowej mieszkańców osiedli popegeerowskich oraz wpływem mobilności na rynku pracy na ubóstwo rodzin.

Przeprowadzone badania potwierdziły, że mieszkańcy terenów dawnych PGR żyją na skraju ubóstwa. Są częstymi klientami ośrodka pomocy społecznej, nie kwapią się do podnoszenia stanu swojego wykształcenia, ani udziału w kursach kwalifikacyjnych. Ludność przyjęła względem państwa roszczeniowy styl życia i nie robi nic, by ten stan rzeczy zmienić. Duża część tych ludzi nie jest w stanie dostosować się do nowych warunków, w których życie wymaga odpowiedzialności i osobistej aktywności.

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