

THE RIGHT TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Good Practices in the CEECIS Region and
Recommendations to the Albanian Government

March 2012

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Acknowledgments

This report was written by Rachele Tardi for World Vision Albania and Kosovo, with the support of the World Vision Education team in Albania and Kosovo, and many colleagues from different organizations who very generously shared information on practices in the CEECIS region.

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GLOSSARY

Children with disabilities: throughout this document, where this term is used it refers to children with physical, sensory or intellectual impairments, or with multiple impairments, who are disabled because of the interaction of social barriers and attitudes with their physical and/or intellectual condition. It is clearly recognized and understood that these children are not a homogeneous group and that they have individual learning, support and personal needs which should be taken into account at all times in education planning.¹

Children with special needs: any child who is experiencing difficulties in learning may have special needs. However, some countries tend to identify children with special needs as children with disabilities.

Inclusive education: education where the whole school considers what measures it must take to be accessible to all children, including children with disabilities. Although this report focuses explicitly on the inclusive education of children with disabilities, it is important to highlight that inclusive education benefits all children, not only children with disabilities.

Special education: education received by children with disabilities in a segregated learning environment such as a special school or centre. Some schools also provide accommodation for children.

Universal design: the design of products, programmes, environments, and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. 'Universal design' shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where these are needed.²

1. The definitions related to inclusive education are adapted from Hannah Corps, *Inclusive Education Policy Paper*, Handicap International, June 2008, pp. 2-4.

2. Marianne Schulze, *Understanding the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: A Handbook on the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, Handicap International, July 2010, p. 40.

ACRONYMS

| | |
|----------------|---|
| BiH | Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| CCF | Child Community Family (Moldova) |
| CBR | Community-based Rehabilitation |
| CDD | Community Driven Development |
| CHLG | Children's High Level Group |
| CEDC | Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances |
| CEE/CIS | Central Eastern Europe/Commonwealth of Independent States |
| CEI | Center for Education Initiatives |
| CRC | Convention on the Rights of the Child |
| CRPD | Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities |
| DG ENL | Directorate-General for Enlargement |
| ECD | Early Childhood Development |
| ECI | Early Childhood Intervention |
| ECLDS | Early Childhood Learning and Development Standards |
| EENET | Enabling Education Network |
| EFA | Education for All |
| ETF | European Training Foundation |
| EvC | Every Child |
| DG ENL | European Commission's Directorate-General for Enlargement |
| GPDD | Global Partnership for Disability and Development |
| KAP | Knowledge, Attitude and Practice |
| ICTs | Information and communication technologies |
| IDDC | International Disability and Development Consortium |
| IE | Inclusive Education |
| IETs | Inclusive Education Teams |
| IPA | Instrument for pre-accession assistance |
| ISSA | International Step by Step Association |
| LIT | Local inclusive Team |
| MPT | Master Plan of Transformation |
| MICS | Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey |
| MDG | Millennium Development Goal/s |
| MoES | Ministry of Education and Science |

| | |
|------------------|--|
| MoF | Ministry of Finance |
| MoH | Ministry of Health |
| MoLSP | Ministry of Labour and Social Protection |
| MoLESP | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| OSCE | Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe |
| OSI | Open Society Institute |
| OSF | Open Society Foundation |
| PSA | Public Service Announcements |
| SAFPD | Department for Social Assistance and Family Protection |
| SEE | South and Eastern Europe |
| SCUK | Save the Children UK |
| TLs | Toy Libraries |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| WG | Working Group |
| WVA | World Vision Armenia |
| WVA&K | World Vision Albania and Kosovo |

I. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of this report is to provide World Vision Albania and Kosovo Country Office and the Albanian Government with a description of good practices on inclusive education for children with disabilities in the CEECIS Region and a set of recommendations on how to implement inclusive education.

Efforts have been made to identify in particular, within the selected practices, the role of parents/caregivers, peers and communities, as well as a number of strategies used by NGOs to advocate for the inclusive education of children with disabilities.

As the latest report of the United Nations Secretary General on the Status of the Convention of the Rights of the Child states, 'the challenges faced by children with disabilities in realising their rights to education remain profound'.³ This has been emphasised also in a number of recent publications, including the *World Report on Disability*: 'In general children with disabilities are less likely to start school and have lower rates of staying and being promoted in school'.⁴

Although the present report focuses explicitly on the inclusive education of children with disabilities, it is important to highlight that inclusive education benefits *all* children, not only children with disabilities. Inclusive education is:

- a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the state to educate all children.⁵

The case studies of good practices presented in this document have been collected through key contacts, networks, databases and websites.⁶ The request for material on good practices was circulated through three major mailing lists: GPDD (Global Partnership for Disability and Development), IDDC (International Disability and Development Consortium) and the network of ISSA (International Step by Step Association). Given the level of detail sought, the production of each case study has been based, as well as on publicly available material, on project documents such as evaluations and on extensive dialogue with the staff involved in each of the selected organisations.⁷

3. *Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, A/66/230, p. 6.

4. WHO/World Bank, *World Report on Disability*, Geneva, 2011, p. 206.

5. UNESCO, *Overcoming Exclusion through Inclusive Approaches in Education. A challenge and a vision*, Paris, UNESCO, 2003 cited in UNESCO, *Guidelines for Inclusion: ensuring access to education for all*, Paris, 2005, pp. 8-9.

6. Websites consulted include those of Inclusive Education in Action <http://www.inclusive-education-in-action.org/ieal/>, the Zero Project Good Practice Examples <http://www.zeroproject.org/practice/about-the-good-practice/> and the Making it Work Good Practice Database <http://www.makingitwork-crp.org/good-practice-database/>. The World Bank/Leonard Cheshire Disability Database (<http://www.disabilitydatabase.org/>) collects information on government projects that aim to include people with disabilities in mainstream education, health and rehabilitation, and livelihoods programmes. However examples from the CEECIS Region are not currently included.

7. The only case studies that it was not possible to follow up with direct communication with project staff were 'KYRGYZSTAN: Negotiating reforms in Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities', the one on 'BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA, CROATIA, ROMANIA, SERBIA: Pre-service and In-service teacher training' and the one on 'Parents' Role in the Education of Children with Special needs'. However the publicly available documentation is very detailed.

The case studies included in this report are diverse, geographically and in scope, and they have been implemented by different actors: UN agencies, local and international NGOs. Also, they range from wide-system level to community and school-level initiatives. The selection of case studies does not aim in any way to provide a complete picture of all the good practices in the region; it aims to offer, as stated above, a set of illustrative examples.

This document is divided into five main sections. Following this brief introduction (Section I), Section II focuses on Conventions, international Instruments and EU enlargement policies on the right to inclusive education for children with disabilities. Section III gives an overview of the education of children with disabilities in the CEECIS region, with a focus on the challenges perceived by governments and other stakeholders. Section IV contains the criteria for good practices followed by thirteen case studies from the CEECIS region. Section VI and sections VII outlines the advocacy strategies and the role of the 'circle of care'. Section VIII highlights some of the funding opportunities for the implementation of inclusive education in Albania and Section IX presents a number of recommendations for the Albanian Government and suggestions for NGOs.

II. INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS, INSTRUMENTS AND EU ENLARGEMENT POLICIES ADDRESSING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

International Conventions and Instruments

In the last 20 years there has been an increasing recognition that inclusion is the key to achieving the right to education for all children, including children with disabilities.

The 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, marked the emergence of an international consensus that education is essential in combating poverty, empowering women, protecting children from hazardous and exploitative labour and sexual exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment and influencing population growth. The conference also highlighted the need for more inclusive approaches to education to address the barriers faced by many children who were currently excluded.⁸

The 1993 *UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities* require Member States to recognize the principle of equal educational opportunities for children, youth and adults with disabilities, in integrated settings.⁹

In 1994 all European countries signed the UNESCO *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action*. The Salamanca Statement includes a clear 'recognition of the need to work towards "schools for all" – institutions which include everybody, celebrate differences, support learning, and respond to individual needs'.¹⁰ Inclusive education, as defined in the Salamanca Statement, means that education is provided for all within the regular education system. All European countries agreed that the principles encompassed in the Salamanca Statement should underpin all education policies – not just those specifically dealing with special needs education.

In 2000 the Education for All Framework for Action (EFA) was adopted by the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal. EFA is a global commitment that incorporates six goals to be met by 2015 with the objective of providing quality basic education for all children, youth and adults.¹¹ The second of the EFA Goals, Universal Education, is echoed in the second of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Indeed, the achievement of the EFA goals is essential for the attainment of all 8 MDGs.¹² However, although EFA has given a global push to education advocacy and practice, it has not, to date, given sufficient attention to some marginalised groups of children, in particular those seen as having "special educational needs" or disabilities'.¹³ The exclusion of these children has gone mainly unchallenged and many of them remain

8. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/the-efa-movement/jomtien-1990/>

9. <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r096.htm>

10. *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*. World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality, Salamanca, Spain, 7–10 June 1994, p. iii. Available at: www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA_E.PDF

11. Education for All - information on the UNESCO website: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/>

12. Education for All - information on the World Bank website: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTEDUCATION/0,,contentMDK:20374062~menuPK:540090~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:282386,00.html#EFA>

13. UNICEF, *The Right of Children with Disabilities to Education: A Rights-Based Approach to Inclusive Education*, Geneva: UNICEF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS), 2011, p. 4.

invisible in the efforts to achieve universal access to primary education.¹⁴ It is now widely recognised that, without specific measures for children with disabilities, the EFA's goals will not be achieved for these children, nor will MDG2.

The 2010 MDG Report is the first to mention disabilities and specifically the limited opportunities for children with disabilities and the link between disability and marginalization in education.¹⁵

The UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) in 1998 and the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD) in 2008 enshrine the right to education for all children. The right to education is also recognized in other core human rights documents: Article 26 (1) of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Article 5 (e) (v) Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Article 13 (1) on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 10 on the *Elimination of Discrimination against Women*, and Article 30 Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers.¹⁶

Article 2 of the CRC introduces, for the first time in an international human rights treaty, an explicit obligation on governments to assure the realisation of all rights, including therefore the right to education, of every child without discrimination, including on grounds of disability. Article 28 of the CRC affirms the right to education on the basis of equality of opportunity and it emphasises primary, secondary and vocational education.

The CRPD does not introduce new rights but reaffirms and emphasises the rights that people with disabilities already have and introduces additional obligations on governments to ensure their realisation. Article 24 Para (1) of the CRPD enshrines the right to education. It echoes Article 28 of the CRC, but it goes further and it explicitly requires 'an inclusive education system at all levels and life long learning'. It also requires all educators to make reasonable accommodations and to provide appropriate support and individual programmes of study so that all children with disabilities can be educated to achieve their academic, creative and social potential. In addition, Article 8 of the CRPD requires all schools to foster 'at all levels of the education system, including in all children from an early age, an attitude of respect for the rights of persons with disabilities'.¹⁷

14. Susie Miles and Nidhi Singal, 'The Education for All and Inclusive Education debate: Conflict, contradiction or opportunity?' in *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, Vol. 14, No. 1, February 2010, 1–15, p. 2.

15. WHO/World Bank, *World Report on Disability*, p.12.

16. Schulze, *Understanding the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, 2010, p.133.

17. CRPD, Art. 8 (b).

Here is a comparison table on the provisions for education in the CRC and CRPD:¹⁸

| CRC | CRPD |
|---|---|
| <p>Article 28 – right to education on the basis of equality of opportunity. States Parties to the Convention must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make primary education compulsory and free to all • make secondary school available and accessible to every child and take measures to make it free • make higher education accessible to all on basis of capacity • make vocational information available and accessible to all children • take measures to increase attendance and reduce drop-out rates. <p>All appropriate measures must be taken to ensure that school discipline respects children’s dignity and complies with other rights in the UNCRC, and States Parties must encourage international cooperation.</p> <p>Article 29 – education must be directed to the development of children to the fullest potential, respect for human rights, respect for the child’s parents and their values, the values of their own and others’ societies, preparation of the child for life in a free society and respect for the natural environment.</p> | <p>Article 24 – affirms the right of people with disabilities to inclusive education, at all levels, without discrimination and on the basis of equality of opportunity. States Parties must ensure that children with disabilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are not excluded from the general education system and can access inclusive, quality and free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live • are provided with reasonable accommodation of their needs • receive the support they need within the general education system • are provided with individualised support measures, consistent with full inclusion. <p>States Parties must also take measures to enable people with disabilities to participate equally in education and their communities by supporting learning of all alternative forms of communication, and enabling deaf, blind and deafblind children to learn in the most appropriate languages and modes and in environments that maximise their development.</p> <p>The education system must enable people with disabilities to achieve the full development of their personality, talents, creativity and mental and physical abilities, a sense of dignity and self-worth, respect for human rights and effective participation in society.</p> |

It is important to note that Article 24 of the CRPD refers to persons with disabilities rather than children. It emphasises that learning is a life-long process and takes into consideration the fact that primary and secondary education can be received also during adulthood. There is also an explicit reference to sign language and Braille.¹⁹

¹⁸. The table is reproduced from Gerison Lansdown, *See me, Hear me: A Guide to using the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to promote the rights of children*, Save the Children, London, 2009, pp. 79.
¹⁹. Schulze, *Understanding the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, 2010, p.133.

In addition to the rights-based framework, UNESCO has identified another three main reasons that support the implementation of inclusive education:²⁰

1. inclusive schools have to develop a flexible approach to individuals that will benefit the learning of all children (educational reason);
2. educating children all together can help in the creation of societies without discrimination where the values of equality of opportunities and rights are nurtured (social reason);
3. inclusive schools are likely to be less costly and more sustainable (economic reason).

Put together, these arguments – based firstly on human rights and then on educational benefit, greater social equality and economic advantage – make an overwhelming case in favour of inclusive education.

EU Enlargement Policies

As for European Union Enlargement policies that refer to the inclusive education of children with disabilities, it is essential to mention the *Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2011-2012*.²¹ In the section 'Conclusions and Recommendations' there are a number of observations about the situation of Albania that touch upon children's rights in general and upon issues related to social inclusion:

- there has been progress in certain key priority areas, such as strengthening the protection of children's rights through the adoption of a comprehensive law and improvements in the conditions of detained persons in prison and the development of alternatives to detention. Progress in the field of human rights has nonetheless been uneven and renewed concerns have emerged in certain areas, such as freedom of media, where editorial independence continues to be hampered by political and business interests. Effective implementation and enforcement of legislative and policy tools governing human rights and protection of minorities needs to be substantially reinforced. (...) There has been partial progress on addressing the key priority which calls for reinforcing the protection of human rights, notably for women, children and Roma, and the effective implementation of anti-discrimination policies. There have been developments in this area, including (...) the start of implementation of the Law on Protection from Discrimination. Some important legislative gaps remain, in particular with regard to persons with disabilities, and Albania needs to ensure the consistent implementation of existing legislative and policy tools. General awareness of anti-discrimination legislation and the complaints mechanism needs to be increased.²²

The European Training Foundation (ETF), an agency of the European Union, has been active in Albania since 1997. One of its key areas of work is Education Equality. The ETF recognizes that social inclusion remains a critical challenge in the Western Balkans and is an important theme under the European Employment Strategy and also for European cooperation in education.

In this context, and on request of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Enlargement (DG ENL), the ETF commissioned the study *Mapping policies and practices for the preparation of teachers for inclusive education in contexts of social and cultural diversity* of the seven Western Balkan countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.²³ During 2010-2011 the ETF commissioned a regional report, *Teachers for the Future*, which focused on the seven country reports. The report identifies a number of challenges, gaps and opportunities for improving policies and practices for pre-service and in-service teacher development for inclusive education.²⁴

20. UNESCO, *Understanding and Responding to Children's Needs in Inclusive Classrooms*, UNESCO: Paris, 2001, quoted in WHO/World Bank, *World Report on Disability*, p. 210; UNICEF 2011, *The Right of Children with Disabilities to Education: A Rights-Based Approach to Inclusive Education*, p. 7.

21. The enlargement policy is a powerful tool for societal transformation. Countries that have already acceded to the EU and those on the road to joining have undergone impressive changes through accession-driven democratic and economic reforms. In addition to this, the EU has a *Disability Strategy for 2010-2020*, adopted in November 2010, which aims to help implement the provisions of the CPRD both at EU and at Member State level. For more information see: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=933&furtherNews=yes>

22. *Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2011-2012*, COM(2011) 666 final, p. 54. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/press_corner/key_documents/reports_oct_2011_en.htm

23. Individual country reports can be found in the searchable catalogue: http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Publications_by_year#

24. Nataša Pantić, Alison Closs and Vanja Ivošević, *Teachers for the Future: Teacher Development for Inclusive Education in the Western Balkans*, ETF, August 2010. Available in the searchable catalogue: http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Publications_catalogue

The report on Albania concludes that, although education legislation is generally supportive of inclusion, implementation and local good practices are very limited and the whole there is no evidence of serious commitment and support from key public institutions'.²⁵

On the request of the DG ENL's Multi-Beneficiary Programme, the ETF is facilitating discussions with country stakeholders, including Albania, for the 2012 DG ENL IPA (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance) Multi-Beneficiary Project on Inclusive Education.

25. Evelyn Viertel, Margareta Nikolovska, *Albania- Review of Human Resources Development*, 2010, p. 71. Available at: http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Albania_-_Review_of_Human_Resources_Development; E. Ikonomi, B. Musai and K. Sotirofski, European Training Foundation, *Mapping policies and practices for the preparation of teachers for inclusive education in contexts of social and cultural diversity – Albania country report*, Working document, ETF, Turin, 2010.

III. OVERVIEW OF CHALLENGES TO THE RIGHT TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN THE CEECIS REGION

There are a number of significant challenges that need to be met in order for inclusive education of children with disabilities to be successfully implemented in the CEECIS region.²⁶ The main challenges are identified in this section and the case studies in the next section show how some of them are being addressed in the CEECIS region.

The main challenges are as follows:

Need for a better understanding of disability in terms of the biosocial model

The limited understanding of disability as resulting from an interaction between an impairment and the external environment, rather than as a 'defect' inherent in the disabled person, is a major challenge at system-wide, community and school level. Throughout the CEECIS region, during the Soviet era, disability was interpreted through the lens of 'defectology', a discipline and an approach rooted in the old medical model of disability, which considered disability as a deviation from the norm, a 'fault' to be corrected. Many children, as a result of this approach, were institutionalised and considered 'ineducable'. Many others, who stayed with their families, were hidden and had very limited opportunities for education of any kind.

The case studies in the next section of this report show where progress has been made with respect to these earlier approaches and practices. However the defectological model, and the assumptions it generates are still widespread in the region.²⁷

Need for more reliable data

In 2002, 1.5 million children were recognized as having a disability across the CEECIS Region as a whole. The total child population is estimated at just over 100 million.²⁸ According to international benchmarks (2005 and 2007) the prevalence of children with disabilities is assumed to be 2.5%. This estimate suggests that there are still over a million children with disabilities who are not included in the data and are therefore invisible. All of these children are likely to be out of school.²⁹

Article 31 of the CRPD requires collection of data on people with disabilities to better identify the challenges they face and plan more appropriate solutions. The purpose of the article is the 'creation of tools assisting the assessment of the Convention's implementation.'³⁰

26. UNICEF, *The Right of Children with Disabilities to Education: A Rights-Based Approach to Inclusive Education*; WHO/World Bank, *World Report on Disability*; Innocenti Insight, *Children and Disability in Transition in CEE/CIS and Baltic States*, UNICEF, Florence, 2005, pp. 59-64; UNICEF, *Education for Some More than Others?*, UNICEF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States: Geneva, 2007; USAID, *Best practices in inclusive education for children with disabilities: applications for program design in the Europe & Eurasia region*, March 2010; PPT Presentations at the Conference on 'Inclusive education for children with disabilities in CEECIS', Moscow, September 2011 available at: http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/education_17933.html

27. UNICEF, *The Right of Children with Disabilities to Education: A Rights-Based Approach to Inclusive Education*, p. 8

28. Innocenti Insight, *Children and Disability in Transition in CEE/CIS and Baltic States*.

29. UNICEF, *The Right of Children with Disabilities to Education: A Rights-Based Approach to Inclusive Education*, p. 3.

30. Schulze, *Understanding the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, pp. 170-172.

A number of challenges at different levels impede effective data collection:³¹

- the fact that definitions of disability across the region remain medically based, so that it is difficult to obtain data that reflect the social model of disability and give information about a person's potential for learning rather than just about their impairment;
- lack of common definitions and classifications of categories of disability both within and between countries;
- reluctance on the part of parents to report their child as having a disability;
- difficulties in identification of certain impairments, as well as acquisition of impairments later in the child's life;
- the fact that disability-based discrimination and stigma also sometimes inhibit the willingness of survey administrators and participants to address questions related to disability.
- the sporadic nature of early identification, assessment and intervention.

In addition to the lack of reliable data on children with disabilities, the other key data collection problem is lack of good data on access to schooling and the outcomes of education for children with disabilities.³² Also, long-term data collection is needed in order to track the educational and post-educational careers of learners.

