



**Interoffice Memorandum**

To: Mr. Lance Clark  
UN Resident Coordinator  
Serbia

Date: 29 January 2009

From:   
Assistant Administrator and Director, Partnerships Bureau  
UNDP, New York

Extension: 6005

Subject: Serbia/Conflict Prevention and Peace Building: "Promoting Peace building in Southern Serbia"

File: MDGF-1972

**I. Approval Status**

On behalf of the MDG-F Steering Committee I am pleased to inform you that your Joint Programme 'Promoting Peace building in Southern Serbia' is hereby approved with an allocation of USD\$2,500,000 million for three years. This figure includes 7% for indirect costs incurred by UN Participating Organizations. Please note the 1% AA fee will be reimbursed directly to the MDTF Office and need not be included in your allocation.

**II. JP design comments**

We have identified in section III below, **those actions that need to be taken and guidance on the necessary changes we require to the design of your Joint Programme** prior to its signature. Once these adjustments have been reflected in the document, you may proceed with signature of the Joint Programme document. In addition to the Government, the UN Resident Coordinator and Participating UN Organizations should each sign the Joint Programme document. We would encourage you to ensure some visibility for this event and for the launch of implementation.

The Joint Programme is expected to contribute in strengthening social cohesion in thirteen municipalities in post conflict South Serbia. The proposed strategies address the importance of ensuring political participation of women and ethnic minorities, increasing the dialogue space among youth, equipping local governments to detect potential conflicts and promote conflict prevention planning, and improving the livelihoods of internally displaced people. The programme targets multi-ethnic communities and particularly, women, youth, ethnic minorities and internally displaced people.

The draft JP departs from the concept note by focusing on only one of the three outcomes initially proposed. This is a direct consequence of the budget reduction approved by the Steering Committee and suggested recommendations of the Technical Sub-Committee. This reduces the multi-dimensional nature of the programme, but this is mitigated by the strong coordination systems put in place between this JP and another programme currently being developed.

The Joint Programme document has been reviewed by an independent technical reviewer arranged by the Secretariat. The review has been positive and the Secretariat supports this assessment. The expert's report provides a number of observations/ recommendations to maximize a lasting impact and ensure the sustainability of the intervention, which we intend to share with the Country Team. An acceptable effort has been made to address the recommendations of the technical Sub-Committee and the Steering Committee.



### **Relevance and external coherence**

The Joint Programme meets a number of the Fund's strategic goals and it is aligned with UNDAF for Serbia. Little reference is made on how this programme will contribute to the MDGs, however, it is expected that will contribute to promote social, political and economic recovery in the region as it is embodied in the Government's "Covic plan". It is expected to engage and work through the local authorities and civil society organizations. The situation analysis is comprehensive nationwide, perhaps it would be welcome to have a more explicit analysis on the targeted areas of intervention to highlighting the specific strategies that will be put in place to deal with various ongoing conflict dynamics at the political, social and economic levels.

The Programme complements and reinforces other ongoing UN initiatives. There is a clear value added in the UN Participating Agencies (UNICEF, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, IOM, UNDP) and a good division of labor between agencies.

A National Steering Committee has been formed, including Government and Spanish representation and endorses the programme design.

### **Internal Coherence**

The JP is well articulated and the strategies are clearly defined. The logic between activities, outputs and outcomes is evident in the majority of activities. However for a number of outputs there is too little information to be able to assess their relevance. We are of the view that the budget allocated to each of the outputs has been poorly justified and needs to be further disaggregated. The activities identified in the results framework need to have corresponding budgetary allocations to assess the cost effectiveness of the programme, especially for all the participating agencies except UNDP, who has already done it.

In terms of the programme management, we feel that the proposed arrangements for coordination and management are sound and seek synergies, maximize the coordination and logistics with other UN programmes. It would be welcome to have additional information on how it is coordinated with the other MDG funded joint programme in the area of youth and employment.

### **Sustainability**

The programme supports the efforts and policy of the government in South Serbia. It has a fairly good description of the risks and corresponding mitigation strategies. Parallel funding is available and complements the work of this joint programme in the area of conflict prevention. A series of investments are foreseen to improve the livelihoods of internally displace people with the view to provide a lasting solution with the provision of housing grants.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

The monitoring and evaluation framework is sound although some of the indicators at the MDG and outcome levels need to be developed. Baseline data has been identified, although we would welcome further sex disaggregation of the data in the baseline.



