

EMPLOYMENT POLICIES FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE INFECTED WITH HIV/AIDS

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Abstract: *The purpose of this article is to analyse the topic of the young people infected with HIV/AIDS (the social group most affected by this virus both in Romania, and worldwide), stressing on the forms of including these people on the labour market. The first part of the article is a brief introduction into the matter of HIV/AIDS and it provides several statistics and estimates on the infection with HIV/AIDS worldwide and in Romania. The article also shows the important aspects from Law 582/2002 on the measures to prevent the spreading of HIV/AIDS in Romania and to protect the people infected with HIV or having AIDS. We also presented the exclusion of the young people infected with HIV/having AIDS from the labour market and the difficulties they experience in trying to get a job or to preserve a stable job.*

The second part of the article makes an analysis of 6 projects implemented from 2007 to 2011, projects which aim to integrate the young people infected with HIV/having AIDS on the labour market. The analysis refers to the objectives, activities, results and progress of each project, as well as a comparative analysis of the projects.

Keywords: *HIV/AIDS, exclusion, labour market, young people, integration, projects, analysis*

Introduction

HIV/AIDS is a complex matter which affects all the components of the society, particularly the public health.

It has been acknowledged as real social problem only during the past two decades, being of major interest for the epidemiologists and sociologists in the field of health.

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AIDS is a “disease of the society, in the deepest meaning of the term, being fundamentally related to the life style and social behaviour” (Rădulescu, 2002, p. 180).

It is known that the people infected with HIV virus are confronted with various problems; most times they are discriminated and labelled by the other members of the society. The low level of information on the legal rights determined the people infected with HIV to consider that some of the discriminatory behaviours they are confronted with are only normal.

The stigma and instinct of rejection are often associated with the infection with HIV/AIDS, which affects dramatically the level of social integration of the infected people, limiting their access to the resources of the society.

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is a virus that attacks and destroys the immune system, and thus the organism can no longer cope with the aggressors of any kind (viruses, bacteria, moulds, cancer cells). This causes infections and forms of cancer that can be lethal.

AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) is the terminal stage of the HIV infection, when the immune system is very affected by the virus, when the number of important cells of the immune system that defend the organism decrease dramatically, and when the organism can no longer cope with the infections (Blaglosov, Constantin, Lazăr, Luca, 2007). A person can be carrier of HIV, but this doesn't mean that he/she has AIDS.

Statistics on the infection with HIV/AIDS

According to the estimates of the compartment monitoring and evaluating the HIV/AIDS infection in Romania from the National Institute of infectious diseases „Prof. Dr. Matei Balș”¹, in December 2010 there were more than 34 million people living with HIV/AIDS. The number of people infected with HIV in 2010 is 2.7 million, of which 2.3 million are adult people and 390,000 are children below the age of 15. In 2010, 1.8 million people died of AIDS.

UNAIDS reports reveal that in 2010, almost 7,000 were infected with HIV worldwide, on a daily basis. More than 97% of them come from poor countries and from developing countries; about 1,000 are children below the age of 15, almost 6,000 are aged 15-49, of which 50% are women, and 41% are aged 15-24.²

¹ The Institute for Infectious Diseases „Prof. Dr. Matei Balș”, Compartment for HIV/AIDS monitoring and evaluation in Romania. Statistics available at <http://www.cnlas.ro/date-statistice/>

² UNAIDS WORLD AIDS DAY REPORT 2011, available at https://www.unaids.org/en/media/unaids/contentassets/documents/unaidspublication/2011/JC2216_WorldAIDSday_report_2011_en.pdf

In Europe, the number of people with HIV is increasing, as well as the risky sexual behaviour (CNLAS, 2011).

In Romania, HIV/AIDS phenomenon displays a particular characteristic by its demographic and geographic concentration. The epidemiological burst noticed among the paediatric population from the 1987-1989 generation, peaked statistically in 1990, thereafter decreasing dramatically, Romania aligning to the universal patterns of transmission. The causes of disease are: degradation of the health care system during the years of the socialist regime (transfusions using blood not tested for HIV, injections using non-sterilized needles), limited possibilities of laboratory diagnosis and epidemiological study, lack of sanitary education and of information, particularly among the population living in a permanent state of poverty, the policy of non-acknowledgement and even denial of AIDS patients under the former regime (Buzducea, 2002 in L. Pop, 2002, p. 691).

The first case of HIV/AIDS in Romania was diagnosed in 1985, and after 1989, cases were also noticed among the children. Only in 1990, over 1,000 infected people have been diagnosed, most of them children.

In Romania, in 1985-2011 (cumulatively), the total number of HIV/AIDS cases was 17,212, of which: 9,866 children aged 0-14; 7,346 adult people aged 14+. The total number of deaths due to AIDS (1985-2011) was 5,850 people, the number of children and adult people missed from registration is 597, and the number of alive HIV/AIDS patients is 10,765.¹

The table below shows the trend of HIV/AIDS transmission (vertical, MSM, IDU, heterosexual, unknown) in Romania, in 2007-2011.

