

Final Report

on the International Conference “**First Steps to achieving MDG1: poverty measurement, customizing goals and indicators and sub-regional targeting**”
held in Minsk on November 2-3, 2004.

(1) Living conditions survey

Expected outcome according to the Project: *Develop an additional household survey of living conditions in Belarus designed to collect information to support fully disaggregated data to support Goal1 and add supplementary data for goals 2-7. The survey will be conducted prior to the conference (below) so that the survey results will be presented at the conference.*

Living conditions survey was conducted during April – September 2004 by national experts from sociological laboratory NOVAK (Market and Opinion Research in Belarus). Sociological survey based on 3,260 households pull, and was focused on:

- Analysis of poverty prevalence assessment techniques and methods;
- Description of respondents’ socio-demographic parameters according to gender and age, education, socio-economic status, region, household composition and employment of household members;
- Evaluation of household incomes, their relation to the minimum subsistence budget (quintile and decile), assessment of a minimum amount of money which could satisfy monthly needs of a respondent’s family, sources and structure of monetary assistance;
- Housing evaluation;
- Family supply of durable goods;
- Purchasing power of the population;
- Assessment of the possibilities to meet the needs in services, including in education;
- General trends of family income changes and ways to address wealth problems;
- Family wealth differentiation by gender and age, household composition, presence of children, presence of unemployed pensioners, education level, presence of students, socio-economic status, place of residence;
- Degree of satisfaction with particular areas of one’s life.

Findings

The problem of poverty is in focus of public leaders, policy makers and scientists all over the world. Belarus started examining poverty as a socially significant phenomenon only in the mid 90’s. There were two reasons for that: firstly, poverty was especially acute in the country at that time and, secondly, poverty as a topic was no longer an ideological taboo. Ever since then, questions of subjective poverty assessment were included in one way or another in most of the surveys conducted in the country. However, this study is the first which specifically focused on this subject. In addition, it covered the population of all regions of Belarus and the city of Minsk, and its results are representative for the entire population in general and individual regions specifically.

The study revealed that personal assessment of one’s wealth generally corresponds to the real state of affairs and does not differ too much from the national statistics. Most of those surveyed (61.9 percent) believe that over the past 12 months they have been earning middle income. Approximately a third (32.2 percent) believe that they are poor and another 3.7 percent noted they were very poor. There are few of those considering their income to be above average: only 2.1 percent of the respondents called themselves wealthy and 0.1 percent - rich.

Subjectively, different people view the same level of income quite differently. Among those who indicated their average family per capita income below ‘the poverty line’, only 5.9 percent called themselves very poor, 42.6 percent – poor and more than a half – of average income. There were even those among them (0.3 percent) who considered themselves to be wealthy. At the same time, among those who placed their income above the minimum subsistence budget, 11.3 percent called themselves poor, 82.3 percent – average-income earners, 5.9 percent – wealthy and only 0.4 percent – rich.

As usual, high-risk poverty groups included: families with many children, single parents (mainly, single mothers) looking after infants; single senior citizens, where again women dominate; young people who are unable to find job after graduation; the unemployed and disable persons. Low level of education and insufficient work experience are additional factors increasing the risk of poverty.

Poverty profile in Belarus has a distinguishing feature, namely the so-called category "the working poor".

The majority of the population lives in very straitened circumstances, which explains generally modest claims of the respondents. When asked about the minimum amount of money which could satisfy a family's monthly needs, the average figure amounted to no more than 645, 410 rubles or basically the minimum consumer budget per household (the average size of a household in the survey is 2.9 persons). Depending on the subjective judgment of one's material wealth, the minimum amount varies between 50,000 to 5,000 rubles. That more than a half (54.6 percent) of the covered households had been in need of cash assistance over the previous 12 months indicates that most of the population lives in reduced circumstances. Naturally, the highest percentage of such households is found among families calling themselves "very poor" (91.5 percent) and "poor" (78.5 percent). But middle-income families also required cash assistance over the preceding 12 months (41.3 percent). There were such cases even among those qualifying themselves as wealthy (13.5 percent).

The study revealed that intra-family transfers substantially improve income situation. Wealthier families appear to receive much more of the required assistance from their relatives.