Legislation, policies and resources/budget

All countries in the region have ratified the CRC and the overwhelming majority have signed and ratified the CRPD. However, even though there is strong encouragement to promote inclusion and programmes of de-institutionalisation in accession countries and many countries have introduced progressive legislation to strengthen the rights of children with disabilities, progress remains slow and uneven.³³ The main obstacles are the lack of clear plans to implement relevant legislation, where such legislation exists, and lack of funding. These often go together with lack of social protection and support services for children with disabilities and their families. However, the problem lies not just with the amount of resources provided. It is also with how they get allocated. Also, even when primary education appears to be free of charge, families are often unable to pay for books or for transportation (especially in rural and mountainous areas where distances are greater or travel more difficult).

Divided ministerial responsibility

A key challenge in several countries is that the responsibility for the education of children with disabilities is shared between different ministries. Often across the region the primary responsibility for disability is with the ministry of social welfare. This segmentation tends to isolate and segregate the education of children with disabilities and prevents the emphasis from being placed on equality of opportunities. There is a lack of a coordinated strategy across ministries. In addition, political systems are highly centralised in the CEECIS region and this causes further problems in terms of transparency and budget allocations.³⁴

Institutionalization of many children with disabilities

In the CEECIS region, the number of children in institutional care is the highest in the world: UNICEF estimates that across the region a child with a disability is almost 17 times more likely to be institutionalised than one who is not disabled.³⁵ The rate of children in institutional care in CEECIS has on average been almost stagnant since 2000. But in 12 countries, the rate actually *increased* between 2000 and 2007.³⁶ Violence against children with disabilities often takes place in institutions where 'children with disabilities are four to five times more likely than their typically developing peers to experience violence, regardless of

31. *Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, with a focus on implementing the rights of children with disabilities.* A/66/230, p. 4.

32. UNICEF, *The Right of Children with Disabilities to Education: A Rights-Based Approach to Inclusive Education*, p. 9.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

34. WHO/World Bank, *World Report on Disability*, p. 214.

35. UNICEF, *The Right of Children with Disabilities to Education: A Rights-Based Approach to Inclusive Education*, p. 3.

36. *Ibid.*

the type or severity of their impairment.³⁷

Children in institutions are isolated. They tend to be forgotten by families, communities, authorities. Their educational environment is very limited: the curriculum is reduced, the work done by staff is not sufficient to develop the children's skills and the attention given to individual children is very limited. As a result, the children are not motivated, they are stigmatized, and they do not develop to anything like their full potential. All this is closely linked to lack of awareness not only about disability but also about child development.

Need for much better identification, early assessment and care

Throughout the CEECIS region, assessments are mainly medically focused, despite the fact that NGOs try to influence evaluation commissions to carry out holistic assessments. These take place through the work of multidisciplinary teams. This was illustrated in an UNICEF Survey presented in Geneva in 2010 that also highlighted how follow-up assessment is rarely provided.³⁸

Early years education

Early education is of particular significance for children with disabilities: an early assessment followed by early education can provide children with disabilities with the essential extra support and tools they need to develop their potential in full. Despite this, they are the least likely to be included in such programmes. The patterns of early education provision vary considerably – there are a number of programmes across the region, but it is not clear to what extent children with disabilities benefit from them.³⁹ Neither the CRC nor the CRPD makes explicit reference to early education. However, the Committee on the Rights of the Child interprets education as starting from birth in order to fulfil the child's right to optimum development.

Physical barriers

Physical barriers in schools, both internally (for example, doors, stairs, toilets) and externally (for example, main entrances, play areas and sport facilities) are a major challenge. Existing schools are often not accessible and new building construction does not follow the guidelines for Universal Design.

Pre-service, in-service training and support for teachers

There is often a lack of pre-service training that emphasises inclusion and is also practical: the pre-service teacher education curricula are based mainly on academic disciplines rather than on the development and practice of competencies for inclusive teaching.⁴⁰ In addition to this, there is fragmentation between teachers working at different levels of the education system, who are trained in different types of institutions in the region.⁴¹

In-service training as a form of continuing professional development, when available, is often short, theoretical rather than practical, disconnected from pre-service training and no opportunities for follow-up is provided. Often the only form of monitoring and evaluation of teacher training is the questionnaire at the end of training sessions.

Overall countries in the CEECIS region 'report an acute shortage of high quality in-service training programs. Nine countries out of 22 in the region report having teachers trained to teach inclusively. (...) Often sponsored by NGOs, these programmes are rarely widespread and organizations rarely have the resources to scale them up'.⁴² Lack of in-service training for the range of specialist staff such as pedagogues,

37. Five years on: A global update on violence against children. A report from the NGO Advisory Council for follow-up to the UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence Against Children, 2011, p. 20; Nora E. Groce, Summary Report. Violence against Children with Disabilities, UN Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children, Thematic Group on Violence against Children with Disabilities, UNICEF, 2005.

38. Hannah Page and Erin Tanner; UNICEF CEE/CIS Education Regional Office, 'Overview of the Inclusive Education Regional Situation Analysis', PPT presented at the Conference 'Uniting partners for inclusive education. Exploring collaboration in inclusive education in CEE/CIS', Geneva, Switzerland, 11-12 May 2010. Available at: http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/education_14507.html

39. UNICEF, *The Right of Children with Disabilities to Education: A Rights-Based Approach to Inclusive Education*, p. 11.

40. UNICEF, *The Right of Children with Disabilities to Education: A Rights-Based Approach to Inclusive Education*, p. 12; Pantić, Closs and Ivošević, *Teachers for the Future*, pp. 74 and 100.

41. Pantić, Closs and Ivošević, *Teachers for the Future*, p. 73.

42. UNICEF, *A brief overview: Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities in the CEECIS Region*, UNICEF, Geneva, 2010 – Unpublished draft, p. 34. It doesn't specify which ones are the nine countries. UNICEF, *The Right of Children with Disabilities to Education: A Rights-Based Approach to Inclusive Education*, p. 12.

psychologists and speech therapists is also a major issues, since many of these professionals has been taught at what were formerly Faculties of Defectology, recently renamed in many countries.⁴³

In-service training that targets headteachers and/or principals is rare and this contributes to the lack of a culture of inclusion in the whole school.⁴⁴

Need for individual educational plans

Inflexible approaches to teaching and to the curriculum are often accompanied in schools by inflexible assessment, which focuses on academic performance against pre-defined external standards, rather than assessment of the individual learner's performance according to individual educational plans (IEPs). IEPs are prepared in certain schools, but not systematically in all schools, and the degree of participation of the different stakeholders in them varies considerably. For example, Romania and Azerbaijan have implemented IEPs for the majority of children with disabilities. In Croatia, teachers are often supported in the development of the plan by school pedagogues, who observe the children and then discuss how to best differentiate classroom material for individual assessment.⁴⁵

Home-school relationships

Home-school relationships include relationships between the principals, the teachers and the parents of children with disabilities and also the relationships between parents. Sometimes parents of children without disability ask the child with disability to leave the school because they see him or her as a threat to their own children.

Violence, bullying and abuse against children with disabilities in schools

Children with disabilities are often targets of violence, bullying and abuse in schools by teachers, other staff and other children. Also, children with disabilities are amongst the most frequent victims of corporal punishment.⁴⁶

Lack of child-sensitive and disability-sensitive child protection mechanisms

This is another challenge, related to that of violence and bullying. The fear of violence can lead to parents of children taking their children out of school, or to the children themselves wanting to be taken out, or preferring a special school as a more protective environment.

Parents do not believe in their children and are not aware of their rights

Parents often do not send their children with disabilities to school for a number of reasons, including their fear that they will be unsafe, the belief that they cannot learn, lack of communication with teachers and headteachers. All this is often combined with stigmatization and prejudice in the school and in the community.

Children with disability are also part of the wider community: local authorities, teachers and the other school staff, parents of children without disabilities are members of the community and are the first to discriminate and stigmatise children with disabilities and their families: 'beliefs and prejudice constitute barriers when health-care workers cannot see past the disability, teachers do not see the value in teaching children with disabilities (...) and family members have low expectations of their relatives with disabilities'.⁴⁷ In addition to this, stigma and prejudice also 'allows some members of the community to see disabled children as easy targets of rage, anger or sexual aggression'. 'Lack of social support, limited opportunities for education (...) or participation in the community further isolates disabled children and their families, leading to increased levels of stress and hardship'.⁴⁸

43. Pantić, Closs and Ivošević, *Teachers for the Future*, p. 75.

44. *Ibid.* p. 74.

45. UNICEF, *The right of children with disabilities to education: A rights-based approach to inclusive education*, Position Paper; Draft, 2012, p. 52.

46. *Five years on: A global update on violence against children*, p. 14.

47. WHO/World Bank, *World Report on Disability*, p. 262.

48. Nora E. Groce, *Summary Report. Violence against Children with Disabilities, UN Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children*, Thematic Group on Violence against Children with Disabilities, UNICEF, 2005, pp. 15 and 5.

As mentioned at the beginning, this section of the report has aimed to give an overview of some of the challenges faced by government and other stakeholders in implementing inclusive education for children with disabilities. Section VI below, on 'The role of the 'circle of care': parents/other carers, community and peers', will build positively on the power of parents, communities and peers to build local frameworks for the realisation of the right to inclusive education for children with disabilities.

IV. CRITERIA OF GOOD PRACTICE IN APPROACHES TO THE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

This section lays out a set of criteria for assessing good practices on inclusive education for children with disabilities in the CEECIS region. The criteria are in conformity with the CRPD and informed by a number of studies on inclusive education and on the inclusive education for children with disabilities.⁴⁹

Good practices in the education for children with disabilities are understood in this report as being well-documented initiatives that

(i) apply a rights-based approach. Each practice must ensure that the seven principles that inform a human rights-based approach are applied in the development of legislation, policy and practice relating to the right to inclusive education:

- *Universality and inalienability:* Human rights are universal and inalienable, the entitlement of all people everywhere in the world. An individual cannot voluntarily give them up. Nor can others take them away.
- *Indivisibility:* Human rights are indivisible. Whether civil, cultural, economic, political or social, they are all inherent to the dignity of every person.
- *Interdependence and interrelatedness:* The realization of one right often depends, wholly or in part, on the realization of others.
- *Equality and non-discrimination:* All individuals are equal as human beings, and by virtue of the inherent dignity of each person, are entitled to their rights without discrimination of any kind.
- *Participation and inclusion:* Every person and all people are entitled to active, free and meaningful participation in, contribution to and enjoyment of civil, economic, social, cultural and political development.
- *Empowerment:* Empowerment is the process by which people's capabilities to demand and use their human rights grow. The goal is to give people the power and capabilities to claim their rights, in order to change their own lives and improve their communities.
- *Accountability and respect for the rule of law:* A rights-based approach seeks to raise levels of accountability in the development process by identifying 'rights holders' and corresponding 'duty bearers' and to enhance the capacities of those duty bearers to meet their obligations.⁵⁰

(ii) provide evidence of success in contributing to the quality of education of children with disabilities and to the removal and/or reduction of barriers to their access to

49. UNICEF, *The Right of Children with Disabilities to Education: A Rights Based Approach to Inclusive Education*; UNESCO, *Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All*; WHO/World Bank, 2011, *World Report on Disability*, Geneva; European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2001, *Key Principles for Promoting Quality in inclusive Education – Recommendations for Practice*, Odense, Denmark; European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education; USAID, *Best practices in inclusive education for children with disabilities: applications for program design in the Europe & Eurasia region*, March 2010.

50. This definition of the seven principles is taken verbatim from UNICEF, *The Right of Children with Disabilities to Education: A Rights-Based Approach to Inclusive Education*, p. 14.

education and/or contribute to the respect of rights within the learning environment in conformity with the CRPD's obligations. Successful initiatives of this kind can work at one of the three levels: 1. system-wide, 2. school, 3. communities, families/carers and peers.

Individual good practices can work at one or more levels, although a holistic and therefore more effective approach to the education for children with disabilities must consider all of them.

1. System-wide interventions. A good practice might focus on ensuring both access and quality education through

- adoption of appropriate legislation and creation of policies and action plans in line with the CRC and the CRPD on the education of children with disabilities;
- allocation of budget for the implementation of policies/legislation/action plans and planning for appropriate capacity building;
- strengthening information systems (common definition of disability, data collection, etc.)
- creation of systems for the systematic identification of children with disabilities and holistic assessment of their needs;
- planning of cross-sectoral collaboration across ministries and services to better ensure the fulfilment of the rights of children with disabilities (this also includes early assessment);
- ending institutionalization – specifically in the CEECIS region.
- awareness raising and capacity building initiatives

2. School interventions. A good practice might focus both on ensuring access and quality education through the

- design and promotion of flexible teaching and learning methods;
- promotion of accessible and child-friendly learning environments. This includes: flexible curricula, child-centred teaching methods, materials and assessment procedures;
- development/building of the capacity of teachers (in-service teacher training, etc.);
- provision of special support teachers when needed and specialized support;
- early identification;
- co-operation with special schools and mainstreaming;
- removal of physical barriers;
- promote the respect for other rights such as participation, protection, identity, language and culture) within the learning environment.

3. Communities, families/carers, DPOs and children with disabilities themselves. A good practice might focus on the

- development of community-based support for the education of children with disabilities;
- investment in partnership with families, children, NGOs, DPOs and all other stakeholders in the development of inclusive education;
- provision on awareness raising and/or parental education;
- promotion and/or creation of partnership between DPOs and other civil society actors;
- investment in the removal of barriers to parental involvement;
- Investment in information for families/communities/children on the right to education for all children, including children with disabilities

(iii) can be considered for adaptation and then replication and/or scaling up in the Albanian context.

The assessment of how far the criteria listed here have been met in the case studies is based on the analysis of the material in each case study and on interviews with project staff. The views of other stakeholders are included in the project evaluations. However follow-up with other key stakeholders was not part of the scope of this report.

Each case study presented in the next section includes a number of details to help the reader consider its potential for adaptation to the Albanian context:

- a summary of the key points addressed by each case study
- a brief overview of the context in which the practice takes place;
- an explanation of how the practice worked, with a focus on the role of parents/carers/community and peers and on the advocacy strategy (whenever applicable);
- the overall lessons learned.

The next section includes thirteen case studies of good practice on the inclusive education for children with disabilities. Each of them illustrates a rights-based approach and the efforts made to meet one or more of the criteria described above.

It is important to keep in mind that perfect inclusive education practices do not exist and that the practices presented here aim at encouraging reflection on how they might be adapted in order to be effective in the Albanian context.

V. CASE STUDIES OF GOOD PRACTICES IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN THE CEECIS REGION

I. ARMENIA: Advocacy activities for the inclusive education of children with disabilities⁵¹

Key points:

- Government - level advocacy
- Efforts to improve data collection
- Coalition/Network

The 'Quality Education for All Children' project was implemented in Syunik Marz in southern Armenia by WVA from 2009 to 2011. The project built on the organisation's previous work to promote inclusive education and children's rights, which started in 2000 with a focus on pre-school inclusion. The project's aim was stated as follows: 'Reforming of cultures, policies and practices is promoted to increase the level of presence, participation and achievement of all children in education'. The three main outcomes of the project were:

- Improvements to the national education system.
- Support to individual schools.
- Lobbying and supporting the government towards education reforms.

In June 2011 the Enabling Education Network (EENET) carried out an evaluation that focused on the different activities implemented during the project, namely:

- Training of trainers and cascade training (involving inclusive education specialists, teachers, parents and children). This takes up the largest share of the project.
- Multi-disciplinary assessment of children considered to have special needs.
- Infrastructure improvements in schools.
- Community centres.
- Government-level advocacy.
- Non-government advocacy.

The project implemented a number of different activities, some of them, as the external evaluator pointed out, not linked closely enough to the overall project goal and with limited impact indicators. Despite this, 'WVA's impact overall on government thinking is significant and it is perceived to be very important

⁵¹ Based on the following documents supplied by Hasmik Ghukasyan, World Vision Armenia and by Ingrid Lewis, EENET: Ingrid Lewis, *Quality Education for All Project, World Vision Armenia. Final Evaluation*, April 2011; Ingrid Lewis, *World Vision Armenia Technical Support Visit*. 23rd April–6th May 2010, May 2010; and on the follow-up email exchanges with Hasmik Ghukasyan.

by key players in education and child rights circles in Armenia'.⁵² This case study focuses specifically on government-level advocacy and on some of the advocacy activities carried out at non-governmental level and identified as examples of good practice.

Government-level advocacy

WVA has developed a good relationship and a good reputation with the government for working on disability and inclusion issues: 'WVA is a most significant partner because it is immediately involved in policy development' (MoES senior staff member); 'WVA is very helpful. If we want to start a new programme or co-operate with an INGO, WVA is one of our first choices. We feel it's good to have WVA here'. (MoES senior staff member).

The main advocacy aims of the projects were to:

- Encourage the MoES to think more about social vulnerability in relation to children's inclusion in education (moving beyond a focus only on 'special needs') and encourage MoES to use a social model approach to disability issues.
- Support schools in applying for inclusive education status (and associated extra funding) from the MoES.
- Encourage and support the MoES to adapt and use the *Index for Inclusion*.⁵³

MoES staff indicated during the evaluation that the partnership with WVA increased their understanding of inclusive education more broadly, not only through the lens of special needs. They also appreciated the focus that WVA put on a regional approach: WVA has 11 Area Development Programs in 6 marzes of Armenia covering more than 200 communities. They promote the concept and culture of inclusion not only in the capital but especially in remote areas and they are advocating and promoting reforms in education sector in local level.

How did it work?

The key governmental-level advocacy activities carried out during the project were: (i) Development of a *National Inclusive Education Strategy*; (ii) Translation of the *Index for Inclusion*; (iii) Technical visit from international inclusive education consultant.

Under (i), WVA organized bi-annual meetings and roundtable discussions for MoES, and other key bodies/NGOs. These meetings emphasised the importance of coordination and cooperation among the different actors working on inclusive education and the idea of working together on a *National Inclusive Education Strategy*. WVA played a leading role in the working group that developed this strategy. The meetings provided an opportunity for sharing information and lessons learned with the different actors in the country working on inclusive education.

The *National Strategy* aims to 'bring together a more coordinated approach to the development of inclusive education in Armenia, with all main players sharing a vision and working together rather than competing'. WVA managed to bring the issue of inclusive education to the top of the agenda and it continued to work on it. The *Strategy* has not yet been formally adopted. However, MoES initiated amendments in the Mainstream Education Law, with the aim of embedding in it elements of the *Strategy*. Based on these amendments now all schools in Armenia are considered as inclusive.

For (ii), WVA translated the *Index for Inclusion* as a possible self-help tool for supporting schools' commitment to inclusive education and it has influenced the MoES in using it. However, in order to maximize the *Index's* effectiveness it needs to be adapted to the context and tested.

As for (iii), a 10-day visit by an international consultant took place, out of which a report was produced highlighting a number of issues, including IEPs and funding for Inclusive education, which have been taken further taken by WVA and the MoES.

52. Lewis, *Quality Education for All Project*, p. 71.

53. The *Index for Inclusion* is a set of materials developed by the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, Bristol, to support schools in a process of inclusive school development, drawing on the views of staff, governors, school students, parents/carers and other community members. It aims to improve educational attainments through inclusive practice.

Advocacy and capacity building of non-governmental bodies

The following two activities can be highlighted as good practices in advocacy and capacity building of non governmental bodies, which were also implemented as part of the project:

- (i) Collaboration with other NGOs to input into the writing of the alternative report to the CRC: the Armenian government will be reporting in 2012 and WVA has committed to input into the process beyond the end of the project.
- (ii) Partnership with UNICEF in the creation of a comprehensive database with information about children with disabilities in Armenia (CEDC).

One of the project activities was to develop a database on information about children with disabilities. However, WVA found out, at the early stages of the project, that a World Bank-funded project was already developing a very similar database and that another database project, coordinated by UNICEF and Nork Information Centre of the Ministry of Labour and Social Issues, aimed at collecting information about children in especially difficult circumstances (CEDC), was failing due to lack of funds. Instead of investing its funds in the creation of another database, WVA therefore decided to redirect its funds to support the CEDC database with information on children with disabilities. By the end of 2010 the database contained merged information about children in institutions and registered for adoption, children registered as disabled, and children from poor families who received state benefits/assistance. The database was tested and the Child Protection Unit has been given access to it and training. These activities show the efforts being made to work in partnership to maximize the efficacy of data collection on disability at national level.

Finally, WVA, with the support of the external evaluator, decided to show the wealth of children's views, collected during evaluation of the project, in two posters. One brings together the children's views on what they think inclusive education is, and the other shows what they think a good teacher is/does. WVA wants to use the Armenian language versions of the posters in schools, to promote pupil voice, child-centred learning, and child participation.

Lessons learned⁵⁴

- Inclusive education needs to be understood more broadly as quality education for all children rather than just as 'education for children with special needs'. Strategy documents, laws and policies need to emphasize the importance of reforming the whole educational system and not only the need to include children with disabilities and special needs. This is important in order to overcome the misunderstanding of inclusive education as beneficial only for excluded children.
- The *Index for Inclusion* is a very effective self-assessment tool; however, it needs to be contextualized and tested.
- It is important to work both at national government level and at regional government level.
- Awareness-raising activities, as a key element in advocacy campaigns at different levels, need to be planned strategically, as coherent and linked-up events and initiatives that fit together as a well-planned campaign with clear indicators of success. Very careful advocacy should be conducted among parents and teachers.

