

SICAP Mid-Term Review

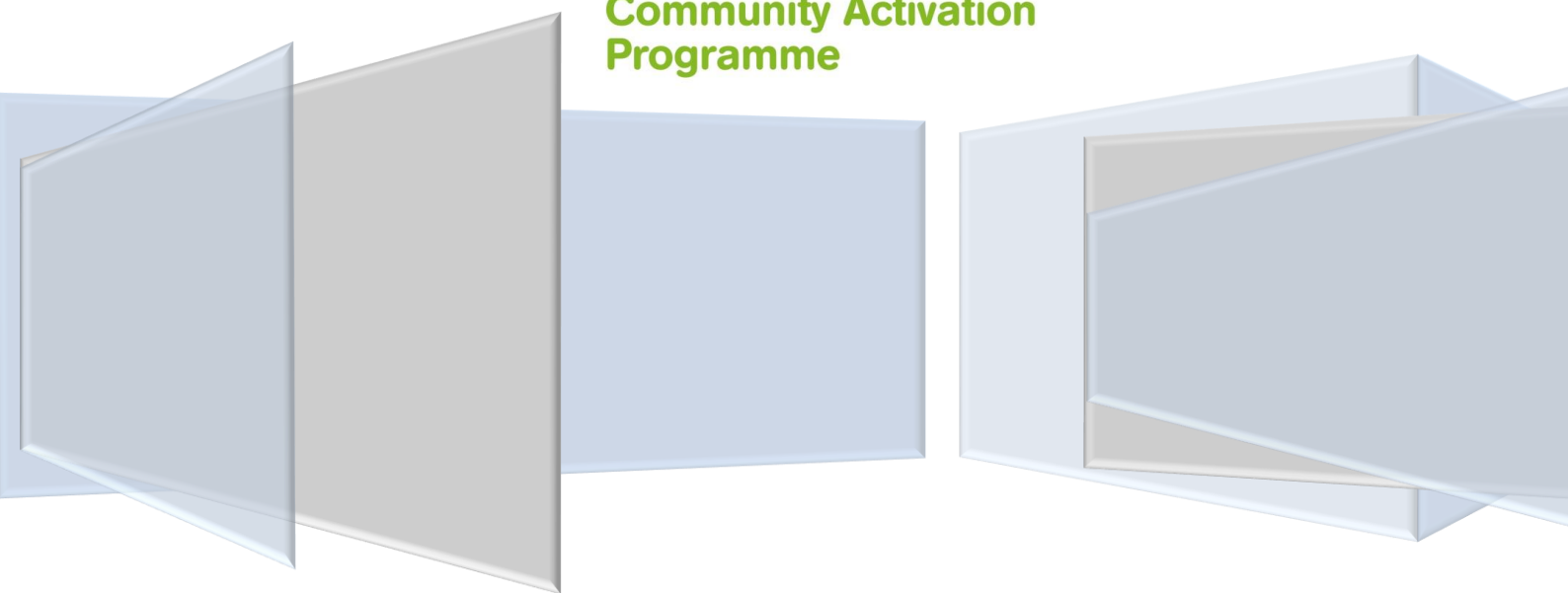
(1st April – 31st August 2015)

Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme

November 2015



Social Inclusion &
Community Activation
Programme



Ireland's European Structural and
Investment Funds Programmes
2014-2020

Co-funded by the Irish Government
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Comhshaol, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil
Environment, Community and Local Government

Contents

1	INTRODUCTION.....	3
	Programme Context.....	3
2	REPORTING PROCESS.....	6
	Mid-Year Review	6
	Reporting Timeline and Supports	6
	Addressing the Emerging Issues	7
3	PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE.....	8
	Finance Mid-Year Report	8
	3.1.1 SICAP Costs Charged Summary Report - Mid-Year 2015	8
	3.1.2 Lot Budgets	11
	3.1.3 Analysis of the number of SICAP Funded FTEs	12
	3.1.4 Administration Costs.....	13
	3.1.5 Spend reported on Action Categories.....	13
	SICAP Indicators	15
	SICAP Target Groups	18
	On-going Programme Developments and Supports	20
4	ISSUES AND TRENDS IDENTIFIED	23
	4.1 Feedback from LCDCs on issues identified at a local level:	23
	4.2 Issues/Trends Identified:.....	24
5	LEARNING, IMPLICATIONS AND ACTIONS.....	27
6	CONCLUSION.....	29

1 INTRODUCTION

This report provides an overview of the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) Finance and Monitoring returns covering the period from 1st of April to the 31st of August 2015 as well as feedback received from LCDCs and PIs and Pobal's observations and learning from the process to date.

The structure of this report includes a programmatic context, an overview of the SICAP reporting and monitoring process, presentation of programme performance in terms of financial reporting, KPIs and headline indicators, as well as trends and learnings identified to date.

An overall summary conclusion is set out in section 6 on page 28.

Programme Context

SICAP, which is led nationally by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, aims to tackle poverty, social exclusion and long term unemployment through local engagement and partnerships between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies.

SICAP's vision is to improve the life chances and opportunities of those who are marginalised in society, living in poverty or in unemployment through community development approaches and targeted supports. The programme was rolled out on 1st April 2015 and will run until December 2017. It is the successor programme to the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP). It is a national programme that is led in each County by a Local and Community Development Committee (LCDC). Following a public procurement process, contracts for the implementation of the new programme have been awarded by LCDCs to 45 Programme Implementers (PIs) covering 51¹ geographic areas (Lots).

SICAP has been designed and funded to impact on the following areas:

1. Engagement with the most hard to reach in the most disadvantaged areas;
2. Focus on youth interventions to address youth unemployment;
3. Preparing and supporting disadvantaged people to take up mainstream services;
4. Contribute to citizen engagement in line with national policy.

¹ Currently there are 50 Lots implementing SICAP, due to legal issues pertaining to one Lot

The Programme has three goals:

Table 1: The Goals of SICAP

Goals of SICAP
Goal 1. To support and resource disadvantaged communities and marginalised target groups to engage with relevant local and national stakeholders in identifying and addressing social exclusion and equality issues;
Goal 2. To support individuals and marginalised target groups experiencing educational disadvantage so they can participate fully, engage with and progress through life-long learning opportunities through the use of community development approaches;
Goal 3. To engage with marginalised target groups/individuals and residents of disadvantaged communities who are unemployed but who do not fall within mainstream employment service provision, or who are referred to SICAP, to move them closer to the labour market and improve work readiness, and support them in accessing employment and self-employment and creating social enterprise opportunities.

SICAP in the Policy Context:

Europe 2020 is Europe's 10 year growth and jobs strategy and is setting national policy across the five headline targets. SICAP is contributing to two of these headline targets – 1) Employment and 2) Social inclusion/ Poverty Reduction. SICAP is included within the *Action Plan for Jobs 2015* (Action 51 – Support for local and rural development) and is likely to feature in forthcoming plans. The Programme is listed in *Pathways to Work 2015* as a Key Milestone/Measure under Action 4: Develop & evaluate options to extend employment services to people not on the Live Register & improve the promotion/communication of existing activation options (DECLG – Q2 2015).

In addition, it is contributing towards the achievement of EU *Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning* (PEIL) 2014-2020 under a number of investment priorities e.g. Active inclusion; Promoting social inclusion; Sustainable integration of youth into labour market and is also listed under the Priority Axis of the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI).