Family ownership of durable goods greatly differs according to which income group the respondents consider themselves to be part of. The most common durable commodities in all the covered households are a refrigerator (96.9 percent), furniture (95.2 percent) and a colored TV set (90.8 percent). A washing machine (any type) and a vacuum cleaner are only slightly more than a half of the households. The least common durable commodities are a computer (10.6 percent), garage (26.9 percent) and a car (27.1 percent). There is a noticeably high need in buying (or replacing) a computer in most of the families (often regardless of income), which bears evidence of rapid spread of computers in the country.

The population purchasing power is substantially limited. The respondents are able to meet their bread needs most fully (92.9 percent), milk - only 57.4 percent, sour cream – 51.6 percent and butter – 50.8 percent of the respondents. Potatoes and vegetables are normally grown at private plots of land or taken from relatives (61.2 and 55.1 percent, respectively). As for fish, sausage, confectionery and meat, they are normally bought with great limitations. Most of the population also cannot afford commercial services. Slightly more than a quarter can use health services provided on a paying basis. Going on vacation someplace is the least accessible service for the majority (less than 17 percent).

Most of those polled (67.0 percent) believe that the income status of their family has not undergone any changes over the past 12 months. Families that do report changes tend to show a worsening of the income status (24.5 percent).

Measuring one's personal wealth vis-à-vis other people is a very important element of subjective assessment. More than a half (59.2 percent) of the pollees believe that their families live just as the others, no better and no worse. 29.3 percent say they live poorly, but there are families living even poorer. 2.8 percent believe that they live poorer than the others. 7.2 percent believe that their family lives slightly better than the average family and 1.2 percent consider themselves living better than the majority of the others.

Nearly half of the respondents assume an active stance regarding one's income problems. 45.7 percent try to improve one's income. 35.3 percent reduce consumption, 12.1 percent, on the other hand, are resigned to one's fate and do nothing. 4.2 percent rely on government support and 2.5 percent – on relatives. There is an interesting trend here: most of those who consider themselves to be of middle income (53.6 percent) and wealthy (88.1 percent) argued that one should try

raising one's income level. As for the poor, they are more frequently seen reducing however low consumption levels they have (43.1 percent – 'very poor' and 52.6 percent – 'poor').

In a transition economy, having children becomes an important poverty risk factor. As attested by the survey, the first-born immediately worsens the income status of a better part of families, because the previously gainfully employed woman takes a maternity leave. Practically all families that have had a new-born over the past 12 months reported worsened income situation. The income level of families with children speaks of the same. The more children a family has, the worse off it is. More than a half of families with children believe they belong to a middle-income bracket. As more children are born into a family, a relative number of households claiming to poor is increasing.

Unemployed pensioners form one of the risk groups. In spite of the average pension being rather high and promptly paid relative to other former USSR republics, for many pensioners it is close to the minimum subsistence budget.

Household income status largely depends on the education level of its members. The higher was the level of education, the higher was the income status reported by the respondents. Those who measured their family income status as "rich", all had higher education. More than a half of those who assessed themselves as "wealthy" had higher education. Among those who defined themselves as "poor" and "very poor", slightly less than 10% had higher education and more than a quarter had education below the incomplete secondary level. Thus, poor education is a risk factor of great account.

Income self-assessment greatly differs regionally. In the east and south-east of the country, most of the respondents indicated below-average household income status (in Mogilev Region – 44.2 percent, in Gomel Region – 41.7 percent). This indicator is at its lowest in Minsk Region (29.5 percent) and Brest Region (30.5 percent). At the same time, the cash income situation looks somewhat different. The largest portion of the population with income below the minimum subsistence budget is found in Minsk, Gomel and Brest Regions. The share of the poor is the smallest in the City of Minsk, although only 0.8 percent said they were wealthy, whereas in the Gomel Region, for example, this figure is 3.6%. In a way, it has to do with the life being more expensive in the capital city.

(2) A 2-day Sub-regional conference "Achieving the millennium development goal 1: approaches and strategies"

Expected outcomes according to the Project:

- *expanding knowledge and opportunities to absorb global best practices and apply new tools*
- *facilitating a dialogue and partnerships among key stakeholders at the country level;*
- *fostering formal and informal networking among participants*
- *encouraging public awareness on poverty-related issues and broad discussion of ways to help reach the targets set by MDGs.*
- *better coordination of efforts of international and donor organizations*

Final Conference report

The international conference "Achieving the millennium development goal 1: approaches and strategies" was held in Minsk on 2-3 November 2004. It was organized under the auspices of UNDP with the support of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Global MDG Fund. The Conference's 125 participants represented governments, parliaments, business and academic communities, religious groups and the civil society of Armenia, Ukraine, Moldova, Russia and Belarus.