The Secretariat plans to work with all approved programmes during 2009 to address their M&E frameworks and to develop a small number of common indicators relating to the MDGs, thematic windows, UN reform and the Paris Declaration. This programme could also benefit from introducing **participatory and impact oriented** monitoring and evaluation framework.

### III. **JP re-design requirements**

Nonetheless, the Secretariat has carefully assessed the revised draft Joint Program, and recommends it for approval with some reservations that will warrant a close monitoring during the implementation phase of the joint programme to ensure the expected impact of the Joint Programme. When transmitting the signed joint programme, please indicate in the cover letter how the following MDG-F secretariat's recommendations have been taken into account in the signed programme document:

1. To **re-work the Results Framework** in order to provide additional details in some of the activities and to justify the allocated amount to each of the proposed activities. More specifically, the disaggregated budget needs to be provided for the activities under joint programme output 1.2 with an allocated amount of \$282,280; JP output 1.3 with the overall amounts of \$650,349 and \$204,126; and JP output 1.4 with a budget allocated of \$773,005.
2. An **annex should be provided explaining in detail how the proposed JP output #1.4** will unfold. How families will be selected to participate in the housing programme? How local authorities and civil society organizations will be involved in the designing the programme and determining the selection criteria? What will be the decision making process in this grant making mechanism? What measures will be put in place to ensure the sustainability of the intervention? , etc.
3. To **formulate indicators to capture progress at the MDG levels.**
4. To include **gender disaggregated data.**
5. To clarify the role of the Multi-Donor Trust fund Office as AA, as per operational guidance note available at [http://www.undp.org/mdtf/mdgf/docs/operational\\_guidance\\_en.pdf](http://www.undp.org/mdtf/mdgf/docs/operational_guidance_en.pdf)

### IV. **Management arrangements and delegation of authority**

On receipt of a copy of the signed document, the Fund Secretariat will transfer the full three-year allocation to the custody of the Multi Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) Office pending further instructions from you.

Please note the MDTF Office will pass-through funds to Participating Organizations on instruction from you as Resident Coordinator and Co-Chair of the National MDG-F Steering Committee.

As reflected in the Fund's Framework Document (Section 9 'Formulation Process & Release of Funds) and the global MoU with Participating Organizations (Article I, 2-c) the MDTF Office will release resources on an annual, advance basis. For the first advance, these funds will be transferred on the basis of receipt of the first year Annual Workplan and the signed Joint Programme document. Subsequent annual advances will be released on instructions from you and on the basis of a) receipt of the next annual work-plan approved by the National Steering Committee; b) evidence that a formal review of the programme's progress has



been undertaken not more than three months earlier, either in the form of an annual progress report (if the timing coincides) or through the minutes of a National Steering Committee where this has been discussed; and c) only when combined commitments against the existing advance have exceeded 70%. Please review the initial year budget requests carefully with participating organizations in order to ensure realistic delivery targets in this regard. The annual agency apportionment projected in the final budget attached to the signed Joint Programme document should also be reviewed and can be revised up to the time of your first funds-advance request. This is important for the reasons outlined below.

In order to allow the implementation team some flexibility to adapt the strategy to unexpected challenges and opportunities (most particularly delivery issues), and to empower Resident Coordinators in their oversight responsibilities, this memorandum also provides you with the authority over the three year duration of the programme in consultation with Participating Organizations and with the agreement of your National Steering Committee to (a) transfer up to \$1,000,000 or 20% of the total value of the project budget – whichever is lowest – *between Participating Organizations* identified in the original Joint Programme budget and (b) re-phase up to \$1,000,000 or 20% of the total value of the project budget – whichever is lowest - *between years*. The base-line against which these ceilings will be measured is the annual budget projection (by year and by participating organization) confirmed at the time of your first funds-advance request. The MDTF Office must be informed of any revisions of this kind, decided locally and is responsible for tracking these delegation ceilings for each programme. Any changes that fall outside these parameters will have to be referred back to the (Global) MDG-F Steering Committee for approval.