A Changing Operational Landscape:

There is cognisance within the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) and Pobal, that the social inclusion and employment/activation landscape within the country has changed significantly in recent years, inevitably impacting on a programme such as SICAP. Unemployment is falling and analysis shows that long-term unemployment is also decreasing. While youth joblessness is declining, it still remains high.

Other factors shaping the operational context for SICAP include poverty levels. Since the financial crisis, the rate of consistent poverty has increased and is particularly high amongst a number of SICAP target groups including people with disabilities, lone parents, the unemployed and non-Irish nationals.

From LCDP to SICAP:

SICAP is the successor programme to the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP). While there are some similarities, SICAP marks a departure and advancement, particularly with regards to having a tighter, more defined set of actions and a more specific set of target groups. It also seeks to engage with the most disadvantaged by taking a place-based & issue-based approach. Within SICAP there is a strengthened focus on engaging with youth and a greater activation emphasis is evident. Through the use of the programme's Integrated Reporting Information System (IRIS) as a means of monitoring and capturing data, there has been increased emphasis on beneficiary outcomes and demonstrating progression by way of meeting agreed targets. There is also an increased focus on intervention time being given to individuals, all of which is to ensure that those most in need are supported in a manner which will deliver better outcomes for them and their communities. Pobal recognises that it has been a demanding change management process for all stakeholders involved. The programme is still bedding down while Programme Implementers (PIs) adapt to a changed set of Programme Requirements, Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) accrue an understanding of the strategic and operational elements of the programme and Pobal also adjusts to working with new stakeholders on delivery.

The Role of Pobal:

Pobal has been nominated by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) to act as its agent with respect to the national management and oversight of the programme, including in respect of co-funding under the European Social Fund (ESF). Pobal was mandated to project manage the set-up and design of the new social inclusion programme and drew up the preliminary Programme Framework.

2 REPORTING PROCESS

As part of the SICAP financial and monitoring reporting requirements, Programme Implementers are required to submit a mid-year and end of year report on an annual basis for the duration of the contract. This facilitates the reporting of progress against the Annual Plan and on the achievement of headline targets and actions, in addition to expenditure against the agreed SICAP budget for the respective period.

Mid-Year Review

As part of the monitoring framework, a Mid-Year Review is also carried out by the LCDCs. In 2015, the mid-year review took place after a 5-month period (1st April to 31st August 2015). In other years, the review will take place after the first 6 months of each year (reviewing delivery between 1st January and 30th June). Whilst the LCDCs, as the Contracting Authorities, are responsible for undertaking the mid-year performance review, Pobal also has a role within this process. The purpose of the review is to assess whether the PIs have been successful in relation to:

1. Their KPI and headline indicators targets
2. SICAP target groups and beneficiaries being resident in areas defined as being disadvantaged
3. Progress in delivery against the set of actions agreed in the Annual Plan and the respective targets
4. Adherence to the SICAP budget requirements
5. Any other information that the LCDC might choose to collect relating to the performance of the PI, e.g. feedback from beneficiaries, qualitative information etc.

To this end, the LCDCs may engage in discussions with PIs about particular elements of their service delivery and targeting of supports, including any adjustments deemed necessary in order to fully deliver on the agreed annual plan. Pobal also reviewed the mid-year information submitted by Programme Implementers to ensure the financial requirements of the programme are being adhered to and that sufficient progress is being made in the implementation of the agreed Annual Plan.

The following section outlines the timeline for the reporting process to date, including the reporting requirements for PIs and LCDCs as well as the supports provided by Pobal to LCDCs during this reporting period.

Reporting Timeline and Supports

The deadline for submission of financial and monitoring mid-year reports (MYR) by Programme Implementers (PIs) to LCDCs was 14th September 2015. LCDCs were requested to have their review undertaken and approved by the end of September, so as to allow a payment to be issued to all PIs by the 30th September. A guidance note on how to undertake the review was issued to LCDCs and outlined the following steps:

1. PIs to input and submit their financial and monitoring reports on IRIS by 14th September 2015 to be reviewed by the LCDCs.
2. The financial reports were then to be reviewed by Pobal. Where there were issues or anomalies arising, this would be fed back to the LCDC to engage directly with the PI in question.

3. A checklist as an optional tool was provided to LCDCs to enable them to come to a conclusion within their own review process.
4. Pobal also provided additional analysis to feed into the review and this was provided to each LCDC. This analysis provided commentary on the following areas:
 - I. Observations on the actions entered into IRIS from the Annual Plan. This considered the completeness of the information entered for each action and the extent to which it was on track towards meeting its end of year target.
 - II. The individual and local community group (LCGs) profile information entered to date. This included the extent to which clients had given their consent to record personal and sensitive information. It also flagged where a Personal Action Plan had not been prepared for individuals.
 - III. The level of information provided on support/interventions delivered to date, and also on the outcomes and progression.
 - IV. An analysis on the extent of PIs' engagement with individuals/LCGs residing in disadvantaged areas, as well as an overview of the extent to which PIs are engaging SICAP target groups. This included an assessment of PIs' engagement with the most socially excluded groups within SICAP based on the caseload and gave a breakdown of the proportions of target groups which have been registered.
5. Once the review process had been undertaken and completed by LCDC staff or a sub-committee of the LCDC, a recommendation was to be presented to the LCDC for approval of the finance and monitoring report.

Addressing the Emerging Issues

Where there were issues emerging out of the LCDC or Pobal parallel review, the following guidance was given to the LCDCs:

- i. An immediate meeting should be organised between the LCDC and PI. Pobal would recommend that this meeting includes the CEO and Chairperson of the PI and Chief Officer and Chair of LCDC.
- ii. The core focus of this meeting would be to identify the areas of concern and request that the PI submit a clear outline to the LCDC on how actions undertaken in the SICAP annual plan will meet the required targets by year end. This outline should be submitted to the PI within seven days of the meeting (or earlier if agreed by both LCDC and PI).
- iii. This submission should be reviewed by the LCDC and, if satisfactory, the mid-year report to be approved and the outline submission from the PI to be uploaded onto IRIS.

3 PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

This section outlines the performance and progress of the Programme to date in relation to the Mid-year Finance Report, Programme Indicators, Target Groups worked with and Programme Developments.

Finance Mid-Year Report

This section provides information from the finance reports received for the period from April to August 2015, referencing the three goals as detailed on page 4 of this report

3.1.1 SICAP Costs Charged Summary Report - Mid-Year 2015

Table 2: SICAP Mid Year Costs Charged 2015

		Total 2015 Budget €		Total Cost Charged €	% of Total Action Costs Budget	% of Action costs charged
Goal 1	Non-Salary	€5,300,935.27		€2,661,537.02	13.94%	32.1%
	Direct Salary	€916,884.21		€179,500.60		
	Total Goal 1	€6,217,819.48		€2,841,037.62		
Goal 2	Non-Salary	€4,795,381.10		€2,414,638.32	13.78%	31.74%
	Direct Salary	€1,995,846.25		€394,523.42		
	Total Goal 2	€6,791,227.35		€2,809,161.74		
Goal 3	Non-Salary	€5,206,293.74		€2,608,994.98	15.38%	35.43%
	Direct Salary	€1,866,161.37		€526,939.50		
	Total Goal 3	€7,072,455.11		€3,135,934.48		
(Each Goal Cost for a full year must be between 28% and 38% of Total Actions Cost)						
Monitoring		€304,660.38		€65,453.67	0.32%	0.74%
Total Actions Cost		€20,386,162.32		€8,851,587.51	43.42%	100%

	Total 2015 Budget €	Total Cost charged €	% of Total Costs Budget
Total Administration Cost	€6,424,373.57	€3,263,204.57	12.17%

(The Administration Cost cannot exceed 25% of the Total Cost Charged)

	Total 2015 Budget €	Total Cost Charged €	% of Total Costs Budget
Overall Cost	€26,810,535.89	€12,114,792.08	45.19%

Commentary on above Report

The total costs reported at the mid-year point of the 31st August were €12,114,792.08, which equates to 45.19% of the total budget.