Trends of HIV/AIDS transmission in Romania, 2007-2011

Routes of transmission	December 31, 2007	December 31, 2008	December 31, 2009	December 31, 2010	September 30, 2011
Vertical	9 (2.44%)	12 (2.7%)	22 (5%)	21 (4.8%)	10 (2.5)
MSM	14 (3.8%)	33 (7.5%)	34 (8%)	46 (10.5%)	63 (15.5%)
IDU	3 (0.8%)	3 (0.7%)	5 (1.1%)	12 (2.7%)	62 (15.3%)
Heterosexual	278 (75%)	302 (69%)	324 (75%)	329 (74.7%)	254 (62.7%)
Unknown	64 (17%)	86 (20%)	43 (10%)	32 (7.3%)	16 (4%)
Total	368	436	428	440	405

**New cases detected and registered in the database in 2011*

Source: Compartment for HIV/AIDS monitoring and evaluation in Romania – INBI „Prof. Dr. Matei Balș”

¹ The Institute for Infectious Diseases „Prof. Dr. Matei Balș”, Compartment for HIV/AIDS monitoring and evaluation in Romania. Statistics available at <http://www.cnlas.ro/date-statistice/>

Important aspects from Law 584/2002, regarding the measures to prevent the spreading of AIDS disease in Romania and to protect the people infected with HIV or having AIDS

According to the international legislation, all categories of people, including the people with HIV/AIDS, must benefit of all the human rights, with no exception or form of discrimination.

The introduction of specific programs and laws, both national and international, to increase the access to medical and social services, was determined by the existence of the various forms of discrimination and stigmatization of the people infected with HIV/having AIDS (ARAS, 2011).

At the national level, the laws in support of the people infected with HIV / having AIDS are as follows:

- **Law 448 /2006** concerning the protection and promotion of the rights of the people with disabilities. In terms of the services of medical assistance, the main rights of a person with disabilities include free accommodation and meal services for the person accompanying the child with serious or strong disability; upon doctor's recommendation free ticket for spa treatment; free and equal access to a form of education in agreement with the type and level of disability and with the educational needs; professional guidance; state allocation. In Romania, HIV infection is assimilated to serious or strong disability, depending on the stage of the disease. Therefore, the ill people benefit of the legal rights for the people with disabilities.
- **Law 584/2002** concerning the measures for the control of AIDS spreading in Romania, for the protection of the people infected with HIV or having AIDS. This is the main law regulating the situation of these people.

According to this law "the people infected with HIV or having AIDS benefit of social protection, non-discrimination treatment in terms of the right to education, the right to work and to social protection of the work, to professional training; their state of illness cannot be reason for firing".

Law 584/2002 stipulates the "obligation of the medical units and of the doctors, irrespective of speciality, to admit in hospital and to care in agreement with the particular pathology of the patient, as well as the free medication, antiretroviral and for all the diseases associated to the infection with HIV or to AIDS".

The duties of the people with HIV are generally related to the protection of the other people and are stipulated by the law in the section regarding the measures to control the spreading of AIDS. A person infected with HIV or having AIDS must "inform his physician, dentist, on his HIV status, when he/she is aware of this status. The

voluntary infection is punished, according to the Penal Code (article 309, paragraph 2) with imprisonment from 5 to 15 years". In complement to the methodology for the enforcement of Law 584/2002 "several government orders and decisions have been adopted: Order no. 73/2004 of the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family to approve the Methodology of granting the monthly food indemnity for the adult people and children infected with HIV or having AIDS and of controlling the actual use of this right by these categories of people; Government Decision no. 2108/2004 to approve the Regulation for the enforcement of Law 584/2002; Government Decision no. 839/2004 regarding the amount of food allocations for the collective consumption in the public medical units and in nurseries, and Government Decision no. 1342/2004 for the approval of the National Strategy to Monitor, Control and Prevent the cases of infection with HIV/AIDS" (Blaglosov et al., 2007, p. 116).

Exclusion from the labour market of the young people infected with HIV / having AIDS

In Romania, the people infected with HIV / having AIDS are confronted with major obstacles upon employment.

Many of the young people infected with HIV / having AIDS want to be independent, primarily by getting a job. The data on the educational level of these young people show that many of them have a low level of education, they dropped out of school before finishing the compulsory education, or finished just 8 grades. This situation narrows considerably their odds to get a job, and if they do find a job, the work is generally poorly paid or unskilled. If the unskilled work relies on physical effort, the young man infected with HIV is unlikely to hold too long to this job because the physical effort may have adverse effects on his/her health state: they may need admission in a hospital, thus ending the job (Blaglosov et al., 2007).

There are two critical aspects regarding the employment of the young people infected with HIV:

1. To what extent an employer will hire/keep an employee infected with HIV;
2. Which are those types of work/activity that the people infected with HIV can perform and/or which are those that they cannot perform" (Blaglosov et al. 2007, p. 106).

Regarding the first aspect (the extent to which an employer will keep an employee with HIV), since the law guarantees the right to confidentiality, it is not necessary that the employer knows the HIV status of his/her employees. There are studies showing that after being informed on their diagnosis, many people gave up their jobs being afraid of the attitude of their work colleagues; they preferred to leave the job rather

than being sacked. According to the same studies, there were situations in which at the moment when the diagnosis was made public, both the person infected with HIV, and the family members working in the same company were sacked (Blaglosov et.al, 2007).

Regarding the second aspect, which are those types of work/activity that the people infected with HIV can perform and/or which are those that they cannot perform, law 584/2002 comes in support of the people infected with HIV/having AIDS. The law stipulates that the people infected with HIV/having AIDS benefit of non-discriminating treatment regarding their right to work and regarding the social protection of the work, regarding professional promotion, and that the state of their health cannot be reason for sacking. However, there are situations when HIV test is demanded upon employment, such as for the beauty salons, manicure, hair dresser, eatery units, health care and nurseries (Blaglosov et al. 2007).

In conclusion, we may say that the stigmatization and discrimination of the young employees living with HIV/AIDS takes different forms, including testing before employment, refusal to hire the young people living with HIV/AIDS and redirection or firing the employees living with HIV/AIDS, irrespective of their working capacity. The stigmatization and discrimination at work may be the result of the attitude displayed by the employer and by the work colleagues, which leads to the social isolation of the employee with HIV status.

The fear of the society towards the people infected with HIV, determined by the lack of information on the routes of transmission of the infection, as well as the historic stereotypes regarding the intrinsic relation between immorality and HIV/AIDS cause the social exclusion, actually being the defining factor of the discrimination.