As you will appreciate, one of the MDG-F's express goals is to strengthen the role of Resident Coordinators as leaders of Country Teams. The success of the MDG-F activities will depend on your ongoing leadership and engagement. We count on you to exercise this leadership and to ensure this Joint Programme remains an ongoing, integrated effort by the UN system in support of national priorities. Please also use the National Steering Committee mechanism to help ensure national ownership by the Government in particular and involve it in important financial and programmatic oversight decisions.

The signed Joint Programme document and the completed Fund Release Form should be sent to the MDG-F Secretariat and MDTF Office within 30 days of the receipt of this memorandum. If this deadline is not possible, please inform the secretariat accordingly.

The Executive Coordinator of the MDTF Office, Bisrat Aklilu, will be in contact with any specific documentation requirements to ensure the programme meets compliance requirements for the Fund's pass-through arrangements.

With best wishes.

- cc. Mr. Bisrat Aklilu, Executive Coordinator, Multi-Donor Trust Fund Office  
Ms. Kori Udovicki, Assistant Administrator and Director Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, UNDP, New York  
H.E. Mr. D. Juan Antonio Yáñez-Barnuevo, Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations  
H.E. Mr. Pavle Jevremović, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Serbia to the United Nations  
Mr. Juan López-Doriga, Director-General of Development Planning & Evaluation, MFAC Madrid



Ms. Debbie Landey, Director, United Nations Development Operations Coordinator Office (DOCO)  
MDG-F Secretariat

## **Review: Serbia, MDGF-1972**

### **JP Title: Support to National Efforts for Promoting Peacebuilding in Southern Serbia.**

#### **1. Overall Comments**

- The programme makes effective use of the specific expertise and experience of five UN agencies in South Serbia and is designed to complement and interact with another programme targeting the same region. It integrates a range of strategies targeting vulnerable and marginalized groups (incl. youth), local authorities, political parties, and media, and promises to be a relevant intervention that can have a significant impact on the conditions in the South of Serbia.
- The JP departs from the concept note by focusing on only one of the three outcomes initially proposed. This reduces the multi-dimensional nature of the programme, but this is mitigated by the strong coordination systems put in place between this JP and another programme currently being developed.
- The context analysis at the beginning of the JP document provides a useful basis for the JP, and is commendable for its scope and its careful consideration of the status of women and ethnic minorities in South Serbia. It would be useful if this section were to go beyond its current descriptive nature and be more analytical in terms of shedding light on why the conditions in South Serbia are as they are. Yet the project specific analysis and analysis of peace and conflict dynamics is relatively limited and not very accessible for outsiders. This is unfortunate and hinders assessment how well the proposed strategies address underlying factors and dynamics creating the potential for violence and conflict in South Serbia.
- The JP's conflict sensitivity dimension can be strengthened by greater consideration of the interaction between the activities and strategies undertaken, and the impact of the JP's activities on local conflict dynamics in each of the targeted municipalities. This would also include taking into account how factors mentioned in the analysis, may impact on activities and outputs (eg. polarized media; cross-border activities, etc.)
- A strong point of the JP is its division of labour between participating agencies, as they will all focus on separate outputs and/or activities. In the implementation of the JP, it will be important to avoid a 'stove pipe' approach where the main connections between agencies and outputs are made at the top, at the management level. There is much scope for fruitful linkages between actors and activities targeted and implemented under different outputs, which will enhance the programme's internal coherence.
- It is difficult to assess the feasibility of achieving the intended results within the stipulated time frames. As currently formulated, several activities in the results framework constitute 'mini-programs' in their own right, which will entail a range of activities (not specified in the JP). Without clarity on how such activities will be approached and on what actually will be done in this context, it is hard to establish how realistic the activities and intended outputs are. Also, in the implementation of these activities, it will be important to not compromise depth for breadth (especially in relation to: participatory conflict and prevention planning; establishment of sustainable partnerships; various training programs.

