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**Review of the strategic approach to the problem of poverty in
Montenegro**

UDK:364-262.2(497.16)

Abstract

Strategic approaches to the problem of poverty were identified as the objective solutions in other countries and the third world. The first strategy for the reduction of poverty in Montenegro was implemented in 2003. A few years later (2007), the Government of Montenegro created new strategy in which the concept of social inclusion was incorporated. Along with the implementation of the above strategic approaches were also carried out the reform of the education and social welfare, with the clear objective of facilitation the social inclusion of marginalized groups. The main subject of this study is the application of the method of *time series* analysis in determining the degree of efficiency of applied strategic approach. If the strategy adopted in 2003 and 2007 produced results, then we can identify them as the key points where there is a change in trend of indicators that we use to predict the level of poverty. We will use the two available measures and test key hypotheses, unemployment and number of users of social help support.

Keywords: social exclusion, social inclusion, social inequality, social welfare, social stratification.

Introduction

During the period of existence within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Montenegro belonged to the club of underdeveloped republics and provinces. If we look at the situation on the basis of these facts, we can conclude that living in poverty is nothing new for the population in Montenegro, but quite the contrary, for a number of its inhabitants and lifestyle. The lack of organized treatment of social problems is one of the main causes of under-exhaustive scientific and analytical materials on poverty, social inequality, and social stratification in Montenegro. The beginning of 21st century in Montenegro started with collective and synchronized social action against consequences of poverty. Synchronized actions of representatives of government, parliament, civil society and social movements resulted with two conceived strategies with clearly defined objectives and implementation periods, namely:

- a) *The Strategy of Development and Poverty Reduction in Montenegro, 2003, and*
- b) *The Strategy for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion in Montenegro, 2007.*

In this paper, we examine the effects created by strategic approach for the control and reduction of poverty. Current socio-economic situation in Montenegro suggests the assumption that the strategy did not produce the expected results. If the strategies adopted in 2003 and 2007 got positive results, then we ought to be able to identify that two years as the key points where there is a change of trend in terms of indicators that we use for poverty. We remark that the subject of our research analyzes two periods, namely: from 2003 to 2007 and from 2007 to 2012. During research we analyzed available time series. A total of ten years of implementation of measures and instruments created in the strategically approaches represent a sufficient period of time based on which one can assess the effectiveness of the strategies.

1. Analytical review on "*The Strategy of Development and Poverty Reduction in Montenegro, 2003*"

The first activities were aimed at identifying the causes and dimensions of poverty in order to reduce poverty, and were driven by a commitment to develop a strategy for reduction of poverty in Montenegro. The act of adoption of the Strategy was preceded by a period of researching profiles of poverty in Montenegro, which was necessary in order to define priorities that would be covered by this document. The growth rate of around 50%, decline in employment down to 30%, weakening institutions, strengthening the informal (shadow) economy, are just some of the reasons for the adoption of the Strategy for Combating Poverty characterized as an urgent matter at the state level (SSRS, 2003).

The first draft of the Strategy (July, 2003) points out that about 10% of the population in Montenegro lives below the line (border) of poverty, while more than one 3rd of the population is classified as economically vulnerable (which is especially alarming, regardless of the fact that this was the period when the country was coming out troubling the last decade of the 20th century). We wish to note that these data refer to the year 2002 and that the research identified the three categories on the basis of poverty: poverty in the diet, absolute poverty and economic vulnerability (Table 1).

Table 1: Poverty in 2002. (In percent of total population)

Poverty in food	Absolute poverty	Economically vulnerable
4.0	9.4	36.4

Source: *The Strategy of Development and Poverty Reduction in Montenegro, 2003.*

In addition to identifying the "gap" of poverty and number of the poor, poverty analysis also included the assessment of the depth and severity of poverty. Policy makers insisted not only on the analysis of consumption poverty, but also to study its connection with employment, health, housing conditions, the level and accessibility of education, environmental quality, etc.