While the above figures do indicate a slight underspend against budgets in relation to the five months being reported in the Mid-Year report (which would equate to 55.5%), it is expected that the level of costs being incurred will increase over the final four months of 2015 and that total spend reported at the end of the year would be broadly in line with the overall budget.

Administration Costs

The total administration costs reported for the year cannot exceed 25% of the total SICAP budget.

The mid-year report shows the percentage of total costs reported for Administration Costs is 12.17% which amounts to €3,263,204.57. This is slightly under budget for the 5 months to the 31st August, which would target a reported spend of 13.31% (€3,568,482.33).

Actions Costs

Goal 1

At the mid-year point 13.94% of the total action costs budget was reported which amounts to €2,841,037.62.

Taking the five months to the 31st August as a target point and assuming a smooth distribution of costs throughout the nine month period in SICAP, this is slightly under budget which would target a reported spend of 16.94% (€3,454,344.10).

Goal 2

At the mid-year point 13.78% of the total action costs budget was reported which amounts to €2,809,161.74.

Taking the five months to the 31st August as a target point and assuming a smooth distribution of costs throughout the nine month period in 2015, this is under budget with a target reported spend of 18.51% (€3,772,904).

Goal 3

At the mid-year point 15.38% of the total action costs budget was reported which amounts to €3,135,934.48.

Taking the five months to the 31st August as a target point and assuming a smooth distribution of costs throughout the nine month period in 2015, this is under budget with a target reported spend of 19.27% (€3,929,142).

Monitoring

At the mid-year point 0.32% of the total action costs budget was reported which amounts to €65,453.67.

Taking the five months to the 31st August as a target point and assuming a smooth distribution of costs throughout the nine month period in 2015, this is under budget with a target reported spend of 0.83% (€169,255).

Payments

The total Lot payment for the period was €19,894,701.10. The balance of monies will be transferred to the PI's once the mid-year reports are signed off by the LCDC's in October 2015.

VAT

The total VAT charged by the PI for the period was €114,405.35. This equates to 0.9% of the total costs charged for the period of €12,114,792.08.

Value for Money

An analysis on the value for money will be determined through a review of the actual outputs achieved against the targets set for each of the Lots along with the spend reported for that Lot.

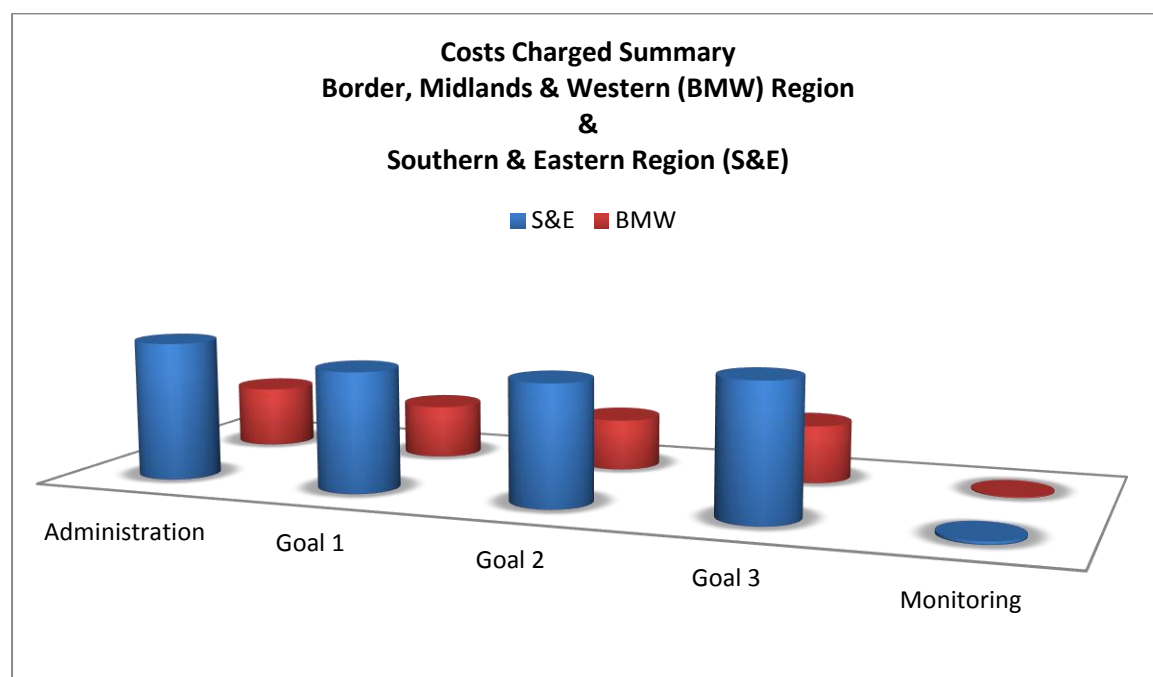
This analysis cannot be determined until the end of 2015 as the Key Performance Indicators (headline targets) set for each of the Lots relate to the full period of 2015.

It is ultimately on the basis of each Lot achieving or not achieving its Key Performance Indicators at the end of this period, along with compliance with the financial reporting rules of the programme that a value for money judgement can be made on the programme and other programme considerations.

3.1.2 Lot Budgets

The total spend reported for the period can be broken down into the Border, Midlands & Western Region (BMW) €3,688,211.91 and Southern & Eastern Region (S&E) €8,426,580.17 across the budget cost categories as outlined in the graph below.

Figure 1: Costs Charged Summary



Taking 3 bands of Lot allocations as an example for each of the two regions:

- Band 1 - €0 - €500,000
- Band 2 - €501,000 - €1,000,000
- Band 3 - >€1,000,000.

Band 1: Lot Budgets €0 - €500,000

S & E Region

BMW Region

Table 3: Band 1 Lot budgets by region

No of Lots	17		11
Total Lot Budget €	€4,698,148		€4,135,953
Total Spend Reported €	€2,060,753		€1,910,924
% of Lot Budget reported as spend	44%		46%

Band 2: Lot Budgets €501,000 - €1,000,000**S & E Region****BMW Region****Table 4: Band 2 Lot budgets by region**

No of Lots	13		6
Total Lot Budget €	€10,052,803		€3,966,155
Total Spend Reported €	€4,543,293		€1,777,288
% of Lot Budget reported as spend	45%		45%

Band 3: Lot Budgets > €1,000,000**S & E Region****BMW Region****Table 5: Band 3 Lot budgets by region**

No of Lots	3		0
Total Lot Budget €	€3,957,482		Nil
Total Spend Reported €	€1,822,534		Nil
% of Lot Budget reported as spend	46%		Nil

The percentage of Lot Budget reported as spend is consistent between both regions for the Lot budgets in Band 1 and 2.

In Band 3 there is currently no BMW Lot, the County Galway Lot is excluded as SICAP is not operational in this Lot area.