#### **2. Elaboration of Concept Note**

- The JP reflects **priorities within the thematic window of the MDG-F**, especially in relation to its emphasis on building conflict prevention and management capacity within local institutions; supporting multi-stakeholder participation in the development and implementation of plans regarding community safety, conflict and violence prevention; and assisting vulnerable and marginalized groups, including women, ethnic minorities and IDPs.
- As noted, the JP document differs substantially from the concept note by the transfer of two proposed outcomes into another programme. This **change responds to concerns raised** by the Technical Sub-Committee's Convenor about cutting costs and the ambitious nature of the programme. The JP and supporting documentation however clearly set out the rationale for this decision. The strong coordination mechanisms between the JP and the other programme, and the establishment of one programme implementation unit (PIU) for the two programmes, will help retain some of the multi-dimensional approach of the concept note.
- **Various comments** from the MDGF Secretariat and Technical Sub-Committee have been addressed. This includes more specific attention (budget and substantive) for gender; more emphasis on capacity-building for conflict prevention; expansion of subject areas for peer education; development of operational and funding partnerships; greater identification of risks and risk management strategies; and clear setting out of baseline data (including identification of what baselines need to be developed.) Concerns about sustainability and ownership have been addressed in part by planning for gradual hand-over of implementation of activities and involvement of local authorities.
- A few issues raised in the feedback on the concept note would benefit from further consideration in the JP. This includes further integration of gender, social inclusion and social cohesion in outputs other than the first one, and more attention for conflict sensitivity in general and in relation to IDP integration. Further strengthening of the JP is also still possible in the area of conflict prevention and resolution, and in relation to enhancing local ownership (see further below.)

### 3. Relevance and External Coherence

- The JP seems carefully designed to address conditions prevailing in South Serbia and is as such relevant. The information provided in the document suggests that such conditions are matter of concern for the national government, but is insufficient to assess the **linkage between the JP and the national policy framework** and development strategy instruments. In the absence of such information, it is not clear how strongly this initiative is rooted in national policy and priorities.
- The document identifies other development initiatives, especially those undertaken by the UN system, and sets out how the JP will build on and **complement such existing projects**. The mechanism of one PIU for both the JP and the inclusive development programme will help avoid duplication between the two programmes. It is less clear what measures will be taken to ensure synergy and avoid overlap with other programmes mentioned in the JP document (such as UNDP's Municipal Improvement and Revival Programme, UNICEF's work on Local Plans of Action, OSCE's work on police reform; the latter is particularly relevant in light of output 1.3c.)
- The JP pursues partnerships with two Ministries (Min. for Public Administration & Local Self-Government, Min. for Youth & Sport) and pays particular attention to working with another government institution, the Coordination Body. Close collaboration with municipal governments is foreseen in the context of several outputs, but the JP document does not clarify how it will **obtain their buy-in and ensure their ongoing participation**. As such, it is

not clear how realistic the envisaged partnerships are with the local stakeholders. This area could be improved in the JP document, for example by specifying strategies to facilitate buy-in, ownership and ongoing participation.

- As noted, there is a clear division of labour between the participating UN agencies and the added value and specific expertise of each agency is clearly explained. The agencies are each responsible for specific outputs, which will facilitate reporting and accountability.