The study identified the following segments as particularly significant as ones which affect the outcome of the fight against poverty: healthcare, education, labor market and social protection. Also, policy makers insisted in process of measuring consumption inequality using two methods: Ginny coefficient and “deciles ratio scale”.

In Table 2 we can clearly see the results that were obtained by measuring the consumption inequality, and how Montenegro compares to other countries in Central and Eastern Europe. While selecting the countries with which we did comparative analysis of consumption inequality we taken into account that it should be so-called transition countries, with of course a greater or lesser degree of success when it comes to the overall reform of society. As comparative cases policy makers selected the following countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovenia, Macedonia and Estonia. It is necessary to note that research in the above mentioned countries have not been performed at the same time as in Montenegro, so there could be discrepancies in relation to the reality that existed in 2002.

Table 2: Comparative analysis of consumption inequality

Country	GINI coefficient	90/10 ratio
Bosnia and Herz., 2001.	0.26	3.3
Albania, 2002.	0.28	3.6
Hungary, 1997.	0.28	3.5
Serbia, 2002.	0.28	6.7
Slovenia, 1997/98.	0.28	3.7
Montenegro, 2002.	0.29	5.8
Bulgaria, 2001.	0.30	4.1
Croatia, 1998.	0.30	3.9
Macedonia, 2000.	0.31	4.3
Estonia, 1998.	0.38	5.4

Source: *The Strategy of Development and Poverty Reduction in Montenegro, 2003.*

Looking at Table 2, we can conclude that according to the Ginny coefficient Montenegro (0.29) was in the same level with most countries in the region. But, this should be accepted with some reserve, considering that the data for Hungary and Slovenia was relatively outdated (from 1997 and 1998 respectively), and these were the "leaders" states when it comes to the success of the transition in this part of Europe. Also, data for Croatia and Estonia (from 1998) probably do not reflect the real situation, because in these countries Ginny coefficient was unusually high in relation to Montenegro, especially when one takes into account inequality in terms of economic power between this three states. For example, the level of gross domestic product in the 2000th in Croatia amounted to \$ 80 in Estonia, \$ 84, \$ 105 in Hungary, Slovenia \$ 114 per capita, while in the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was 48% per capita.

Compared to other countries which were similar to Montenegro in terms of economic development in this period, we see that Ginny coefficient does not show any significant differences. Albania (0.28), Serbia (0.28), Bosnia and Herzegovina (0.26) have slightly lower Ginny than Montenegro, while Bulgaria (0.30) is in the last place, if we extract from the table only country with latest data (from 2001 and 2002).

Policy makers also used method deciles-ratio (90/10) for the purpose of measuring inequality of consumption, in order to measure the gap between the richest 10% of the population and the majority population. It is obvious that the degree of inequality of consumption, according to this method of measurement, in Montenegro, was the highest compared to all countries listed in the table below, with the exception of Serbia. This is particularly important when one bears in mind that this is the period of existence of Montenegro in union with Serbia, which means that the then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, according to the degree of inequality in consumption was the first place in this part of Europe.

Montenegro used by the consumer basket for a standard household (in 2003 the amount was 116.2€ per consumer unit) as a measure of absolute poverty line in strategic documents, and a line of economically vulnerable population is set at 50% above the poverty line (SSSR, 2003).

We wish to emphasize that the entire strategy was based on comparison of estimates of the total population of Montenegro 718.790 people, which is significantly higher figure than the one that was estimated in the 2003 Census. The reason for this is the fact that apart from the local population in Montenegro there are a number of refugees and displaced persons, as well as the RAE. The most of them are not covered by the list because they did not meet the requirements to be residents or citizens of Montenegro, although they actually live on Montenegrin territory and in most cases will stay in Montenegro permanently.

According to the final data from *The Strategy of development and poverty reduction in Montenegro* absolute poverty is especially present among the RAE population (52.2%), as well as refugees (38.8%) and internally displaced persons (38.6%), while among the local population poverty amounted to 12.2 % (SSSR, 2003). Finally, it is clear that under the poverty line according to the results of the Strategy, were the dominant members of the RAE population, refugees and displaced persons (SSSSR, 2003).