Presentation and content analysis of six projects targeting the integration on the labour market of the young people infected with HIV/having AIDS

We will now present and **analyse the content** of six projects aiming the employment/integration in work of the young people infected with HIV/having AIDS. The data on these projects were retrieved from the websites of the project implementers (Global Fund for the Fight against HIV/AIDS, RAA, UNOPA).

The content analysis is defined as an *“assembly of techniques for the quantitative/qualitative investigation of the verbal/nonverbal communication, consisting in the identification and objective and systematic description of the manifest/latent content of the communication with the view to reach scientific conclusions on the personality of the people that are communicating, on the society where the communication is done and on the communication itself, as social interaction”* (Chelcea, 1993, p.26).

Here are the objectives of the analytic approach:

- A. Gathering information for the people coming into contact with the people infected with HIV/having AIDS, so that this disease is no longer an obstacle for employment / integration in work;
- B. Clarification of the matter: what is the discrimination and exclusion from a job of the young people infected with HIV/having AIDS
- C. Operationalization of the matter: exclusion from the labour market of the young people infected with HIV/having AIDS generated by the disease, by self-exclusion, by marginalisation and by discrimination.

Following is the presentation of the six projects aiming the integration on the labour market of the young people infected with HIV/having AIDS.

Project 1: „Vocational training and training stages for the PLWHA” (People Living with HIV/AIDS) (2007-2009)

This project run in several towns, among which: Bucharest, Arad, Constanța, Galați, Bacău, Fălticeni, Dâmbovița and Balș-Slatina.

Following, as exemplification, is a brief presentation of the project implementation at „Lizuca” centre in Bacău County.

The partner of the project was the Foundation for the Development of People.

The purpose of the project was to train and educate for life a number of 192 young people living with HIV/AIDS, residents in Bacău County. This was accomplished by activities of counselling and by the establishment of support groups with the following subjects: family planning and avoiding unwanted pregnancies; drug consumption (about 80 of the 192 people); prevention of sexually-transmitted infections, etc. The project also aims to establish 7 groups of peer-educators, supported by 4 people trained to this purpose. Since one of the purposes of this project is to provide vocational training for 10 people living with HIV/AIDS from Bacău County, these people will attend training and apprenticing stages which will help them get a job. Following their participation in the vocational training, the young people living with HIV/AIDS will acquire abilities enabling them to live independently and to take a job (Global Fund, 2008a).

„The planned number of people living with HIS/AIDS (PLWHA) being counselled for professional and vocational guidance was 623 people, but the actual figure that we reached was 898 people.” (RAA, 2009a).

This means that the indicator was achieved 144% and that the exceeded target is 144%. The explanation consists, according to the implementers, in the fact that more people living with HIS/AIDS than planned were interested in counselling on how to write a CV, how to get a job, how to identify and register for vocational training, etc. (RAA, 2009b).

„Vocational training and training stages for the PLWHA” as mentioned before aimed to increase the odds for professional integration of the PLWHA, by access to vocational formation, because many young people living with HIS/AIDS didn't have full access to educational services, many of them displaying serious educational gaps.

The project included several activities.

A1: Establishment of the project team and authorisation of the counselling service

A2: Promotion of the service and selection of the beneficiaries

A3: Vocational counselling

A4: Courses for professional training

A5: Monitoring and evaluation of the young people attending the training courses for professional formation

A6: Applied practice

A7: Evaluation and monitoring of the stages of applied practice

Before starting the vocational counselling, the young people were evaluated in order to determine their interests and attitude towards work. Monitoring consists of information on their past activities, degree of interest, acquired knowledge and, possibly, working history. The final evaluation was performed after the end of the applied practice using evaluation questionnaires and activity reports.

Project 2: „Support for continuous education for specialists and for YPLWHA” (Young People Living with HIV/AIDS) (2007-2009)

Activity number 3 of the project *Counselling for professional integration of the young people living with HIV/AIDS* aims to include the training of the suppliers of services – social workers, psychologists, educators, in individual and group sessions, in 18 localities, being of interest for the analysis to be performed.

“The intention of this project was to facilitate the access to formation by providing services of professional integration and by making visible the experience of some organisation with the professional integration of the.” (Global Fund, 2008b)

The project objectives are: *acquisition of knowledge and abilities by the staff working with young people living with HIV/AIDS, which to favour the work with the young people towards their professional integration; provide support to further the education of the young people living with HIV/AIDS* (Global Fund, 2009a)

The project beneficiaries are 20 people (employees of organisations – 5 NGOs and their partner associations – 4 parents associations) working with the YPLWHA. One young man infected with HIV, beneficiary of FDP Arad services within „Casa Izvor” unit. The foreseen methods and the strategies used to accomplish the objectives of this project are: training for the specialists from the partner organisations for the development of services of professional integration; seminars for exchange of experience between the partners to share their experience; visits for exchange of experience to the project partners. The visits for technical assistance consisted of 7 days/2 days /2 persons FDP. The visits are made at the partner organisations and associations (Noua Speranță Association - Petrla, Neghiniță Association - Dâmbovița, Speranța Association - Constanța, Lizuca Association - Bacău, Red Ribbon Association - Fălțiceni, Baylor Foundation - Constanța, Copiii Noștri Foundation - Balș, Scop Foundation - Timișoara, Inimă de Copil Foundation - Galați. (Global Fund, 2009a)

During the visits for technical assistance the project aimed to make an initial evaluation of the needs for formation in the field of vocational counselling of the staff from the partner organisations. To begin with, the specialists used a questionnaire to assess the needs for formation. Based on this evaluation the specialists determined the curriculum for the formation seminar. At the end of the training seminar, the participants are to fill in a questionnaire to evaluate their knowledge. The expected outcome is to deliver improved services (Global Fund, 2009c)