#### 4. Internal Coherence

- The JP **'hangs together'** in targeting different marginalized groups (women, ethnic minorities, youth, IDPs); combining an emphasis on social cohesion with a focus on strengthening institutions and establishing partnerships. It considers the need to enhance trust in local authorities and build capacity for conflict prevention and management. The involvement of political parties and the media is also highly relevant, given the extent to which these actors may engage in distortion of information, manipulation of community sentiments, etc.
- The internal coherence of the programme could be further strengthened in a number of respects. The four outputs are pertinent to the JP's outcome, but the **link between each output and the supporting 'smart outputs' and activities is not always that strong.**
  - This is particularly the case in relation to **output 1.1** (enhanced political participation of women and ethnic minorities). The smart outputs under 1.1 are mostly, if not exclusively, focused on actors *other* than women and ethnic minorities (civil servants, Coordination Body, political parties, civil society organizations and the media); only *one* activity targets women and ethnic minorities specifically. Activities under this output and the corresponding smart outputs are mostly geared towards getting other actors to act in ways that will ultimately benefit the interests and concerns of women and ethnic minorities; the impact on the political participation of these groups will be, at best, indirect. The internal logic of output 1.1 could be strengthened by inclusion of activities that are more directly geared towards enhancing the political participation of women and ethnic minorities. Alternatively, reformulation of output 1.1 may be appropriate.
  - By same token, there is no link between the smart outputs and activities under 1.4 and the 'dialogue' aspect of output 1.4 as currently formulated.
- Coherence would further be enhanced if there were more **explicit linkages between activities and target groups within the various outputs and smart outputs. Gender and social inclusion concerns also need to be mainstreamed more throughout the JP.**
  - It will be important to involve youth, women and ethnic minorities in the context of smart outputs and activities related to 1.3 (participation of such groups in participatory planning processes and/or monitoring of such processes by youth/ women/ ethnic minorities; involvement in partnerships to be established; building mediation/ conflict management capacity amongst such groups, etc.) It may also be useful to build conflict management capacity amongst IDPs to equip them skills that may facilitate their integration in local communities.
  - It may also be appropriate to shift the media related outputs to output 1.3; as presently formulated, they have little bearing on output 1.1. Locating them in 1.3 is in line with the capacity-building emphasis of 1.3; it will add a communication dimension to 1.2,



and will help mainstream gender and ethnicity in 1.3. In addition, a useful link could be made between youth-related outputs and activities and media-related activities.

- Many indicative activities appear to constitute 'mini-programs' in their own right (eg. 1.3.3; 1.3.4; 1.3.5). As such, it is hard to assess **the feasibility of achieving the desired results** in the stipulated time frame. It is preferable to do less with more impact, than to do lots of things with little impact. In addition, it seems that many base line and assessment studies are to be undertaken in the first six months (including safety diagnoses in 13 municipalities), which raises the question whether this is realistic. It could be considered whether it makes sense to implement output 1.3 in a phased approach, targeting 6 municipalities in the first year and the remaining 7 in the second year; this will also allow for learning the necessary lessons. (NB: some other activities would benefit from more clear and specific formulation – eg. 1.1.20.)
- **Output 1.3 related activities are based on the assumption** that participatory planning and establishment of partnerships will enhance social cohesion in the local context. This assumption is not necessarily correct; much will depend on how participation and partnerships are facilitated; how diversity, gender and social inclusion are addressed in determining who will be involved; to what extent local authorities are responsive to priorities and needs brought forward by citizens; and whether political parties and media will refrain from manipulating the proceedings or the informing coming out of such processes.
- The JP's approach to **conflict sensitivity** should be enhanced, as there is insufficient consideration of how the JP's intervention may impact on its local environment and more flexibility can be built in for adjustments to the programme's activities and strategies. These aspects need to be built into the program design.
  - Particular attention should be paid to analyzing conflict dynamics in the specific municipalities, including actor and relationship analysis and consideration of power structures, both prior to the start of the JP and during its duration. It is important to consider whether certain actors in each community may benefit from the current violent-prone conditions, and how the JP activities may challenge existing power structures in the community. The JP should help actors (state and non-state) to anticipate spoilers and develop appropriate strategies for dealing with these.
  - The JP should incorporate a mechanism to monitor the interaction between its activities and local dynamics. For example, while 'polarized media' is mentioned in the 'key inequalities' diagram, it is not considered how the media may distort activities undertaken by the JP; the same applies to points made about 'cross-border activities' and limited popular buy-in into NGOs – how may the latter affect activities that will channel funds through NGOs? Analysis of 'unintended consequences' of the JP's activities should also be a part of this monitoring.
  - Flexibility needs to be more built into the programme design; there needs to be a mechanism for adjusting the JP and local activities depending on the findings of the ongoing monitoring, and helping implementing agencies to put such adjustments in practice.
  - Particular attention must be devoted to conflict sensitivity regarding activities to move IDPs from CCs into to private accommodation/ village houses. How will their integration in recipient communities be facilitated, and how will a negative reaction to their arrival be prevented, given possible biases?
  - The cover letter with the JP indicates that conflict sensitivity training is now incorporated in the programme. This is not clear, unless this relates to output 1.3e (mediation seminars for the UNCT staff). The possible conflation of conflict sensitivity

and mediation suggests a low level of understanding amongst the UNCT about the different concepts and what is required.