Overall**S & E Region****BMW Region****Table 6: Overall Lot budget by region**

No of Lots	33		17
Total Lot Budget €	€18,708,433		€8,102,108
Total Spend Reported €	€8,426,580		€3,688,212
% of Lot Budget reported as spend	45%		46%

The percentage of Lot Budget reported as spend for the period is consistent between both regions based on their overall Lot allocations.

3.1.3 Analysis of the number of SICAP Funded FTEs**Table 7: Percentage breakdown of FTEs by Goal**

Budget Category	No. of SICAP Funded FTEs	Salary Budget Cost of SICAP Funded FTEs €	Salary Spend reported for SICAP Funded FTEs €	% of Total Salary Spend reported
Administration	102.10	4,341,486.57	2,222,248.70	22.43%
Goal 1	138.40	5,300,935.27	2,661,537.02	26.86%
Goal 2	126.98	4,795,381.10	2,414,638.32	24.37%

Goal 3	137.07	5,206,293.74	2,608,994.98	26.33%
Total	504.55	19,644,096.68	9,907,419.02	100.00%

The table above shows that the average cost for a SICAP Funded FTE is €38,934. (Total Salary Budget Costs - €19,644,096.68 /Total number of SICAP funded FTEs - 504.55)

At the mid-year point, 50.43% of the total salary costs budget was reported as spend, which amounts to €9,907,419.02.

Taking the five months to the 31st August as a target point and assuming a smooth distribution of costs throughout the nine month period in 2015, this is under budget with a target reported spend of 55.56% (€10,913,387).

3.1.4 Administration Costs

The total budget cost is 23.96% of the total overall SICAP budget, which does not exceed 25%.

Administration Costs (overheads) are split across 4 headings as detailed below:

Table 8: Administration costs (Overheads)

Budget Category	Budget Amount €	Spend Amount €	% of Total Administration Spend reported
Financial/Professional Fees/Other	182,134.30	65,992.50	2.02%
Indirect Salary (Management/Administration)	4,341,486.57	2,222,248.70	68.10%
Office/Administration/Establishment	1,785,891.59	928,371.17	28.45%
Travel and Subsistence for Indirect Salary	114,861.11	46,592.20	1.43%
Total Administration	6,424,373.57	3,263,204.57	100.00%

At the mid-year point, 50.79% of the total administration costs budget has been reported as spend, which amounts to €3,263,205.

Taking the five months to the 31st August as a target point and assuming a smooth distribution of costs throughout the nine month period in 2015, this is under budget with a target reported cost of 55.55% (€3,569,097).

Of the total administration costs reported as spend at the Mid-year point, Indirect Salary Costs are the largest component of these costs at 68.1%.

3.1.5 Spend reported on Action Categories

Table 9 details the overall action category spend reported by Goal at the Mid-year point.

Table 9: Action category spend

	Non Salary Spend Reported €	Salary Spend Reported €	Total Spend Reported €
Goal 1 – Action Categories	180,071.60	2,672,233.00	2,852,304.60
Goal 2 – Action Categories	393,591.00	2,411,781.00	2,805,372.00
Goal 3 – Action Categories	527,301.00	2,601,156.00	3,128,457.00
Total	1,100,963.60	7,685,170.00	8,786,133.60

As can be seen from table 9, the highest spend reported was on Goal three.

Note: Programme Implementers are allowed to split action costs across the three Goals but must assign an action to a specific Goal and action category.

Table 10 below details the highest spending action category by Goal and the amount reported.

Table 10: Spend against action by Goal

Goal	Highest Spending Action Category	Total Spend amount reported €	% of Total Goal Action Category Spend reported
Goal 1	Community engagement of disadvantaged target groups	985,019.92	34.5%
Goal 2	Lifelong learning Opportunities	1,853,178.00	66%
Goal 3	Employment Supports	1,398,419.00	44.7%

Table 11 details the lowest spending action category by Goal and the amount reported.

Table 11: Lowest spending action category by Goal

Goal	Lowest Spending Action Category	Total Spend amount reported €	% of Total Goal Action Category Spend reported
Goal 1	Enhance community participation in local/regional decision-making structures	518,014.00	18.1%
Goal 2	Community engagement of disadvantaged target groups	15,180.00	5.4%
Goal 3	Lifelong learning opportunities	10,743.00	3.4%

SICAP Indicators

The programme's performance is measured against two Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and a range of other headline indicators, which are presented in the table below. The table presents the annual targets alongside the actual achievement towards these targets in the period between 1st April and 31st August 2015. Achievement towards the KPIs within the reporting period stands at 36.24% for KPI 1 and 47.35% for KPI 2.

In addition to the pre-set targets, the Programme Implementers also set mid-year targets for the two KPIs, which were agreed with LCDCs. Analysis against these targets show that for KPI 1 (set at 14,423) the figure was exceeded by 7%, while for KPI 2 (1,101) the mid-year target was exceeded by 16%.

The Programme is on course to achieve its annual targets in regard to the number of young people (aged 15-24) who have progressed (along the education continuum) after registering with SICAP (61.93% of target achieved); the number of individuals who have progressed (along the education continuum) after registering with SICAP (57.79%), and number of children in receipt of a Goal 2 educational or developmental support (54.25%).

The areas where progress towards meeting targets has been lower within the Programme include:

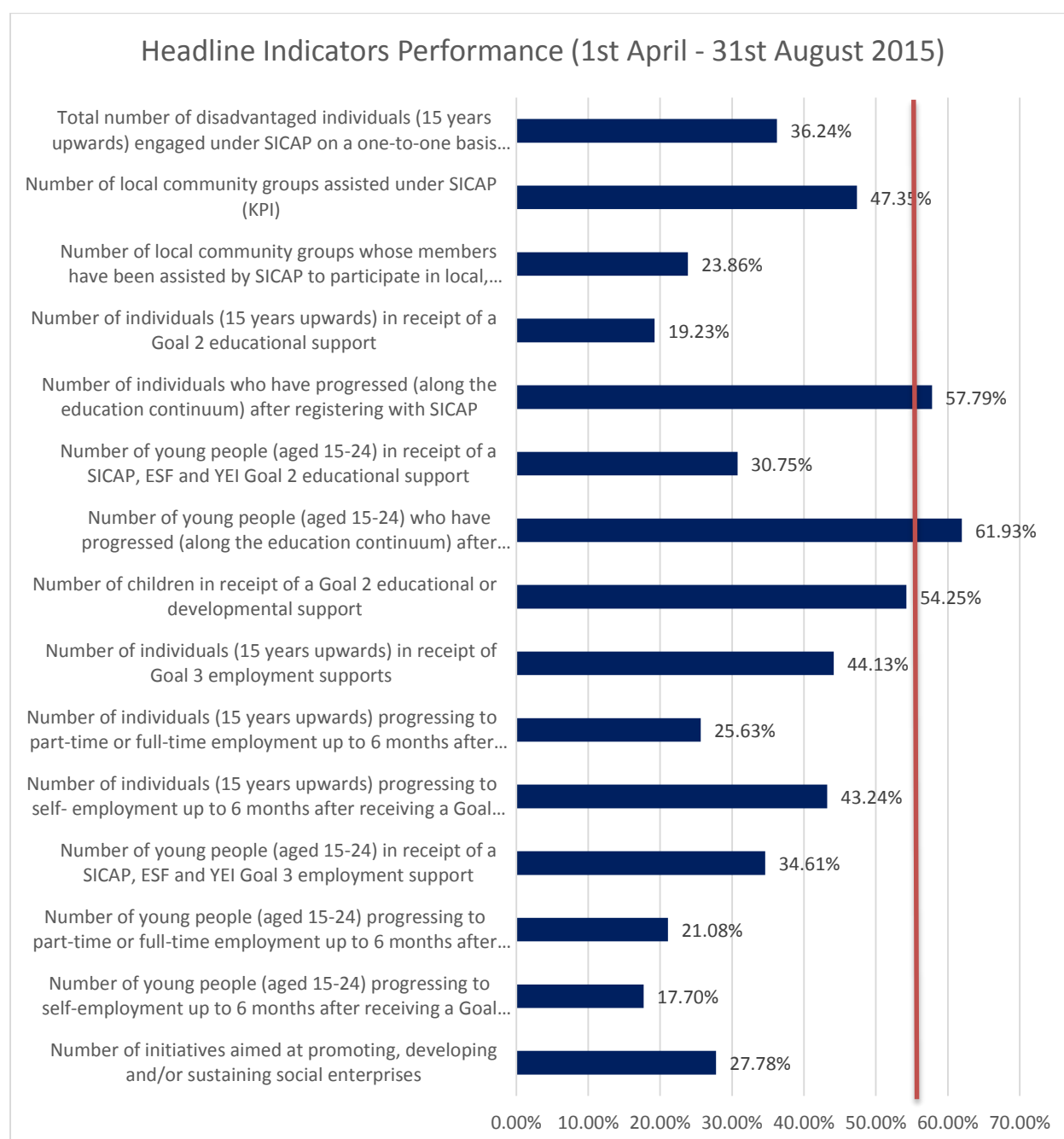
- The number of young people (aged 15-24) progressing to self-employment up to 6 months after receiving a Goal 3 employment support (17.7%)
- The number of individuals (15 years upwards) in receipt of a Goal 2 educational support (19.23%)
- The number of young people (aged 15-24) progressing to part-time or full-time employment up to 6 months after receiving a Goal 3 employment support (21.08%)
- The number of local community groups whose members have been assisted by SICAP to participate in local, regional or national decision-making structures (23.86%)
- The number of individuals (15 years upwards) progressing to part-time or full-time employment up to 6 months after receiving a Goal 3 employment support (25.63%).