The planned target for young people living with HIV/AIDS (YPLWA), which benefitted of activities of information, education and counselling during the programs of “Education for life” between July 2007 – June 2009, was 1,463 people, but the actual number of people was 2,100, which means that the indicator was accomplished 144%. The exceedingness was possible due to the activity of the 20 organisations member of UNOPA. They implemented the program “Education for life” by monthly group sessions with 6-10 young people each. The implementers were: UNOPA, FDP, Inimă de copil, Noua Speranță, Lizuca, Baylor Marea Neagră, I Noștri Bambini, Red Ribbon, SCOP, Alături de voi, Health Aid Romania, Romanian Children’s Appeal the covered Bucharest city and the counties of Arad, Dâmbovița, Galați, Hunedoara, Bacău, Constanța, Dolj, Suceava, Timiș, Iași, Neamț, Caraș Severin, Vaslui, Botoșani, Sibiu, Mureș, Giurgiu, Prahova (UNOPA, 2009).

„The planned target of the number of suppliers of services that are trained for family planning and professional integration for the young people living with HIV/AIDS, was

340 people, but the actual figure that we reached was 462 people, which means 136%. The value expresses the number of specialists formed for family planning (trained people: family planning doctors, gynaecologists, general practitioners) and to provide counselling for the professional integration of the young people living with HIV/AIDS (persons for psycho-social support)" (RAA, 2009b). In this respect, 217 clergy members and specialists in the psycho-social field from religious organisations were educated in matters related to the alleviation of stigmatization within the community in connection with AIDS; 201 doctors and specialists in the psycho-social field were educated in matters related to the reduction of discrimination within the medical and psycho-social services (RAA, 2009b).

The project implementers were Romanian Children's Appeal, SECS, FDP.

The participants in the training courses were from Bucharest city and from the counties of Bihor, Vaslui, Cluj, Iași, Dâmbovița, Hunedoara, Covasna, Brașov, Constanța.

„Support for continuous education for specialists and for YPLWHA”, aims to provide continuous education for the young people living with HIV/AIDS and for the staff working with them.

Same as the previous project, this project has several activities and expected results (Appendix 1B of the Sub-Grant Agreement, *Project description*, 2009)

A1: Preparation of the seminar for staff training in the field of vocational counselling

A2: Running the seminar for staff training in the field of vocational counselling

A3: Seminars for exchange of experience

A4: Visits for technical assistance and evaluation

A5: Grants for the young people infected with HIV

A6: Monitoring/evaluation

There will be an initial evaluation of the needs for formation of the staff from the partner organisations, which is to be done during the visits for technical assistance in the field of vocational counselling. The expected result is the provision of better services.

Project 3: „Psycho-social counseling, school and professional guidance of the young people living with HIV/AIDS from Romania” (2007-2009)

This project was run by UNOPA in partnership with CENTRAS, with the aim to increase the capacity of the psycho-social services to provide counselling and

support for the school and professional integration of the young people living with HIV/AIDS.

There were 7 training courses for the specialists working with people infected with HIV/having AIDS, with the purpose to provide services of better quality, accessible and adapted to the problems of the people infected with HIV/having AIDS. The courses were attended by 140 specialists working young people living with HIV/AIDS, from 30 counties of Romania. The project organized 29 round tables and a national conference on the subject of "HIV/AIDS and the place of work", conference which revealed the problems confronting the young people living with HIV/AIDS when they want to get a job. 140 specialists working with people living with HIV/AIDS were informed about the "Psycho-social counseling, school and professional guidance of the working young people living with HIV/AIDS in Romania", having thus the possibility to provide higher quality services to the beneficiaries of their services. 90 young people were counseled, guided educationally and professionally by trained specialists. By March 31, 2009, 973 young people living with HIV/AIDS benefitted of information, education and counseling within the program "Education for life". 445 young people attended groups of peer education and benefitted of information for the prevention of unwanted pregnancies, of sexually-transmitted infections and drug consumption. The project run a survey to identify the proportion of employers (public or private) which have policies and specific programs for the people living with HIV/AIDS; it also worked to evaluate the situation of the people living with HIV/AIDS in Romania in terms of their present needs and of the response of the social services to these needs (UNOPA, 2009).

The project increased the capacity of the organisations dealing with people living with HIV/AIDS to provide quality services to the PLWHA and to the community, and increased the level of information of the employers and of the community regarding HIV/AIDS. Specialists from 30 counties acquired higher skills for quality services provided to the PLWHA, there was a higher awareness of the local communities that HIV/AIDS is a problem of the community which concerns us all, that the community must get involved in the sustainability of the programs (UNOPA, 2009).

The project experienced difficulties such as poor involvement of the local authorities in the actions run at local level, at which they were asked to participate; most people (authorities and local people) were little aware of HIV/AIDS, problem that concerns us all, not just an isolated group of people; the local and central authorities didn't support almost at all the continuation of activities, although they are to the benefit of the communities and they solve social problems which are the responsibility of the authorities at every level (UNOPA, 2009).

Project 4: “Advocacy to reduce stigmatization and discrimination of the PLWHA” (2008-2009)

The purpose of the project was to educate the employers in Romania with the view to increase the socio-professional integration of the PLWHA, promotion and defence of PLWHA rights, within the context of their socio-professional integration.

The manner of intervention was decided in agreement with the following specific objectives:

Q1: at the end of the first year of implementation there was a higher level of information of the employers in Romania regarding PLWHA needs at their place of work and international practices of the ILO (International Labour Organisation) regarding HIV/AIDS;

Q2: Advocacy to improve the national policies, strategies and programs in terms of observing the human rights and the needs of the people living with HIV/AIDS (UNICEF & UNOPA, 2007).