- The JP would benefit from a **more in-depth and comprehensive risk analysis**, that does not only consider risks at the overall, national and/or regional level (as is currently the case). It would be useful if the JP were also to identify more 'local level' risks and develop appropriate mitigation strategies.
- Some commitments made in the narrative are not integrated in the results framework or the work plan. Examples are: capacity assessments of participating institutions (p. 31); functional analysis and assessment of financing needs (p. 31); preparation of a hand-over plan (ibid); development of a M&E system (p. 33).

## 5. Sustainability, Monitoring and Evaluation

- The JP's emphasis on **capacity-building, strengthening local institutions and formation of partnerships** is promising from a sustainability perspective. Capacity-building of partnering institutions will be undertaken on the basis of a capacity assessment, which is appropriate. Attractive from a sustainability and ownership perspective is also the intention to gradually hand over implementation of the JP by partnering institutions. Initially, however, it appears as if training will mostly, if not exclusively be provided by UN agencies. It could be considered whether this can be done in collaboration with local or national partners from the outset (as a mentoring and capacity-building strategy) to enhance sustainability and ownership.
- It is important to consider the **sustainability of training** to be provided through the JP, especially in relation to training local professionals in mediation and conflict management skills (1.3.5, 1.3.7). It would be wise to put systems in place enabling local professionals to be called upon and utilize the skills learned, should there be a need for conflict management capacity (for example: establishment of mediation teams per municipality; information dissemination amongst populations about availability of mediation/ facilitation services, etc.) In addition, it will be important to put in place quality assurance mechanisms when such conflict prevention training is replicated.
- The JP seems to consider **women, ethnic minorities, and IDPs** primarily as **beneficiaries** (whose situation will improve by actions of others including UN agencies and local authorities) rather than as actors with agency and a stake in the design, implementation and monitoring of activities relating to them. It is not clear whether they have been involved in the design of the JP in relation to outputs relating to them, or how they will be involved in the implementation of activities relating to them. By the same token, the development of recommendations for more inclusive participation of women and minorities should not be done by UNDP (p. 13), but should be done by or with such communities, with UNDP (only) playing a facilitative role.
- The **M&E framework** would benefit from further work, especially re. identifying outcome indicators (both at outcome and at output level.) Many output related indicators indicate that activities took place (eg. numbers of people trained) but does not reflect impact of such activities. The formulation of the overall outcome of the JP ('communities in South Serbia are stronger, more integrated and better able..') requires an overall baseline to evaluate whether this outcome has been achieved by the end of the JP.

## 6. Recommendations

Given the detail provided thus far, recommendations are summarized below.

1. Further development of the JP's **conflict sensitivity approach** is warranted, particularly relating to (a) analyzing conflict dynamics at the local level within the different municipalities; (b) incorporating a mechanism for monitoring interaction between the JP's intervention and such dynamics; and (c) building in greater flexibility to allow for adjustments. Any such mechanisms and activities in this area must be reflected in the results and M&E frameworks, and the work plan. It is also important to improve the **JP's risk analysis and management**, with better identification of risks at the local and mitigation strategies.
2. **Greater linkages need to be built into the design between activities and groups targeted under various outputs**, to enhance the internal coherence of the JP. It is important to avoid a stove-pipe approach where links between outputs and participating UN agencies are mostly made at the management level and insufficiently at the operational, implementation level.
3. More attention should be devoted to how **buy-in and participation from local authorities and stakeholders** will be facilitated and maintained.
4. **Capacity-building in mediation and conflict prevention** should be strengthened by complementing training in these areas with putting systems in place to encourage application of skills and knowledge learned.
5. The **internal logic of smart outputs and activities related to output 1.1** needs to be improved along the lines suggested above. In addition, it will be important to **integrate gender and social inclusion** to a greater extent into outputs and activities not explicitly related to women, youth, and ethnic minorities.
6. Incorporation of some discussion on the **JP's relevance in terms of the national policy framework and development strategy instruments**, would benefit the JP document.
7. It would also be wise to reconsider **the achievability of the results sought**, given the extent to which several activities constitute a range of actions in their own right and do not provide a clear picture of what exactly will be done in the context of such activities.