⁵⁴ This case study focused specifically on the advocacy aspect of the project. However, the detailed and useful recommendations from the evaluation document have been taken into consideration in the writing of the Recommendations in Section VIII in order to maximise cross-organizational learning.

2. BELARUS: Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Intervention Centres⁵⁵

Key points:

- Early identification and intervention
- Individual holistic rehabilitation package
- Parents' Participation

Since 2007 Belarus has started to develop inter-disciplinary Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) Centres, providing child-centred and family-focused programming, using a mixed health and education approach. There are 32 Early Intervention Rooms and 2 ECI Centres.

ECI was one of the priorities of the national social policy, in particular the *National Programme on Demographic Security in Belarus for 2001-2015*. The first Resource Centre was established in 2002 in Minsk. The partners were children's polyclinics and MoH in general. Now the partners are medical rehabilitation centres for children with neurological disorders.

The Staff were trained at the ECI Institute in Saint-Petersburg. The Early Childhood Development (ECD) professionals were trained in the latest early intervention techniques in Moscow and in an ECD Resource Package in Lviv. As a follow-up to these trainings, fifteen trainings for Belarusian professionals were then provided by them.

According to UNICEF, children with disabilities aged 0-4 'represent 75% per cent of all children living in institutions'.⁵⁶ In recent years, the trend has shifted away from placing children with disabilities in special boarding schools towards providing these children with integrated education. Assistance provided to families of children with disabilities includes early intervention services, day-care centres and rehabilitation and vocational training programmes'. UNICEF has supported the programme and the 2010 Country Report states that the development of the national ECI system was integrated into the draft Presidential Programme *Children of Belarus for 2011-2015* and that by September 2010 34 ECI centres were functioning within children's polyclinics nationwide.⁵⁷

UNICEF also assisted with the development of the National ECI Resource Centre to build the knowledge base of specialists and parents in ECI.

Early Childhood Learning and Development Standards (ECLDS) were adopted by MoE Resolution 90. This is the alignment document for preschool curricular development and preschool conditional norms. A course on 'Educational standards of the preschool system' was added to undergraduate and postgraduate teaching programmes. The MoE provided preschool education departments with instructions on the application of ECLDS.⁵⁸

ECI Centres target groups of children from birth to three years old and their families. The centres provide outpatient services to children with or at risk of developmental delays, disabilities and related special health needs. Services include:

- Early start - early identification and rehabilitation of children with defined level of disability risk.
- Continuity - ECD specialists in partnership with parents ensure everyday rehabilitation at the place of residence.
- Succession - observation and monitoring of status and progress in specialized institutions and in outpatients units.

55. Based on Emily Vargas-Barón, U. Janson with N. Mufel, *Early Childhood Intervention, Special Education and Inclusion: A Focus on Belarus*, Minsk, UNICEF 2009; UNICEF Annual Report Belarus, 2010. Available at: www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Belarus_COAR_2010.pdf; Emily Vargas-Barón, 2006, *Formative Evaluation of Parenting Programmes in Four Countries of the CEE/CIS Region: Belarus, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Georgia and Kazakhstan*, The Rise Institute, Washington DC, 2006, and on the follow-up email exchanges with Natalia Aleksandrovich, Early Childhood Development Officer; UNICEF Country Office in Belarus.

56. Information provided by Natalia Aleksandrovich, March 2012.

57. UNICEF Annual Report Belarus, 2010.

58. *Ibid.*

- Comprehension - provision of medical, psychological, pedagogical and social rehabilitation package.
- Individuality - development of the individual rehabilitation and integration programme for each child.

ECI programmes aim to combine centre-based services with home visits to help ensure full parental involvement. A nurse visits the home with the newborn child when s/he is 1 month, 2-3 months and 6 months old. Afterwards, a family with a child have regular visits to the polyclinics.

How do the ECI Centres work?

Belarus has in place a system of cooperation between the MoE, MoH and MoLSP to support the running of Early Childhood Intervention centres. The Ministry of Finance is also involved and it plays an important role in what has been defined as a 'partially decentralised approach'. In this system ministries guide their regional directorates, which in turn supervise Executive Committees that establish programmes for cities, subregions and communities. Executive Committees control the budgets of each municipality or region as well as all programme budgets. This system and the inter-ministerial cooperation are regulated by a number of agreements, regulations and guidelines that have been developed over the years.

ECI Centres employ inter-disciplinary teamwork for child-centred and family-focused programming, using a mixed health and education approach. Interdisciplinary Teams include staff with medical, health, psychological and special education competencies (also in some cases speech therapists). They are run on a state budget and due to resource constraints the composition of the teams and the running of the ECI Centres and programmes vary across the ECI Centres/rooms.

Referral happens through direct requests by parents and medical personnel in polyclinics. Home and community outreach is an essential part of identifying children in need of support or at risk.

The role of parents

ECI Programmes recognise the importance of the full involvement of parents or carers and emphasise their role, rights and responsibilities. ECI Centres recognise that the child's development is closely connected to the family. Parents' involvement is therefore considered essential in assessment and reviews and in framing the Individualised Family Service Plan. ECI specialists work firstly with the mother or main carer to educate them and train them on how to provide the support and care needed by the child in between sessions. This Plan contains details about the child's needs and overall condition, his/her and the family's objectives, the developmental programme, steps to be taken, observations made by the Centre and by parents/carers, and their respective responsibilities. Children with high-level support needs are assessed every three to six months in cooperation with parents/carers. When a child reaches the age of three, an Individualised Transition Plan is prepared together with parents/carers. Parents/carers are also asked to do certain tasks each week with their child to stimulate him/her.

The members of the interdisciplinary teams emphasise the child's positive capacities, the importance of positive child parent-child attachment and parent education. Parents receive counselling on child development and on how better to interact with and stimulate their children. The ECI Centres are keen to involve fathers as well as mothers and thereby to support family cohesion. If a specific problem is identified in the family (for example drug or alcohol abuse) the family is referred to the MoLSP. The family situation is therefore monitored and if it does not improve the child might be placed in an institution. Of course the government is trying to reverse the trend of institutionalisation, as are many of the projects implemented (e.g. USAID-funded projects in the country).⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Child Fund International (Project Period: 09/12/2005–09/11/2012) implements a USAID-funded programme called 'Community Services to Vulnerable Groups'. The programme consists of two components: Supporting Orphans and Vulnerable Children and Expanding Participation of People with Disabilities. The first component is aimed at reducing the number of children in state-administered orphanages and boarding schools and increasing the number of children brought up with their natural families or in a family-like environment. The project targets orphans and social orphans, i.e. the children of living parents who are unable to provide proper care or who have been denied parental rights, as well as their families. The activities focus on working with families and social service professionals in selected communities of Belarus to maintain children in families and to move them from institutions into less restrictive environments, primarily a return to the natural family. See: <http://belarus.usaid.gov/programs.shtml>

The essential role of parents is also highlighted in the activities carried out by the Belarusian Association of Assistance to Children and young people with disabilities. The association was established in 2001 and it supports families of children with disabilities through a number of activities, including:

- psychological, social and legal support to families raising children and young people with disabilities;
- support to self-help groups;
- rehabilitation and health care activities for children and young people with disabilities;
- submission of suggestions on changing the current legislation in order to improve the situation of people with disabilities;
- professional education and employment of young people with disabilities;
- spare-time activities for children and young people with disabilities.

The Association also works with the Foster Educators' Association and with parents' groups. It encourages parents not to place their children in institutions and provides information on alternative programmes available. The Association benefits from an extensive group of parent volunteers, and it brings together 4000 families of children with mental and physical disabilities and comprises 56 regional and 9 Minsk member associations in six Belarus regions.⁶⁰

Advocacy and Awareness Raising

In the report *Early Childhood Intervention, Special Education and Inclusion: A Focus on Belarus* one of the lessons learned focuses on the need for the ECI to 'expand their joint work to conduct family outreach, prepare educational materials, and provide social communications through the radio, television and newspapers. Many reported that although progress is slow, family outreach, counselling and public education services are helping to build positive public opinion regarding the potential of children with disabilities; the importance of reducing the number of social orphans and community support for keeping children at home; and the provision of services that support families who have children with special needs'.⁶¹

In line with UNICEF's long-term advocacy efforts, the UNDAF for 2011-2015 envisages the creation on a pilot basis of a Child Rights Ombudsman Office.

Also UNICEF has assisted the MoH in the creation of a national ECI system, including development of ECI national concepts and standards.

As a result of continuing advocacy, the National Statistical Committee agreed to conduct a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS4) in 2011.⁶²

*Lessons learned from the practice of ECI:*⁶³

- Strong policy support, a legal basis for the ECI system with inter-sectoral agreements and guidelines promoting the development of sustainable, culturally appropriate, comprehensive and continuous ECI services.
- Need to revise the old systems, concepts and methodologies centred on 'defects' in order to ensure that an effective special education and health system is developed.
- Service eligibility criteria should remain broad.
- Need for inter-agency early identification, assessment, case management and follow-up systems to ensure children are not 'lost' in the system.
- Standardised assessment procedures and definitions are essential in order to make this interagency work possible. Outreach services are essential to identify and serve all special needs children.

60. Belarusian Association of Assistance to Children and Young People with Disabilities: <http://www.belapdi.org/Templates/1-WE%20ARE%20DIFFERENT.html>

61. Vargas-Barón, *Early Childhood Intervention, Special Education and Inclusion: A Focus on Belarus*, p. 64 and UNICEF Annual Report on Belarus, pp. 5-6.

62. Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys / MICS4 http://www.childinfo.org/mics4_surveys.html

63. Vargas-Barón, *Early Childhood Intervention, Special Education and Inclusion: A Focus on Belarus*, pp. 59-65.

- Belarusian parent education, counselling and support services have proved to be effective and widely used by parents/carers of special needs children.
- Parent/carer involvement in ECI services and centres is correlated with client satisfaction.
- Individualised family and child service plans should include the informed consent and active participation of parents/carers in all programme activities.
- Comprehensive centre- and home-based ECI services are required.
- Year-round ECI services are essential given continuous child and family support needs.
- ECI's Interdisciplinary Teams help to achieve well-integrated services.
- Guidelines are needed to manage ECI learning resources.
- Careful planning for the transition of children and parents from ECI services to inclusive preschools and primary schools is essential.
- Flexible approaches should be used for pre- and in-service personnel training.
- Inter-agency coordination roles and Commission meetings should be revised to ensure that parents are able to decide on the future of their children.
- The cost of institutionalising children with developmental delays and disabilities far exceeds the cost of providing preventive and supportive child-centred and family-based services for families with special needs children. The costs related to infant homes and orphanages should be progressively shifted to the ECI and Special Education System along with the provision of high-quality parent education and support services to ensure children will be well cared for and nurtured. Care must also be taken to ensure the transition is well programmed to provide quality care in residential environments as children are gradually transitioned to new foster homes or are adopted.
- In addition to current institutional monitoring requirements, ECI services should design and implement results-based programme evaluation systems in order to assess programme outcomes.
- More strategies for ECI programme advocacy are needed.
- Strengthening inter-agency cooperation on the stages of early identification, tracking and follow-up to increase effectiveness of ECI.
- Capacity building for specialists.
- Ensuring access to the complex ECI services for children and families, in particular in rural areas and at community level.
- Integrating innovative approaches and methods into the ECI system.
- Development of comprehensive services aimed at education, consultation, and support provision for parents.
- Prevention of institutionalisation of infants and children under 3 with special needs;
- Promotion of effective transition to inclusive preschool and primary school services.

3. BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: Community empowerment for the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools⁶⁴

Key points:

- Local government – level advocacy
- Awareness raising
- Removal of physical barriers
- Community participation
- Parents' participation

The Foundation Mozaik, with financial support from Light for the World and the Austrian Development Agency, implemented the two-year project 'Community empowerment for the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools' aimed at improving the inclusion of children with disabilities into mainstream education.

The project was implemented using the Community Driven Development (CDD) methodology and the 'three layers' approach, based on Robert Putnam's ideas about stipulating and supporting active citizenship through a layering strategy.⁶⁵ According to Putnam's theory on engaging communities:

- 'Layer one' is about stimulating and supporting active citizenship;
- 'Layer two' is about building community capacity, strengthening the residents' voices;
- 'Layer three' is about supported citizen-centred change.

The project funded by the Foundation Mozaik followed the same structure described above, with the aim of strengthening and empowering local communities to address and remove barriers to the inclusion of children with disabilities:

- in the first stage of the project ('layer one') the first grant was given to attract the communities and to develop a specific proposal: to target accessibility, with a focus on the construction of ramps in community schools;
- in the second stage ('layer two') a larger grant was given and the community worked on the essence of the issue: the removal of other physical or social barriers;
- in the third stage ('layer three') the grant was for public policy advocacy.

This approach involves a high degree of delegation of responsibility to communities for managing their own development, from the design to the implementation of projects. It requires 'that the communities themselves have the capacity to assume responsibility and (...) a culture of public administration that views communities as development partners in their own right, rather than as simply recipients of benefits through public expenditure'.⁶⁶

How did the selection of communities work?

The Foundation Mozaik launched a Call for Project Participation in December 2008 to identify qualified community partners. The Call was disseminated in all regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina through publication in newspapers, web page. The Call invited community-based organizations and groups of citizens to present project proposals in the area of inclusive education for children with disabilities by February 2009. Out of the 38 applications received, 12 organizations/groups of citizens were shortlisted and 10 were selected: 8 NGOs and 2 groups of citizens (in non-formal groups) working on this project in 10 communities of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

⁶⁴ Based on the documents supplied by Vesna Bajanski-Agic, Executive Director; and Adnana M. Camdzic, Programme Manager: *Final Narrative Report*, Sarajevo, January 2011; proMENTE, *End project assessment of the project 'Community empowerment for the inclusion of people with disabilities'*, January 2011 and on the follow-up email exchanges with Adnana M. Camdzic.

⁶⁵ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.

⁶⁶ For a more detailed definition of the methodology, see: <http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/web/guest/topic/home/tags/community%20driven%20development>

The selection was made by the Foundation Committee, based on a number of criteria assessed through visits to the communities. The criteria were:

- demand for access ramps;
- number of preschool and school age children with disabilities in the community;
- number of children with disabilities attending the school targeted in the project;
- preparation and willingness of a non-governmental organization or group of citizens to advocate for access to mainstream primary education of children with disabilities;
- capacities and previous experience of the non-governmental organization/group of citizens in this field;
- demonstrated interest in the project by the primary school targeted and will to engage its own human resources in the implementation of the project;
- interest in the project demonstrated by the Municipality, Social Work Centre and other relevant institutions as well as parents;
- ability to utilize local economic resources.

How did the project work in each community?

Each community developed specific projects following the 'layers' structure described above: (i) accessibility with a focus on the construction of ramps in community schools; (ii) removal of other physical or social barriers; (iii) public policy advocacy.

As a first step, each community organization/group of citizens created a Working Group (WG) consisting of initiators and implementers of the actions. The WGs are key to encouraging a participatory approach to planning and implementing community actions. This is why Mozaik always encourages the formation of WGs that include representatives from different groups of stakeholders: municipal authorities, NGOs, parents, students, schools and businesses. However, in the end the members of each WG are decided by the community members themselves.

Persons with disabilities are fully involved in WGs (in some of them they are the coordinators) but the number and type of impairment is not recorded because Mozaik wants in this way to focus on the ability rather than on the disability.

The Foundation Mozaik held in-house workshops for WG members and for other activists working with the group to develop their capacity in relation to the project activities. The methodology of the workshops and trainings has been very participatory and participants have always had the opportunity to apply the knowledge acquired in these sessions to activities within the project. The knowledge acquired was also disseminated in the community.

Here are the topics of the main trainings organized during the project:

Mobilization of Local Resources and Project Proposal Writing: although each of the selected groups had already written an initial proposal as part of their application, the first step of the project consisted in writing a more detailed project proposal. In order to make sure that the proposals were inclusive and the actions achievable, the Foundation Mozaik delivered training on Mobilization of Local Resources and Project Proposal Writing for 108 participants from the 10 selected communities. All the partners wrote a detailed project proposal for each 'layer'. Their proposals were reviewed and approved by the Advisory Group.

Education for Social Justice: the Centre for Educational Initiatives Step by Step, from Sarajevo, delivered this training to the members of the working groups from the 10 communities. The training aimed at introducing participants to the key issues in the creation of a society without discrimination, where individual differences are respected.

Selection of Ideas: one workshop was held for members of the working groups and their partners in each

community (a total of 10 workshops) with the aim of facilitating the selection of the idea for the second stage of action in each community ('layer two'), the one aimed at removing 'other barriers'. This workshop was key to supporting the community in identifying priority areas to focus on after the construction of ramps and other physical adaptations of the local school.

Public Policy Advocacy: a four-day training was held to prepare communities for the implementation of public policy campaigns and to train them on how to influence decision makers while proposing solutions for the problems of people with disabilities.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Public Policy Advocacy Campaigns: a training that followed up the preceding one, to equip the partners from the communities with these skills to monitor and evaluate their advocacy initiatives. Each community had a totally different campaign. They were advocating for different things in different ways but they all had the same final goal, namely to support the inclusion of people with disabilities in mainstream life. Advocacy activities included: roundtable discussions, articles published in local media, surveys conducted in schools, a petition signed, conferences, leaflets distributed, etc.

Facilitation of Community Driven Development: a ToT training conducted with the aim of strengthening the partners' capacity to use the CDD approach, helping them understand its importance, its advantages and benefits for their future work.

The whole initiative was successful and a number of results were achieved:

- Ten target communities were enabled to run community-driven initiatives, mobilize local resources and work together to identify and solve problems pertaining to the integration of children with disabilities and to fight discrimination against them.
- Access ramps for schools in ten selected target communities were built with significant community involvement and self-contributions (financial and in kind).
- One further community action was conducted, aimed at removing other physical or social barriers for the inclusion of children with disabilities in each of the ten target communities.
- The capacity and ability of the ten target communities to lobby and influence the government to take up its responsibility of ensuring adequate conditions for inclusion of children with disabilities into the mainstream education system were strengthened.

Some specific examples

The Association Butterfly in Bugojno, during the 'first layer' of the project, facilitated the construction of a ramp, the adaptation of the main door and of the ramp to the toilets in the primary school. As part of the 'second layer' of the project, a mobile team of experts was created to assess children and create Individualized Education Plans/Programs. Trainings for parents of children with disabilities and round table discussions were organized, three children were included in the mainstream school (previously admission had been denied to them) and teaching materials were purchased for the occupational therapies workshops for the Association and the primary school, transport from home to school was organized for the children with disabilities in partnership with the municipality and 36 teachers were trained in inclusive child-centred methods. The main goal of the 'third layer' of the project was the campaign to support the formation of the mobile teams for the inclusion of children with special needs in primary schools in Central Bosnia Canton. This goal was already partly achieved in some communities. However the community advocated for it at cantonal level by gathering information on inclusion in education in 10 cantonal municipalities, holding a number of meetings, collecting signatures for a petition, promoting the initiative on TV and radio.

Although the Cantonal Ministry of Education has not adopted the Decision yet, definite promises have been made, as well as a letter of support from the Ministry, that it will be done in the 2010/2011 academic year.⁶⁷

67. Information provided by Adnana M. Camdzic, February 2012.

As a result of the advocacy done within the current project, the Association managed to implement two more projects:⁶⁸

- Within the project 'Right to equal access to adequate education' an access ramp was built in Primary School I in Bugojno, six Individualized Education Programs for children with special needs were created, and parents, teachers and students underwent training on the importance of inclusion. Four assistant teachers have started working in schools. The assistant teacher has been added as an indispensable requirement for working with children with special needs.
- Within the project 'Equal accessibility opportunities for all' seven access ramps have been built in two primary and two secondary schools, and three access ramps in the Center for Sports and Culture. The traffic lights in the centre of the Bugojno town have been adapted to the needs of blind and visually impaired persons.

The Association also opened the 'Bugojno Centre for the Support of Youth with Disabilities', a regional centre for the Gornji Vakuf/ Uskoplje, Donji Vakuf, Bugojno and Jajce municipalities. One section of the centre is supporting inclusion in mainstream schools and the rehabilitation of children and youth with disabilities.

Lessons learned (from the whole initiative)

- In the first layer of the project, plans for the majority of the access ramps were produced by architects. However, in a few communities the ramps were made without architectural supervision. Although all the ramps conform to legal norms on inclination and width, in future the Foundation will require every ramp to be approved by an architect.
- It is important to have a financial expert in our Advisory Group to help the Foundation's advisors develop the partners' budgets at the very beginning and thus make the work much easier.
- The public awareness campaigns were small in terms of resources and time frame, but they got our community partners acquainted with this mechanism as a way of achieving their rights.
- Public awareness campaigns required in some cases more time than had been planned for by the project and therefore the final results are still to be seen, although a great deal of work has been achieved.
- Mozaik does not have the resources to follow up the independent development of the initiatives which were supported through Mozaik.
- The communities usually have a municipal representative in their working group; beforehand, in the process of applying for participation in the Foundation Mozaik's project, the community members visit the municipality, explain the activities they would like to undertake and get the letter of support from the local government. This prevents misunderstandings and challenges which could otherwise occur and at the same time it supports the local ownership of the projects and ensures that their results are sustainable.
- The Foundation Mozaik invites everyone to participate in the application procedure and believes that, in order to achieve good results, the interest and initiative of the community is crucial. Unless community members recognize the opportunity and show interest in investing their time, effort and voluntary work in order to improve, for example, the education of children with disabilities in their community, then the Community Driven Development cannot be applied.
- Children were not only targeted by the project; they were also involved as participants in various activities, for example in designing and writing leaflets, posters, in the organization of different events, etc.

