

Public Call for Provision of Technical Assistance to LGs in Improving Social Protection (CEI PRO 02/2023)

1. Background

The UN Joint Programme “PRO - Local Governance for People and Nature” contributes to improvement of the well-being and quality of life of citizens through improved local governance, social inclusion and environmental protection in 99 cities and municipalities in two regions: Šumadija and Western Serbia and Southern and Eastern Serbia¹. With the support of the Government of Switzerland through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in the total value of EUR 9 million, the Joint Programme is implemented by the United Nations Serbia agencies - UNOPS, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNEP, in the period from 01 January 2023 to 31 December 2026.

To achieve the Programme’s Objective, the intervention will focus on three key outcomes:

1. Local self-governments (LGs) improve capacities and apply good governance principles in practice (Pillar Good Governance);
2. LGs and other relevant local actors improve capacities and develop evidence-based local social protection policies (Pillar Social Inclusion);
3. LGs improve capacities and apply environmental governance processes in practice (Pillar Environmental Governance).

The key stakeholders, but also direct users of support at the local level, will be local governments (cities and municipalities), including their administrations/staff, organisations, and local institutions (Centres for Social Work - CSWs, Primary Health Centres, pre-school institutions and schools), local Civil Society Organisations – CSOs. The final users of support will be the citizens from participating LGs from the Region of Šumadija and Western Serbia, and the Region of Southern and Eastern Serbia.

¹ The following cities and municipalities are eligible for this Public Call: Aleksandrovac, Aleksinac, Arandelovac, Arilje, Babušnica, Bajina Bašta, Batočina, Bela Palanka, Blace, Bogatić, Bojnik, Boljevac, Bor, Bosilegrad, Brus, Bujanovac, Crna Trava, Čačak, Čajetina, Čićevac, Čuprija, Despotovac, Dimitrovgrad, Doljevac, Gadžin Han, Golubac, Gornji Milanovac, Ivanjica, Jagodina, Kladovo, Knić, Knjaževac, Koceljeva, Kosjerić, Kragujevac, Kraljevo, Krupanj, Kruševac, Kučevo, Kuršumljija, Lajkovac, Lapovo, Lebane, Leskovac, Loznica, Lučani, Ljig, Ljubovija, Majdanpek, Mali Zvornik, Malo Crniće, Medveđa, Merošina, Mionica, Negotin, Niš, Nova Varoš, Novi Pazar, Osečina, Paraćin, Petrovac na Mlavi, Pirot, Požarevac, Požega, Preševo, Priboj, Prijepolje, Prokuplje, Rača, Raška, Ražanj, Rekovac, Sjenica, Smederevo, Smederevska Palanka, Sokobanja, Surdulica, Svilajnac, Svrlijig, Šabac, Topola, Trgovište, Trstenik, Tutin, Ub, Užice, Valjevo, Varvarin, Velika Plana, Veliko Gradište, Vladimirci, Vladičin Han, Vlasotince, Vranje, Vrnjačka Banja, Zaječar, Žabari, Žagubica, Žitorađa.

All Programme activities will be undertaken in partnership with the Government of Serbia, especially the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Governments (MPALSG), the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs (MLEVSA), the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP), and the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM).

The Programme will coordinate its activities with the key line-national-level institutions, while observing the national strategies, laws and relevant development documents, which will contribute to sustainability, ensure national ownership and develop national capacities.

On its way to the EU accession, Serbia has a very important task, and this is contribution to the social inclusion process in its society. In order to fulfil the requirements and to follow the EU trends, Serbia needs further development and improvement of the institutional framework and a methodology for monitoring the social inclusion policies and practices at the local level. At the legislative and policy levels, Serbia needs to adopt a new Law on Social Protection (current is from 2011), and to develop and adopt a new Social Protection Strategy (the draft is available since 2019).

According to the assessment on the [Mapping of Social Protection Services under jurisdiction of LGs](#) the provision of social protection services within LGs is not at satisfactory level in terms of their variety, sustainability, availability, efficiency, and quality. The situation in terms of providing adequate care has significantly worsened since the breakout of the COVID 19 pandemic.