Sharpness of poverty, depth of poverty and extreme poverty are represented most prominently in RAE. The people who represent categories of the population that have the most problems with poverty (RAE, refugees and displaced persons) have a low level of education, or didn't have had any kind of education. For example, 70% of Roma population were not active in the educational process and did not attend school during the period when policy makers began to empirical research of poverty. Also, in the cause-effect relationship with the level of education is also employment of the people and on the basis of poverty in terms of employment affects mostly RAE population (43.3%), although it is expressed with refugees (32.5%) and internally displaced persons (30.4%). In the domestic population we want to emphasize that the figure of 17.7% of the poor in employment is not an insignificant indicator, and this situation is directly related to poverty in education, which in 2003 amounted to 17.2%. In terms of housing conditions, strategy identified drastic poverty of RAE population (74.7%), suggesting that most members of this population have no basic prerequisites for maintaining some kind

of existence, such as: a source of drinking water in the living space (apartment or house), improper surface area of an apartment or house, impossibility of connection to the main water supply, lack of bathrooms, etc. Inadequate housing conditions was a serious problem with refugees and displaced persons, which is best manifested by the fact that 55.4% of refugees are living in homes with less than 10 square meters of space per person, or 50.1% of displaced persons. In the RAE population, this figure is even more drastic and is 85.8% of the total population whose fundamental problems are living space. According to geographical criteria, most of the poor live in northern Montenegro, about 45% with a poverty rate of 19%; the number of poor in the central part is 35% with a poverty rate of 10.8%; while the smallest number of poor live in the southern part with about 19% with a poverty rate of 8.8% (SSSR, 2003).

2. Analytical review on “*The Strategy for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion in Montenegro, 2007*”

After completing the four-year period of implementation strategies and projects within it, the conditions were met for the design activities for the period 2007-2011. The Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Welfare in collaboration with partners from civil society have taken over the obligation to create the *Strategy for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion in Montenegro*. The activities envisaged by the project should have been implemented in the period from 2007 to 2011, all in accordance with the Agenda of Economic Reforms and Development of Montenegro from 2007 to 2011, designed by the Government of Montenegro.

In the 2007 began the second phase of the fight against poverty in Montenegro, with very specific objectives: ensuring socially stability and reduce economic vulnerability. In order to achieve these objectives it was necessary to create a series of activities in the areas of education, health, employment, social protection which were identified as priorities (SSSS, 2007:7). As a special priority of this strategy was combating poverty among vulnerable social groups, and for its implementation of special significance documents and activities adopted by the Government of

Montenegro. These are: a) *National Strategy for Resolving the problems of refugees and internally displaced person* b) *National Action Plan for the "Decade of Roma Inclusion 2010-2015 in Montenegro*; c) *Strategy for Improving the Position of RAE population in Montenegro* (SSSS, 2007).

Policy makers in The Strategy from 2007th introduced the term social exclusion, as is accepted practice in the EU countries, which are increasingly insisting on the use of this concept. The meaning of that incorporative term is that "is a process during which certain individuals are pushed to the margins of society and prevented from participating fully in society because of poverty or lack of basic skills, lifelong learning opportunities, or as a result of discrimination" (Vukovic, 2005). Otherwise, the term was first used in France in the 1970s, and has gained wide popularity in the 1990s. Just a few months after the adoption of the Strategy for Combating Poverty Reduction and new research on the degree of poverty in Montenegro were conducted. The results of new research have mainly confirmed the findings of the preceding Strategy from 2003.

However, the results also pointed out the necessity of expanding strategies and the sphere of social exclusion, since a large number of citizens of Montenegro are subject to certain social events due to which partially or permanently they can be excluded from many social activities.