⁶⁸. Another campaign, run by another community, succeeded in getting a Municipal Assembly Decision on financial support to 11 primary schools to solve their physical accessibility issues. This way the community managed to get the existing policies implemented and 14 access ramps for 11 schools have been made according to the standards.

4. BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA, CROATIA, ROMANIA, SERBIA: Pre-service and In-service teacher training

Key points:

- Capacity building/development of teachers
- Coalitions/Networks

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA⁶⁹

Different options for in-service teacher training

Some positive examples of in-service teacher training are organised within the open interactive schools project in Tuzla. The training series uses multimedia modular material structured for individual learning or for learning in small groups.

The EducAid project is another example of good practice in in-service education. The training goes beyond typical traditional training, emphasising the presence and participation of a mentor, i.e. a person who facilitates and provides support during

learning. This training series takes place in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in cooperation with the pedagogical institutes of Sarajevo, Mostar and Tuzla through the activities of Documentary Centres. By the end of 2007, nine different training programmes were available including: methods focused on students at basic and advanced levels; training for trainers in student-centred methods; developing learning resources; making adaptations in the classroom; methods of developing critical opinion through reading and writing; school improvement methods; evaluation of teacher training programmes; and use of qualitative standards in schools

Regional level cooperation

At regional level, there is a cooperation involving seven universities (Universities of Belgrade, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, Skopje, Tuzla, Zagreb and Oslo). The seven universities work on the development of inclusive schooling through the acquisition of new knowledge and the improvement of competences. It is based on comparative classroom studies and joint research workshops combined with study visits and continuing discussions. The project involves schoolteachers and student teachers through cooperation between schools and teacher education institutions, summer schools for students and the exchange of students on postgraduate programmes with the University of Oslo.

CROATIA: The Croatian Teacher Learning Community Network⁷⁰

Teacher development opportunities are organised according to the suggestions received from teachers' councils at school level, subsequently delegated to regional councils for further discussions. The Society for Psychological Assistance is an NGO that offers in-service teacher-training seminars with an emphasis on the role of the school ethos in preventing behavioural disorders, and provides support and consultation for teachers and schools regarding students' psychosocial competences.

In-service teacher education also takes place in teachers' activity groups, where teachers have the opportunity to exchange experiences and examples of good practice in their work. The National Centre for External Evaluation of Education is in charge of a project on peer learning that is being piloted among teachers in several schools in Croatia. In addition, teachers are involved in a number of learning communities that support professional growth by providing opportunities for teachers to think, talk, read and write about their daily work. These are grouped together in a Teacher Learning Community Network.

69. L.Kafedić, T. Pribiše, Beleslin and S. Demidić Kristiansen, *Mapping policies and practices for the preparation of teachers for inclusive education in contexts of social and cultural diversity – Bosnia and Herzegovina country report, Working document*, European Training Foundation, Turin, 2010, pp. 52-53.

70. Pantić, Closs and Ivošević, *Teachers for the Future*, p. 77.

Currently, in-service development programmes offered by the Teacher Education and Training Agency are accredited by the Agency's Council. In the future it is likely that these programmes will also require MoSES accreditation. MoSES has a directorate for in-service training that evaluates and accredits programmes offered by various NGOs.

These programmes are co-financed from the state budget. The number of inclusion-relevant programmes within the overall in-service training provision is relatively low. Nevertheless, there are a number of programmes at the various levels of education (preschool, primary and secondary) that deal with social inclusion issues (children's rights, special needs, after-school education) and inclusive practices (critical thinking, cooperative learning). Some programmes target specific groups of children (for example, gifted children, children with special needs). Nevertheless, training courses related to the teaching of Roma children have only been offered as part of in-service training organised by some NGOs such as Step by Step and the Forum for Freedom in Education. Teachers have also started to use active teaching methods, influenced by in-service training organised by NGOs such as the two mentioned.

ROMANIA: In-service teacher training evaluation and accreditation⁷¹

In Romania a variety of in-service teacher education providers exist: higher education institutions, institutions for pre-service teacher education, public authority in-service teacher education centres, private sector training centres (e.g. language schools), NGOs, private companies. An independent body working on behalf of a public authority is responsible for the accreditation and/or evaluation of all providers. Evaluation and accreditation results are published as a list (catalogue) of accredited teacher in-service training programmes. The external accreditation and/or evaluation procedures include a compulsory site visit, analysis of a written plan and analytical self-evaluation reports. Examination of other background documents is also recommended. Internal evaluation is also a compulsory component of the accreditation and evaluation of in-service teacher education institutions or programmes. Different aspects of provision are covered by the accreditation/evaluation procedures, which include (1) the content of the activity; (2) teaching methods; (3) competences of trainers; (4) participants' opinions on the training they receive; and (4) infrastructural assessment. Specifically, the accreditation process takes into account a set of criteria and conditions, such as the legality of institutions and the existence of the necessary training space, the utility of the training programme (i.e. its alignment with the national policies and strategies for education development, in-service teacher education standards, training priorities specified at the national level and its suitability for the target group), the existence of counselling offers and time management (i.e. time allocation, the duration of training sessions and their organisation into full-time or part-time courses, evening classes, distance education, etc.).

SERBIA: Duties and Rewards - Serbian Plan to develop continuous professional development for inclusive education linked to career progression⁷²

Each teacher is obliged to attend at least 100 hours of professional development programmes over five years of work in order to be entitled to promotion and to apply for a higher rank, with the following priorities for the 2010-2013 period: (1) inclusive approaches, aimed at the inclusion of children with developmental disabilities, marginalised groups and Roma children; (2) recognition and prevention of discrimination; (3) protection of children against violence, abuse and neglect; (4) identification of, and support for, talented and gifted students throughout the education system (Priorities 2010-2013, Ministry of Education of Serbia, 2009).

71. Ibid. p. 86.

72. S. Macura-Milovanović, I. Gera and M. Kovačević, *Mapping policies and practices for the preparation of teachers for inclusive education in contexts of social and cultural diversity – Serbia country report*, Working document, European Training Foundation, Turin, 2010, p. 43.

5. BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, KOSOVO, MONTENEGRO AND SERBIA: Mobilising Civil Society to Advance Inclusive Education in South and Eastern Europe⁷³

Key points:

- Government-level Advocacy
- Government-level Advocacy
- Capacity Building/development of civil society organizations

Save the Children UK (SCUK) coordinated and funded the project 'Mobilising Civil Society to Advance Inclusive Education in SEE' between June 2008 and December 2009. The project was to be implemented for 3 years, till May 2011, but it ended before because the SCUK office in SEE closed.

The main aim of the project was to build national platforms of civil society actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia, to bring positive changes in inclusive education for all children, by promoting children's rights and holding education duty bearers to account. This was achieved through two sets of activities:

- Capacity building of civil society organisations aimed at achieving policy change at national level through learning by doing.
- Advocating for sustainable long-term policy and practice changes related to improvement of access of marginalised children to quality education.

Each country formed a coalition consisting of various inclusive education stakeholders, local and international NGOs, as well as relevant governmental bodies such as ministries, municipalities, and schools. The coalition in BiH included members from the local municipal officials; in Kosovo the coalition was open only to local and international NGOs.

The main focus of the coalition in each country was to plan and implement the public awareness campaign 'For REAL' which was launched first in Serbia as a 'pilot' in November 2008, followed by the launches in the other countries at different times in 2009.

All advocacy campaigns had two distinct aspects: one focusing on public awareness raising and one focusing on changing/adapting the current legislation in each country. More specific advocacy goals were country-specific and included, for example, advocating for inclusive education to be legally regulated in Serbia (new law on primary education and systematic use of the *Index for Inclusion* in schools); implementation of and better budgeting for existing inclusive education legislation and establishment of a monitoring mechanism for tracking out-of-school children in BiH, amending the existing regulation on inclusive education and providing adequate funding for its implementation in Montenegro and in Kosovo.

How did the campaign work?

In the initial meetings of the project, participants from the different countries were briefed by SCUK staff about the overall goals of the project and were invited to join an informal coalition of organizations dedicated to promoting inclusive education. After the meetings, participants who wanted to join the campaign were sent questionnaires with the aim of forming a country-specific coalition and signing a statement of intent. Coalition meetings were held regularly in each country on invitation from SCUK staff, and reports were sent regularly.

All four coalitions agreed to undertake campaigns for the promotion of inclusive education during 2009 in their respective countries. Coalition meetings were dedicated to the planning and the implementation of the campaign 'For REAL'. SCUK staff were involved in activities related to supporting EU advocacy initiatives

⁷³. Based on the documents supplied by Margarita Yanakieva and Ljiljana Dosen: Ajša Hadžibegović, *Final Evaluation of the Project: "Mobilising Civil Society to Advance Inclusive Education in South East Europe"*, 2009; Save the Children SEE, Save the Children UK, South East Europe, s.d., on the telephone interview with Fatima Smajlovic, Programme Manager/ Adviser Education, Save the Children Norway SEE Regional Office (March 2012) and Ljiljana Dosen (March 2012).

through joint lobbying towards the EU institutions in Brussels and Strasbourg.

Coalition members pursued pro-bono services for the campaign from private businesses. The campaigns were conducted with fairly modest funds compared to the high amounts provided by local businesses.

Awareness-raising activities

Across the four countries public awareness raising was carried out through:

- 77 television/radio appearances.
- Distribution of 59,000 flyers and 1,500 posters with daily newspapers and events.
- Broadcasts of ads on 14 TV stations, 9 radio stations and printed ads in 7 daily newspapers and magazines.
- 153 billboards and city lights in 25 cities.
- Banners on 186 buses in Serbia and on the web pages of media partners.
- Newsletter "INKLUZIV" in Montenegro (10,000 copies distributed with a daily newspaper).
- Two websites: www.inkluziv.ba and www.kagjk.org

The evaluation of the campaigns indicates that overall that were very successful for a number of reasons, namely:

- The diversity of stakeholders involved.
- The awareness raised about the concept of IE.
- The considerable funds raised for schools in Serbia and Montenegro from the private sector/ businesses and from SMS, or text messaging. The state telecommunication provider allocated the phone number to which people could send an SMS aimed at supporting the SCUK campaign. Each SMS sent to the number was a donation that was transferred to support some children's or school's activity. The funds were used to improve physical accessibility in the schools involved, purchase material and organize training for staff on inclusive education.
- In Serbia, partly as result of the advocacy efforts of the Coalition (it is difficult to measure the impact attributable directly to them, as distinct from other causes) the new law on education was introduced in September 2009. The Law guarantees the right of every child to education and each school is obliged to enroll each child living in its catchment area and to remove communication and physical barriers (more details on the Save the Children's approach and response in Serbia can be found in the case study SERBIA: CBR and Toy libraries, Day care Centres and Inclusive Education).
- Young people were involved as partners in campaign activities: mainly in the organization of public events and promotional activities directly targeting children and youth: in the coalition in BiH representatives from the Association of High School Students were also members.

It is important to mention the impact that the campaigns had on the coalition members themselves. The members indicated the following as positive outcomes:

- Improved visibility of the participating organizations. This also led to better access to relevant organizations/institutions that they had not had a chance to connect with before.
- Strengthened cooperation through different partners.
- Better understanding of the complexity of inclusive education by a number of stakeholders.

The members were very interested in continuing the advocacy work and in starting up new initiatives. However the lack of a strong coordinating agency for the time being created a vacuum.

Lessons learned

- There should be a greater involvement of children/young people during the project implementation and the evaluation to make sure their views are included.
- More pressure needs to be put on decision makers to be able to receive concrete responses from the local and national authorities.
- Coalitions across countries need strong coordination. SCUK's office closed and this created problems for the sustainability of the coalitions. Similar programmes should plan for supporting coalitions in 'transitional periods', enabling them to plan future activities. Sustainability issues should have been discussed right from the beginning of the initiative.

6. BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: Inclusive Education: translating national strategies and policies into practice at local level⁷⁴

Key points

- Creation of inclusive education action plans at local level
- Implementation of the *Index for Inclusion* (from piloting to scaling up)
- Cross-sectoral collaboration

The project 'Inclusive Education: translating national strategies and policies into practice at local level' was implemented by SCUK from 2007 to 2010 and was funded by Irish Aid. The project was initially designed to be implemented in a few localities, but it was extended to 27 new municipalities with support from OSCE and it included a total of 41 by 2010.

The overall project goal was to create an environment that would contribute to reducing poverty through the provision of quality basic education for all disadvantaged children, including children with disabilities, to ensure their full development, and the strengthening of inclusive, participatory practices at the local level and central level of government in BiH.

Partners to the project were representatives of the local authorities, representatives of the Pedagogical institute in Zenica and Tuzla, the local NGOs 'Hi neighbours' and 'Rainbow' and 36 schools in the area of Zenica-Doboj Canton.

The specific objectives of the project were:

1. The development of a model to translate educational strategies and policies from central government level into practice at municipal level, and to ensure sustainable financial support for elementary school children at a disadvantage, including children with disabilities. This goal was realised mainly through:

- Supporting a number of municipalities to create Inclusive Education Action Plans to implement the existing legislation and reforms for children with disabilities, Roma and ethnic minorities. These plans included the definition of the roles and responsibilities of state bodies (schools, centres for social welfare, municipal departments of education, Pedagogical Institute and Ministry of Education) to achieve short- and long-term objectives in inclusive education.
- Involving non-governmental organizations as partners for the development of the plans. SCUK facilitated the initial meetings and workshops.

2. Increased participation of local communities and civil society in the effective implementation of educational reform and the participation in the development of inter-ethnic cooperation in providing quality inclusive education. This goal was achieved through:

⁷⁴ Based on the documents supplied by Margarita Yanakieva and Ljiljana Dosen: 'Project Evaluation Report: Inclusive education - translating national strategies and policies into practice at local level', August 2010; Save the Children SEE, *Save the Children UK, South East Europe*, [s.d.], and on the telephone interview with Fatima Smajlovic, Programme Manager/ Adviser Education, Save the Children Norway SEE Regional Office (March 2012).

- Establishment of a Municipal Working Group for Inclusive Education.
- Establishment of a Coordinating group for the implementation of the Index for Inclusion at the school level.
- Organization of workshops with project participants. SCUK, OSCE, Save the Children Norway and USAID supported these. At these workshops the participants had an opportunity to exchange their experiences and to present their achievements in the project.
- SCUK approved funds for small projects that schools implemented on inclusive education. Some school projects were co-financed by the local municipality.

3. Improved cooperation at the local and national, in partnership with civil society. This goal was achieved through:

- Cross-sector collaboration through the municipal working group on inclusive education and action plans.
- Cross-sector collaboration in the implementation of the Index for Inclusion and creation of a Coordination group.

SCUK SEE translated the *Index for Inclusion* into the Serbian, Bosnian and Albanian languages on the basis of the 2005 agreement with the Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education.⁷⁵

The promotion of the *Index for Inclusion* initiative continues in 2012, supported by SC Norway SEE and OSCE in BiH. The methodology proposed by the *Index* tackles the issues of exclusion, division, inequality, lack of access to quality education of vulnerable groups rather than on inclusive education of children with disabilities only.⁷⁶ The implementation that started in 27 municipalities in 2009 had expanded to 41 municipalities in 2010, working through the OSCE's network of field officers. OSCE provides for the municipalities and schools engaged capacity-building workshops and expertise for the municipalities and schools to enable them to implement the *Index for Inclusion* methodology. Two cantonal ministries have already integrated the *Index for Inclusion* in their plans and the school plans in those cantons need to base their school plan on the *Index*.

An report on the lessons learned from the implementation of the *Index for Inclusion* will be available in June, by Save the Children Norway SEE and OSCE.⁷⁷

Lessons learned

- The implementation of the *Index for Inclusion* increased the capacity of the education system and practitioners to provide access to quality basic education for disadvantaged children, including children with disabilities.
- The *Index for Inclusion* has been recognized by SC Norway and by OSCE as an important tool for the work of schools in BiH, for promoting inclusion, respect for diversity and quality of education for all children.
- The *Index for Inclusion* does not impose external solutions. Instead, it is a self-help tool for teachers, parents and children to assess themselves, their attitudes and practices and to design solutions together.
- It is important to provide a clear model for the implementation of inclusive education (such as the *Index for Inclusion*) and to work in partnership with other organizations and with the government to implement it. The collaboration with OSCE has given SC UK SEE and SC Norway in BiH the possibility to maximize efforts and to avoid duplication.

75. Save the Children SEE, *Save the Children UK, South East Europe*, p. 35.

76. Email received from Fatima Smajlovic (March 2012).

77. The report will be available in June 2012.

7. KYRGYZSTAN: Negotiating reforms in Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities⁷⁸

Key points

- Creation of a group of 'resource teachers'
- Creation of new-style Disability Commissions
- Pre-service and In-service training
- Community Participation (C-EMIS)
- Government-level advocacy
- Child Participation

As in many countries of the former Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan in the early 1990s had a segregated and inflexible education system where 'children with problems' were assessed and placed in institutions. However, in central Asia's rapid and difficult transition to a post-communist system, funding for public services dropped rapidly. It became too costly to maintain the already limited special school system, which in any case left out many children with disabilities. Many special schools closed, and although government policy had shifted towards the inclusion of disabled children in society to some extent, schools continued to exclude them.

Save the Children developed a model of inclusive education, initially in relation to children with disabilities. The model focused on addressing different stakeholders and different issues with the aim of improving schools for all. The model addressed the following:

- Teachers' attitudes
- Alternative methods of training
- Adapting physical environment to children's needs
- Involving parents and communities
- Access for all children
- Child-centred curriculum
- Flexible methods of teaching
- Participation of all children
- Support for teachers and schools.

The programme started as a pilot project and then developed to the extent of bringing system-wide changes. This case study aims at giving an overview of both stages.

During the pilot programme two priorities were identified for achieving significant change towards inclusive education for children with special needs: (i) change teachers' attitudes; (ii) change the attitudes of parents and the community and increase their involvement and support.

How did it work?

SC's programme developed a pilot teacher training and organized in-service teacher training on disability. In addition to this, and to respond to teachers' lack of ongoing support to put this type of training into practice, the programme formed a group of 15 resource teachers to provide follow-up support and mentoring for other teachers.

In 2003 staff members in 11 mainstream pilot schools and then in 84 cluster schools received the training as part of a USAID funded project.

⁷⁸ Based on 'Promoting Change Across Education Systems', in *Making Schools Inclusive. How change can happen: Save the Children's experience*, Save the Children UK, 2008, pp. 38-42, and from http://www.eenet.org.uk/resources/eenet_newsletter/news10/page6.php. Note that World Vision Armenia staff members with WV USA and UK staff members and employees from the Ministry of Education and National and Regional level went on a study visit to the Kyrgyzstan SC UK programme.

The pilot training focused on the following topics:

- The principles of including children with special needs in schools.
- The principles of the inclusive classroom, based on the UNESCO guidelines.
- Skills for the resource teachers to enable them to train other teachers on inclusive practices.
- Approaches to overcoming barriers to inclusion and in doing so changing the lives of children from marginalized communities.

The 15 resource trainers offered advice and support to both pilot and cluster school teachers. A checklist to assess and troubleshoot teachers' work was developed from observing their work in mainstream school groups. The most common problems faced by teachers were overcoming negative attitudes towards children with special needs within the community; inaccessible physical environments; lack of skills and facilities for early identification and ongoing assessment of children with special educational needs; lack of appropriate curricula, methods and systems of multi-level assessment; and general lack of knowledge, information, skills, and experience among teachers and parents. The SC programme therefore started to focus also on parents.

In 2004, the Save the Children programme started using the Community-based Education Management Information System (C-EMIS). The system helps community members, parents, children and teachers identify together the main barriers to inclusive education and then to plan actions to overcome the identified barriers. Children actively participated in the collection and analysis of the data. The main barriers identified were the following: lack of heating in schools during winter; poor sanitation and hygiene in schools, bullying at school and school costs that could not be met by the poorest families. The programme supported parents to form associations and advocated for better conditions for children in schools. It also worked with existing groups of children to increase child-to-child peer support. In particular, children in children's groups and clubs were trained on forming bonds with other children and on the topic of the rights of all children. 'Greater tolerance and less discriminatory behaviours' were reported by the participants in these activities.

Advocacy strategy

After the pilot, Save the Children wanted to replicate and upscale the programme, and therefore advocated for inclusive education for children at national level.