Table 12: Headline Indicators (1st April - 31st August 2015)

Headline Indicator Report (April-August 2015)				
Ref	Headline Indicator	Annual Target	Actuals Achieved	% of Target
1.	Total number of disadvantaged individuals (15 years upwards) engaged under SICAP on a one-to-one basis (KPI)	42,734	15,489	36.24%
1.b	% of disadvantaged individuals (15 years upwards) engaged under SICAP on a one-to-one basis living in a disadvantaged area	50 %	26.97% (4,178)	na
2.	Number of local community groups assisted under SICAP (KPI)	2,686	1,272	47.35%
3.	Number of local community groups whose members have been assisted by SICAP to participate in local, regional or national decision-making structures	926	221	23.86%
4.	Number of individuals (15 years upwards) in receipt of a Goal 2 educational support	23,965	4,608	19.23%
4.a	% of those targeted should have educational attainment of Leaving Certificate or lower	70 %	80.58% (3,713)	na

5.	Number of individuals who have progressed (along the education continuum) after registering with SICAP	1,431	827	57.79%
6.	Number of young people (aged 15-24) in receipt of a SICAP, ESF and YEI Goal 2 educational support	2,848	876	30.75%
6.a	% of those targeted should have educational attainment of Leaving Certificate or lower	80 %	93.04% (815)	na
7.	Number of young people (aged 15-24) who have progressed (along the education continuum) after registering with SICAP	352	218	61.93%
8.	Number of children in receipt of a Goal 2 educational or developmental support	41,586	22,561	54.25%
9.	Number of individuals (15 years upwards) in receipt of Goal 3 employment supports	24,001	10,592	44.13%
9.a	% of those targeted should have educational attainment of Leaving Certificate or lower	60 %	65.44% (6,931)	na
10.	Number of individuals (15 years upwards) progressing to part-time or full-time employment up to 6 months after receiving a Goal 3 employment support	1,830	469	25.63%
11.	Number of individuals (15 years upwards) progressing to self-employment up to 6 months after receiving a Goal 3 employment support	5,840	2,525	43.24%
12.	Number of young people (aged 15-24) in receipt of a SICAP, ESF and YEI Goal 3 employment support	3,288	1,138	34.61%
12.a	% of those targeted should have educational attainment of Leaving Certificate or lower	70 %	84.53% (962)	na
13.	Number of young people (aged 15-24) progressing to part-time or full-time employment up to 6 months after receiving a Goal 3 employment support	536	113	21.08%
14.	Number of young people (aged 15-24) progressing to self-employment up to 6 months after receiving a Goal 3 employment support	305	54	17.70%
15.	Number of initiatives aimed at promoting, developing and/or sustaining social enterprises	90	25	27.78%

Figure 2: Headline Indicators Performance in the reporting period (red line at 55% indicates the target for the reporting period)



Analysis of the headline indicators show that while the Programme is on track or even ahead of schedule in meeting some targets, it is also somewhat behind in meeting a number of other targets. At this point explanations for this situation appear to include:

- Outcome indicators are likely to be lower in the first year of operation as time is required for them to be realised (e.g. indicators 13 and 14).
- Programmatic changes from LCDP: this would include altered and more restricted set of target groups, a reduced number of goals and greater intensity of work provided.

- Based on past experience in the LCDP, the level of registrations tends to increase in the last quarter of the year. Consequently, it is expected that the registrations will increase in the final quarter. In particular, it is reasonable to expect an increase in the participation in Goal 2 actions, especially in accredited courses starting in September/October (e.g. indicator 4). However, due to greater emphasis on maintaining accurate data and the achievement of targets in SICAP the level of year end increases is expected to be lower than in LCDP and data entered is expected to be more constant across the year.
- The roll up of actual for the 'Number of individuals (15 years upwards) in receipt of a Goal 2 educational support' only included individuals who participated in an educational course. The roll-up will now also include individuals who have received supports to access education and receive follow-up support to remain in educational courses.
- There may be some issues around reporting which impact upon the figures, such as low familiarity with IRIS or lack of clarity within individual PIs as to what interventions should be recorded and reported.

SICAP Target Groups

SICAP supports a broad range of disadvantaged and marginalised target groups who might otherwise be unable or unlikely to access mainstream supports. The SICAP target groups for Individuals receiving supports under Goal 2 and 3 are: Children and Families in Disadvantaged Areas; Lone Parents; New Communities (including refugees/asylum seekers, Migrants experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage); People living in Disadvantaged Communities; People with Disabilities; Roma; The Unemployed - including those not on the Live Register; Travellers; Young unemployed people living in disadvantaged areas and NEETs – Young people aged 15- 24 years who are not in employment, education or training. The group that has had the highest participation in the Programme in the reporting period are the unemployed, which constituted 76% of Programme participants. People living in disadvantaged areas are also well represented at 27%. The target groups with the lowest levels of participation are Roma and Irish Travellers. The breakdown for eight target groups (the two unemployed categories have been combined into one) is included in Figure 3. These figures provide grounds for reflection on the degree of achievement with some groups and a renewed emphasis on methods to successfully outreach and engage with them.