Policy makers have presented the research findings, which were not alarming or problematic for society in that moment, according to their opinion:

- a) Absolute poverty in Montenegro affects a relatively small percentage of the population, namely 10.9%, while it ranges between 8.4 and 13.6% where the poor mostly live in the north and central part of the Montenegro state;
- b) There are some groups that are extremely poor and socially excluded. For these groups poverty is multidimensional and starting from problems with housing to problems with education and exclusion from labor market;

- c) A large part of the population is vulnerable to poverty. Despite the fact that many people are poor, there are more those that are subject to social fluctuations that will make them poor;
- d) Economic vulnerability and increased risk of becoming poor is far greater problem, which affects one third of all population of Montenegro; (SSSSI, 2007:6)

Policy makers were looking for certain innovations in the strategy with motivation to adapt them to the actual situation in Montenegro. Since 2007, the poverty reduction programs took into account two important properties of these complex phenomena, such as the self-reproduction of the problem and connection with other social problems. Areas that were defined in the Strategy as a priority were: healthcare, education, social protection and labor market.

The healthcare system in Montenegro should remain accessible to all citizens of Montenegro, in order to preserve the principle of equality. Here we want to emphasize that to strengthen the capacity of healthcare related services, especially for the poor categories of the population, it is very important to regulate the situation in primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare sector. Relieving hospitals, specialized clinics, while strengthening the primary level of care (health centers) with easy access, open space for continuous protection, especially of the poor population and implementing prevention measures (Vukovic, 2011: 117).

The education reform aims to create conditions for quality education for all children, especially in terms of equal access to educational institutions. Also, the education system as such must continually speed up the process of lifelong learning and adult education.

With these methods policy makers planned to suppress the occurrence of poverty and social exclusion at the lowest possible level. Also, one of the conditions that must be fulfilled in order to eliminating poverty and social exclusion is the regulation of the labor market situation in terms of promoting measures for employment and combating unemployment. Specific target groups in this process should be: difficult to employ persons, young people, people with long waiting

times for employment, persons whose profession is no longer needed, etc. The role of system of social protection should not be confined to the provision of subsistence minimum citizens, but more attention must be directed to the prevention and detection of potential users of social services.

Policy makers in “The Strategy for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion in Montenegro, 2007”, defined the year 2011 as the deadline for meeting the goals. After this period they planned an evaluation process of generated effects. The main propose in these two represented strategies for reduction of poverty is to find the adequate direction in process of reducing the number of poor people in Montenegro.

3. Revisiting of created strategic approaches in the reduction of poverty and social exclusion in Montenegro

At the beginning of this paper we emphasized the ambition to test the efficiency of the strategic approach in the 2003 and 2007, using the method of time series analysis. We hypothesized that strategic approaches to the poverty did not give the results planned and defined by the following time limit (until the end of 2011). With that aim, we limited ourselves to users of social assistance (help) for several reasons. First of all, that category of the people doesn't have other economic benefits except the social help which imparts from the social services of the state. Second, policy makers create strategies for reduction of the poverty because their main targets were users of social assistances as population in the most severe risks of poverty. Third, it was not realistic to expect that all the poor in Montenegro are covered by government intervention.

In order to test assumptions, we formed the *baseline model* in which the number of social assistance beneficiaries in different categories of age (juvenile, adult, men, and women) explained with several control variables, as follows: GDP, average wages and time series trend. On that baseline model we added several dummy variables, each one with a desire to test the hypothesis, as follows:

- 1) Dummy variable for the period 2003-07. With this dummy variable we test whether there is a statistically significant change in the number of social assistance beneficiaries during the entire period from 2003 to 2007, which could be attributed to the effectiveness of the first strategy.
- 2) Dummy variable for the period 2007-11, with which we want to test whether there, is a statistically significant change in the number of social assistance beneficiaries during the entire period from 2007 to 2011, which could be attributed to the effectiveness of the second strategy.
- 3) Trend variable for the period 2003-07, with which we test whether there is a statistically significant change in trend in the number of social assistance beneficiaries during the period from 2003 to 2007, which could be attributed to the effectiveness of the first strategy.
- 4) Trend variable for the period 2007-11, with which we test whether there is a statistically significant change in trend in the number of social assistance beneficiaries during the period from 2007 to 2011, which could be attributed to the effectiveness of the second strategy.

