



Evaluation Summary



International
Labour
Office

Evaluation Unit

Support to national efforts for the promotion of youth employment and management of migration - Mid-Term Joint Evaluation

Quick Facts

Countries: Serbia

Mid-Term Evaluation: 04/2011

Mode of Evaluation: Independent

ILO Administrative responsibility:
DWT/CO-Budapest

Technical Area: ED/EMP

Evaluation Management: MDG
Achievement Fund

Evaluation Team: Dietmar Aigner

Project End: 11/2012

Project Code: SRB/09/50/UND

Donor: MDG AF (US\$ 6,143,000)

IOM: 984,901

UNDP: 3,052,701

ILO: 1,344,370

UNICEF: 761,028

Keywords: Youth employment, migration,
social protection.

Background & Context

The long term goal of the Youth Employment and Migration joint programme (YEM JP) is to contribute to the fulfillment of key strategic objectives of Serbia such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the National Strategy for Economic Development, the National Sustainable Development Strategy, Strategy for Regional Development, and the National Employment Strategy and the National Action Plan on Employment. YEM JP is being

implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development, which acts as the Serbian lead partner. Further national partners include the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, the National Employment Service, the Centres for Social Work and the Republic Statistical Office. Under the formal leadership of IOM, four participating agencies – IOM, UNDP, ILO and UNICEF – are implementing the programme activities. Three interlinked outcomes were planned:

Outcome 1. Youth Employment and Migration Policy Objectives are Included into National Development Strategy;

Outcome 2. National Institutions Develop Integrated Labour Market and Social Services that Meet Employment and Migration Policy Objectives Targeting Disadvantaged Young Women and Men;

Outcome 3. Integrated Employment Programmes and Social Services Targeting Young Returnees and Other Disadvantaged Young Women and Men Implemented in Three Target Districts.

The programme was assessed on the bases of its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and prospects for sustainability. Information gathered during the process led to the following findings:

Relevance: Overall, the YEM JP is highly relevant and needed. It is firmly based on adequate and realistic needs assessments and

good problem identification. It has a clear logic and documentation. The specific interests of women, minorities and ethnic groups have been taken account of. The monitoring framework has been improved in the life of the project and the guidance given by the MDG-F Secretariat has been particularly helpful. The three defined outcomes directly respond to national policies, systems and services, and national counterparts have been fully involved and strongly supportive of the programme and have made a substantial financial contribution.

Efficiency: Overall, programme implementation was characterised by initial delays in all components, but once sub-projects have started, efficiency has improved rapidly. Whilst the programme has been implemented efficiently by the professional agency managers, procedural rules relating to parallel management and contracting have reduced the true potential for efficiency, and some synergies may have been lost, although there is limited evidence to show the benefits of sharing work methodologies and tools. The pace of implementation means that programme outputs should be complete at the close of the project.

Effectiveness: The YEM JP is making substantial progress towards the effective achievement of programme objectives, Millennium Development and thematic window goals. Particular success is reported in the youth employment component. Performance of social protection and migration components is good but sometimes uneven. Serbian policy makers and administrators have been given a large number of innovative tools and models to actively fight youth unemployment and to a lesser extent migration. The data base on youth employment and migration is being significantly improved and should lead to the development and implementation of more effective and better targeted national and regional policies. All these activities need further systematic replication and dissemination to boost the effects being produced. The YEM JP mostly delivers high quality products and flexible management has regularly adapted to a constantly changing

environment. Dissenting views exist on the quality of the draft Diaspora on-line survey. Despite limitations, the Diaspora survey can be considered as a first attempt to move towards a more systematic follow up of migration trends.

The work on migration data and trends initiated by YEM is being followed up by an EU pre-accession project implemented by IOM and Commissariat for Refugees. Implementation is adequately followed up by the Programme Management Committee. The target areas for regional activities have been mostly chosen well, taking into account the size and complexity of the underlying socio-economic problems. Concerns remain about the selection of Belgrade as a pilot area for the Fund. Overall, there appears to be a good mix of final beneficiaries among different social groups, comprising in particular low and unqualified youth, long term unemployed, minorities and women. However, relatively little funding have been earmarked for actively tackling migration problems despite these having been defined as one of the strategic priorities.

Sustainability: There is strong national commitment to the sustainability of YEM employment components, with funding available for 2011. The sustainability prospects of some predicted outcomes from the social protection and migration components still deserve more attention. The rapid adoption of the new Law on Labour Protection is essential for the durability of results being achieved. Additional resources will be needed to cope with an increased workload at Centres for Social Works and it remains to be seen how far case management approach and integrated service delivery can be further developed and disseminated under such conditions. There is still room to increase the durability of the results being achieved by parts of the migration component. In particular adoption and integration of outputs into national policy frameworks is slow. Taking into account very small resources dedicated to labour migration policy, the opportunity for capacity building might be missed. Sustainability of the municipal youth offices in