The political situation was favourable: the new government was willing to take on board new ideas and to have technical support. SC led a number of actions to make the change possible:

- Building of strong personal relationships with key individuals in the Ministry of Education.
- Presentation to government staff of detailed information on the success of the pilot projects and a complete policy with clear plan of action for replications to achieve an inclusive education reform.
- Collaboration with donor-funded education reform initiatives, supporting them for changes at departmental and ministry level.
- Creation of new-style Disability Commissions, first in several districts and then, after positive feedback, at national level. The new disability commissions replaced the practice of the Medical-Pedagogical Commissions that, during the Soviet period, diagnosed children with disabilities and placed them in institutions. The new Disability Commissions assessed the children in child-friendly and child-centred environments where children with disabilities could play with other children in the presence of parents/carers. The Commission members spent more time with the child and produced recommendations on how the child could be supported in mainstream school. The Commissions act as advisory bodies on inclusive education, promoting standards for its implementation in mainstream schools (in terms of access to and quality of education) in consultation with parents and teachers.
- The curriculum of in-service teacher training was formally recognized at national level and key teacher training colleges adopted it. This was possible through building contacts and relationships

with key people in teacher training institutions, clearly presenting to them the benefits of the training and providing TOT support to key pre-service teacher trainers.

- Creation of university courses and production of materials.
- Special school teachers, who feared losing their jobs, were trained to support teachers in mainstream schools and become a precious resource at the National Republican Resource Centre for Inclusive Education.
- Urban gymnasia (grammar schools), which previously had an entrance examination, now accept children with disabilities and other special needs without exams, because it is impossible for them to attend schools further away and exams will violate their rights to education.

The Kyrgyz national education strategy and the Oblast Education Department strategies include the inclusion of children with disabilities in education as a priority and focus also on the involvement of communities.

Lessons learned

- It is important that a programme team build supportive relationships with senior personnel in teacher training institutions to overcome concerns about changing teacher practice and to ensure the adoption of inclusive teacher training approaches in national training curricula.
- It is essential to show that teachers and education experts are happy to adopt new approaches when talking to decision makers.
- As success was achieved in one area of inclusive practice, respect for SC in education circles grew and it became easier for staff to meet and influence decision-makers in other fields. Gradually, SC was seen as a key source of practical ways for government to respond to pressures for reform, within a clear conceptual framework. A good funding base is required to build this type of influence over such a long period – being able to keep good-quality work going, record results and present evidence to a range of targets.
- Collaborating with other civil society groups and getting attention for the issue through the media helped in putting pressure on the government to implement inclusive education policies faster.
- If the government had not been interested in reform and open to new thinking, this type of approach would not have taken root so readily.
- The turnover of staff is a challenge and therefore there should be opportunities for continuous development of staff, especially in the Disability Commissions.

8. LATVIA: Parent's Roles in the Education of Children with Special Needs⁷⁹

Key points

- Government-level advocacy strategy
- Parents Education Programmes
- Development of Parents Association

The International Step by Step Association (ISSA) is a membership organization that connects professionals and organizations working in the field of early childhood development and education.

ISSA promotes equal access to quality education and care for all children, especially in the early years of their lives. Established in the Netherlands in 1999, ISSA's network today stretches across the globe from Central and Eastern Europe to Asia and the Americas. However, ISSA's core members are the 29 non-governmental organizations, located primarily in Central/Eastern Europe and Central Asia, which implement the Step by Step Program initiated by the Open Society Institute in 1994.

⁷⁹ Based on the ISSA website and on the documents supplied by Liana Ghent, Executive Director of the ISSA: *Handbook of ECD Experiences, Innovations, and Lessons from CEE/CIS*, 2010 and *Building Open Societies Through Quality Early Childhood Care and Education: Case Studies of the Step by Step Program*, 2008.

ISSA's work is firmly placed within the framework of the CRC, General Comment 7 on the CRC, the CRPD, the MDGs and the EFA Goals.

ISSA believes that the early years are the foundation for children's well-being and success in life. Every child has the right to quality care and education, including stimulating quality early childhood development experiences, according to his or her evolving capacities, and providing love, warmth, and strong foundations for positive and successful learning experiences throughout life. Families must be supported and empowered as children's first educators, including through encouragement and support from their community, so they can achieve their own goals and provide a safe and nurturing environment for their children.

This case study focuses on the implementation of the Step by Step program in Latvia, which started in 1997 and on the creation of the Parents' Education programme and Parents' Association.

To maintain the Step by Step program activities and the network of schools and pre-schools involved in the project, a non-profit organization, the Center for Education Initiatives (CEI) was established at the beginning of 2001. The aim of the CEI is to raise awareness about children and family rights in society, to promote the dissemination of the ideas of inclusive education, and to facilitate the introduction and reinforcement of a child and family-centred approach in the educational system of Latvia. The Step by Step network is now established across the country, involving schools and pre-schools from all regions of Latvia.

How does the programme work?

To reach its aims the CEI:

- Advocates for policy to ensure that every child, regardless of gender, race, religion, nationality or ability, has the opportunity to develop to his or her full potential.
- Provides in-service training and technical assistance on early childhood education and parent/community involvement to teachers and other education professionals, parents and policy makers. The CEI offers thirty-nine different seminars and workshops.
- Develops new teacher resources and learning materials for early age learners to be used in child-centred classrooms.
- Offers materials of its resource centre (teachers/parents support books, children's books, videos and journals) to lend to teachers, parents, communities, teacher training institutions and policymakers.
- Develops new training programs according the data collected on the most urgent needs of educators and parents.
- Provides opportunities to share knowledge and experience through local and central media, as well as abroad.

CEI includes the network of seven Teacher Training Centres covering all parts of Latvia (in Riga, Liepaja, Ogre, Jekabpils, Valmiera, Daugavpils and Jelgava), which operate with the aim of strengthening the most successful Step by Step model sites, to disseminate the ideas of the program, and to provide students' with opportunities to practice.

The CEI implements its projects with the financial support of the Open Society Institute, the European Commission's Phare and Socrates programmes, and local/regional governments.

Great emphasis is given to parents' involvement: the Step by Step Program recognizes that parents are their children's first and most important teachers. According to the Step by Step philosophy, parents have both the right to choose the most appropriate educational program for their children and the concomitant responsibility to contribute as much as they can to their children's education and development. Step by Step invites parents into both the conversation and the classroom, initiating a new model of parent-school cooperation.

In 2003 the Center for Education Initiatives began offering a special Parent Education Program specifically for parents of children with special needs. More than 300 parents have participated in the Parent Education Program as of June 2004.

In order to help more families become involved in their children's education at school, the Step by Step Parent Education Programme supports Parent Support Centres in all participating cities. Parents of children with special needs come together regularly to exchange experience, offer encouragement and assistance to each other, and plan for the future.

The Step by Step training brought parents together with teachers, educational administrators, and social workers, all committed to inclusion and to parent-school partnerships. In many cases, it was the first time these different constituencies had collaborated, or even spoken to one another. Not all teachers were open to Step by Step's approach at the beginning, but many changed their mind.

In June 2000 the Step by Step Parents Association was created by the parents from Step by Step project schools from different regions of Latvia. The association, which is one of the CEI's partners, has set the following objectives:

- to encourage public awareness and advocacy for equality and quality issues in education;
- to facilitate the reforms in education focused on implementing of the child-centred approach to teaching and learning;
- to promote the participation of parents and the broader community in education.

The association organizes its conferences yearly. Members of Parliament, Ministers of Education, the Chief of the State Inspectorate of Education and other leading education specialists take part in these conferences. The association has been involved in discussions in the media about early childhood education reforms, to advocate for inclusion of children with special needs and minority children (Roma), and for a new understanding of the aims, content and methods of education.

8. MOLDOVA: An example of de-institutionalisation and promotion of inclusive education⁸⁰

Key points

- De-institutionalization and inclusion of children with and without disabilities in mainstream schools (establishment of an intra-school team)
- Capacity building/development at different levels
- Child participation
- Awareness raising

As part of the Child Care Reform, the Ministry of Education in Moldova has approved a Master Plan of Transformation (MPT) for the closure of residential institutions and has formalized its partnership with three NGOs with extensive experience in de-institutionalization: EveryChild (EvC), Child Community Family Moldova (CCF Moldova) and Lumos.

This case study focuses on the project 'Children in Moldova are protected from family separation, violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation'. This was funded by UNICEF and implemented by Every Child between May 2010 and May 2011 with a budget of about \$200,000. A follow-up project (which was fundamental, as it is very difficult to re-organize 3 institutions in one year) has been funded by USAID with a budget of \$2.5 million. The project targeted 3 auxiliary schools (institutions for children with learning disabilities): in Sculeni (Ungheni region) and in Socii Noi and Albinetul Vechi (both in Falesti region).

The project had a strong focus on inclusive education and capacity building of all stakeholders. In the three institutions there were 144 children aged between 7 and 17 and 32 graduates, who left the institution 'naturally' at the end of the school year in May 2010.

⁸⁰. Based on the documents supplied by Viorica Postolaki, Development Manager, EveryChild Moldova: *Final report on the project 'Children in Moldova are protected from family separation, violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation'*, May 2012 and on the follow-up email exchanges with Viorica Postolaki.

All the children in the auxiliary schools had been previously assessed as having 'learning difficulties'. However, the majority of these children, once assessed, were found not to have any disability. The main causes of their institutionalization were the economic conditions of the family, the difficulties they faced in school, connected to the lack of educational programs corresponding to different development capacities, lack of community services for children with special needs, lack of information given to parents on the conditions of children in auxiliary schools. The institutionalization process happened usually because of pressure from mainstream school teachers who claimed they could not deal with the children.

By May 2011 two of the three institutions, Sculeni and Albinet, had been totally closed and the third, Socii Noi, was closed in summer 2011 after the end of the school year. All the children with and without disabilities were enrolled in local community schools in the localities where their families live, in the most appropriate class according to their age. The mainstream education system in these areas has made considerable improvements to be able to take all children, paying special attention to children with special educational needs. The community's social services were strengthened to prevent family separation and institutionalisation of children.

How did the project work?

The project staff implemented a number of activities, namely:

- Capacity building of local authorities and other service providers in order to implement the National Reform of the Child Care system.
- Assessment of children in institutions and consequent inclusion in mainstream schools and development of social services at community level.
- Awareness-raising campaign on child rights and on the Child Care reform.
- Facilitation of child participation at all stages of the de-institutionalization process.

Below is a detailed description of the main steps undertaken for the implementation of each of the activities listed above.

I. Capacity building of local authorities and other service providers in order to implement the National Reform of the Child Care system. This consisted of:

- 30 local level decision makers, representatives of the Department for Social Assistance and Family Protection (SAFPDs) and other relevant civil society actors received a 14-day training programme (initial training and on-going training) aimed at encouraging and supporting the de-institutionalization process at local level. The training programme covered: development and provision of an effective gatekeeping system, foster care, family support and reintegration using a number of tools such as case management, referral mechanisms, post-reintegration monitoring, professional supervision, communication, inside-family relationships and family counselling.
- 76 community social assistants received a 9-day training program in foster care, family support and reintegration services, communication and inside-family relationship dynamics.
- 40 child protection and education professionals received a 1-day training in child participation.
- 136 school staff (managers for inclusion and teaching support staff) of 74 community schools and 6 representatives of the SAFPDs received a 22-day training programme. This also continued with the subsequent funds received by USAID. The project staff worked very closely with schools to support them in receiving the reintegrated children: in addition to the training, study visits to school with inclusive practices were organized and round tables of school managers responsible for inclusion. Also, the project staff supported the schools with provision of information to the teachers, parents and children, establishment of the intra-school team to work specifically on inclusion; assessment of children and development of individual educational plans and periodic review of these plans and adaptation of the curriculum to the children's needs.
- 218 head teachers and deputy heads from 74 community schools received a 1-day training in principles and practices of inclusive education.

- 110 staff in residential institutions were trained in change management to enable them to support children during the deinstitutionalization process and involve them in community-based services.
- 106 residential staff working in the three auxiliary schools received a 4-day training programme to help them to prepare for the reform process. The residential staff's resistance had a number of causes, including their concern about losing their jobs (auxiliary schools being one of the main employers in the communities where they are located), a high degree of 'institutionalization of the staff', who have worked in these schools for 15–20 years and are as negatively affected by the system as the children are, as well as by the complete lack of training opportunities since they started work there. The training programme included topics to help reduce their resistance and acquire new skills to support children in their integration into community schools and communities.

2. Assessment of children in institutions and inclusion in mainstream schools and development of social services at community:

- 176 children – all the children from the 3 auxiliary schools, including 32 graduates – were assessed by multidisciplinary assessment teams consisting of social workers, doctors and psychologists. Methods and techniques included: data collection using a set of forms, observations, interviews, analysis of documents on the child and family, analysis of the child's file, visits to the child's family and extended family. Each of the 144 children in school (not the graduates) had an individual care plan that was developed with their participation, as well as involving the families and social workers from the communities where the children's families live.
- The inclusion in mainstream schools of all the children, including children with disabilities, continues to be one of the most problematic issues in the process of de-institutionalization. Lack of an appropriate legal framework and the persisting negative attitude of the general public and of some of the specialists towards children with special educational needs are challenges that put children who have been reintegrated in the community school at risk.
- The establishment of an intra-school team (manager for inclusion, support teacher, and psychologist) has proved to be very important in ensuring that the schools commit to inclusion and that they support all children. The establishment of these teams in each school requires a lot of effort: informing all stakeholders of the inclusion process, building the skills of specialists and regulating inclusive education. Building the skills of parents of children with special needs is crucial in inclusion; many parents consider that the school is responsible for their children's performance and that they themselves do not have the capacity to support the children. Many of these parents are themselves graduates of residential institutions. At the moment, the relationships between the school and parents do not involve real collaboration between them and this continues to generate the marginalization and exclusion of some children.

It became clear that, in most cases, the level of participation of the support teacher and of the community social worker were key in the inclusion of the de-institutionalized children.

3. Awareness-raising campaign on child rights and on the Child Care reform:

The majority of people continue to consider institutions the best solution for children 'with problems'. Awareness was raised about the Residential Child Care system and the project activities through 10 radio programs and 4 TV talk shows, with the participation of children, local decision-makers, specialists and officials from the MoE and MoLSPF.

A group of 25 journalists from local and national media were trained about the project's objectives, approaches, and aspects of the Child Care reform, to ensure visibility and quality of information. Representatives from the MoLSPF and MoE were also involved in the training for journalists.

Close collaboration with the Government and civil society was important to ensure sharing of good practices and avoid duplication of efforts.

4. Facilitation of child participation in all stages of the de-institutionalization process.

- 112 children took part in 5 seminars between September 2010 and April 2011. The seminars focused on life skills and on building children's capacities of re/integration in the family, community and school. Children said that they had become braver, more self-confident, and less aggressive; they had made friends and changed their behaviour at school as result of these trainings. Children with disabilities were fully included in these seminars.
- Frequent meetings of children who are still in the institution with children who had been reintegrated led to the development of positive behaviours such as: solidarity, tolerance and acceptance. Children shared the problems they faced in the reintegration process and identified solutions together. Most children realised that school reintegration is a chance for them to learn an interesting set of work skills that would secure their future.

Lessons learned

- The project was implemented in partnership with representatives of local authorities who are responsible for the transformation process at local level. The project contributed to the development of the first draft of the *Deinstitutionalisation Guide*, developed by the abovementioned NGOs with the support of UNICEF; this covers also, but not only, issues related to inclusive education.
- A change in attitudes and the full involvement of all stakeholders, including the community, were key in the success and sustainability of the project.
- It is necessary to increase actions to prevent institutionalisation by developing services at community level, consolidating and supporting the family in difficulty.
- The resistance of the personnel in the residential system can be overcome but this requires long-term capacity building. Only 25% of participants in the trainings acknowledged the reorganization of the residential system as a priority for the child and believed in they could be successfully reintegrated in a family environment.
- The stigmatization of institutionalized children makes reintegration and school inclusion difficult. Reintegration of children in the family and community requires much bigger investments than those required for prevention of institutionalisation: community-based services (nursery, school, day care centres) and an inclusive educational program. The success of reintegration is ensured only if there is an efficient inter-sectoral cooperation, especially when there is good collaboration between the community social worker, school and other community actors.
- Child participation is key for all children involved to develop a number of skills and new friends. The adults must support meaningful child participation. The participation of children in decision-making processes in issues relevant to them results in better outcomes. Child to child support in schools for the integrated children makes the process easier.
- Reinvestment of money saved from closed institutions remains a key issue. EvC works in close cooperation with the Ministries of Finance, Education and Social Protection, with local authorities, and with Lumos to support the MoF to identify mechanisms for reallocation that would be tested and approved by the government in the nearest future.

10. MONTENEGRO: *It's About Ability, An explanation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*⁸¹

Key points/ inputs for reflections

- Awareness raising at national level

⁸¹ Based on the information on the website http://www.unicef.org/montenegro/15868_15881.html and the video here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TZ2UsAaLNU&list=UUqKcm38Ect4_Up75QYDd5GA&index=4&feature=plcp, on the documents supplied by Jelena Perovic, UNICEF Montenegro Communication Officer: Ipsos Strategic Marketing, *Research on the social inclusion of children with disabilities*, PPT Presentation, August 2010; Ipsos Strategic Marketing, *Inclusion of children with disability (December 2011)*, *Opinion poll on social inclusion of children with disability in Montenegro. Report*, November 2011 and on the follow-up email exchanges with Jelena Perovic.

- Coalition/Network
- Stakeholders' Participation (including children's participation)

This case study focuses on the campaign *It's about Ability*, launched in Montenegro in September 2010 and still active. The aim of the campaign, initiated by UNICEF, the Government of Montenegro and the EU Delegation, has been to promote the inclusion of children with disabilities in society. The campaign has been funded mostly by UNICEF with contributions from the British Embassy. By December 2011, 446,935 USD had been invested in it. As a result, 161,000 people, 23% of Montenegro's total population, have changed their behaviour towards children with disabilities. The campaign has been considered to be highly cost-effective, since for every 2.78 USD invested, one citizen changed his/her behaviour towards children with disabilities as monitored by the KAP survey commissioned by UNICEF to Ipsos Strategic Marketing (see below for more details). The campaign did not envisage any fundraising activities. However, the private sector supported with a few donations the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream schools.

The campaign is based on the publication *It's About Ability - An explanation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, developed in partnership with UNICEF and the Victor Pineda Foundation.⁸² It is a learning guide for children, with or without disabilities, about fighting exclusion and discrimination in society and promoting the principles of the CRPD. The book highlights the steps and actions that governments must take to help children with disabilities to realize their rights. It also invites children with and without disabilities to take action together.

How did the 2010 and 2011 campaign work?

A KAP survey was conducted among 1,014 respondents aged 18 and over in all parts of Montenegro between 5 and 13 August 2010. Data were collected through face-to-face field surveys of household respondents.

Here is a snapshot of the results of the survey:

- One in two respondents thought that children with disabilities should go to special educational institutions and that it is in their best interest to live in special institutions instead of being with their families.
- 42% of respondents would accept that a child with disabilities could go to the same school as their child.
- 41% of respondents feared that inclusive education would produce negative effects on children.
- 1 out of 5 respondents would not mind a child with disabilities being their child's best friend.
- Children with disabilities arouse compassion among Montenegrin citizens, and they are associated with suffering, bad luck, helplessness.
- Respondents felt that they were generally poorly informed about children with disabilities and the main sources of information are the media.
- On the one hand, respondents express mainly sympathy for children with disabilities and think that everything possible should be done to help them. On the other hand, they believe that these children are essentially different from other children, and therefore should not be fully included in schools.

These results show a limited understanding of inclusion of children with disabilities.

To maximize both public and political support, a number of partners from the government, EU, INGOs, civil and private sectors, children and parents, and media were drawn into a broad coalition for social change. These partnerships, especially at the national and supranational levels, were crucial to the campaign, and the promotion of disability rights became an issue of credibility for the Montenegrin government as it pursued the EU accession process.

⁸². UNICEF/Victor Pineda Foundation, *It's about Ability*, 2008. Available at: http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_43893.html The book has been used by UNICEF offices in a number of countries as an awareness raising tool, however an overall evaluation is not yet available (email exchange with Victor Pineda, February 2012).

Billboard showing the many campaign partners



The campaign had two phases: September-December 2010 and January-December 2011. In the first phase an intensive mass media campaign was implemented. Some of its key messages were 'Where many see difficulties, we see opportunities'; 'where many see obstacles, we see friendship'; 'where many see weakness, we see courage'; 'where many see a burden, we see love'; 'we see our children'; 'It's about ability'. The second phase of the campaign continued building on the successful work initiated in 2010. The campaign had 3 main sets of activities both in 2010 and 2011:

1. Billboards and Newspaper campaign: the messages were posted on billboards all over the country for 3 months in 2010 and for more than 6 months in 2011 in order to stimulate Montenegrin citizens to welcome children with disabilities into their homes, communities without fear or prejudice. The images showed Montenegro's children with disabilities with their peers as active members of society: as schoolmates, friends, family members, athletes, musicians, dancers, etc.