So, for the purpose of testing this hypothesis, we used five different dependent variables, namely:

- a) number of minor beneficiaries of social assistance – males (SocPomm_m);
- b) number of minor beneficiaries of social assistance – females (SocPomm_z);
- c) number of adult beneficiaries of social assistance – males (SocPomp_m);
- d) number of adult beneficiaries of social assistance – female (SocPomp_z);
- e) Total number of beneficiaries of social assistance (SocPom).

Table 3: Dependent variable

Dependent variable	SocPom (m_m)	SocPom (m_z)	SocPom (p_m)	SocPom (p_z)	SocPom
Adapted R ² baseline model	0.0663	0.9768	0.3255	0.9160	0.9095
Dummy_03_07	2164	1092	-4630	-2053	-3426
(sig)	0.436	0.751	0.617	0.414	0.832
Dummy_07_11	6813	6638	4610	-559	17502
(sig)	0.094	0.221	0.853	0.944	0.637
Trend_03_07	-162	-1693	-547	371	-3730
(sig)	0.660	0.303	0.936	0.861	0.720
Trend_07_11	3975	6166	16436	3903	30482
(sig)	0.591	0.276	0.357	0.560	0.141

During the analysis of the data in Table 3, we see that none of the selected four dummy variables in any of five different models has any statistical significance. Such indicators lead us to the conclusion that during the period of strategies implementation (from 2003 to 2007, as well as in the period from 2007 to 2011) there has been no change in the level of poverty in Montenegro. According to this data, there are no positive effects that can be attributed to the poverty reduction strategies, and other factors not included in the initial model (the general economic situation, gross domestic product, income, etc.). Namely, poverty reduction strategies, in this period, have not changed the total number of beneficiaries of social assistance. Social situation in Montenegro has not improved, and the number of users of social assistance evidence in favor of this thesis. Also, in those periods (2003/07 and 2007/11) were recorded in the category changes in the overall structure of the users (juvenile, adult). Finally, we note that, although statistically insignificant, direction of coefficients estimated for variables used are often not appropriate (so instead of reducing, in some models we see increase in number of social assistance beneficiaries), which further confirms the hypothesis of non-efficiency strategy implementation.

Table 4: Minor beneficiaries of social assistance / gender, 2000-2011.

Year	Minor beneficiaries		
	Total	Female	Male
2000.	12.421	5.439	6.982
2001.	13.513	6.079	7.434
2002.	15.315	6.831	8.484
2003.	15.677	6.922	8.755
2004.	17.449	7.876	9.573
2005.	18.836	8.192	10.644
2006.	19.188	8.571	10.617
2007.	22.595	10.249	12.346
2008.	27.429	13.558	13.871
2009.	26.159	12.697	13.462
2010.	25.213	12.400	12.813
2011.	23.639	11.466	12.173

Source: MONSTAT

Table 5: Number of adult beneficiaries of social assistance / gender 2000-2011.

Year	Adult beneficiaries		
	Total	Female	Male
2000.	19.203	9.270	9.933
2001.	23.431	10.292	13.139
2002.	25.694	11.756	13.938
2003.	25.477	12.236	13.241
2004.	29.088	13.407	15.681
2005.	26.063	12.472	13.591
2006.	26.756	13.241	13.515
2007.	27.301	13.217	14.084
2008.	28.351	14.297	14.054
2009.	28.398	14.171	14.227
2010.	28.331	14.288	14.043
2011.	28.128	14.190	13.938

Source: MONSTAT

In the end, publicly available data on the number of social assistance beneficiaries in Montenegro (Table 4 and 5), policy makers recognized that a strategic approach to poverty did not provide positive effects. These data indicate that the number of social assistance beneficiaries from 2000 to 2011 has drastically increased. Each category (juvenile and adult, male and female) that we used in our statistical operation increased the number of beneficiaries. Therefore, strategic approaches designed and implemented in Montenegro in the period from 2003 to 2012 did not provide a contribution to reduction of poverty, because they did not solve two major problems, namely: unsuccessfully, targeting poor population and determining the cause of the real deficit in the population. As seen, in Montenegro we have absolute poverty not just in categories of RAE population, refugees and displayed persons, since the number of users of social assistance is significantly higher than the total number for these categories of population. Conclusion is simple, absolute poverty is present also in the domiciled population and it is more complex than is determined by strategic approaches used up to now.