Serbia is still weak. The establishment of youth offices by decree has been a pragmatic step forward and in fact has facilitated the quick set-up of local service centres. National discussions about a revised framework for education and vocational training, including the related accreditation and certification measures are moving slowly. Entrepreneurial learning has been established in the educational system and the creation of an institutional framework for it is an important prerequisite for addressing youth unemployment.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Overall, the YEM JP is highly relevant and addresses key issues in respect of Serbia's socio-economic development. The programme design has been ambitious in scope and coverage relative to its timeframe and resources. Targeting disadvantaged young men and women, especially those most at risk of social exclusion and prime candidates for emigration has been a crucial success factor for this well designed intervention. The programme also focuses well on developing evidence-based policies on youth employment, on strengthening the capacity of national institutions to design integrated labour market and social services aligned with policy objectives and on supporting local institutions in piloting innovative employment programmes and social services. Individual components and sub-projects appear to be innovative in tackling youth employment and social protection and have made good use of the technical experience and good practice existing at the various agencies involved. National partners' commitment is good within the youth employment component but variable in social protection and labour migration components. The programme has made very good use of existing inter-ministerial working groups and has also stimulated the establishment of further overall coordination mechanisms. The implementation and cooperation structures have encouraged the participation of many national stakeholders, in particular, some not highly involved in the

programme implementation. The YEM JP currently presents the best performing joint programme in Serbia. The YEM JP is expected to achieve most of its defined outcomes within the timeframe for implementation. Results and impacts could be even stronger if the programme were given an extension. Adoption of strategic outputs and thus transferring them into intermediate and wider impacts is lagging behind schedule in some cases, such as parts of the social protection and labour migration components. The likelihood for replication of successful pilot initiatives is good in general but since many initiatives, especially the integrated service delivery, have just started immediate impacts have not yet materialised. The outcome of the integrated service delivery piloting will be a finalised model, but more difficult to predict are the wider consequences of this model. Much will depend on the revised social protection legislation being put in place soon and the pro-active engagement of local branches in making the integrated service model a success. For some activities, follow-up actions are already being considered or have started by means of the EU pre-accession instrument and other support mechanisms. Nevertheless, an extension would deepen the impacts, notably legislative and administrative improvements and strengthen immediate and longer term sustainability. Despite its success, implementation has suffered from the prevailing implementation approach, namely the absence of a strong and integrated programme management, coordination and reporting structure. Impressions remain that the management of individual agencies' components is clearly superior to joint overall coordination. Joint programming is still too much based on a segregated approach based on individual agency considerations which are later harmonised under a unified umbrella. Strong overall leadership and guidance is unlikely to be achieved on the basis of independent parallel budgeting and agency-specific implementation provisions. Overall cost effectiveness, above individual agencies' parts, is difficult to predict in respect to value-for

money and synergetic effects from the prevailing approach.

Together with other institutions and partners involved, the Secretariat should consider granting a time extension to this programme. Despite the fact that the achievement of objectives within the current timeline is considered very good and partly excellent, more time would be beneficial to allow the YEM programme's immediate impacts to appear more visibly. In this event, programme success and the good practice character of YEM Serbia could be much better explored and disseminated. A no additional cost extension of six months would allow the follow up of sustainability actions being taken by the national partners. The benefits from an extension could be further strengthened by seeking additional donor funds in order to allow a limited number of extra activities to take place.

The Committee should take a favourable view on extending the programme lifetime. In order to identify financial means for an extension, an enlarged Committee meeting should be organised in the form of a "sustainability conference". The purpose would be to present the achievements today and the detailed prospects for sustainability, as well as further activities needed for the immediate strengthening of impacts and sustainability. The donor community should be invited as the main target group of such conference, and their ideas for providing funding for covering an extended programme period should be explored.

The remaining programme time, in particular if an extension is granted, should be utilised to incorporate education and vocational training elements into the remaining programme activities. The Ministry of Education, including its regional centres, and institutions dealing with vocational training, should be invited to take a stronger interest in the programme, its outcomes and perspectives.

There is still a need to further strengthen the joint communication and advocacy campaign. The Joint Programme Manager should be requested to further increase efforts for promoting programme achievements under the

unified umbrella of the joint programme.

In line with launching the Campaign on Migration, the Joint Programme Manager should consider using this activity as a basis for promoting all other outputs produced by the migration component and to call for immediate adoption and absorption by the national authorities. Commissariat for Refugees and Ministry of Diaspora should ensure greater involvement and quicker decision-making as concerns the output of the output of the labour migration component.

Government partners have to continue with providing training particular in respect to the integrated service model and case management, preferably by further developing and using sustainable training systems.

Future joint programmes in the area of YEM should take account of the need to be fully inclusive by actively involving the education and vocational training sector at the programming stage. In the event of a future programme having a migration component, it is recommended that migration activities are designed as an important cross-cutting issue, complementing all other programme activities accordingly. Special attention should be given to the identification and inclusion of returnees, a particular vulnerable group that does not receive sufficient consideration in the current intervention.

Future support to social protection should deeply explore ways for increasing employment perspectives for young social benefit receivers benefiting from the integrated service model. Pilot interventions targeting the most vulnerable groups should preferably take place in socio-economically disadvantaged locations.

Design of future JPs should put clear emphasis on exploring coordination and management mechanisms and should actively promote the identification of synergy effects. A revised implementation approach giving the UN Resident Coordinator a supervisory role could effectively improve the quality of joint programmes.