



Evaluation Summary



International
Labour
Office

Evaluation Unit

Support to national efforts for the promotion of youth employment and management of migration – Final Joint Evaluation

Quick Facts

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Evaluation Management: *United Nations MDG Fund – (ILO lead) Partners: IOM, FAO and UNDP; Consultant: James A. Newkirk*

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Since May 2009, the International Labour Office (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have been providing technical assistance to the Government of Serbia through the Joint Programme (JP) *Support To National Efforts For The Promotion Of Youth Employment And Management Of Migration*. The Joint

Programme was co-financed by the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F) and the Government of Serbia with contributions of US\$6.1 million and US\$1.9 million, respectively.

The aim of the Joint Programme was to address the youth employment and migration challenges of Serbia by combining employment and social policy objectives and integrating them into long-term national development goals. The direct recipients were decision-makers and staff of the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development (MoERD), the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MoLSP), the Ministry of Youth and Sport (MoYS), the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights (MoHMR), the National Employment Service (NES), Centres for Social Work (CSW); the Republic Statistical Office (RSO), social partners (staff of employers' and workers' organisations), as well as the local authorities of the Districts of South Backa, Belgrade and Pcinjski. The ultimate beneficiaries were disadvantaged young women and men (15 to 30 years old) in the 35 municipalities of the three target Districts, highly affected by unemployment and poverty and expected to be the re-settlement destination of many returnees.

The Joint Programme was designed with a three-pronged strategy touching upon *policies, institutions and programmes* vital to delivery of integrated employment and social services targeting disadvantaged young women and men exposed to migration, especially young returnees. It built on three, interlinked outcomes:

- Mainstreaming youth employment and migration policy objectives into national development strategies.
- Strengthening the capacity of national institutions to develop integrated labour market and social services.
- Implementing a package of programmes on employment and social services.

The Joint Programme was developed through a robust participatory process involving participating UN agencies and national partners. The design process ensured that the external context, including a thorough analysis of the problems to be addressed and the country strategic priorities, was well understood. This joint intervention benefited from the high level of commitment of national partners, which ensured that the assistance deployed responded to the development challenges faced by the country. The level of participation can be attributed, to a large extent, to the establishment of an open dialogue between national partners and participating UN Agencies during design, implementation and monitoring of the Programme.

The Joint Programme was designed with the priorities of the UNDAF and, of course, the MDGs in mind. The Programme was designed within the YEM thematic window of the MDG-F. The YEM thematic window defines the following priorities:

- Make youth employment a national priority - national development plans and frameworks.
- Identify, develop and implement measures to help young people access and remain in the labour market: i) innovative interventions re impact of migration on youth; and ii) innovative interventions to address rural- urban migration, with special emphasis on youth.
- Strengthen institutional capacity to effectively deliver employment, youth and migration interventions, including improved coordination and policy coherence.

The Joint Programme had a direct and measurable impact on ensuring a more prominent focus on youth employment in national strategic frameworks through the

embedding of youth employment targets in the *National Employment Strategy*; the design and implementation of employment programmes targeting disadvantaged youth; and the development of by-laws for the 2011 *Law on Social Protection*.

It had – and through the Commissariat for Refugees in its new role as coordination body for migration monitoring and management (CPPM) will continue to have – a direct influence on the management of labour migration. This is an area where Serbia had little prior experience with clear gaps in policy and programme effectiveness. The 2010 *White Paper: Towards Developing a Policy on Labour Migration in the Republic of Serbia* has made significant inroads in addressing these gaps and in providing the Government with a reliable framework for policy and programme development.

The Joint Programme assisted Serbian institutions in establishing a coordinated and multi-sector system for the delivery of services to youth at risk of social exclusion, which not only coordinates the delivery of social and employment services, but also includes work on activation and skills development programmes. The Joint Programme was instrumental in:

- The establishment of partnership agreements among public service providers.
- The development of an integrated service delivery system and its operational procedures.
- The building of capacity of staff of the National Employment Service and the Centres of Social Works in managing referrals.
- The increase of coordination between the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development and their decentralized structures.

The results achieved in this field are significant in their structural nature and long-term significance. In addition, the wide range of lessons learned stemming from the piloting of integrated service delivery provide good ground for its scaling-up across the whole territory of Serbia.

The Youth Employment Fund introduced a mechanism to improve on the delivery of youth employment and social inclusion policy objectives, similar to those used by the European Union Social Fund. This instrument allows the Government of Serbia, through the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development and the National Employment Service, to address the national youth employment challenge. The Ministry in charge of employment has already committed to continue the financing of the Fund and has embedded the good practice on targeting approaches, stemming from the Joint Programme, into its strategic planning.

The quantitative targets set by the Project Document for final beneficiaries of gender-sensitive employment programmes (3,000 disadvantaged youth receiving individualized employment services and programmes) were not reached, the key constraint being the overall costs of interventions targeting low-skilled youth and the length of treatment required to prepare them for labour market entry. However, the employment rate of participants at follow-up (25 per cent) is in line with the experience of countries in the European Union, where the average employment outcome for disadvantaged youth typically ranges below 20 per cent.