The beneficiaries of the project were the people living with HIV/AIDS from Romania; the employers active in Romania; 20 organisations of the people living with HIV/AIDS involved in the project; the local communities from Bucharest, Bacău, Târgu Mureş, Constanța, Piatra Neamț, Mediaș, Reșița, Vaslui, Medgidia, Giurgiu, Petrița, Mangalia, Fălticeni, Craiova, Bârlad, Botoșani, Galați.

Main activities of the project:

- **National conference “HIV/AIDS and the place of work”**

The conference tried to answer questions such as: which is the current situation in Romania? Which are the current problems of the PLWHA? Are the employers ready to hire PLWHA? Are the PLWHA ready to get a job? What are the resources and which are the solutions? Can we do something that the PLWHA status is no longer an obstacle at the job?

The research report of UNOPA showed, with concrete field data, the position of the employers towards the people living with HIV/AIDS, towards the people with disabilities, their level of information regarding HIV/AIDS and the legislation regarding the people with handicap, as well as the level of PLWHA acceptance by the employers active in Romania.

The project had a positive result, to the benefit of the PLWHA: “there was a higher level of information of the community, at the national and local level, of the problems and needs of the PLWHA; there were fewer cases of stigmatization and discrimination due to HIV/AIDS; opportunities were established for the collaboration with different employers and for PLWHA employment; opportunities for social and professional integration of the PLWHA were established” (Global Fund, 2009b).

Project 5: „Evaluation of the services of professional integration of the young people living with HIV/AIDS in Romania” (2008-2009)

The purpose of the project was to facilitate the professional integration of the young people living with HIV/AIDS in Romania through: services of counselling and professional or occupational guidance; enrolling the young people in courses of vocational training; integration of the young people in protected workshops and units; information of the employers on the right to work of the people living with HIV/AIDS; organisation of activities of occupational therapy for the young people; training the psycho-social specialists for the counselling and professional guidance of the PLWHA (Global Fund, 2009a).

The financing of the Global Fund allowed activities to the benefit of the YPLWHA from 11 counties: Bucharest, Bacău, Suceava, Galați, Arad, Dâmbovița, Hunedoara, Timiș, Iași, Mureș, Constanța, with the contribution of the specialists from 11 governmental organisations.

By the end of 2008, after these activities, 600 YPLWHA benefitted of counselling for professional guidance; about 100 psycho-social specialists were trained to provide counselling and professional guidance to the PLWHA; there are 20 functional protected workshops and workshops for occupational therapy where the young people can acquire various professional abilities; about 200 young people enlisted for training courses of vocational formation provided by accredited providers or organised within the protected workshops. The organisations facilitated stages of applied practice at different employers for almost 40 young people; 9 young people were employed by protected units (farms and printing houses); 30 young people were housed permanently or temporary in 5 apartments, 2 family houses and an emergency centre; almost 200 young people benefitted of occupational therapy (Global Fund, 2009b).

Project 6: „Socio-professional integration of the people living with HIV/AIDS in Romania” (2009-2011)

This project is co-financed from the European Social Fund through the Sectoral Operational Program Human Resources Development 2007-2013.

The project is implemented by the National Union of the Organizations of the People Living with HIV/AIDS (UNOPA) in collaboration with 20 organisations of the people living with HIV/AIDS from 18 counties and from Bucharest. The project extended for a period of 30 months (January 2009 – June 2011) (UNOPA, 2009).

The expected results are:

- Higher access of the PLWHA to services of counselling and socio-professional guidance;

- Improved skills of the providers of social services for the PLWHA to deliver services of counselling and socio-professional guidance to the PLWHA;
- Better professional training of the PLWHA to get a job;
- Better information and education of the community about HIV/AIDS and about the rights of the PLWHA;
- Higher number of employed PLWHA;
- Problem-free implementation of the project (UNOPA,2009).

Project analysis

The six projects were presented in the order of the importance of aptitude acquisition both for the people living with HIV/AIDS („*Vocational training and training stages for the PLWHA*”; „*Support for continuous education for specialists and for YPLWHA*”; „*Psycho-social counseling, school and professional guidance of the young people living with HIV/AIDS from Romania*”; „*Advocacy to reduce stigmatization and discrimination of the PLWHA*”), and for the specialists in the services for professional integration for the young people living with HIV/AIDS („*Evaluation of the services of professional integration of the young people living with HIV/AIDS in Romania*”; „*Socio-professional integration of the people living with HIV/AIDS in Romania*”).

The projects are developed by non-governmental organisations (NGO) from Bucharest and from several counties, part in HIV/AIDS program financed from the Global Fund for the Fight against AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. The organisations displayed a delayed response, maybe because the lack of credibility for a longer life of the young people living with HIV/AIDS.

The socio-professional profile of these young people, according to the existing data (Buzducea, 2007) shows that:

- Most of them live in the families of origin, less in family-type houses, in protected apartments or in care units;
- About 30% of them didn't graduate any form of education, or maybe the elementary school;
- About 40% of the young people of school age don't attend any form of education; school dropout is often, on grounds of health state, discrimination, parents' decision, or own decision.

The purpose of the first project: „*Vocational training and training stages for the PLWHA*”, is to prepare and educate these categories of young people by allowing them to attend vocational courses including training and apprenticing, thus preparing

them for a possible job. The purpose of the project suits the needs of the young people living with HIV/AIDS and they displayed a major interest for counselling in writing a CV, finding a job, enlisting for vocational training, as supported by the 144% accomplishment of the proposed target (898 people vs. the planned 623 people) (Global Fund, 2009a).