Examples of billboards used in the campaign in 2010

2. TV campaign: a TV public awareness spot advertisement about a child with disabilities growing up in a family was shown on all national TV stations in 2010 and in 2011 the spot was about a girl with disabilities playing drums,⁸³ and the campaign song and TV spot by the UNICEF National Goodwill Ambassador Rambo Amadeus and children with and without disabilities, etc).⁸⁴

3. Other Campaign events, including:

Many special events were organized all over the country in order to let children with disabilities demonstrate their abilities and potential and express their wishes, needs and proposals for a more inclusive society. These events included:

intergenerational dialogues on inclusion; special sessions on inclusion of national, municipal and school parliaments; summer camps on child rights; participation of children with disabilities in the country's most prominent children's and art festivals; sporting events with the Special Olympics and the Football Association of Montenegro; one-minute films made by children with disabilities; opening of inclusive play areas in schools; launching of the first child-friendly version of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Braille, audio and sign language in the Balkans; photo exhibition of successful athletes with disability).

83. *It's about Ability*, 2010 TV spot. Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=woaC6PVaWSI> and *It's about Ability*, 2011 TV spot. Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQ9E9sD42k4&list=UUqKcm38Ect4_Up75QYDd5GA&index=47&feature=plcp

84. Campaign TV song. Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqlfF4hFKtg&feature=youtu.be>

Thanks to the support to child parliaments, more children with and without disability had a chance to participate in the campaign and speak out at different occasions in the role of young agents of change.

An evaluation survey of Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices was conducted in November 2011 to assess the impact of the campaign. The target population size was 474,655 and the sample size was 1,207. The findings of this nationally representative survey showed that:

- More than three quarters of respondents had seen the campaign.
- One in two respondents learned something new about children with disabilities from the campaign in 2011. Most of them said that they learned about day care centres for children with disabilities and small group homes as alternatives to institutionalization.
- One in four respondents has changed their attitudes towards children with disabilities as a result of the campaign. Citizens say that they now see potential prominent members of society among children with disabilities.
- One in four respondents has positively changed their behaviour towards children with disabilities as a result of the campaign in 2011. Citizens say that they now communicate more easily with children and persons with disabilities.
- The percentage of respondents who consider children with disabilities to be equally valuable members of society has increased by almost 20 per cent since the campaign started in September 2010.
- There is a consistent increase in the number of respondents who would accept that children with and without disabilities live in the same city or street, share the same classroom, play together and become best friends.
- Many respondents said the reason why they have changed their minds was because, throughout the campaign, children with disabilities took an active part as vital members of society: as youth advocates for inclusion, as athletes, musicians, friends, students, daughters, sons, brothers and sisters.

UNICEF Representative Benjamin Perks underlined the importance of linking the campaign with child welfare system reform, inclusive education and action from local government and civil society organizations. He used the example of the Northern Montenegrin Municipality of Pljevlja, where they expanded inclusive classes, established a Day Care Centre for children with disabilities and increased social work interventions to support families. He explained: 'It can be a powerful tool for changing a situation of children with disabilities in our society (...) What you can see is (...) the increase in the number of a parents bringing children forward for inclusive education from 2010 compared to previous years.'⁸⁵

Next Steps: Focus of the campaign in 2012

The campaign will continue with special events and TV as the most influential communication channel – UNICEF is also producing the final communication strategy for 2012: children and parents are going to be fully involved in finalizing it.

UNICEF Montenegro in 2012 aims to:

- Continue raising awareness on abilities and rights of children with disabilities.
- Support data analysis and outreach to record and increase the number of children coming forward for inclusive education.
- Use the public's change of attitude towards children with disabilities to leverage Child Welfare Reform.
- Support more active involvement of Parents' Associations and local communities in the campaign. Ensure its sustainability by ensuring local ownership.

Specific challenges

- Taking photographs of local families with children with disabilities for the campaign billboards and promotional material. In the beginning, UNICEF had difficulties finding families with children with

85. http://www.unicef.org/montenegro/media_18773.html

disabilities willing to be photographed and appear on billboards all over the country and on other promotional material. People were afraid of this visibility and feared being even more stigmatized and discriminated against. However, as the campaign evolved, more and more families with children with disabilities started approaching UNICEF asking to participate in it and appear on the promotional material. Their perspective on this visibility changed as they saw it as something popular, progressive and positive, since it was widely recognized as such by society. They became proud of being part of the campaign and were not ashamed of having a child with disability as they had been at first.

Lessons learned

In general, there were three crucial elements of success: audience-centred approach; engagement of children with and without disabilities as young agents of change and leaders of the campaign; and creation of a wide coalition for social change.

- Jelena Perovic, Communication Officer for UNICEF in Montenegro, explained: 'An audience-centred mind-set was crucial for the campaign's success. We need to understand the audience to be effective – what they think of the topic, about the campaign, what they see as costs and benefits of the proposed behaviour; what their friends think and if they think that they can carry out the behaviour that we are proposing; what the alternatives are and why they are attractive. Also, the messages need to be regularly adapted for segments of target audience that are in different stages of behaviour change. For this reason, we regularly researched and segmented the audience, pre-tested new ideas/promotional materials and key messages, monitored, revised, etc.'⁸⁶
- Supporting the development and active involvement of children's parliaments in schools, local communities and society has proved to be essential. Children with and without disabilities learned about their rights and inclusion and developed good communication skills through participation in school parliaments. In this way, they became 'young agents of change'.
- Informing and consulting the main partners – Parents Associations and Government – when making plans and organizing campaign events. In this way, local ownership of the campaign is strengthened and so is its sustainability in future. In order to do this better, it is important to establish a communication task force with representatives/communication focal points from the main partners and share the campaign communication strategy and updates on the implementation regularly with the campaign task force.
- Support and accelerate establishment of inclusive services throughout the country that the campaign is creating the demand for. Also, as the campaign evolves, families with children with disabilities are feeling less ashamed and starting to ask for the services that should be in place to support them. So, the campaign results in a significantly greater demand for inclusive services. It is therefore essential to support and accelerate the establishment of these services. It is crucial to use the momentum created by the campaign for fundraising for this purpose. In this way, the campaign will not be advertising inclusive services that don't exist in the country, but it will be actively contributing to their establishment and replication throughout the country.

11. RUSSIA: Inclusive Education Project⁸⁷

Key points

- Capacity building/ development of children
- Pre-service and in-service Teacher Training
- Support for Parents (including capacity building/development)

⁸⁶. Jelena Perovic, follow-up email exchanges, March 2012.

⁸⁷. Based on Denise Roza and Yulia Simonova, Perspektiva, 'Children should go to school together - experiences of the National Advocacy Coalition', PPT presented at the UNICEF Conference on Inclusive Education - Moscow, September 2011; on 'IE Projects on the Ground and Partner Collaboration', PPT presented at the UNICEF Conference 'Exploring collaboration in inclusive education in CEE/CIS' - Geneva, Switzerland 2010 and on the document summarizing Perspektiva's activities supplied by Yulia Simonova, Inclusive Education Manager, Perspektiva; and on the follow-up email exchanges with Yulia Simonova.

- Government-level advocacy
- Awareness Raising through media (including social media)

Perspektiva is a Russian NGO founded in 1997. Its specific aims are to:

- Promote and develop inclusive schools
- Create mainstream employment opportunities
- Raise awareness of disability issues
- Advocate for disability rights
- Coordinate peace building in the North Caucasus
- Promote full access to sports and recreation.

This case study aims to give an overview of the range of activities carried out by Perspektiva in the area of inclusive education, namely:

- Working with Schools
- Training and support for Teachers
- Working with parents
- Raising awareness
- Developing and maintaining an Advocacy Network

How does the programme work?

1. Working in schools

Perspektiva works in schools (primary, secondary and high schools and also special schools) to raise awareness amongst children. Role Plays, discussions, films and competitions are organized. A particularly successful activity was 'Building Bridges – Cameras in Children's hands' funded by UNICEF. In November 2005, 10 students, aged 12 to 15, from a school in Moscow, spent five days undertaking photography activities. Children with disabilities were paired with non-disabled children. Disposable cameras were donated by Kodak, and a local photo printing shop every day put the photos onto CDs, so that the photos could be shared and discussed every day. The activity gave the children the opportunity to learn a skill, but above all it contributed to breaking down barriers between children with and without disabilities. The project demonstrated how positive attitudes and friendships can grow in a short time using a very simple but powerful tool – a camera. The photos have been exhibited at schools, in parks, at the American Embassy. Since January 2008, the project has been replicated in six cities in Russia. In two cities it has become an annual summer camp activity and in two Moscow schools it has become a weekly activity. Extensive media coverage of the project has led to people donating cameras so that more schools can develop similar activities.

The project has very effectively promoted the message that all children can and must be educated together.

2. Training and support for Teachers

Perspektiva supports teachers in different ways, through:

- The work, since 2008, of Inclusive Education Teams (IETs) established in 9 regions. Teams include teachers, parents, lawyers, activists who work together to develop inclusive education and to support inclusive schools. Each IET provided support to at least 4 pre-schools and 3 schools on a number of issues: the team organizes trainings for teachers and administrators, psychologists and officials about inclusive education issues. The team also organizes disability awareness seminars and presentations at schools and joint activities between children with and without disabilities to lead disability awareness trainings in the schools.
- Inclusive Education Digests, with information on inclusive education principles and practices,

disseminated to more than 150 pre-school and school teachers, special educators, psychologists, professors and high school students and 114 parents of children with disabilities.⁸⁸

- Pre-service training: Perspektiva, jointly with Moscow City Psychological, Pedagogical University (MCPPU), developed and tested training sessions on inclusive education as part of a course for teachers for a total of 72 hours of instruction. Perspektiva's key role was to develop and lead the disability awareness and legal advocacy sections of the course.
- Video conferences on an array of inclusive education issues. Recently 25 experts, – 12 international experts in the field of inclusive education from Norway, USA, England, New Zealand, Canada, etc. and 13 Russian experts in inclusive education and the rights of persons with disabilities – were invited to provide expertise. The participants (a total of 2,100) included pre-school and school teachers and administrators, special educators, psychologists, education officials, parents of disabled children, professors and students, etc.⁸⁹
- Study visits were organized in 2008 and 2011: twice to London and Austria for 30 teachers, parents and activists.

3. Work with parents

The work with parents focuses on training, peer support and advocacy, legal advice and referral. For example, Down Syndrome children aged between 3 and 6 years old were getting no services. In 2008 local parents joined forces to advocate for their rights. Perspektiva's lawyers and other parents provided them with support. Support was also secured from the National Ombudsman and two years later they got access to their schools and day care.

4. Raising awareness

Perspektiva and its partners continue to develop and lead simultaneous public activities aimed to educate members of their communities about inclusive education and to promote new policies and more favourable legislation to support disabled children in inclusive settings.

- In 2007 the Campaign 'Children Should Go to School Together' was launched and it is still continuing. It aims to:
 - Demonstrate that children with disabilities should go to school with their non-disabled peers.
 - Show positive images of children with disabilities and their non-disabled peers together at school.
 - Feature inclusive schools as models for other schools.
- Perspektiva designed and produced more than 15 Public Service Announcements (PSAs) for television that were used by several Coalition members during their campaigns. The Grand Prix Advertising Research Centre prepared a report for Perspektiva on testing the effectiveness of PSAs on inclusive education.
- Perspektiva has been raising awareness with films through the international film festival 'Breaking Down Barriers', which takes place every two years in Moscow and is disseminated through partners in their regions.
- Finally, Perspektiva works with the media also through trainings for journalists, providing clarifications on terminology, encouraging media coverage for special events.

5. Developing and maintaining an Advocacy Network

Perspektiva's 'National Education for All Coalition' (NEAC) was established in 2005 and has grown to 28 member regions. Its members are Disability NGOs, Parents' NGOs, Republics. Its aim is to improve access to education for children with disabilities and to promote inclusive education in Russia. Every year NEAC's members meet in Moscow to exchange experiences, discuss problems, find new ways of developing Inclusive Education, plan activities.

⁸⁸. The Digests are available on Perspektiva's website at: <http://obrazovanie.perspektiva-inva.ru/index.php?id=1073>.

⁸⁹. Select video conference sessions were filmed and are available on Perspektiva's web-site at: <http://obrazovanie.perspektiva-inva.ru/?1107>

To strengthen the capacity of NEAC members to promote and support inclusive education professionally in their communities and at national level, Perspektiva invited all of them to participate in video conferences and shared project outputs and outcomes with them. 17 NEAC members developed and implemented 30 community change/advocacy projects (CCPs) aimed at promoting inclusive education in their regions. In five NEAC regions – Tomsk, Voronezh, Ulan-Ude, Moscow and Samara – NGOs succeeded in lobbying for additional funds for children with disabilities going to mainstream schools. As a result, local legislation increasing the funding for education for disabled children was developed and accepted.

Since September 2010, Perspektiva has been using social media tools (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter) to highlight success stories, to facilitate the sharing of ideas and opinions and recruit activists and supporters: Perspektiva's YouTube channel www.youtube.com/user/rooiperspektiva contains 34 videos.

Perspektiva's Facebook page www.facebook.com/rooiperspektiva was created in August 2010.

Perspektiva's LiveJournal Blog <http://rooiperspektiva.livejournal.com/> was created in September 2010. Currently, it is a member of 21 online communities and has 60 subscribers.

Perspektiva's micro blog on Twitter on the integration of people with disabilities into society <http://twitter.com/rooiperspektiva> was created in February 2011.

12. SERBIA: Inclusive Education – From Practice to Policy⁹⁰

Key points

- Networks of teachers and schools
- Local Inclusive teams
- Coalition/ Network
- Awareness raising

Inclusion of children with disabilities is an important rights issue for the Open Society Foundations. Several programs and national Open Society Foundations address this issue and advocate for the rights of people with disabilities, including children namely the Education Support Program, the Open Society Rights Initiative, the Mental Health Initiative, the Early Childhood Program, the Open Society Youth Initiative and the East East: Partnership Beyond Borders Program.

The specific strategy of the Education Support Program to advocate for children's legal rights focuses on:

- providing governments and educators with the access to professional development and expertise that make inclusion possible;
- supporting locally developed models of inclusion with potential for replication;
- strengthening civil society groups to ensure that young people, parents, and teachers have a voice in policy development and communities are not crowded out of the debate.

OSF's projects aim to 'build solidarity within and among marginalized groups to advocate for their rights effectively'.⁹¹ They engage with communities, parents, and children as partners in inclusion to achieve lasting change.

In 2005 the Open Society Institute Serbia, within the Inclusive Education Program, implemented a broad initiative called 'Inclusive Education - From Practice to Policy'. OSI and members of other NGOs realised that there were many good practices and they wanted to analyse what was working and advocate for policy

⁹⁰. Based on the document supplied by Kate Lapham, Senior Program Manager, Education Support Program, Open Society Institute: *Guide for Advancing Inclusive Education Practice*, Belgrade: Fund for an Open Society, 2009. Available at: http://www.fosserbia.org/download/IA_Guide_for_Advancing_Inclusive_Education_Practice.pdf; and on the documents supplied by Tatjana Stojic, Education Programme Coordinator, Fund for an Open Society Serbia: 'Inclusive Practice to Inclusive Policy' PPT presented in Montreal, May 2011; 'Inclusive education: from practice to policy' in *Voluntary Contributions by Organizations on Inclusive Education. Working Document*, Geneva, 24 October 2008, pp. 14-22 and on the follow-up email exchanges with Tatjana Stojic.

⁹¹. Open Society Institute website: http://www.soros.org/initiatives/esp/focus_areas/discrimination

change. This project was implemented initially for three years to 2008, but then it continued after that. The 2005 - 2008 initiative intended to tackle inclusion at school community and policy level in order to:

- Create the conditions to widen accessibility to quality education for all children, particularly those who are traditionally excluded, including children with disabilities.
- Develop citizens' identity and improve intercultural competencies of pupils and teachers;
- Abolish or contribute to the abolition of the division between mainstream and special schools in order to initiate co-operation and exchange among schools and therefore increase capacities of teachers to work with children with different needs.
- Advocate for policy and law change, based on the good practices that were already being implemented.

How did the programme work?

A broad Coalition of partners was established consisting of state organs (Secretariat of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and Vojvodina Pedagogical Institute), local governments, professional associations (Teacher Association), NGOs dealing with the development, implementation and promotion of inclusive education. Members of this coalition, in accordance with their respective positions, made their contributions to advocate for embedding inclusive education in the education system and for the creation of a new law. Five projects originated from the Fund's initiative 'Inclusive Education - From Practice to Policy':

1. 'Inclusive Education through Network of Teachers and Schools'

As part of this project, the Inclusive Education Network (IEN) was expanded to comprise over 150 teachers and expert associates in 15 cities and towns in Serbia. An Inclusive Education Support Service was set up consisting of 30 education experts and experienced practitioners in 10 Serbian cities and towns who provided support by phone or field visits to teachers, parents and all other stakeholders. The support services collaborated amongst themselves through an exchange of experiences and provision of mutual support. A portal was created, www.inkluzija.org, as a means of communication and expert support via exchange of experiences, expert literature, organisation of seminars and courses for teachers, using information and communications technology. This is still active.

2. 'Educational Inclusion – Local Teams'

In late 2006 and over the course of 2007, a network of 10 Local Inclusive Teams (LIT) was established in 10 Serbian cities and towns. LITs were made up of personnel from local authorities and local NGOs and their role was to make sure that the children from their community were really involved. Through public debates, media presentations and talks with educational institutions, the LITs promoted the concept of inclusive education and encouraged local educational institutions to open up to marginalised groups. Actions by LITs were successfully co-ordinated by the Centre for Interactive Pedagogy (CIP) and the Initiative for Inclusion VelikiMali (The GreatLittle). Only some are still active.

3. 'Inclusive School in Multicultural Community – Creating conditions for Inclusive School Development in Multicultural Vojvodina'

Bearing in mind that the way in which children with special needs are excluded in the education system is replicated for ethnic minority communities, the Fund supported a special project whose goal was to create conditions for the development of inclusive schools in minority languages.

4. 'Intercultural/Multicultural Education – From Practice to Policy'

The project was dealing with the advancement and development of quality multicultural coexistence through educational practice and policy in two distinctly multiethnic regions.

5. 'Art and Educational Inclusion'

This project dealt with affirmation of artistic forms and models (movement, music, drama) in work with children with disabilities. The project was run by the Stari Grad Cultural Centre and Beton Hala Teatar.

A number of outcomes were achieved by the end of the three-year initiative:

- Examples of good practice and established criteria and indicators for good inclusive practices in education were defined and collected in the *Guide for Advancement of Inclusive Educational Practice*;
- A network was created and the capacity of 150 practitioners from 15 Serbian cities and towns on inclusive education was developed – the network is still active at national level and is now much wider than it was originally.
- The 'Inclusive Education Support Service' was created (30 professionals in 10 cities and towns, counselling over the phone or by field visits, support for teachers, parents and other stakeholders).
- Cross-sectoral cooperation was supported.
- The 'Most Inclusive School Competition' was created as an incentive mechanism for the education system to work inclusively and to promote schools' self-evaluation and embedding the approach into the school's plans, decisions, documents.

In 2008 these projects ended. However the Inclusive Education Initiative of OSI Serbia has been continuing its work, focusing on

- awareness-raising campaigns (the coalition however does not exist any longer) to promote a better understanding of inclusive education through the organization of 100 round tables around Serbia;
- Follow-up activities in partnership with UNICEF and the World Bank.⁹² These aim at:
 - Monitoring the implementation of the inclusive education policy and its instruments since the adoption of the new Law on Foundations of the Education System in 2009.
 - Analysing the documentation of existing practices in the implementation of inclusive education: IEPs, creation of child's pedagogical profile, individualization of teaching, enrolment procedures.
 - Analysing the organization of overall educational and social support for the child within the school and the local community.
 - Identifying existing problems and analysing their causes.
 - Providing proposals for corrective adjustments and concrete solutions in the implementation of the inclusive education policy.
 - Developing a model for monitoring the implementation of inclusive education in the school, including observation of teaching.

Lessons learned

- Build on established foundations, find out what good practices are already taking place in country.
- Promote cross-sectoral cooperation
- Collect data, including disaggregated data (evidence-based policy).
- Establish monitoring system (criteria, indicators) of advocacy activities.
- Cooperate with all relevant stakeholders (professional associations, parents and parents' associations, media, youth organizations, etc).

⁹² The World Bank in Serbia is carrying out the project 'Delivery of Improved Local Services' (DILS) that aims at developing the capacities of the institutional actors in social sectors (in education, social protection and health) by improving efficiency, quality and access to services in the social sectors in an increasingly decentralizing environment. One of the projects of the education strand of DILS is contribution to the implementation of the policy of the Ministry of Education of inclusive education. For more information, see: <http://www.mapaprojekata.rs/projekat/index.php?projekat=22&lang=en> By the end of April 2012 the findings of DILS research on monitoring the small grants given to the schools will be available.

13. SERBIA: CBR and Toy Libraries, day care centres and inclusive education in Serbia⁹³

Key points

- Inclusive education as an element of CBR programmes
- Parents Education and Support Programmes
- Development of Toy Libraries
- Implementation of the *Index for Inclusion*

SCUK Serbia decided to address the problem of barriers to quality education for children with disabilities in Serbia by shifting the focus from the child to the social surroundings. The approach piloted between 2000 and 2003, and then scaled between 2004 and 2009, aimed at improving the services available to children and their families through three main strands:

1. Community-Based Rehabilitation
2. Day Care Centres
3. Inclusive Education.

This case study gives an overview of how these components were implemented, placing particular emphasis on the Toy Libraries, which have been judged to be a very successful initiative at national level.

