



## Fast Facts

**Country:** Serbia

**Duration:** October 2012 to September 2014

**Implementing UN Agencies:** UNDP; UNFPA; UNOPS; WHO

**Other Implementing Partners:** National ministries; Commissioner for Protection of Equality; Serbian Office for EU integration; Municipality of Novi Pazar

**Budget:** \$2,859,659

**Key Words:** Minority groups; youth; inter-ethnic co-existence; inclusive community development

## BACKGROUND

For over 20 years, the Sandžak region of south-west Serbia has received an influx of displaced groups from across the Balkans. During the 1990s, the arrival of refugees fleeing violence in Croatia was followed by internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Kosovo. More recently, groups of repatriated migrants have returned to Sandžak from the European Union, while the region remains home to a large number of displaced Roma families. Refugees, IDPs and Roma communities live in temporary housing or illegal settlements, with little more than rudimentary shelter and inadequate access to water, electricity and land to grow food. They often lack the necessary

documentation to access essential social services, including healthcare and education. At the same time, underinvestment in physical infrastructure and social services has stifled the local economy, with youth unemployment rates at almost 60 per cent. Subsequently, south-west Serbia remains vulnerable to outbreaks of violence as tensions are rising between communities divided along ethnic lines. A concerted effort is needed to promote inter-ethnic cohesion and address the multiple insecurities facing vulnerable communities in Sandžak to ensure a future free from fear, want and indignity.

## PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The project's objective is to promote economic security and social cohesion towards improving the overall human security of vulnerable communities in Sandžak. To this end, the project proposes to: (i) improve income generation and open employment opportunities for vulnerable populations; (ii) enhance

inter-ethnic understanding and community cohesion; (iii) increase access to social and public services and provide official documentation to displaced groups; and (iv) promote the human security concept within central and local governments and civil society organizations.

### BENEFICIARIES

With particular emphasis on women, youth and Roma communities, the project will target IDPs, refugees, returnees and other vulnerable individuals and

households. An estimated 60,000 people in Novi Pazar and other municipalities in southwest Serbia will directly benefit from the project.



## APPLYING THE HUMAN SECURITY APPROACH

This project highlights the importance of people-centred approaches where the voices of people guide policies and actions. By engaging local community-based organisations and government institutions in a human security analysis of Sandžak, the project uncovered the various factors that impeded minority ethnic groups and economically marginalised populations from accessing essential public services and participating in civic life. Based on this analysis, pervasive unemployment, inter-ethnic divisions, lack of formal documentation and the precarious situation of youth were identified as the insecurities most pertinent to the local population. Subsequently, the project has developed a strategy that targets these threats in a comprehensive manner, and recognizes the need for a response that integrates protection mechanisms with solutions that empower vulnerable groups.

For example, obtaining legal certificates of birth registration and citizenship will provide refugees, IDPs and Roma communities with access to the full range of social services, from schools and healthcare to employment opportunities and adult education, as well as fundamental social and legal rights. Meanwhile, vulnerable individuals and communities are empowered to participate in a multi-ethnic community. Through arts, sports, culture and education, spaces will be created to reduce incidences of violence through the promotion of inter-ethnic

dialogue and co-existence. Furthermore, with almost half of the population under the age of 30, the project places specific importance on empowering the region's young people through vocational training, community works and capacity building for youth leadership to forge inclusive and cohesive communities that are resilient to future challenges.

Economic insecurity is also a critical threat to human security in Sandžak and is a significant driver of ethnic tension. Through the establishment of a cooperative waste management centre, the project will provide legal and formal employment for vulnerable people and generate sustainable income opportunities within the community. Moreover, by allocating a portion of the centre's profits to a community support fund, the waste management initiative will give back to the wider community through local development projects. In addition to providing direct economic support to displaced individuals and their families, the waste management centre will also yield environmental benefits for the entire community. In bringing together all relevant stakeholders from different ethnic groups in every aspect of the project, the human security approach multiplies the impact of these activities by promoting social cohesion while strengthening the capacities of vulnerable groups to participate in civic life and develop their human potential to the fullest.