The intention of the second project: „*Support for continuous education for specialists and for YPLWHA*”, is to favour the access to formation by providing services for professional integration and to make visible the experience of some organisations in the professional integration of the YLPWHA.

The people trained to provide services for the young people living with HIV/AIDS must adapt to the specificity of the group of HIV people, they must show patience, empathy and capacity to explain things in such a way so the beneficiaries understand them. The 20 organisations, UNOPA members, allowed exceeding (144%) the set target of YLPWHA beneficiaries receiving support for continuous education.

The activity of the third project: „*Psycho-social counseling, school and professional guidance of the young people living with HIV/AIDS from Romania*”, aims primarily to provide support for further education of the YLPWHA. This type of activity may be an advantage for the young people who reached a particular age and who didn't acquire the educational abilities specific to their age, and who need thus special support for learning. The counselling provided by specialists played an important role in their choice of particular training courses.

Another important aspect of this activity includes the training of the services providers (social workers, psychologists and educators), the acquisition of abilities and knowledge, abilities which facilitate working with the young people for their professional integration.

The actual number of beneficiaries (2,100), compared to the set target (1,463) shows that the activities and courses included in the programs of “*Education for life*” proved very attractive for so many young people, and this means that the strategy of project implementation was efficient.

The next step in the progress of the young people living with HIV/AIDS is revealed in project 3, „*Psycho-social counseling, school and professional guidance of the young people living with HIV/AIDS from Romania*” which, unlike project „*Support for continuous education for specialists and for YPLWHA*”, aims to provide higher quality services, available and adapted to the problems of the YPLWHA. The project covered 30 counties, which is much more than the previous projects, showing thus a higher efficacy of the project activities, first by the success of the programs and then by the higher potential of socio-professional integration of the YPLWHA.

This project included a national conference, “*HIV/AIDS and the place of work*”, attended by 140 specialists from the 30 counties covered by the project. The benefits of this conference materialized in a higher capacity of the organisations serving the YPLWHA to provide quality services to their beneficiaries and to the community by better informing the employers and the community on HIV/AIDS matters. The specialists also acquired more knowledge and there was higher awareness of the local community that HIV/AIDS is a problem of the community that concerns us all.

The project was confronted with difficulties: poor involvement of the authorities in the activities at the local level; most representatives of the local authorities displayed low awareness on HIV/AIDS matters. The local and central authorities didn't support almost at all the activities of the project. This shows that project effects sustainability can be decreased because the relations of collaboration and support with the local public authorities (which don't assign particular importance to this problem) are at the minimal level (UNOPA, 2009).

There have been two types of researches: a research for the identification of the number of employers, public and private, which have policies and specific programs for the people living with HIV/AIDS, which increases the relevance of the project; the second research aimed to evaluate the situation of the people living with HIV/AIDS in Romania in terms of their actual needs and of the response of the social services to these needs (UNOPA, 2009).

The purpose of project “*Advocacy to reduce stigmatization and discrimination of the PLWHA*” is to educate the employers active in Romania as to increase the socio-professional integration of the PLWHA, the promotion and defence of the people living with HIV/AIDS within the context of the socio-professional integration. The second specific objective of the project: *advocacy to improve the national policies, strategies and programs within the context of observing the human rights and the needs of the people living with HIV/AIDS*, shows that the national policies for the PLWHA are insufficiently developed or are in disagreement with the rights and real needs of this category of people, requiring reevaluation or the development of new programs.

The national conference “*HIV/AIDS and the place of work*”, continued during this project too, trying to answer in more detail to the problems of the people living with HIV/AIDS. The conference tried to answer questions such as: which is the current situation in Romania? Which are the current problems of the PLWHA? Are the employers ready to hire PLWHA? Are the PLWHA ready to get a job? What are the resources and which are the solutions?

The research report of UNOPA showed, with concrete field data, the position of the employers towards the people living with HIV/AIDS, as well as the level of PLWHA acceptance by the employers active in Romania. Among the results of the project

one may notice that there were fewer cases of stigmatization and discrimination due to HIV/AIDS, there were higher opportunities for the collaboration with different employers and for PLWHA employment, as well as opportunities for the social and professional integration of the PLWHA (UNOPA, 2009).

Project 5, „*Evaluation of the services of professional integration of the young people living with HIV/AIDS in Romania*” had the purpose to evaluate the results obtained until 2009, the subsequent progress and sustainability. The project focused on the adequacy, relevance and quality of the services provided to the young people living with HIV/AIDS in terms of socio-professional integration and of the acquisition of skills allowing them to lead an independent life.

The evaluation didn't monitor necessarily the number of young people infected with HIV who got a job after attending the training courses, rather whether the involved organisations and the beneficiaries consider that the YPLHWA have higher opportunities to get employed and to lead an independent life. The quality of the services provided to the young people living with HIV/AIDS to assist their professional integration was evaluated in terms of accessibility, level of training and competence of the staff, graduation, quality checking and efficiency (RAA, 2009b).

The project evaluated the satisfaction of the YPLHWA with the services of professional integration made available to them.

Project „*Socio-professional integration of the people living with HIV/AIDS in Romania*” expands for 30 months, ending in 2011. The expected results presume continuing the earlier programs of education for an independent life and for the professional integration. The teenagers turned into young people who need to integrate socio-professionally because the dependency on their family and on the support systems (NGOs, the public system of social work) just stagnate and consolidate their social handicap.

I will now **compare the results** obtained/to be obtained by these projects (by qualitative analysis) to see whether there are significant differences between these projects in terms of efficacy, relevance and impact.

The efficacy analysis will consider the objectives and targets and their accomplishment. The relevance refers to the adequacy of the services to the needs and possibilities of the beneficiaries and to the local opportunities. The impact of the services developed for the young people living with HIV/AIDS refers to the progress achieved (measured by the accomplished results: participation, graduation, employment etc., showing the efficacy of the actions) compared to the initial situation.