The aims were to develop common approaches to internalizing the MDG 1 within the region, to contribute to a global campaign in support of the Millennium Development Goals and to recommend avenues for MDG mainstreaming in the socio-economic planning and forecasting systems at the country level.

The conference was scheduled for two days. Day 1 was dedicated to plenary meetings and panel sessions, and day 2 to informal discussions and site visits.

The themes debated on 2 November included:

- The causes and extent of poverty; national approaches to poverty definition, evaluation and monitoring;
- Achieving the MDG 1: best practices, issues to be resolved; internalizing the MDGs within the region;
- Conceptual foundations of the national strategies and programmes on poverty reduction;
- Mainstreaming poverty reduction into country-level socio-economic policies;
- Trends in national social policies within the region;
- Economic empowerment for poverty eradication;
- Involving the civil society, NGOs and international organizations in poverty reduction.

The debate led to the adoption of this resolution that summarized the main findings and recommendations:

In her welcome speech, **Mrs Cihan Sultanoglu, UN Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative in Belarus**, said with the adoption of the Millennium Declaration in 2000 the world leaders committed themselves to eradicating poverty, improving health care and education, promoting peace and human rights, and conserving the environment. The Millennium Development Goals were formulated based on the Declaration with the top priority attached to the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. There are 1.2 billion people in the world living on less than a dollar a day. Poverty defies national borders, causes diseases, undermines government foundations, leads to the environmental degradation and escalates conflicts. UNDP plays a special role in the MDG implementation by seeking sustainable changes benefiting the poor – from global transformations to national policy reforms around the world. Long-term poverty reduction and economic growth can be achieved only if they are linked to a set of fundamental reforms both globally and nationally. Recognizing the right of countries to internalize MDG 1 in their own fashion, UNDP supports country-level efforts aimed at minimizing human costs of socio-economic transformations. This conference is a great opportunity for neighboring countries to exchange information and share experiences regarding MDG-1-supportive initiatives, deepen the understanding of the nature of poverty, take action to bring governments and civil society into an alliance against poverty.

Mrs A. Morova, Minister of Labour and Social Protection of Belarus, emphasized that poverty reduction and minimization of social implications of the transition period are a government policy priority in Belarus. At the moment, the national social protection system is oriented towards prevention of social risks and diversified targeted support. The ongoing social policy brings tangible results for citizens of Belarus – poverty rates tend to decline steadily throughout the country. For example, while in 1995, 31.2% of households had income below the subsistence level (poverty line in Belarus), in the first 6 months of 2004 – there were only 16.9% of such households. Mrs Morova also spoke in gratifying terms about the contribution UNDP projects make to addressing this problem in Belarus.

Mr B. Jekic, Assistant Representative, UNICEF Country Office in Belarus dwelt upon child poverty. He stressed that since children live in families, their poverty is mainly the result of parents' low income. Another factor of child poverty is a growing number of single-parent families headed by women, a phenomenon caused by increasing divorces and out-of-wedlock births.

During the morning plenary session, taking the floor were also **Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Protection of Belarus Mrs E. Kolos, Mr J. Osiatynski, MDG Advocate, UNDP RBEC/RRC/Bratislava**, political figures, scientists and researchers from Ukraine, Moldova, Russian Federation and Armenia. Their presentations covered a diversity of tools employed to build and implement social policies within the region: they described poverty modalities in their countries and approaches to measure it, shed light on experiences and conceptual approaches to

the poverty reduction strategic planning, recognized the importance of the civil society in policy development and monitoring.

Most of the discussions and opinion exchanges took place within the work of the three panels of the conference.