What are the main reasons of escalation of poverty during the 2000s? It's obvious that in Montenegro problem of poverty is more complex than what has been identified by strategic approaches. This conclusion leads us to the several implications, such as:

- a) penetration of poverty to middle class social scale, and creation of conditions for the polarization of society;
- b) worsening economic situation in Montenegrin society, especially in the period since 2008, caused an increase in social tensions;
- c) Slowing down of the reforms courses needed in the process of democratization of society. Consistency of poverty in Montenegro complicates planning sector reforms such as social protection, healthcare, labor market, etc.

Citizens expect much more from policy makers in terms of building a sound social security system. If such poor social trends continue, individuals and households who are living in risk of poverty will have less motivation to support political, social and economic transformations.

Summary

Developments in the areas of public policies have a significant impact on the occurrence of poverty and social exclusion. Public policies of Montenegro in the areas of healthcare, education, labor market and social protectionism necessary to focus on the fundamental changes. Orientation towards the reforming mentioned policies is the only way to reach valid results as guarantor for the achievement of certain international standards. For example, since 2010, EU has promoted the strategy named “Europe 2020” as a response to the current economic crisis. Montenegro is one of the actors of European integration and in their efforts to comply with standards and commitments will be obliged to take into account the objectives proclaimed by this strategy. In the strategy “Europe 2020”, policy makers in EU promoted as the guiding objectives proposed five areas most affected by the recession, such as: employment, research and development, climate and energy education, the fight against poverty (Vukovic, 2011, 364-365). Each of these goals can also be linked with the creation of public policies to combat poverty. Group of authors (Aradarenko, Jorgoni, Stubs, 2011), given the complexity of socio-economic situation, has proposed several principles on which policy makers can base measures and instruments for reduction of poverty and social exclusion. These are the principles:

- A) Policy makers do not need to take any action without a clear assessment of its social impact. The likely effects on poverty and social exclusion, inequality and employment;
- B) Policy makers should apply the principle “no to harm” and measures should be implemented only if there is evidence that they will not encourage vulnerability and risk in the medium term;
- C) Short-term measures should be based on a clear, strategic, long-term vision of socio-economic development, in which economic objectives are continuously assessed in relation to commitment to social cohesion, inclusion, solidarity and environmental sustainability;
- D) Measures of social policy and labor market measures must be based on evidence, must be fair and equitable when it comes to

different groups, regions, specific objectives and competing demands, but also based on needs, in relation to long-term planning and vision.

Problems faced by Montenegro and other countries of South Eastern Europe have left very little leeway for action in dealing with the consequences produced. That states have underdeveloped resources, characterized by weakness of institutional capacity, and have to deal with a lot of social risks. Also, Montenegro especially is not society with social cohesion, so we cannot tell that the dominant population is socially integrated. British author Bill Jordan believes that for developing public policies against poverty the following question is very important: "If a society is based on economic and political exchanges in the competitive environment, the key question that arises is how the deficits incurred in the provision of private goods and how they can be resolved in a Pareto optimal way" (Jordan, 1996:44). According to that, policy makers in Montenegro in order to properly formulate the policy direction for the fight against poverty are need to establish how deficits occur in the population and determine the number of people who can say that they are the most affected in poverty. After that, begins the second phase of selecting measures and instruments for reducing the poverty. Reproducing and multidimensionality of the poverty are big challenge for "the policy makers who are need to develop new approaches in the fight against the old enemy" (Townsend, 2000).

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