The employment interventions promoted under the aegis of the Joint Programme succeeded in increasing the labour market attachment of the target group (measured in terms of progression of the individual towards labour market activity, rather than a job in the open labour market). Therefore, the longer term gains of including disadvantaged youth in the labour market (in terms of lower spending on social benefits, higher labour tax revenues and stronger aggregate demand through the consumption multiplier) largely offset programme's costs.

The Joint Programme will have had a lasting, positive and systemic impact on policy making and operational activities of Serbian national and local institutions. It has enhanced policy coherence and coordination among government institutions and particularly among the Ministry of Economy and the National Employment Service on the one hand, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and Centres for Social

Work, on the other. The Joint Programme has been successful, and is worthy of study as a good practice model for the establishment of an integrated employment and social service delivery system characterized by individualized and client-oriented assistance and case management approaches. All of these acquire specific importance due to their structural nature and represent the key feature of the Joint Programme success. The impact of the Joint Programme is measurable in terms of the changes it has occasioned at policy, procedural and operational levels within the Ministries of Economy and Regional Development, Labour and Social Policy, Youth and Sports, as well as the Republic Statistical Office, the NES, CSWs and Youth Offices.

The Joint Programme was designed to deliver structural change. It did so and the results are clearly visible. Its implementation strategy, centred on a policy and institutional capacity development component and one aimed at providing direct assistance, was instrumental to the achievement of outputs, which in turn allowed the attainment of planned outcomes.

Main highlights of the YEM Joint Programmes in Serbia

- ✓ The extensive work done on employment, migration and social protection indicators and their use in evidence-based policy-making.
- ✓ The enhancement of institutional capacity to collect and analyse data at national and local levels, as an instrument for evidence-based policy development as well as the continuous involvement of the Republic Statistical Office in this process.
- ✓ The assistance provided in strategy and policy formulation (on employment, migration, youth development and social protection) as well as in the establishment of the Youth Employment Fund as a versatile instrument for the achievement of employment and social inclusion objectives.
- ✓ The piloting of the integrated service delivery model, the work on activation services, the implementation of the principles set forth by the *Rulebook*, the capacity building of local government institutions and agencies and their potential for national scaling-up.

- ✓ Improved provision of client-oriented employment and social services not only for disadvantaged youth, but for all population groups at risk of exclusion.
- ✓ The work on operational planning has changed the way CSWs approach their service delivery.
- ✓ The significant development of the role and capacity of Youth Offices to assist in policy formulation and service delivery at local level.

Recommendations

- The Government of Serbia will soon be faced with the challenge to deliver on the objectives of the newly adopted employment and social inclusion framework that is aligned to the EU *acquis communautaire*. It is recommended that the Government of Serbia build on and expand the activities that were successfully piloted by the Joint Programme, in particular the integrated employment and social service delivery model, case management and operational planning approaches, as well as outreach services to engage the most vulnerable groups of the Serbian population.
- The development of a follow-up Joint Programme would greatly improve the means available to national and local partners to deliver on the objectives of the employment and social inclusion policy framework.
- It is recommended that the integrated service delivery system piloted by the Joint Programme be further developed and expanded based on the lessons that were learnt during its piloting phase. Such work would include:
 - The development of implementing regulations to apply the model throughout the country.
 - A reformulation of the operational procedures to include other service providers such as education and training institutions and the Youth Offices.
 - Inclusion of activation services and programmes targeting recipients of social welfare benefits in the National Cooperation Protocol and the Partnership Agreements.
- It is recommended that the Government of Serbia take action to formalize the operations of the Youth Employment Fund as a means to ensure that the priority assigned to youth

employment in the national employment framework delivers concrete and measurable results. The National Employment Action Plan for 2012 specifically channels budgetary resources to the Youth Employment Fund for the implementation of programmes targeting disadvantaged youth, but the resources invested in many other employment-related interventions – implemented by various government agencies – are not passing through this financial mechanism. As a result, the performance of these interventions, and the impact they have on youth employment goes undetected and unrecorded, undermining efforts to develop a comprehensive understanding of the level of national commitment to youth employment. The experience of the Joint Programme is that it is possible to ensure a high degree of transparency and accountability in Fund management with a minimum of resource investment.

- The Joint Programme allowed local employment offices to decide the mix and sequence of active labour market programmes to be delivered, and specific resource allocations according to individual characteristics. This was critical to the success of the direct assistance component of the Joint Programme. It is recommended that the Government of Serbia encourage the further extension of this model of decentralized management of employment services and programmes. Stronger promotion and linkage to local actors will significantly increase the numbers of participants from target groups, and implementation of an intensive promotion and outreach campaign for the YEF at the local levels is recommended. Additionally, the practice of trialling employment programmes before they are scaled-up should become a regular activity of the National Employment Service. The experience of the Joint Programme demonstrated that not all offered employment services and programmes attract the interest of private sector enterprises, or respond fully to the needs of individual beneficiaries.