2. Justification of the Intervention

The main challenges in the social protection are lack of pluralism of service providers, lack of pluralism of coverage of beneficiary groups i.e. introduced services for three or less beneficiary groups, lack of innovative and integrated services, lack of inter-sector cooperation in the needs assessment process or in provision of services and lack of institutional mechanisms for implementing social protection policy such as Social Policy/Protection Council, Council for Improvement Roma Status and Council for Improvement Status of Persons with Disabilities.

Overall, the offer of services is very modest, with a relatively small number of users while a greater number of services is not sustainable, since most LGs spend small budget funds for these services. Moreover, public sector service providers covered 54% of the beneficiaries while 80% of the total number of beneficiaries were served by providers holding licences valid for six years and limited licences.

To address this and support the LGs in significantly improving evidence-based development and implementation of local social protection policies and subsequent social services, the Programme will provide technical assistance (TA) to selected LGs.

3. Objectives of the Intervention

Overall objective: to contribute to a more responsive and integrated system of social protection services in the participating municipalities.

Specific Objective: to increase capacities of LGs and other relevant local actors² for evidence-based local social protection policies and practices with focus on priorities and needs of LB groups which will create a more responsive and integrated system of social protection services.

4. The Scope of Intervention

The scope of this Public Call is related to **provision of TA to up to 30 (thirty) LGs** for the following:

- to reassess its current status in regards to the requirements to become more in line with the good governance principles³ in their policy-making and practices
- to support development of necessary capacities, methodology and institutionalised mechanisms, for data mapping, information sharing protocols;
- to support establishment of a functional monitoring and evaluation system of the services rendered;
- to support development of social protection services with integrated approach with the aim of more comprehensive response to the needs of LB groups.

The TA is to last up to 18 (eighteen) months from the day the selected LG is informed it has been selected for provision of the TA. **All costs of the TA will be borne by the Programme.**

This Public Call is the first phase of the broader Programme intervention, which will also include publishing of Call for Proposals for provision of grant scheme as the second phase. Namely, the Programme will award up to 15 (fifteen) LGs projects for establishing one new social protection service, which will include one or more approaches developed or strengthened through the TA. Only LGs that participated in TA will be eligible to participate. In project proposals, LGs will elaborate on their needs/priorities, proposing social protection services that were not existent in the LGs, at the time of submission of the application. The newly established service must be proved to be sustainable. The amount of grants will be determined subsequently while the LGs will be expected to provide their financial contribution of a minimum of 10% out of the total value of the Programme financial support. The implementation of these projects will last up to 12 (twelve) months and LGs will be monitored by the Programme in regards to their adhering to and implementation of the results from the TA.

² CWS, and relevant CSOs as service providers, and to other public entities from education, employment, and health sectors

³ Accountability/Rule of Law, transparency, participation, non-discrimination and equality, and efficiency & effectiveness

4.1 The Process

a) Submission of application documents:

- Submission Form
- Intervention Application Form
- Written expressed willingness and acceptance of the Programme's TA for improvement of local social protection policies and subsequent social services (Letter of Interest)

Application document templates are attached to this Public Call⁴.

b) Provision of technical assistance (TA)

The Programme will provide **up to 18 (eighteen) months of TA, to up to 30 (thirty) selected LGs**, consisting of the following:

- Assessment of existing institutional capacities of relevant local statutory actors with recommendation for all selected LGs for the next stages of the process
- Mentorship support for execution of tailor-made plans as follows:
 - Capacity development of at least 10 (ten) LGs to identify priority LB group(s) at local level and conduct proper beneficiaries needs assessment related to social protection area i.e. the methodology for data mapping and assessing needs of local LB groups.
 - Capacity development of at least 10 (ten) LGs to establish or upgrade a functional monitoring and evaluation system locally provided social protection services.
 - Capacity development of at least 10 (ten) LGs to pilot integrated policy approach for social protection at local level. The integrated policy approach should consider multiple sectors relevant for social inclusion, but the greater focus should be on education, health and employment.
- Training for piloting integrated policy approach
- Peer reviews of good practices pertaining to the topics of this intervention

The TA will be considered as completed upon verification from the Programme. Upon verification, the LG in question will be eligible to apply for grants from the Second Phase (as described above). For this, a separate Call will be developed and publicly announced in due time.