Figure 3: Breakdown of Programme participation by SICAP target groups

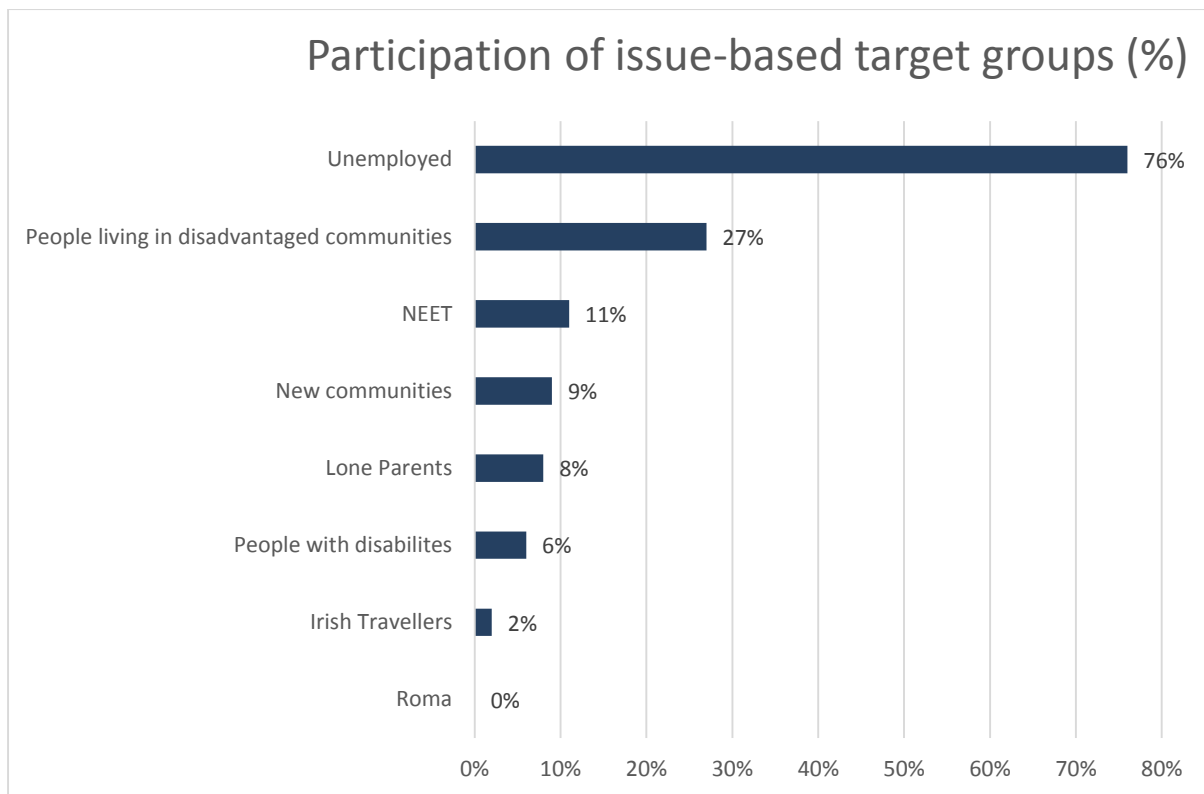
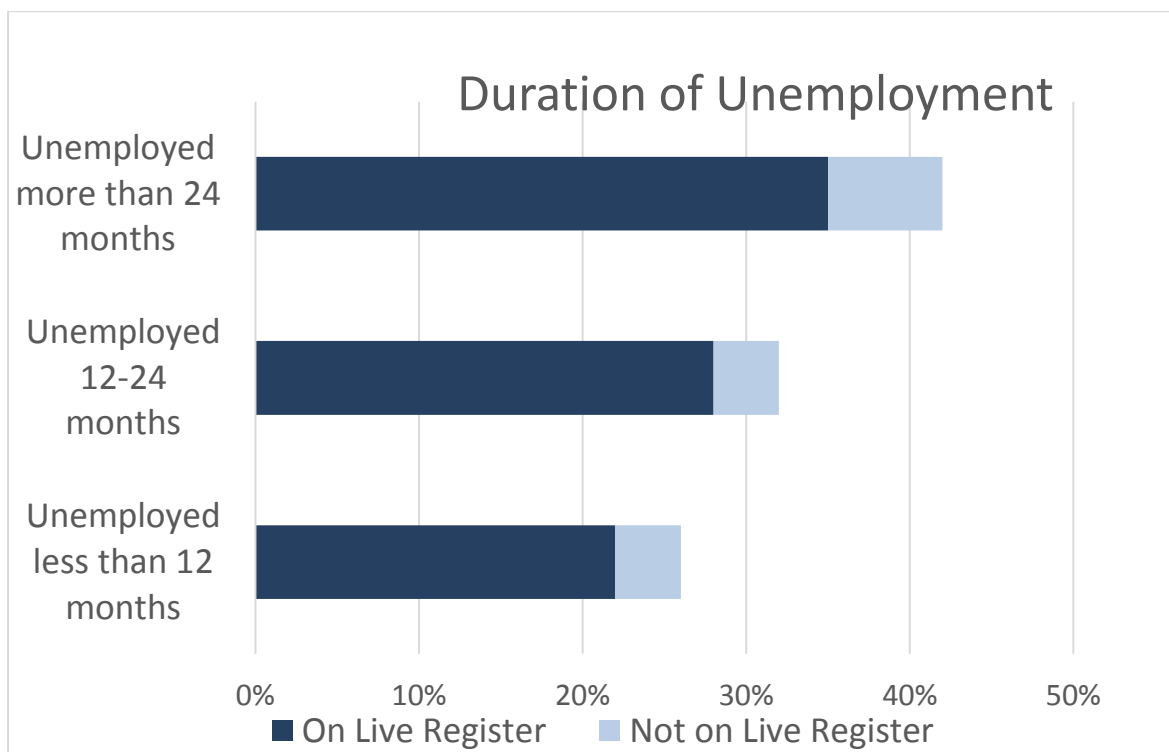


Figure 4 provides a further breakdown of unemployment periods of those unemployed.

Figure 4: Duration unemployed of those reported as unemployed on an not on the live register



On-going Programme Developments and Supports

The programme has sought to respond to issues as they have emerged and to make on-going improvements. Pobal has actively provided a range of tailored supports and training to both LCDCs and PIs since the inception of the Programme and continues to adapt these supports based on the feedback received and issues identified.

A summary of the developments and supports provided in the first five months of programme implementation is provided below:

SICAP Training and Supports

National support sessions have also been held with both LCDCs and PIs on the overview and implementation of SICAP. In addition to this, a support session was organised in conjunction with Pavee Point on July 2nd with frontline staff of PIs to support them in implementing the Ethnic Identifier as part of the registration of individuals. This support event was also used to support and inform staff on ESF and YEI requirements of SICAP. A breakdown of these support events from January 2015 can be seen in Table 14.

Table 14: SICAP Support & Training sessions delivered by Pobal

Title of SICAP Events	Date of the Event	Number of People that attended the Event
SICAP National Training Event with LCDCs	13 th January 2015	57
SICAP Support Event with LCDCs	10 th March 2015	69
LCDC Support Event on SICAP Programme Requirements for the LCDCs	6 th May 2015	62
SICAP Support for Programme Implementers	13 th May 2015	89
SICAP Support Event with Programme Implementers	2 nd July 2015	88
TOTAL		365

A Development Co-ordinator has been designated to each LCDC for ongoing support and information and as part of this support role a support visit was undertaken with each LCDC Chief Officer, other staff and where possible and depending on availability, the LCDC Chairperson. All

LCDCs were visited with the exception of Meath and County Galway due to delays in contract commencement, a visit will be undertaken with Meath LCDC by end of November.