Panel 1 focused on the MDG 1 localizing and poverty monitoring. The panel facilitator, Ms S. Novoselova, Department Head of the Ministry of Statistics and Analysis of Belarus, elaborated on the integrated measurement of poverty rates and depth in Belarus, undertaken nationally for the first time based on the results of research vis-à-vis living conditions and time budget assessment of the Belarusian population. These surveys were made possible owing to UNDP Project “Assisting in Elaborating the Basic Foundation for a National Poverty Reduction Strategy”. Project manager Ms N. Efremenko presented a regional poverty early warning tool for Belarus – a dedicated poverty mapping software. Contributing to a better understanding of the nature of poverty as a psychological phenomenon was a socio-psychological study (Voices of poor) whose results were presented by project consultant Ms Zh. Griniuk. These presentations allowed to expand poverty assessment in Belarus according to its non-monetary components. World Bank Economist for Belarus Ms M. Bakanova introduced WB conceptual approaches to poverty assessment and cross-country comparisons within the region. Presentations of the delegates from the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Belarus covered the evolution of poverty assessment and measurement approaches, as well as MDG achievement indicators in respective countries.

Panel 2 discussed avenues of social policies and poverty reduction. Facilitator Ms E. Kolos, the First Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Protection of Belarus, spoke about development prospects of the social protection system in Belarus placing focus on the need to strengthen support targeting vulnerable groups of the population. Representatives of the government, NGOs and science discussed ways to improve the government labour market policy designed to effectively contribute to poverty alleviation. Health care and education scientists drew special attention to the importance of equitable access to social services. Deputy Minister of Education of Belarus Ms T. Kovaleva highlighted the relevance of the issue of social orphanage and proposed some coping strategies. Ms A. Shirobokova, Professor of Irkutsk Polytechnical University from Russia, President of the ‘Angara’ Women’s Union pinpointed the need to eliminate gender gap and establish coherent government/NGO cooperation for the effective addressing of the poverty concern.

Panel 3’s key discussions centered on economic empowerment as an important factor of poverty reduction in the region. Panel facilitator Mr Eric Brunat - Senior Economist/Advisor, UNDP Belarus, delivered a presentation on balancing economic growth and human development indicating the need to build such a macroeconomic policy which would allow to capitalize on strengths of economic growth to reduce poverty and raise the standards of living and quality of life of the population. Ms L. Istomina, UNDP Programme Officer in Belarus gave an overview of on-going UNDP projects in Belarus in support of the MDG. Mr A. Bogdanovich, Deputy Director of the Research Institute of the Ministry of Economy of Belarus took particular note of the importance of poverty mainstreaming in the strategic planning at the country level. The participants all as one championed the dynamic development of small enterprise for which an enabling environment needs to be created, i.e. self-help and self-employment opportunities. Doctor E. Vankevich highlighted the importance of creating a poverty early warning system in mono-towns, a problem common for all the countries of the region.

The results of the discussions in the panels were presented during the evening plenary session.

The debates led to the adoption of this resolution that summarized the main findings and recommendations:

Resolution

We, the participants of the International Conference «Achieving the Millennium Development Goal 1: Approaches and Strategies», representing Armenia, Ukraine, Russian Federation, Moldova, and Republic of Belarus, held on November 2-3, 2004 in Minsk under the aegis of the UNDP,

Upon hearing the presentations, taking part in the discussions and exchanging opinions and information on the problems under discussion,

Having regard to the practical experience and results of studies conducted in the countries of the region,

While confirming the strive for strengthening cooperation among our countries towards reaching the Millennium Development Goal 1,

Express our gratitude to the UNDP, the UNICEF, the Global Foundation for the Millennium Development Goals and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus for organizing this conference

And have agreed that:

- Millennium Goal 1 points out one of the priority the lines of improvement of the socio-economic policy in the area of poverty reduction in each of our countries;
- The diversity of national instruments, approaches and positive experience is an invaluable resource of reaching the Millennium Goal 1 in the countries of the region;
- The UNDP regional offices strengthen the ties and contacts among our countries and make an important contribution into reaching the Millennium Goal 1.

We have drawn the conclusion that:

- The Millennium Goal 1 may be reached by:
 - ensuring a stable economic growth and creation of conditions for a full realization of the human potential;
 - pursuing of an efficient social policy aimed at reduction of unemployment and provision of state support to the population;
 - preservation of the existing social capital and the provision of an equal access for the entire population to health protection services and education
- Socio-economic features in our countries require an adaptation of the Millennium Goal 1 to the conditions in each of them;
- It is deemed feasible to incorporate the achievement of the Millennium Goal 1 into the systems of national planning and forecasting in our countries
- A system of indices which comprehensively characterize the level and quality of life of the population must be employed as indicators of monitoring and achieving the Millennium Goal 1;
- The reaching of the Millennium Goal 1 may be facilitated by an efficient interaction of the national governments, business, non-governmental structures and international organizations.