One may notice that the activities of the first project „*Vocational training and training stages for the PLWHA*” relied in several principles and a linear, progressive logic starting from the existing services (and accreditation of those not yet accredited), the

needs of the beneficiaries and the existing resources, so that they tend towards a maximal relevance, particularly for the target group.

The results formulated for each activity are justified, the exact number of the beneficiaries attending these training courses being the planned target. The progress can be measured through the outcomes of the project activities. Because the organisations have many people on their records, there must be a limited number of beneficiaries and their selection is an important matter. Selection of the beneficiaries was necessary due to the limitations imposed by the budget and due to the lack of interest of some young people, due to the lack of necessary abilities, or to the low attendance of the activities developed by the organisation.

„Support for continuous education for specialists and for YPLWHA” targets the continuous education for the young people living with HIV/AIDS and for the staff attending them.

The results of project activities refer mostly to a higher quality of the services delivered to the YPLWHA, stressing on the methods to improve the delivered services and analysing in detail the activities depending on the needs.

In terms of efficacy, the set target was exceeded, the indicator being accomplished 144%; the number of the people benefitting of support for continuous education within the programs of “Education for life” being higher than foreseen. This was possible due to the activity of the 20 organisations member of UNOPA.

The impact of the activities must be measured by monitoring the number of young people still benefitting of the provided services, in terms of their progress seen in their attitude towards employment. The motivation of the young people for participation and the awareness of the usefulness of these services show the high relevance of these services.

„Psycho-social counseling, school and professional guidance of the young people living with HIV/AIDS from Romania” focused on increasing the capacity of the psycho-social services to provide counseling and support for the educational and professional integration of the YPLWHA in Romania.

The activities included 7 training courses for the specialists working with YPLWHA, with the intention to provide higher quality services, accessible and adapted to the problems of the YPLWHA. The concern to provide high quality services for these categories of people is noteworthy, making aware the processes by which the young people can acquire knowledge and abilities and the fact that they need carefully evaluated services for their needs.

This project was implemented in 30 counties and very many specialists working with young people living with HIV/AIDS participated actively in the improvement of the

psycho-social services capacity to provide counselling and support for the educational and professional integration of these young people.

Major progresses have been made in several areas, which can be supported by the results: higher level of information of the YPLWHA regarding a healthy sexual and reproductive life; regarding the prevention of transmitting HIV infection; the organisation of YPLWHA increased its capacity for quality services for the YPLWHA and for the community; the employers and the community were better informed on the meaning of HIV/AIDS; the YPLWHA were informed on the risky behaviour; the training level of the specialists increased in the 30 counties where the project was implemented; the awareness of the local communities also increased in relation with the fact that HIV/AIDS is a problem of the community that concerns us all, and that the local authorities and the community must get involved in program sustainability (UNOPA, 2009).

Making an analysis of these results, we may say that the services of psycho-social counselling, educational and professional guidance of the young people living with HIV/AIDS had a high relevance and a rather high efficacy, determined by the motivation of the young people to enlist and to participate in various activities. It is very important that the independence of the young people develops as they get involved in such activities.

“Advocacy to reduce stigmatization and discrimination of the PLWHA” struggles to educate the employers active in Romania for a higher socio-professional integration of the PLWHA, for the promotion and defence of the people living with HIV/AIDS within the context of their socio-professional integration (UNOPA, 2009).

This project organised in June 2008 the National conference *“HIV/AIDS and the place of work”* and in 2009 the National conference *“Human rights within HIV/AIDS context”*. Among the activities of the project there were round tables with the local authorities, the press and the employers, organised by the 20 organisations involved in the project, with the purpose to educate the employers active in Romania (RAA, 2009a).

Another important aspect of the activities consisted in the two investigations, one among the employers active in Romania, and the other in order to evaluate the situation of the PLWHA in relation with the labour market and to avoid the barriers that may arise when seeking a job. Through these research activities, UNOPA was able to support, with field data, the position of the employers towards the people living with HIV/AIDS, their level of information on the matter of HIV/AIDS as well as the level of PLWHA acceptance by the employers active in Romania.

Among the results of the project were fewer cases of stigmatization and discrimination due to HIV/AIDS, higher opportunities for the collaboration with

different employers and for PLWHA employment, as well as opportunities for the social and professional integration of the PLWHA.

The research conducted within this project, particularly the evaluation employers' position towards the PLWHA, ensured a high relevance and efficacy to the project, because this situation had to be clarified since the employers are the main pillars for an independent life of the PLWHA. This project, by its results, showed to be particularly successful, thus showing the usefulness of the research. By its objectives, activities and results, this project continues the advocacy for the promotion and defence of PLWHA rights. The research conducted by UNOPA will provide support for the PLWHA organisations in their endeavour to promote and defend PLWHA rights in Romania.

„Evaluation of the services of professional integration of the young people living with HIV/AIDS in Romania” aimed to accomplish the planned purpose by: services of counselling and professional or occupational guidance; enrolling the young people in courses of vocational training; integration of the young people in protected workshops and units; information of the employers on the right to work of the people living with HIV/AIDS; organisation of activities of occupational therapy for the young people; training the psycho-social specialists for the counselling and professional guidance of the PLWHA, providing protected dwellings in which the abandoned YPLWHA or those coming from institutions can develop their abilities for an independent life (Global Fund, 2009c).

Counselling is very important and highly efficient because it motivates the young people to enlist for training courses, to be active in various fields and to continue this way in the future too. By counselling, the young people can be guided towards different preoccupations.