Considerable training supports have been provided to PIs and LCDCs in the use of IRIS. Details of training sessions including the title, date and number of attendees are provided in the Table 13, below.

Table 13: IRIS Training events delivered by Pobal

Title of the IRIS Training	Date of the Training / Event	Number of People that attended the Event
IRIS Training for Programme Implementers	12th May 2015	35
IRIS Training for LCDCs	14th May 2015	20
IRIS Training for LCDCs	15th May 2015	15
IRIS Training for Programme Implementers	15th May 2015	25
TOTAL		95

Additionally, two more IRIS Training events (Morning and Afternoon Sessions) were held for the CEOs of Programme Implementers on 29th October 2015. In total, 48 visits have been undertaken with LCDCs

Data Quality Management

It became evident in the early months of programme operation that individuals were not being consistently registered on IRIS. Issues were identified in relation to the consistency of definitions and how users of the system assigned beneficiaries within the most appropriate target groups. Analysis of the information being entered also raised questions in relation to a high number of questions not being answered.

In response, a manual was prepared for PIs setting out clearly the value of the registration data in terms of evidencing that SICAP engages with the most marginalised and disadvantaged. This was a lengthy process which required setting out clear definitions for the target groups and for other information requested in the registration form. This process also required engaging with organisations such as the ESRI, CSO, and representative groups such as Pavee Point, Transgender Network of Ireland, Migrant Council etc. Pobal also engaged the ESRI to do analysis on the extent to which PIs were supplying the required information and on patterns of responses². It also involved exploration of data

² ESRI, Pobal: Analysis of Non-Response within the IRIS Dataset, July 2015 & October 2015.

consent and communication with the Data Protection Commissioner, particularly around questions which were deemed 'sensitive'.

In September 2015 SICAP issued a training guide and have since issued an [updated version](#) (V1.3) in early November. Changes were also made to IRIS to improve the interface. Follow up analysis by the ESRI found that the number of non-responses entered has fallen and PIs are improving in terms of the consistency and quality of data being inserted. The work towards standardising how PIs define certain information has also improved the reliability and validity of the data itself. The quality of data being entered in IRIS is an ongoing aspect of the programme, which Pobal shall continue to monitor and seek to improve through supports and system improvements. System views have been developed in IRIS to identify and flag data issues/errors and to prompt follow-up on progression outcomes.

Updating Programme Requirements

Another ongoing piece of work to continually improve SICAP and respond to feedback is to ensure the Programme Requirements are defined in the best possible manner. A second version was released to Programme Implementers and Pobal is preparing an updated version which is a compendium of a) feedback from PIs on elements of the programme which can be altered, b) observations internally on what should be altered – particularly relating to the programme indicators, publicity requirements e.g. logos and eligible expenditure.

Version 1.3 of the Programme Requirements will be issued in the week of 2nd November 2015 which will reflect all the changes to date. While it is recognised that it can be confusing to PIs and LCDCs in terms of keeping up with the number of changes, unfortunately it is unavoidable for a programme of this size that changes are required and are continually being implemented. Pobal has sought to communicate changes clearly and well in advance so that all parties involved are clearly informed and up to date.

Programme Branding

A need was identified to create a brand for the programme to ensure it is recognisable amongst PIs and also the public. This entailed replacing the initial logo and commissioning a professionally designed logo which would represent the programme. The new logo has been used since the summer 2015 and positive feedback has been received from PIs.

In addition, an infographic was created for the programme, aimed at the general public and potential SICAP users. A graphic designer assisted in crafting a short, fun and simple video which set out the purpose of SICAP, who it's for and how it can assist beneficiaries. This video has been accessed over 1,000 times online and has received positive feedback to date. The images developed for the infographic have been used for multiple SICAP branding purposes and across print and online platforms.

4 ISSUES AND TRENDS IDENTIFIED

As part of the Mid-Term Review and Reporting Process, a number of issues and trends emerging have been identified through a) discussions with LCDCs and PIs and b) examination of the data received for this reporting period.

This section outlines the feedback received from the LCDCs and PIs in relation to their experiences of Programme implementation at a local level to date. This feedback has been reviewed and categorised into a number of key headings as follows.

4.1 Feedback from LCDCs on issues identified at a local level:

Meeting Targets

Some of the PIs have indicated to their LCDCs that they may not be able to meet the targets set across a number of areas for a variety of reasons. Examples of these include a lack of understanding in relation to individuals in receipt of a Goal 2 educational support. Some PIs have also indicated that targets set for self-employment may not be attainable and that there is potential for negative impacts on beneficiaries if they are encouraged towards self-employment before being ready. As SICAP is targeting the most difficult to reach clients, more one to one support may be required in order to see progression. Some PIs are requesting that from 2016 onwards, targets are reduced to facilitate PIs doing higher quality or intensity work. Concern has been raised that the type of work carried out at present is “shorter, sharper and more superficial” as the focus on meeting targets is overshadowing the potential client supports and time needed. The concerns and learning from those delivering the programme on the ground provide us with important information on these issues, which may valuably be considered.

Overall, concern has been expressed by LCDCs and PIs in meeting the end of year targets. Some LCDCs have requested clarity and guidance to be provided as soon as possible on actions that may need to be put in place by the LCDC to address this likely scenario.

Timeframe for Reviews

Some concerns have been raised with regard the timing for each input required by the LCDC and ensuring they are aligned with LCDC meetings. In addition, sufficient time needs to be allowed for the LCDC review. Frustrations were expressed by some LCDCs on what appeared to be a short timeframe for review by LCDCs so that payments could be made by the end of September.

Clarity on Programme Indicators

A number of LCDCs have highlighted the need for a clearer understanding of the programme indicators, how they relate to actions and how the actuals roll up against the targets.

IRIS Support and Training

Given the new requirements of the Programme in relation to reporting, a number of LCDCs and PIs are requesting additional supports in understanding these requirements as they are set out in IRIS and further IRIS support and training.

External factors impacting Programme Implementation

Some PIs have raised concerns regarding the impact of the new “Job Path” programme from 2016 onwards and potential competition between Job Path and SICAP for clients. There were also concerns expressed about referrals from the Department of Social Protection (DSP) as the referral system has been reported to have been altered since tender targets were agreed and that this may impact on targets being met. The lack of small grants for community groups has been reported as a barrier to getting new groups established, particularly disadvantaged groups. It has been suggested that grants for hiring meeting space, lighting etc. would act as an incentive to groups to formalise.

Rural Concerns

Rural based PIs have expressed concern about not being able to meet the requirement that 50% of the caseload come from a disadvantaged area. It has been stated that they do not have the population numbers to meet this requirement.

VAT Reimbursement

A number of LCDCs have raised questions and sought clarification on the process for the claiming and reimbursement of VAT from DECLG.

4.2 Issues/Trends Identified:

This section outlines the key issues identified by Pobal as part of the Mid-term review and through consultation with LCDCs and PIs.

Engagement between LCDCs and PIs

There were varying levels of engagement by LCDCs with PIs, with some taking a very proactive approach, for example meeting all PIs in advance of the LCDC review meeting. Others arranged meetings with their PIs following their LCDC meetings to discuss feedback and to go through any data gaps in IRIS as a result of the Pobal parallel review. Some LCDCs had a number of engagements with their PIs over the review period where concerns may have been identified. There were also instances where no face to face engagement took place between LCDCs and PIs, where no significant issues had emerged out of the review.