How did the programme work?

1. Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR)

The CBR project involved 23 municipalities in Serbia. Beginning with a pilot phase lasting one year in the Sandzak region, it then spread to involve more towns in South Serbia and Vojvodina regions. The project aimed to support the integration of children with disabilities into the local communities, to develop and improve the services available to children and their families and to strengthen the capacity of parents, children and local communities to influence public awareness, policy and practice in relation to disability issues. At a policy level, the project conducted advocacy aimed at having the CBR approach recognized as a valuable model at government level and one that provides an alternative to institutionalisation.

CBR projects had 6 main components:

- *Training.* This was provided for professional staff involved in working with children with disabilities, social workers, teachers and parents. The training covered disability awareness and the social model of disability, counselling skills for parents, setting up and running toy libraries (TLs) and NGO development. Training sessions on each of the topics lasted 2–3 days.
- *Workshops for children and support groups for parents.* During these sessions parents met with other parents and children had the opportunity to interact with each other facilitated by trained professionals. For many of the children this was their first social experience outside the home and so the facilitators' role in creating a welcoming and pleasant atmosphere was very important in making the children feel accepted. Siblings of the children with disabilities also attended the workshops and this proved to be a valuable experience for the facilitators in designing activities for children with different abilities and interests.
- *Experience exchange through meetings and creation of networks.* This happened through a strong network of associations with the aim of creating a strong movement for advocating for changes in policy and practice at community, regional and national level. Groups of CBR workers and parents exchanged visits, shared learning and helped to resolve problem situations. Larger meetings were also held, bringing together parents, children with disabilities and professionals from a number of towns as well as representatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs.

⁹³ Based on the documents supplied by Margarita Yanakieva and by Lijljana Dosen: Jelena Čoko Nives Radeljić, *Reducing the Effects of Poverty for Children with Special Needs in Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo. Report*, December 2009, and *Diversity Case Study: Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities in Serbia*. Further information was obtained by follow-up emails and from the Newsletter www.sec.es/esc/ESCNewsletter3-08-LV.pdf

- Media campaign. The project activities were followed and supported by a well-organised media campaign. Media representatives were involved from the outset in the disability awareness training so that they had the opportunity to gain a clear understanding of the project. The coverage in the local press, radio and television brought the problems of children with disabilities and their families closer to the public. Leaflets and posters were also produced and disseminated.
- *Toy libraries (TLs)*. These were a very popular and successful feature of the project. They provided children with a safe environment and different materials, such as toys and books, and with the opportunity to learn and meet with their peers on an equal basis. Sometimes they were introduced as the first element of CBR services, sometimes as a contribution to existing CBR services. TLs offered early education, creative workshops using drama, drawing and terracotta. This had not been available before.

'The problem is that there's no early intervention. Children with disabilities are often not registered before the age of seven, when they are due to start school. We don't have any pre-school facility for children with disabilities, and although they officially have the right to attend kindergartens with other children, this rarely happens in practice and depends entirely on the goodwill of the teacher' (Biljana Koldan, a teacher).

TLs have been considered 'incubators of inclusive education'. Overall, the introduction of TLs has contributed to

- Improving the inclusion and quality of life of children with disabilities and their families.
- Helping the integration and development of children with disabilities and increasing the level of understanding and acceptance of these children in the community.
- Strengthening the interaction between Parents' Associations, the communities and the schools.
- Introducing alternative means of protection.
- Improving parents' understanding of the social model of disability, rather than the model of correctional and re-educational services.
- Creating opportunities for direct support from parent to parent.
- Preparing the child with disability to enroll in school.
- Promoting informal education.
- Influencing the setting up of Day Care Centres.

TLs were run by parents of children with disabilities (with the support of professional staff) and this assured their sustainability. Young experts, including teachers, special education teachers and psychologists, also worked in them on a voluntary basis. Discussions for parents of children with and without disabilities were facilitated, to give them an opportunity to share their experiences.

One of the main prerequisites for the establishment of a TL was finding a venue. When the Parents' Association did not have a space, SC staff members negotiated with local authorities, which often donated a space free of charge and covered the running costs. Parents' Associations at the same time were trained in fundraising in order to be able to guarantee sustainability for their activities, including the running of the TLs. A publication on how to set up and run TLs was published in Serbian to support parents and professionals.⁹⁴ TLs had to be open at least two hours per day during the week. Some of them started to offer parents' clubs and various workshops and they organized birthday celebrations during weekends.

After a successful pilot project in the town of Novi Pazar in the south-west of Serbia, toy libraries were set up in 20 towns throughout Serbia. In 2009 there were 43 TLs across the country.⁹⁵

At policy level TLs and CBR were recognized as a valuable model of support to children and parents, financed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MoLESP). The majority of TLs are still operating. However, the scope and the level of their activities differ and vary. Most of the TLs have managed to sustain their activities and become part of the Day Care Centre (DCC) services, incorporated into the system of

⁹⁴. Publication requested by the consultant who was however unable to locate it.

⁹⁵. Save the Children SEE, *Save the Children UK, South East Europe*, s.d. p. 5.

social services under the responsibility of local governments.

2. Day care centres (DCC)

Some of the Parents' Associations established DCC in order to assist children excluded from the education system and provide day-to-day activities on a longer-term basis than was possible through the CBR project. SC, in partnership with different stakeholders, including the Ministry of Social Affairs, set up DCC in two towns to serve as models and set standards for establishing and running day care facilities to internationally accepted levels.

3. Inclusive Education

The programme focused on quality education that can meet the educational needs of all children. Participation in the CBR project facilitated entry into pre-school groups and elementary school and disabled children were able to enrol in mainstream schools. SCUUK developed and demonstrated the model of inclusive education at preschool and then at school level. As a very important further step forward, intending to secure sustainable progressive implementation of inclusive education, SCUUK developed new good practice models in inclusive education: a model of differentiated subject teaching in the fifth grade of elementary school and a model of a special school transformed into a resource centre.

Also, *The Index for Inclusion* was identified as a key tool and approach to promote inclusive practices in general, for all children. In 2009 the Institute for Evaluation of Education Quality in Serbia, which is a national institution financed by the government budget, accepted the *Index for Inclusion* and in Spring 2009 the Institute led and funded a country-wide process of adaptation of the *Index* to the Serbian context. 800 pre-school and school teachers from 90 primary schools and 90 preschools throughout Serbia took part in the consultation process, which resulted in draft adaptations of the school version of the *Index*, followed by a pilot in 10 schools. This model had a very positive impact and its approach was adapted and replicated in a number of projects.

The case study *BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: Inclusive Education: translating national strategies and policies into practice at local level* gives more details on how the *Index for Inclusion* has been supported by SCUUK in Bosnia.

VI. ADVOCACY STRATEGIES OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL NGOS

The case studies presented in this report show that education reforms that aim to improve the right to inclusive education for children with disabilities can be promoted through:

- evidence-based advocacy for specific policies or laws to be introduced or modified to be made more inclusive;
- 'social advocacy' that aims at building awareness or shifting the attitudes of the general population.

The provisions in the CRC and CRPD on education (see Section II), as well as other frameworks, can be important external reference points and benchmarks for national reforms and for education advocacy at national level. These frameworks include the EFA Global Frameworks, the MDGs, the Global Campaign for Education, as well as international comparative frameworks that focus more on learning outcomes, such as the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study (PIRLS).

The Save the Children publication *See Me, Hear Me: A Guide to using the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to promote the rights of children* offers an overview of the actions that can be taken by disability and child rights advocates to raise awareness and to promote the implementation of the rights of children with disabilities, including the right to education. The Guide suggests 6 key areas of activity to stimulate ideas to be adapted to local contexts. These are listed below, with reference (in brackets) to the relevant case studies:

- Find out about the lives of children with disabilities. This includes:
 - situation analysis (BiH – Foundation Mozaik; Kyrgyzstan)
 - assessing the capacity of children with disabilities to claim their rights, and of the government and other actors to fulfill their obligations.
- Build capacity of
 - National and local government officials (BiH–Foundation Mozaik; Kyrgyzstan; Serbia–SCUK)
 - The disability community, DPOs, Parents' Associations (Latvia, Russia)
 - Children with disabilities and children's organizations (Moldova, Russia)
 - Media (Moldova, Russia)
 - Professionals working with children (Croatia, Kyrgyzstan; Serbia–CBR)
 - Community members (BiH–Foundation Mozaik; Serbia–CBR).
- Build networks and alliances. Possible partners might include:
 - Political representatives at local and regional level (Armenia; BiH–SCUK; BiH- SCUK; Foundation Mozaik; Kyrgyzstan; Serbia–UNICEF)

- The disability community, DPOs, Parents' Associations (Latvia, Russia)
 - Children's NGOs and community organizations (Serbia–OSI)
 - Academic and research institutions (BiH–Regional University Initiative)
 - Media (Serbia–UNICEF; Moldova)
 - Professional associations and trades unions (Croatia; Serbia–OSI)
 - National human rights institutions.
- Campaign for Ratification⁹⁶
 - Find out the procedure for ratification in your country, for example: who is the body making the decision?
 - Identify the person(s) who will be making/influencing the decision.
 - Develop messages that are likely to be persuasive with the government.
 - Identify the most effective messengers within your coalition to press the government on ratification – who will the government be likely to listen to?
 - Use your coalition members to write, email and meet with the government, write to the press, lobby the relevant officials, organise meetings, etc.
 - Build a wider body of public support to put pressure on the government –there is a need to develop simple and accessible arguments why they should support the campaign – for example, numbers of children with disabilities, scale of rights violations, how the CRPD can make a difference, level of international support.
 - Find a champion within the government to spearhead your campaign for ratification.
- Advocate for implementation of the CRPD (specific articles)
 - Raise Public Awareness (BiH–Foundation Mozaik; Serbia–UNICEF; BiH, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia 'For Real Campaign'; Russia;
 - Lobby the national government (Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia–OSI)
 - Lobby the local government (BiH–Foundation Mozaik; Serbia–SCUK)
 - Empower children as advocates (Serbia–UNICEF).
- Monitor implementation
 - Civil society reporting
 - Follow up on concluding observations.

The case studies in this report show different examples of advocacy, awareness raising and capacity building at different levels. They highlight the importance of:

- Embedding the participation of different stakeholders, including children as active partners, in all the stages of planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating different advocacy activities.
- Creating or participating in civil society coalitions, networks and alliances with children's rights NGOs, DPOs, Parents' Associations and teachers' unions and of making sure that these coalitions are sustainable. Coalitions, networks and alliances are essential for coordinating advocacy efforts and avoiding duplication. However they need strong leadership, clear action plans and monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

⁹⁶ The search for case studies focused on advocacy initiatives aimed at the implementation of Art. 24 rather than in general on the ratification of the CRPD.

- Using the *Index for inclusion* for promoting inclusive education as a strategy for quality education for all children, not just for children with disabilities.
- Implementing, at local and community level, national but also low-cost sustainable awareness-raising campaigns, which can be very effective and work as 'pilot' projects for further scaling up.
- Planning for solid monitoring and evaluation of advocacy campaigns, awareness-raising and capacity-building activities and for documentation and sharing of lessons learned.

VII. THE ROLE OF THE ‘CIRCLE OF CARE’: PARENTS/OTHER CARERS, COMMUNITY AND PEERS

Parents/other carers and communities

The case studies presented in this report show clearly that ‘children are not islands’.⁹⁷ They live in families and communities. Together with the actions taken by governments, parents and other caregivers, teachers and other community members have to make sure that all children, including children with disabilities, realise their right to education.

Parents and other carers are the first source of education for children and they should be involved and respected in all aspects of their children’s learning’.⁹⁸ From government level to school level parents need to be meaningfully involved in the different stages of programmes and processes that aim to improve access to and quality of education for children with disabilities. These include a number of activities, some of which are presented in the case studies in this report:⁹⁹

- Policy development at national, local and school level (BiH- Foundation Mozaik)
- Local analyses of the barriers to education for children with disabilities (Kyrgyzstan; BiH- Foundation Mozaik; BiH -SCUK-and Serbia CBR as part the *Index for Inclusion*)
- Participation in the assessment of their own children (Belarus; BiH –SCUK; Serbia -CBR as part the *Index for Inclusion*)
- Participation in the production of IEPs and progress reports (BiH –SCUK)
- Participation in School Self Assessments.
- Development and design of accessible complaints mechanisms to address problems as they arise
- Active membership of School Boards and/or in other governing bodies of schools.

The participation of parents is at the core of the *Index for Inclusion*. The case studies (BiH –SCUK; Serbia –CBR) that present this methodology implement most of the activities listed above.

Parents also need to have regular communications with teachers, not only about areas of concern that can arise over the child’s education, but also about achievements and progress. Teachers need to be trained to be able to deal with parents from different backgrounds and to create a welcoming and collaborative atmosphere.

However, while some parents of children with disabilities are well aware of their children’s rights and have the requisite skills to approach schools staff and governments, others share the negative attitudes of the communities and cultures in which they live.

For this reason, parents need to be informed and supported. Many of the case studies presented here

97. Lansdown, *See me, Hear me*, p. 54.

98. WHO/World Bank, *World Report on Disability*, p. 224.

99. Lansdown, *See me, Hear me*, p. 54.

(Belarus, Latvia, Russia, Serbia- CBR) describe education programmes for parents and carers. These programmes should cover:

- The concept of disability through the lens of the social or biosocial model
- The nature of the child's impairment
- The opportunities available for children in schools and outside
- Children's rights in theory and in practice
- The legislation and the policies in place and how to access a feedback or a complaint mechanism.
- Information about Parents' Associations/
- Positive stories of children with disabilities included in the community.

Education programmes for parents should involve representatives of Parents' Associations and they should provide, whenever possible, positive role models and stories. Qualified people with disabilities and parents should be involved as co-facilitators. Meaningful participation of children with and without disabilities during training or the use of material based on the views of children (like the posters produced by WVVA on IE) should also be planned for.

Parents' Associations are strong forces in advocating for the right to education of their children. In many countries Parents' Associations have created sustainable local, regional and national networks whose aim is to support other parents, offer advice and advocate for changes at different levels. The Open Society Institute has published a guide called *Making a Difference: A Parent's Guide to Advocacy and Community Action*, which suggests clear steps for parents to take action.

Education programmes should also target parents/ other carers of children without disabilities, since they often oppose the inclusion of children with disabilities in regular classrooms on the grounds that their own children risk learning less because the teacher has to pay attention to children with disabilities. The programmes must aim to increase these parents' and carers' acceptance of children with disabilities and raise their awareness of the benefits to all children of a fully inclusive education system.

In addition to these rights, parents have a number of responsibilities. Parents themselves have to commit to fulfilling their children's right to education, when appropriate support is provided by governments, through a number of actions:¹⁰⁰

- Register the birth of a child with disabilities.
- Contribute to children's developmental readiness for school and provide equal care to the child with disabilities as to other children in the family.
- Support and recognise the right to education and its value for all children and encourage the education of the child with disabilities.
- Ensure that children are able to arrive ready and on time when school is in session.
- Get involved in the school and support its work – through participation in fundraising, meetings with teachers, committees, consultations, governing bodies, etc.
- Show continued encouragement of the child's learning.
- Ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that their children are healthy and well nourished and hence able to learn.
- Challenge prejudices within the community.
- Facilitate opportunities for children with disabilities to meet with other children.

Not only is the attitude of the family important, but also that of the extended family and of the community as a whole.

100. Lansdown, *See me, Hear me*, p. 53.

A supportive community makes it easier for parents to accept their child with disabilities and to have him/her included in the school and in the social life of the community.

The CBR multi-sectoral strategy is based on the idea that rehabilitation of people with disabilities, and therefore children too, happens through the combined efforts of people with disabilities, their families, organizations and communities, relevant government and non-governmental services. Disabled People Organizations as part of communities also play an important role and NGOs are in general leading in supporting communities in becoming more active on inclusive education.¹⁰¹

UNICEF and the Association 'Društvo ujedinenih građanskih akcija - Duga' collected a series of real-life stories, *Our World of Diversity*, about experiences and lessons learned from children, parents, teachers and professionals in order to feed into discussions and decision-making about quality inclusive education for all children.¹⁰²

Peers and child participation

The *World Report on Disability* states: 'Child-to-child cooperation should be used more to promote inclusion'.¹⁰³ Child-to-child activities, in which children work as peers with other children, is one form of child participation and it can be implemented both within the classroom and in activities after or out of school, such as child clubs.

- 'Participation is about having the opportunity to express a view, influencing decision-making and achieving change. Children's participation is an informed and willing involvement of all children, including the most marginalised and those of different ages and abilities, in any matter concerning them either directly or indirectly. Children's participation is a way of working and an essential principle that cuts across all programmes and takes place in all arenas – from homes to government, from local to international levels'.¹⁰⁴

The right of children to participate in matters that affect them and to be heard and taken seriously in accordance with their evolving capacities is one of the four core rights of the CRC that leads to the fulfilment of all the other rights, including the right to education.¹⁰⁵

The participation of children with and without disabilities not only realises the rights of children with disabilities to participation and tackles the barriers to their inclusion but is also very effective in empowering children, in supporting their full development, in making them more visible and therefore more protected and more valued by the schools and communities. UNICEF has put together a Directory of various material on the participation of children with disabilities.¹⁰⁶

In addition to the examples in this report that explicitly mention child participation in advocacy (Serbia-UNICEF) and in different stages of programming (Moldova and K Bosnia and Herzegovina the Banja Luka Youth organisation BloKo implemented the project 'Children to children with special needs' in 2007, funded by the Foundation Mozaik. The aim was to integrate teenagers with physical and psychological needs and develop quality volunteer work with pupils of primary schools and secondary school students. The goal of the project was to develop better cooperation and socialisation between peers, reduce marginalisation of children with special needs, develop a spirit of volunteer work and creative use of free time.¹⁰⁷

UNICEF and Duga as part of the Campaign our 'World of Diversity' collected 'stories of change' from a number of stakeholders, including children.¹⁰⁸

101. USAID, *Best practices in inclusive education for children with disabilities: applications for program design in the Europe & Eurasia region*, p. 18

102. UNICEF/ DUGA, *Our World of Diversity*, 2011. Available at: http://www.unicef.org/bih/media_17951.html

103. WHO/World Bank, *World Report on Disability*, p. 225.

104. International Save the Children Alliance, *Practice Standards in Save the Children's Participation*, London, 2005, p. 4.

105. Marta Santo Pais, 'The Convention on the Rights of the Child', in *The Manual of Human Rights Reporting*, OHCHR, Geneva, 1997.

106. UNICEF, *The Annotated Resource Directory on Strengthening the Participation of Children and Adolescents with Disabilities*, Gender, Rights and Civic Engagement Section (GRACE), Policy and Practice Group, UNICEF Headquarters, December 2010.

107. Foundation Mozaik website: <http://www.mozaik.ba/eng/index.php?id=prica2>

108. UNICEF/ DUGA, *Our World of Diversity*.

In the area of inclusive education children can be involved, for example, in

- Their own assessment
- Producing and monitoring their own IEPs
- Implementing inclusive schools as part of the *Index for Inclusion* methodology
- School councils
- Discussions with local and national authorities on specific policies that are relevant to their education
- Group-based classroom work, supporting each other
- Advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns through child clubs or groups of young advocates for their own rights.

The child-to-child approach can take the form of peer education and can be used in the classroom, for instance during group work. But it can also be used in awareness raising campaigns to pass 'messages' to other children and involve larger numbers of children.

The level of participation of children can vary from consultation to joint decision making to children-led actions, with other different nuances in between.¹⁰⁹ In fact, a project or activity may operate at any one of these levels at different times and all these forms of participation are different, but equal, forms of good practice. The type of involvement depends on the wishes of children, the context, children's development developmental stages, the nature of the organisation, etc.

Regardless of the level of involvement, there are certain principles of participatory work that need to be guaranteed to make sure that children's participation is meaningful and is in the best interests of the child. Save the Children in 2005 published the *Practice Standards* to guide the practice of staff working to support children's participation. Each standard is accompanied by a set of criteria that can be used as indicators to see whether or not the standard is being met. This set of standards is widely recognised as good practice in child participation across different development agencies.¹¹⁰

These standards need to be followed to make sure that the participation of children is not tokenistic and that children are not simply being manipulated by adults – even if that is not their intention – especially during advocacy campaigns.

Parents/carers and the community should support the realization of the right of the child to participate.

¹⁰⁹. Experts and practitioners in the field of child participation have created models to help adults and children analyse the level at which children are involved. Most of the models have attracted some criticism over their definitions of the various levels and you may find some more helpful than others.

¹¹⁰. 'Standard 1: An ethical approach: transparency, honesty and accountability; Standard 2: Children's participation is relevant and voluntary; Standard 3: A child-friendly, enabling environment; Standard 4: Equality of opportunity; Standard 5: Staff are effective and confident; Standard 6: Participation promotes the safety and protection of children Standard 7: Ensuring follow-up and evaluation' from International Save the Children Alliance, *Practice Standards in Children's Participation*, London, 2005

VIII. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

A number of funding opportunities for inclusive education projects in Albania, intended in the broad sense and/or with a focus on children with disabilities, are awarded by different types of donors such as the EU, Trusts and Foundations, major international donors and corporations.