5. Guidelines for the Applicants

5.1. General Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for support, the applicant must fulfil the following criteria:

⁴ For more information please see Section 7. Application Procedure of this Public Call

- a) **Be one of 96 cities and municipalities⁵** that can apply for the support from the PRO Programme that also belongs to less developed categories of municipalities i.e. **II, III and IV group according to the level of development⁶ with up to four or less existing social protection services** that are regularly provided in the local community.
- b) The applicant has **submitted a written, official documents that is willing and ready to work on local governance improvements** pertained to the topic of the Call, with expert and TA and support of the Programme, which would have no financial costs for the applicant

5.2. The Selection of LGs

- The LGs that will be provided with TA and awarded will be selected through **a competitive process, while considering operational capacity of applicant(s), relevance and needs for TA and annual budget allocation, as outlined in the criteria section which will be described in the Application form.**
- Appropriate consideration will be given to those **LGs with the most unfavourable score** in terms of the following priority criteria: four or less existing social protection services, lack of inter-sector cooperation in the needs assessment process or in provision of services, lack of pluralism of service providers, lack of pluralism of coverage of beneficiary groups, lack of innovative and integrated services and lack of institutional mechanisms for implementing social protection policy.
- PRO Programme does **not** have an obligation to spend all funds available for this activity and will select for the Phase 1 only those LGs that meet specific criteria, which will give **specific advantage to municipalities with less developed regulations pertained to topic of this Call in order to enable their further development and provision of adequate services to citizens in exercising their needs and rights.**
- The application will be dismissed if it was not submitted according to the requirements, or is incomplete, or is submitted after the deadline. This decision will be final.
- Geographical representation will be considered during the selection of the LGs in order to contribute to more equal representation of LGs from two target regions. Namely, in the case of several equally scored LGs the priority will have a LG from the region with fewer selected applicants.

5.3. Sustainability

The further application of TA impact will be monitored in the Second phase, as described above.

6. The Selection Criteria

Proposals will be selected based on assessment of their various aspects, including the need for the immediate TA, as follows:

⁵ Please see the list of LGs in the footnote 1

⁶ Please see Article 11, item 3 and 4 of Law on Regional Development https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_regionalnom_razvoju.html

1. Operational capacity
2. Relevance of the proposal to the objectives of the Call
3. Financial capacity

Technical evaluation of the received applications for this Public Call will be conducted in line with the following selection criteria which will ***give specific advantage to municipalities with less capacities pertaining to the topic of this Call in order to enable their further development and provision of adequate services to citizens in exercising their needs and rights.***

CRITERIA FOR THE FIRST PHASE	MAX POINTS
1 Operational Capacity	20
1.1 Does the applicant have experience in project management? <i>Applicants with references on successful implementation of at least three projects involving social protection services or international donors - 5 points; More than three projects – additional 5 points</i>	10
1.2. Did the applicant have some institutional mechanisms for implementing social protection policy (such as Social Policy/Protection Council, Council for Improvement Roma Status and Council for Improvement Status of Persons with Disabilities) or to support coordinated service provision (intersectoral working bodies/teams)? <i>Established one mechanism - 5 points; Established more than one mechanism – additional 5 points</i>	10
2 Relevance of the Intervention	60
2.1. Did the applicant conduct an assessment of the needs of particular LB groups in local communities and on designing solutions to those needs to be introduced? <i>Conducted assessment of needs of one particular LB groups - 5 points; Conducted assessment of needs of more than one particular LB groups – additional 5 points</i>	10
2.2. The number of existing social protection services that are regularly provided in local community does not exceed four services? <i>Four services – 1 point; from one to four services – 5 points; and none – 10 points</i>	10
2.3. In case of service(s) provision in the local community, how many beneficiary groups are covered? <i>Three LB groups - 1 point; Two LB groups - 5 points; and one LB group - 10 points</i>	10
2.4. Is there a need for development/upgrading of inter-sector cooperation in the needs assessment process or in provision of services? <i>No – 1 point; Yes, for upgrading – 5 points; Yes, for development – 10 points</i>	10
2.5. The number of local service providers? <i>Three – 1 point; two – 5 points; None – 10 points</i>	10
2.6. Is there a need for development/upgrading of integrated services? <i>No – 1 point; Yes, for upgrading – 5 points; Yes, for development – 10 points</i>	10