Timeline for Reviews/Reports

The majority of PIs submitted their mid-year reports by the deadline or soon afterwards and the Pobal parallel review was able to happen in line with the LCDC review. However, there were some areas where extensions were given to the PIs due to issues with data inputting by the PI and staff availability within the PI due to leave.

IRIS – Issues and Improvements

There were a number of technical issues which impacted on the input of data and submission of the mid-year financial and monitoring reports. The main issues were: minor system bugs, uploading of documents using SharePoint and availability of key system generated reports. Other issues related to a lack of clarity/understanding of the programme indicators and the differences between the indicators used when setting targets (done prior to the development of IRIS) compared to those available in IRIS. Most of the technical issues identified were dealt with quickly and clarifications were issued on the indicators. The solutions to the outstanding technical issues are due to be deployed week ending 6th November. This deployment will include an updated version of AutoAddress, filtering options for LCDCs responsible for multiple Lots, consistency between paper data collection templates, duplication rules and system enhancements.

Lack of Clarity on Reporting Requirements

A number of LCDCs had not completed their payment reports as there appeared to a level of misunderstanding in relation to who needed to complete this report. Some LCDCs had assumed that the PI should complete it, however this was rectified by LCDCs once further clarity was provided.

Payment Delays

A number of LCDC review meetings were not held until the last week in September and in some cases not until early October. Therefore, some payments were not issued until the first week in October or later, depending on when the next payment date was for Local Authorities. For example, for one LCDC, the meeting was held on the 29th September; however the next payment date was not till October 10th. Therefore an interim payment for one month had to be made to ensure their PI did not experience cash flow problems as a result.

In addition, some LCDCs left it quite late for their drawdown from the DECLG for payments to be made by the end of September.

Data Quality Checks

Some LCDCs appeared to be unclear about the additional checks undertaken by Pobal on data quality on IRIS and saw this as being more relevant and of more use to PIs than LCDCs. In some cases there was a need to highlight that this information was of significant use to LCDCs and should be part of their overall conclusion and feedback to PIs on areas that need to be improved by the PI.

Data quality checks have identified areas that need improvement and close monitoring. For example, there is a need to ensure that PIs are recording the exit date for YEI clients and status upon leaving, ensure a consistent approach to the categorisation and naming of unaccredited courses.

Discrepancies with Indicators

There are some discrepancies between indicators used to set targets at action level (prior to IRIS development) and how the actual outputs against these targets are reported on IRIS. The SICAP indicators have been streamlined to improve the process of setting targets and recording outputs at action level for 2016.

Overall, where there were significant issues emerging, there was good engagement by the LCDC with PIs, with support regularly sought from Pobal where required within the process. This engagement and communication is vital to the success of the Programme and is an area in which Pobal will continue to develop and deliver supports as necessary.

5 LEARNING, IMPLICATIONS AND ACTIONS

There has been considerable learning from the first five months of SICAP implementation, both as a result of engagement with LCDCs and PIs, as well as analysis of the data received through IRIS. A number of areas have been identified for further consideration and development, along with actions to address the issues identified to date in order to improve programme implementation for the remainder of the Programme cycle. In addition to the specific areas identified here, there is an overall need to look at more intense support and engagement with LCDCs through the review process for 2015 and the planning for 2016.

Tendering process

Having undergone an open procurement process, this programme marked a shift in the nature of the relationships between all stakeholders. This was compounded by the new funding arrangements in relation to conditionality placed upon funding. It is important to acknowledge the implications of these changes on the early stage of this programme.

Support and Training

A key area identified during the reporting period is the need for further training and supports to LCDCs to improve understanding of all aspects of programme delivery and provide clarity on roles and expectations. To this end, the following supports are proposed in the coming months.

➤ IRIS Support and Training

Whilst training has been provided to both LCDCs and PI's to date in regional and small group sessions around the county, a further training programme is planned. This will entail the delivery of a full days training on the Programme and how it is translated into IRIS. This will be run between November 2015 and January 2016.

➤ Other supports to LCDCs and PIs

Pobal is also planning a number of additional supports to meet the needs identified during this period to ensure effective programme delivery and better understanding of the Programme. To this end, Pobal are developing a guide to assist LCDCs with planning the End of Year Review and assessing 2016 Annual Plan submissions and will provide support to ensure a consistent approach in all areas.

Four regional events are organised for November 2015 to support LCDC staff and members in undertaking their role in the reviewing the End of Year Report and in engaging with the PIs on the submission of the 2015 Annual Plan. To ensure consistency in this engagement Pobal are also issuing a template letter that LCDCs can issue to PIs with clear instructions on the process and timeframe, with further details on budget and targets to follow.

Reporting Timelines

There is a need to revisit the timelines for the end of year and mid-year reviews of the Finance and Monitoring returns for 2016 and 2017 and extend the timeframe for completion of reviews by LCDCs so as to allow sufficient time for desk reviews, any follow up engagement with PIs and then formal approval by LCDCs. This would also need to take into account the payment schedules and when payments can be made to PIs by Local Authorities.

Proportion of Caseload classified as Disadvantaged

There is a need to re-examine whether the programme maintains the requirement set out in the Programme Requirements and Funding Agreement that 50% of the caseload should reside in areas classified as disadvantaged as per the Pobal Deprivation Index. Generally the majority of PIs are not reaching the 50% target. The most recent analysis (as per 9th Oct caseload) shows caseload variance from a low of 4% to a high of 77%, resulting in an average of 23%. Pobal is considering options for the DECLG's consideration on this.

Verification Visits

In line with EU ESF regulations, Pobal is also proposing to carry out on the spot verification visits to PIs as agents of the LCDC. The on-the-spot visits will comprise transactional checks only, and will not involve whole company audits. They will be conducted on financial and non-financial SICAP transactions/participant information submitted to Pobal.

6 CONCLUSION

This report has provided an outline of the performance and progress during the first five months of SICAP implementation, taking into account the data received from the financial and monitoring reports, feedback received from LCDCs and PIs and Pobal's observations and learning from the process to date. Pobal has taken the feedback and learning on board and proposed a number of areas where the Programme could be improved and actions to ensure more effective Programme implementation and an enhanced experience for all stakeholders involved in the Programme.

In the first reporting period, from 1st April till 31st August 2015, the Programme engaged with 15,489 disadvantaged individuals on a one-to-one basis, which constitutes 36% of its annual target (KPI 1), and 1,272 Local Community Groups, which represents 47% of its annual target (KPI 2). The analysis of the Programme's performance has shown that while in some areas it has exceeded its expected targets for the period, overall, the Programme is slightly behind in reaching the pre set targets for engagement within the period. As with any new Programme, it is to be expected that a bedding down period take place, while stakeholders adjust and acclimatise to new requirements and changes in terms of programme management, financial and non-financial reporting and ICT requirements. With all of these factors taken into consideration, it is expected that the last quarter of the year will see an increase in activity, as has been the experience with the former LCDP programme. Pobal is also putting a number of further supports in place to assist the LCDCs and PIs to carry out their roles effectively and to enhance their understanding of the programme. It is anticipated that the SICAP end of year report will show further progress towards meeting targets and that the Programme will continue to build upon the progress to date, as all stakeholders become more familiar and comfortable with the Programme and have a stronger understanding of their roles and expectations for Programme delivery.