The participants of the conference consider it worthwhile to recommend:

In the area of Adaptation of Millennium Goal 1 and the living standards of population monitoring:

- The use of such indices as the Share of population living on less than \$4 per day and the Share of the poorest quintile in the national consumption must be used as the main indicators of monitoring the achievement of the Millennium Goal 1 in the region;
- Consideration of the annual National Reports on poverty, the preparation of which is part of the obligations of the countries on the fulfillment of the Millennium Declaration, as the main reporting document reflecting tendencies in the changes of poverty in the region;
- A set of indices for regular monitoring of the progress in achieving the Millennium Goal 1 must be developed for inclusion into the national reports in the countries of the region;
- The institutional incorporation of a special monitoring system of poverty as part of the national statistical analysis and forecast of the population living standards must be considered as a priority task;
- Such indicators reflecting the non-monetary, i.e. socio-cultural, environmental and other components of poverty, which reflect deprivation of the population not only in income but in opportunities as well, must be included into the set of monitoring indices;
- The elements of assessment and monitoring of poverty must be expanded by the use of macroeconomic indices characterizing the economic growth versus poverty reduction as a condition of sustainable development;
- Studies complementing the analysis of households in terms of subjective assessment of poverty by the population must be facilitated;
- Theoretical investigations on the creation and testing of integral methods of assessing the living standards, which provide for developing a comprehensive approach to poverty as a multi-faceted social phenomenon, must be encouraged;
- Special attention must be paid to the study of such phenomena of poverty in the region as “the working poor”, and the groups of population who are on the brink of poverty;
- The attention of the national governments must be focused on the growth of poverty among children as a group of the population whose well-being pre-determines the development prospects of the society;
- Computer and information technologies, as well as methods of mapping for studying regional differentiation of the living standards inside countries must be expanded;
- Systems of early diagnostics and warning of poverty on the regional level must be created and developed;
- A wide public discussion of National Reports on poverty must be organized for obtaining a feedback from all society groups concerned.

In the area of social policy and inter-sector interaction:

- Strengthening of target-oriented social support to the low-income population strata must be considered as a priority
- In terms of the target-oriented social support, the poverty margin must be set, proceeding from the real financial abilities of a state
- The necessity to develop efficient mechanisms of financing active and passive programs on the labour market must be paid attention to
- The key role of the active policy on the labour market, as a tool for adaptation for the requirements of the labour market and social integration of various socially vulnerable groups of population, must be highlighted
- The necessity to enhance the motivation effect of wages by using systems of labour remuneration which are better adapted to modern conditions must be taken into account
- The importance of expanding the mechanisms of the collective-contract regulation of wages and the development of social partnership must be paid attention to
- The necessity to reform the pension systems in the countries by a gradual introduction of the accumulation element must be stressed
- The development of information and computer systems must be regarded as a mandatory condition of implementation of an efficient social policy
- The fact that the system of state minimum social standards is a guarantee of access to social services for the poor population must be paid attention to
- The development of target-oriented provision of medical services to the low-income population must be considered as one of the priority tasks of the health protection system

- Enhanced access of the low-income population to health protection services may be facilitated by a re-distribution of resources in favor of more efficient and less costly types of medical services.
- The necessity to develop information and computer technologies in the sphere of social services must be paid attention to
- The importance to provide target-oriented scholarships for young people from low-income families attending second and third-level educational establishments must be highlighted
- The legislative incorporation of the principles, forms and mechanisms of interaction must be considered as a mandatory condition for a successful partnership of state and non-government organizations in the sphere of social policy
- The importance of the practice of social mission as an efficient form of inter-sector cooperation must be stressed
- The creation and development of mechanisms of international information exchange among state and non-governmental organizations must be paid attention to
- The creation of regional councils on resolving social problems, consisting of representatives of state agencies, business and public organizations, must be highlighted

In the area of expanding economic opportunities:

- The sustainable economic growth and the development of the human potential must be considered as the main factor of prevention and reduction of poverty;
- The maintenance of macro-economic stability and enhancement of competitiveness of goods, expansion of the export opportunities of the countries, pursuing of a stable monetary policy, formation of a favorable investment climate, and mobilization of internal savings for providing investments must be regarded as the main elements of a sustainable economic growth
- The non-investment factors of economic growth must be maximized in order to generate new working places by a priority development of the economic sectors which are capable of a prompt increase in the working places at minimum capital investments;
- In the conditions of industrial and agricultural reforms, special attention must be paid to the implementation of socially responsible approach to the re-structuring of enterprises;
- The creation of conditions for low-income population strata, who are capable of working, to independently come out of poverty, must be regarded as a mandatory condition for a positive economic development;
- The creation of a favorable entrepreneurship climate as a prerequisite of the development of small and medium business which is a sphere of self-employment and self-support must be facilitated;
- Employment and self-employment through the development of micro-credits, credit cooperatives, and the reduction of administrative barriers must be facilitated;
- The initiatives on the development and creation of new institutions for facilitating employment must be supported;
- The target orientation in enhancing economic opportunities for such socially vulnerable groups as rural population, youth, women, disables persons, and unemployed must be strengthened;
- The development of homesteads as a means of self-support of the population must be facilitated;
- Various forms of self-support of the population on the community level must be supported and developed.

Concluding the first day of the Conference Ms Cihan Sultanoglu and Ms E. Kolos thanked the participants for their enthusiastic and fruitful work and wished them to put into effective use the knowledge and experience gained in addressing poverty reduction.

On day 2 of the Conference the conference participants were invited to join on-site panels. This gave them the opportunity to share their views, perspectives and experiences and to relate those to the national practices of Belarus.

Members of **Section 1 ("Public social support systems")** visited the National Rehabilitation Centre for Disabled Children under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Belarus and the Integrated Social Services Centre of Minsk's Oktyabrsky District

Participants who wished to learn more about national employment promotion practices joined **Section 2 (Adjustment of the socially vulnerable population groups to a new labour market environment)**. The panelists visited the social works centre for disabled individuals and the headquarters of the multi-profile Youth Social Service. During those site visits, the conference participants contributed to debates centred mostly on poverty reduction and alleviation.

Comments from the conference participants:

Mr. Razumov, Deputy Director of the Federal research institution "All-Russian Center for living standards », Russia

«...The conference has been extremely useful and has provided an excellent opportunity for experts from different countries to exchange information and practices related to poverty reduction. This type of conference should be held on a regular basis, with continued sponsorship from UNDP»

Ms. Libanova, Advisor to the President of Ukraine, Deputy Director for Science, Institute of Demography and Social Studies under the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine

«The conference is a clear indication that countries of the region are ready and willing to share their experiences with each other. We have had a lot to tell our colleagues, and have also learned a lot from them. We are thoroughly impressed with the partnership between UNDP and the ministries involved in implementing the project to develop a national poverty prevention strategy for Belarus. We would like to learn more about the findings of the project's research...»

Ms. Moraru - Head of the Main Department of Forecasting and Development Programming, Ministry of Economy of Moldova

« ...I am impressed by the achievements of Belarus' social policy. I was particularly pleased that we were able to not only hear about these successes, but also to see how they were impacting the day-to-day lives of ordinary Belarusians. Integrating on-site visits into the conference programme was a good decision. Conference organization was exceptional. I am deeply thankful for the attention and the warmth with which I have been greeted.»

Ms. Kalinaeva- Coordinator of UNDP gender programmes, Russia

«... We are impressed by the large number of influential leaders from the government and civil society who attended the conference - deputy ministers, members of parliament, leaders of leading NGOs, church hierarchs and members of the academic community. The work of the conference's support personnel deserves special praise, especially given their small number. You have an interesting experience of partnership with an NGO on child entrepreneurship. We invite you to work together ...»

As an attendant result of Conference, on 5 November, **Ms L. Alaverdyan**, Member of PRSP Steering Committee, Authorized Person on the PRSP Participatory Process, Armenia had a meeting with NGOs involved in the poverty reduction strategy development in Belarus to discuss their role and impact.

A selection of conference materials was posted at the project web site (www.poverty-by.org). Conference papers and presentation summaries will also be made available on the Internet shortly. Materials and summaries of presentations related to the Conference had been incorporated in a book and printed.