

JovEmprego: Supporting Young People and Women in Cabo Verde in growing and formalizing their businesses



When: 2017-2023



Where: Africa



Funding: United Nations



Website: <https://www.facebook.com/jovemprego/>

Labour market indicators in Cabo Verde indicate a high unemployment rate, particularly for women and young people. In 2020, the national unemployment rate was 14.5 percent, while the unemployment rate among the young population (i.e., in the age group between 15 and 34 years) stood at around 22 percent, with a higher percentage for women relative to men.⁷ Over one-third of young people are both unemployed and outside the education and training system, while 22 percent of the population is in precarious employment, of whom a large majority women.⁸

Against this background, JovEmprego, a programme in partnership with the UNDP and funded by the Government of Luxembourg, aims at strengthening the employment, training and insertion system in the country, with a focus on the young population and women. The programme has been operating from 2017 to 2022 and currently received a one-year extension until 2023. Its main goal is to address the challenges faced by young people and women in the informal market of Praia in their integration into the labour market and formalization of their businesses. through a demand-driven approach and collaborations with local service providers, particularly around soft and hard skills.

The Project at a Glance

To realize its vision of greater employment opportunities for the young population and women in the country, JovEmprego focuses on both professional integration and entrepreneurship support, along four main axes of intervention:

- ▶ Integrating and strengthening demand-driven insertion mechanisms at the national level, with particular attention to the country's vocational training and insertion system.
- ▶ Fostering the integration of young people and women through both wage employment and entrepreneurship development support.
- ▶ Better adapting the system of supply-side financing by microfinance structures to the demands of MSMEs.
- ▶ Improving the environment for MSMEs in terms of popular understanding.

7 Institut National de la Statistique (Cap-Vert): «Statistiques Emploi et Marché du Travail au CV, IMC 2020» In JovEmprego's Final Evaluation, 2021.

8 Ibid.

A key feature of the programme is its decentralized structure grounded on local contexts and needs, which consists of six Antennas or branches integrated within existing institutions, such as employment and vocational training centers, the university, and municipalities, located in five islands of Cape Verde: Fogo and Brava, Santiago (Sul and Norte), S. Nicolau, S. Vicente, and Santo Antão.

Gender considerations represent an important part of the programme's activities, not only because a large portion of its beneficiaries are women, oftentimes household heads from low-income backgrounds and in self-employment but also because it employs gender mainstreaming and budgeting at different levels in line with government priorities.

A Focus on JovEmprego's One-Stop Centre at the Sucupira Market

- ▶ Through a pilot project involving direct engagement with women entrepreneurs in markets and strong local partnerships, JovEmprego promoted the transition of small businesses from the informal to the formal economy. The project was based on an integrated approach that included training in financial literacy and business management, specifically [GET-Ahead](#), as well as funding opportunities after business formalisation. It also raised awareness on fiscal citizenship and registration with the National Institute of Social Security, and provided support for access to finance, through collaboration with Pró Empresa. The pilot project included the establishment of a one-stop centre at the Sucupira Market to allow women entrepreneurs to better access information, with the result that nearly 190 of them formalized their businesses.

An important contribution of the programme to women's entrepreneurship has been the creation of the Start-up Challenge, a nationwide business plan competition for people aged between 18 and 35 years old. The competition directly benefited 622 young people, of whom 60 percent women. The evaluation of the first edition of the Challenge demonstrates that the initiative resulted in significant benefits for the participants, in terms of income, visibility and access to services, and business plans finalised. In addition, the programme fostered business acceleration programmes for 11 incubators at the national level through capacity building and training. To ensure continuity of the Start-up Challenge, the Start-up Weekend, and the incubators, Pró Empresa – a public institution focusing on improving the business ecosystem by promoting competitiveness, entrepreneurship, and access to finance – has already taken responsibility for these to continue after the end of the programme.

In sum, a key feature of JovEmprego has been its ability to promote ownership among its partners and continuity of its activities. To this end, several trainers were certified on proven ILO methodologies and tools, including financial education, the first initiative of its kind in the country. Further, in the final year of activities, the programme extended the activities of its branches to new cells created in municipalities and employment centers not originally included in the target municipalities, with the aim of amplifying positive impacts and supporting employability and integration across the country.

Emerging Learnings

Be close to your programme beneficiaries. JovEmprego placed particular emphasis on investing in outreach actions with young people and women, both workers and entrepreneurs, through its partnership with Pró Empresa and local branches, as well as through social media and direct engagement with beneficiaries in fairs and markets. Its decentralized structure, particularly the branches established in the different islands, was key to ensuring that the programme stayed close to the needs of local communities and reached those outside of the country's capital.

Ensure co-construction from the programme's design. One of the main strengths of the programme was the elaboration of work-plans in a participatory manner involving consultations with the different partners, which contributed to fostering a high degree of participation and sense of ownership, ultimately generating gains in the sustainability of the programme's actions. These participatory methods culminated in the definition of a Continuity Strategy, which clearly distributes the responsibility of the programme's actions across its partners. This strategy is aligned with the government's gender equality commitments and will guide continued efforts toward improving women's entrepreneurship.

Time and resources are of the essence for all, especially women. Time poverty and limited networks make accessing relevant information more challenging. Hence, seeking integrated approaches that can lead to one-stop shops or similar, can support better access and uptake by women of different services (financial, non-financial, psychosocial etc.) they need to start, grow, formalize, and run their businesses.