3 Annual Budget Allocation (financial capacity of LG)	20
3.1. Annual budget allocation for social protection services (without Republic earmarked funds in case of its receiving in the previous year) in 2023 has not exceeded RSD 10,000,000? <i>Annual budget allocation that exceeds RSD 10,000,000 – 5 points, budget allocation that ranges from 5,000,000 to 10,000,000 RSD – 10 points and budget allocation less than 5,000,000 – 20 points</i>	20
TOTAL POINTS	100

Only the applications that have been given a minimum total score of 60 points will be considered for selection. The PRO Programme reserves the right to request clarifications related to application before the finalisation of the selection process.

7. Application Procedure

7.1 Application forms and supporting documents

The applicant has to submit the following application forms **in English language**:

- Application form (**Annex 1**)
- Intervention Submission Form (**Annex 2**)
- A letter expressing readiness to work on local governance improvement pertained to the topic of the Call (template of the Letter of Interest **in Annex 3**)

Please note that only the above listed documents will be evaluated. It is therefore of the utmost importance that these documents contain all relevant information concerning the action.

Additional documentation that may be submitted with the application files: copy of current valid regulations, evidence of previously implemented projects, and similar.

Failing to submit either of these documents will mean **immediate** disqualification of the application.

7.2 Where and how to send application

- The Application Form must be **submitted via e-mail in PDF format (signed, stamped and scanned)** and in original editable format, while using Word and Excel. Signed, stamped and scanned versions must contain exactly the same application documents as the electronic versions in original editable format. In case of discrepancies, signed, stamped and scanned versions will prevail.
- The applicant must submit application forms **in the English language**.
- The total email size of the application should **not exceed 20 MB**, as that is the maximum allowed email message size by the UNOPS server. If the application is larger than 20 MB, documents should be sent in a series of emails, with each email not exceeding 20 MB size thresholds. Each part of the application should be numbered in the email subject field (email subject/number).

- **Applications must be submitted to an e-mail address below:**
rsoc.applications@unops.org
Automatic notification of the delivery would follow upon successful submission of the email application.
- The email application must be sent with the **e-mail subject** consisting of the reference number and the title of the Public Call (e.g. Public Call CEI 02/2023 – Provision of Technical Assistance to LGs in Improving Social Protection) including the name of the applicant.
- **Requests for clarification** should be submitted to the e-mail address below:
rsoc.cfp.clarifications@unops.org
- The **deadline for the submission of Applications is 23 June 2023. Any Applications submitted after the deadline will be rejected.**
- Applications/proposals **must be received before midnight-local time** on the closing date of the Public Call. Applicants are kindly advised to timely submit the application as late deliveries due to slow internet connection or other network/hardware/software related problems may lead to disqualification of application. Only applications received by UNOPS mail server before the deadline would be accepted.
- **Incomplete applications may be rejected.**
- Applications sent by any other means (e.g. by fax or by post or by hand delivery) or delivered to other emails different from the ones stated in the Public Call will be rejected. **Hand-written applications will not be accepted.**
- UNOPS reserves the right to inquire original versions of submitted documents from applicants where/when original documentation is required or any specific document required by the Evaluation team.

8. Monitoring, reporting and evaluation

The Programme will monitor activities implemented by selected and awarded LGs, and will require from LGs to prepare relevant records.

List of Annexes

DOCUMENTS TO BE COMPLETED⁷:

- Annex 1: Submission Form (Word format)
- Annex 2: Intervention Application Form (Word format)
- Annex 3: Letter of Interest (Word format)

⁷ Section 7.1 of the Public Call