Next to counselling, the services of professional or occupational guidance have been developed in order to stimulate the interest of the young people and to allow them acquire abilities and skills useful to their socio-professional integration. The efficacy of these services can be quite high and their impact can be measured by their initiatives and creativity.

The training courses are of success and yielded adequate results; their relevance also is high because they allow the young people to get hired in the fields they were prepared for.

The stages of applied practice at employers have a high relevance because they allow the young people to make practice according to their qualification, by which they get applied, not just theoretic, abilities and skills whose impact can be seen in time.

The integration of the young people living with HIV/AIDS in protected workshops and units may provide a working environment similar to that from the labour market, thus

making them aware that they have clear duties and assignments, as well as rewards. The direct impact on the young people is that they may have thus the possibility to join the labour market and to actually work there.

The information of the employers on the right to work of the PLWHA has an impact that cannot be measured for the time being; however, by knowing the rights of the people living with HIV and of the ways of AIDS transmission, their attitude is expected to be a positive one in time, by accepting the young people living with HIV/AIDS.

The training of the psycho-social specialists for counselling and professional guidance of the PLWHA was meant to form continuously the specialists, keeping them updated with the latest developments in this field, so that they can provide to the beneficiaries services that are as adequate as possible to their particular needs (RAA, 2009b).

The results of the project were positive, progresses of the YPLWHA being recorded for every activity of the project.

„Socio-professional integration of the people living with HIV/AIDS in Romania” is a recent project ending in 2011. It is run by UNOPA in collaboration with 20 organisations delivering services for PLWHA. The expected results aim to provide higher quality counselling services to the PLWHA, their proper training to get a job and to increase the number of employed PLWHA. The project will carry on with these activities.

The **projects aim** to expand the opportunities and possibilities that the young people living with HIV/AIDS are part of the community having the right to a job, like everyone else, where they are not confronted with situations of discrimination, stigmatization or even exclusion from the labour market.

If we make an attentive analysis of the project objectives and results, if we **compare** them, we may say that the projects complement each other, all of them struggling for the social and professional integration of the young people living with HIV/AIDS.

All the services developed by the projects were adequate to the needs and possibilities of the PLWHA, and this aspect generated their motivation for participation and involvement in the planned activities.

The general objective of the projects was to improve the opportunities for professional integration of the young people living with HIV/AIDS. The objective has been accomplished through the process of formation, which has been constantly accompanied by activities of professional counselling in order to help the people get oriented. The high efficacy of the projects, in most cases, can be measured by the accomplishment of the set targets, over 90% or even higher than the set target. The

accomplishment of the targets has been proved by the indicators (the usual indicator was the number of young people enlisted in courses, the number of young people which graduated the courses, etc.) used to monitor the process.

No project actually determined the number of YPLWHA who get employed immediately after graduating the training courses; however, they could acquire abilities that give them chances to get employed in the near future. However, there may be problems hindering YPLWHA employment such as: their health state, which many times presumes admission in a hospital, low educational level, or low skills for independent life.

In terms of geographic coverage, the most comprehensive project was „*Psychosocial counseling, school and professional guidance of the young people living with HIV/AIDS from Romania*”, which was implemented in 30 counties of Romania and which included 140 specialists working with the young people living with HIV/AIDS. The lower geographical coverage of the other projects may be due to the unavailability or inexistence of organizations working with PLWHA in different towns or localities.

One may conclude that the services developed by the 5/6 projects have a high relevance and efficacy, both by the utility of the programs they run and by the fact that they aim to increase the employment potential of the YPLWHA.

Conclusions

In conclusion, we may say that the young people living with HIV/AIDS want to get and maintain a job in support of their welfare and independent life. As expected, most of them have low educational levels: they either dropped out of school before finishing the compulsory education, or finished just 8 grades. School dropout is usually caused by the news of the diagnosis, being afraid of the reaction of their colleagues upon breaking the news about the infection to them, of the defence reactions that may appear from their colleagues and of the situations of discrimination and stigmatization that may appear.

Most employers don't have enough information regarding HIV infection, such as routes of transmission, signs and symptoms, strategies to reduce the risk of getting infected with HIV etc.; they also don't know the legal provisions regarding the people living with HIV/AIDS and have no standard procedures to deal with the situation when a PLWHA is discriminated at the job. HIV/AIDS must therefore be acknowledged as a problem that may appear at work and be treated as any other serious disease of disturbance that the employees may have.

Many times, the PLWHA turn down a possible job because one of the requirements upon employment is the HIV test, or they quit if they need medical leave.

Among the important aspects of the law guaranteeing the rights of the people infected with HIV is that it is of utmost importance that their diagnosis is not made public, that they are entitled to confidentiality. Thus, the employers should not know the HIV status of their employees and should not reject them upon the disease criterion. However, there are studies (Blaglosov et al, 2007), which documented the fact that after they found out the HIV diagnosis, many people resigned from their jobs being afraid of the attitude of their fellow workers.

As seen from the presentation of the projects, a preventive intervention is needed in order to inform the employers on the rights of the HIV people, on the minimal risks of disease transmission at the place of work, and on the adaptation of the working schedule according to the possibilities of the person with AIDS which is able to work.

The areas where the people living with HIV/AIDS are discriminated most often are: the **labour market** – compulsory HIV testing upon employment, rejection of the employment if the result is positive, harassment on the job, sacking; **education** – difficulties at enrolment of the children living with HIV/AIDS, rejection, harassment and marginalization of these children; **health care services** – rejected access to dental care, to dermatologic services, excessive protection measures when health checking people living with HIV/AIDS, failing to provide free treatment and services according to the law; **social work** – failing to provide food allocations for the people living with HIV/AIDS, failing to grant the rights stipulated by the law, such as free subscription for public transportation, personal care for the persons with serious disability (HIV/AIDS), etc. (ARAS, 2008)

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