Funding can be divided into two categories:

- direct funding through grants;
- indirect funding through national and local intermediaries (e.g. available for international NGOs for projects to be implemented by them in Albania).

Direct funding can be offered by the country offices/delegations of institutional donors, by embassies and other local bodies (for example USAID, AUSAID, etc.) in Albania or by other donors based outside the country that allow direct applications.

This section focuses specifically on direct funding through the European Commission (EC) and through selected Trusts and Foundations.

EC Funding

The EU financial support already given to the Government of Albania can be reviewed here: <http://www.mie.gov.al/>. However, here is an overview of the main funding opportunities available.

Instrument for pre-accession assistance (IPA)

<http://www.adriaticpacbc.org/>

The IPA is the financial instrument established by the European Union to assist the Candidate Countries and the Potential Candidate Countries (beneficiary Countries) in their progressive alignment with the standards and policies of the European Union.

SEE: The South East Europe

<http://www.southeast-europe.net/en/>

The South East Europe programme is a unique instrument, which, in the framework of the Regional Policy's Territorial Cooperation Objective, aims to improve integration and competitiveness in an area, which is as complex as it is diverse. The programme is supporting projects developed within four Priority Axes: Innovation, Environment, Accessibility, and Sustainable Growth Areas - in line with the Lisbon and Gothenburg priorities, and is also contributing to the integration process of the non-EU member states.

Investing in people

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/finance/dci/investing_en.htm

The Programme "Investing in people" aims to support actions in the area of human and social development, in particular: education, health, gender equality, social cohesion, employment, childhood and youth, as well as culture. Based on Article 12 of the EU Regulation establishing the Development Co-operation Instrument (DCI), this is the only thematic programme which covers nearly all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The programme supports activities under four main pillars: (i) good health for all, (ii) Skills, promotion of universal access to quality primary education and access to vocational and skills training;

(iii) gender equality; (iv) Other aspects of human and social development, such as: employment and social cohesion (to improve working conditions at international level), children and youth (against the exploitation of children and in favour of improving job prospects for the young).

Entities eligible for funding are specified in the guidelines of each call for proposals, depending on the objectives of the call. Usually, they are:

- Non-State Actors (NSAs), including non-governmental organisations, social partner organisations, such as professional associations, universities and research institutes, etc.;
- Local authorities and consortia there of or associations representing them;
- International (intergovernmental) organisations, as defined by Article 43 of the Implementing Rules of the Financial Regulation of the European Community.

Youth in Action

http://www.eia.org.uk/view_calls.php?id=342&PHPSESSID=2b9a43c085ddc235ed186277bbff5170

This call offers grants to support projects, which promote cooperation in the youth sector between Youth in Action Programme Countries and Partner Countries other than those, which are neighbours of the EU. It is addressed to organisations working in the youth sector that are interested in running projects promoting cooperation in this field, involving youth workers and youth leaders, young people themselves and other actors involved in youth organisations and structures. Proposals must be submitted by non-profit organisations, which are: non-governmental organisations (NGOs); public bodies at regional or local level; or national youth councils. The same applies to partner organisations.

Trusts and Foundations

Abilis Foundation

www.abilis.fi/

The Foundation supports organizations that include persons with disabilities in their leadership and also organizations that are run by parents of children with disabilities.

ABILIS Foundation judges the applications according to the involvement of persons with disabilities, including their role in developing the project and in committing their own resources to the project. The project must be realistic in its scope and expected results. The application must show how the project will continue to benefit the community once the project's funding term has been completed. A minimum of 10 % of the project budget should be a contribution of time, money or other resources from the applicant group.

The David & Elaine Potter Foundation

<http://www.potterfoundation.com/education.php>

The Foundation focuses on organizations and institutions that offer educational opportunities, which will enable students to develop their skills and abilities (for Albania: it could sponsor trainee teachers). The Foundation supports individuals to enable them to pursue their studies - a requirement of the grant is that they share their research within the university and use it to contribute to wider society (geographical areas are not specified and previous funds were allocated to British and South African bodies).

Evan Cornish Foundation

<http://www.evancornishfoundation.org.uk>

The Foundation aims to promote and provide access to education for all and to improve and enrich people's lives through education. The Foundation's intention is to complement rather than replace public funding. The Foundation works with charities in the UK and internationally.

Gates Foundation

<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/global-libraries/Pages/overview.aspx>

The Foundation has a programme called 'Libraries (Global)' that promotes the dissemination of information and Internet in public libraries globally.

Global Fund for Children

<http://www.globalfundforchildren.org/>

The Global Fund for Children aims to advance the dignity of children worldwide. It offers small grants to innovative community-based organizations working with many of the world's most vulnerable children, and by harnessing the power of children's books, films, and documentary photography to promote global understanding. The Fund supports organizations that have annual budget of less than \$200,000. In most cases, new grantee partners have budgets in the \$25,000 to \$75,000 range. The aim of the fund is to identify organizations at a relatively early stage in their development. Prospective grantee partners must work directly with children and youth. The fund does not support groups engaged exclusively in advocacy or research. However, the Fund supports organizations that perform both advocacy and direct service. Prospective grantee partners must be led by individuals who live and work in the community. The Fund prioritizes organizations whose leaders were born and raised in the community; it does not fund the local offices or affiliates of national or international organizations. A prospective grantee partner must be registered with the local or national government as a non-profit organization. If the political context makes legal registration unfeasible, the organization must demonstrate non-profit equivalency. This Fund could be ideal for supporting new Parents' Associations.

Global Fund for Women

<http://www.globalfundforwomen.org/index.php>

The Global Fund for Women supports women's groups that advance the human rights of women and girls. The Fund strengthens women's right groups based outside the United States by providing small, flexible, and timely grants ranging from \$500 to \$30,000 for operating and program expenses. The Global Fund supports:

- Groups of women working together.
- Organizations that demonstrate a clear commitment to women's equality and women's human rights.
- Organizations that are governed and directed by women.
- Organizations based outside of the United States.

Education is one of the areas the Fund supports.

Greenwich World Hunger Association

<http://greenwichworldhunger.org/>

The mission of Greenwich World Hunger Association (GWHA) is: 'To help alleviate world hunger through education of the community and promotion of self-help programs for the hungry.' GWHA supports educational programs, job training facilities, and provides scholarships.. Grants are typically in the \$2,000-5,000 range. The website does not seem to provide the list of geographical areas in the eligibility criteria.

The Hidden Charitable Fund

<http://www.hildencharitablefund.org.uk/application%20notes.htm>

The Fund supports project in the area of overseas development. The aim of the Fund is to address disadvantage, notably by supporting causes, which are unlikely to raise funds from public subscription, known sometimes as 'unpopular causes.' Fund policy is directed largely at supporting work at a community level. Grants are rarely given to well funded national charities.

Macquarie Group Foundation

<http://www.macquarie.com/mgl/com/foundation/worldwide/emea>

The Foundation supports community partners who, in addition to receiving a Foundation grant, benefit from fundraising and volunteer support from Macquarie staff. Concentrating funding in the areas of health care and research, education, the arts, welfare and the environment ensures our support is diversified

across the community spectrum. In addition, the Foundation works on a range of initiatives to build the sustainability of the not-for-profit sector. These include assisting with growth strategies, transferring skills to the sector and supporting programs that make the sector more efficient e.g. capacity building.

MIUSA

<http://www.miusa.org/idd/history/bidcllocations/smallgrants>

MIUSA administers small grants for DPOs or other disability-led initiative groups for projects that result in inclusive practices, policies and outcomes within existing international development activities and promote collaboration between DPOs and international development agencies. This year MIUSA awarded small grants to 3 Albanian NGOs.

Oak Foundation

<http://www.oakfnd.org/>

The Learning Differences Programme of the Oak Foundation has been funding projects in the United States, and has supported a limited number of European projects. However, they aim to expand to include more international work in 2012.

In the Special Interest Grant Programme, Oak funds a range of projects including those with a focus on education. The Trustees are committed to remaining flexible and to seizing opportunities as they arise. Also, in the Child Abuse Programme, Oak supports initiatives that:

- Directly address sexual abuse and sexual exploitation; and/or
- Diminish other forms of abuse and violence that are related to or impact upon sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.

Children with disabilities who are hidden in their homes or in institutions are often subject to violence and abuse. Inclusive education as a form of participation enhances their visibility and their protection – based on this, it could be possible to request funds under this Programme.

Open Society Foundation

<http://www.soros.org/initiatives/>

Open Society Foundations addresses the issue of inclusion of people with disabilities, including children through a number of initiatives and grants in the following areas:

Open Society Rights Initiative - <http://www.soros.org/initiatives/rights-initiatives/focus/disability>

Mental Health Initiative - <http://www.soros.org/initiatives/health/focus/mhi>

Early Childhood Program – http://www.soros.org/initiatives/childhood/focus_areas/equity

- Note that the early childhood programme does not advertise their funding opportunities online – new call for applications circulate amongst their regional foundations, partners and Step by Step network.¹¹¹

Open Society Youth Initiative - <http://www.soros.org/initiatives/youth>

East East Partnerships without Borders - <http://www.soros.org/initiatives/east>

OSI often offer funds for evidence-based advocacy.

Pestalozzi Children's Foundation

<http://www.pestalozzi.ch/en/home.html>

Pestalozzi Children's Foundation (PCF) supports development projects aimed at improving the realisation of child rights in the areas of access to basic quality education and intercultural education, implemented by established local partners in PCF programme countries. PCF does not implement projects itself in the PCF programme countries, but works through operational partners. Financial support to operational partners for a project can last up to 9 years, divided in 3 project phases of approx. 3 years each (phase in, consolidation/expansion, phase-out). The Foundation provides funds and focuses also on building the

111. Skype Interview with Olena Vinareva, OSI (March 2012).

partners capacities in content and management related issues. Many of the projects are 'network projects', and the operational main partner is working then with several local partners. They have projects in Moldova, Serbia, Macedonia at the moment, but not clear geographical restrictions are stated.

The Sanne Philanthropic Foundation

<http://www.sannegroup.com/index.php?page=129>

The Foundation supports projects in three areas: children and youth, climate change and economic empowerment. Further themes can be addressed in accordance with emerging issues. Geographical areas covered are not specified.

The Sigrid Rausing Trust

<http://www.sigrid-rausing-trust.org/>

The grants cover different programmes including Minority Rights - current grantees have contributed to the adoption and implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, both at the international and domestic level - and Women's rights have a sub-programme on 'Training and Education' that could be of interest to Albanian NGOs. The Trust can only support activities that can be properly considered to be charitable according to the law of England and Wales (Charities Act 2006).

Sofronie Foundation

<http://sofronie.org/europe>

The Foundation wants to provide opportunities to the most vulnerable children and give them the best chance to learn, grow and thrive. Education is one of the areas supported by the Foundation. It supports projects in Europe.

The Souter Charitable Trust

www.soutercharitabletrust.org.uk/

The trust supports projects engaged in the relief of human suffering in the UK and overseas – especially, but not exclusively, those with a Christian emphasis.

Grants are generally given to charitable organisations and not to individuals or in support of requests on behalf of individuals.

UBS Optimus Foundation

http://www.ubs.com/global/en/wealth_management/optimusfoundation.html

The Foundation supports education projects that contribute to enabling more children to attend school and that provide better educational opportunities to girls.

Providing access to ECD to children in underserved areas is one of the particular priorities of the Foundation that currently supports projects in Belarus and Russia.

Waterloo Foundation

<http://www.waterloofoundation.org.uk/index.html>

WF is interested in the psychological and behavioural development of our children, and particularly in certain neuro-developmental conditions and the factors that influence them. To that end the Foundation supports research projects as a main priority, but also non-research projects and dissemination of research.

Organisations not based in the United Kingdom must send contact details for a named person, preferably from a UK-registered entity, who is willing to provide the Foundation with references in the UK.

Recommendations

This section contains a set of recommendations to the Albanian Government in order to work towards the realisation of the right of children with disabilities to inclusive education. These recommendations are based on the CRPD, on practices that have been carried out elsewhere in the CEECIS region and on overall global trends.¹¹² The recommendations also take into consideration also the 'Pre-University Law',¹¹³ the four objectives for education of the Action Plan of the National Strategy on People with Disabilities and the Action Plan currently drafted by UNDP in collaboration with the Albanian Government towards the ratification of the CRPD, which has a set of actions around inclusive education and recommendations from other reports about Albania.¹¹⁴ Important general information about the Albanian educational context were provided by colleagues in loco.¹¹⁵ However, the analysis of the good practices taking place in Albania and the very specific contextual situation in the country is beyond the focus of this study. It should be noted that a parallel study funded by WVA&K has been carried out by a locally-based consultant focusing specifically on practices in Albania. At this stage this report is not informed by the findings and recommendations of the report of that study.

The recommendations suggest key actions to be taken in order to realise the right of children with disabilities to inclusive education. These actions fall into three main categories, even though several of the recommendations below are inevitably interlinked and presuppose each other across the different categories:

1. Government-wide actions
2. Specific actions to promote access to education
3. Actions to ensure quality of education for all children.

It is recommended that WVA&K engage a number of different local stakeholders with local knowledge and experience of specific practice in the Albanian context to discuss these recommendations further. To this end, a number of recommendations for NGOs and other civil society actors have been appended to each set of recommendations to the government.

I. Government-wide actions

It is recommended that the Government of Albania take the following measures:

Policies and legislation

- Ratify the CRPD and its Optional Protocol.
- Eliminate legislative or constitutional barriers that prevent disabled people from being included in mainstream schools.
- Align policies and existing strategies to reflect the provisions of the new Pre-University Law.
- Create national policies of inclusion in kindergartens.
- Develop the capacity of government officials at all levels, including local and regional authorities, in their understanding of the Law and by-laws.

¹¹² UNICEF, *The Right of Children with Disabilities to Education: A Rights-Based Approach to Inclusive Education*, Geneva: UNICEF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEECIS), 2011; *Best practices in inclusive education for children with disabilities: applications for program design in the Europe & Eurasia region*, March 2010.

¹¹³ Parliament of Albania, 'Pre-University Law': Section XII, Articles 76 and 77 of the draft (January 2012), were unofficially translated for this report.

¹¹⁴ Marianne Schulze, *Final Report: Promoting Disability Rights in Albania*, [publisher; place], 2011; Albanian Disability Rights Foundation and AMShC, *The Implementation of the Action Plan of the National Strategy on People with Disabilities in 2010: Monitoring Report*, May 2011; E. Ikononi, B. Musai and K. Sotirofski, European Training Foundation, *Mapping policies and practices for the preparation of teachers for inclusive education in contexts of social and cultural diversity – Albania country report*, Working document, ETF, [place, date].

¹¹⁵ Information was kindly provided by Janet Njelesani, UNDP Consultant (Skype Interview, March 2012); Rodika Goci, Senior Program Coordinator for Inclusive Education and Early Childhood Development, Save the Children Albania (telephone interview and email exchanges, February and March 2012; and with Chiara Segrado, Save the Children Italy (January 2012); Gerda Sula, Executive Director at Step by Step Center, Albania (Skype interview and email exchanges, March 2012) and ongoing support from World Vision Albania & Kosovo.

- Provide information to children with disabilities and their families about the new Law and by-laws, their implications and how to challenge violations of them.
- Ensure that the relevant Ministries make the new school spaces accessible externally and internally according to the principles of universal design. There must be disabled access to all buildings and all external areas and internal spaces to which every pupil requires access, including classrooms, toilets, play areas, sports facilities, corridors; there must also be accessible doors: 'Research has demonstrated that the cost of accessibility is generally less than 1% of total construction costs'.¹¹⁶
- Ensure that the reform of vocational education and training (VET) legislation, which aims to contribute to the increased employability of youth and towards a competitive economy, is disability-inclusive so that young people with disabilities can benefit fully from it and it can open up perspectives from them.¹¹⁷

NGOs and other civil society actors should consider:

- Advocating for the ratification of the CRPD and taking part, whenever possible, in the process and consultations initiated by UNDP on the drafting of the Action Plan towards ratification.
- Creating one (physically) 'accessible school', documenting the process of using local materials and the cost involved and presenting it to the Government as an advocacy tool.

Ministerial responsibility and collaboration among ministries for inclusive education

- Ensure that responsibility for the education of children and adults with disabilities continues to rest within the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES).
- Facilitate co-operation between finance ministries and those developing the policy and ensure the allocation and monitoring of the budget for inclusive education.
- Ensure collaboration between the MoES and the Ministry of Transport and Public Affairs at national and local levels, to ensure that accessible and affordable transport systems are in place, consistent with the numbers of children needing provision, especially in rural and mountainous areas of the country.
- Facilitate co-ordination between maternal and prenatal health services, crèche system (currently under the Ministry of Health), and early childhood education services, to ensure early identification and assessment, as well as rehabilitation services. The crèche system should have an early education component, in addition to the provision of basic care services, and therefore be closely linked to the MoES.
- Ensure close liaison between ministries responsible for social work services, social protection, employment and vocational training.

NGOs and other civil society actors should consider:

- Creating and promoting opportunities for collaboration, identifying 'focal people' in each ministry.

Action plans, strategies and appropriate budget allocation for implementation at national, regional and local level

- Ensure that the new Pre-university Law is translated into clear national, regional and local strategies and action plans and that clear roles and responsibilities are indicated.
- Initiate and facilitate participatory national and regional consultative processes, according to international good practices on participation, to develop relevant strategies and action plans

¹¹⁶ Edward Steinfield, *Education for All: The Cost of Accessibility*, Education Notes, The World Bank, August 2005, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ 'In the mid-term perspective 2010-12 the ETF will place an emphasis on improving the quality of vocational education and training (VET) in Albania within a lifelong learning perspective. The focus will be on specific initiatives emerging from current policy developments in VET, employment and active labour market policy in Albania. The ETF will support the capacity building related to the goals of the EU's Education and Training agenda, Albania's benchmarking, reporting and regional cooperation within the framework of VET system development and provision, relevance to the labour market and enhanced employability, and adaptability of enterprises and education-economy partnerships', European Training Foundation, *Albania: Country Information Note 2010-2012*, 2010, p. 1. Available at: http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Country_Information_Note_Albania_EN

for the implementation of the Pre-University Law, and for any further review of the education system (DPOs, Parents' Associations, children and young people and other relevant civil society stakeholders should be meaningfully involved).

- Ensure that national, regional and local strategies and action plans synergise with other existing frameworks that aim at implementing the CRPD.
- Ensure monitoring of the strategies and action plans and the involvement of civil society actors in feedback on their implementation.
- Introduce an obligation for The School Development Plans and the Education Municipal Action Plans to include explicit provisions for the inclusive education of all children, including children with disabilities, with appropriate budget allocation.
- Develop the Educational Municipal Plans involving schools, teachers, municipal officials, school administrators, parents and children, as well as other stakeholders and ensure appropriate funding.
- Create and budget for an Inclusive Education Focal Point/Expert at municipal level.
- Consider the adaptation of special schools as resource centres: they could support teachers in mainstream schools to develop a number of skills, including Sign Language, Braille literacy, orientation and mobility and teaching materials.
- Ensure that the framework for assessing teachers' performance at national level includes a number of criteria/indicators related to inclusive education.
- Ensure that the criteria for the appointment of education staff at national, regional and local level include the commitment to inclusive education for all children, including children with disabilities.
- Consider amending National Plans for Education for All and for the attainment of MDG2 to meet the needs of children with disabilities.

NGOs and other civil society actors should consider:

- Supporting the drafting of the action plans at the different levels and making sure that clear roles and responsibilities are allocated, together with appropriate budget allocation.
- Building the capacity of DPOs and Parents' Associations as well as of children's groups and associations where these exist (see 'Children's Participation Rights' below) to enable them to participate in consultations and decision making processes related to action plans and strategies.
- Ensuring that resource centres evolve in such a way as to support all teachers to work with all children and therefore to support inclusive education in the broadest sense.
- Supporting pilot projects for the implementation at local level of the action plans and sharing lessons learned for possible scaling up.
- Submitting an alternative/shadow report to the CRC highlighting the situation of children with disabilities and the gaps in the provision for their education.

*Ending institutionalization*¹¹⁸

- Strengthen support to families to build their capacity to be able to look after their children.
- Strengthen cross-sectoral community-based services.
- Re-train former institution staff to be able to work in different capacities.
- Train teachers and school management to guarantee inclusive education for the children in transition from institutions to school.

NGOs and other civil society actors should consider:

- Advocating for de-institutionalisation and supporting the creation of alternative care.

¹¹⁸ There are around 400 children in 9 public institutions and 200 in 6 non-public residencies. However there are many other vulnerable children at risk of losing parental care and becoming institutionalized', Dea Haxhi, *Final Baseline*, World Vision Albania, 2011, p. 3.

- Supporting the provision of training for teachers, school management and parents/carers.
- Supporting the provision of training for institution staff members in transition.
- Providing training in life skills for children and young people with and without disabilities together to support their development and the transition out of institutions.

Capacity building and awareness raising

- Raise awareness of local authorities at different levels, as well as of professionals and the general public, about the bio-social model of disability and the government's commitment to it (showing the actions taken by the government to operationalise the concept).
- Raise awareness of local authorities at different levels, as well as of professionals and the general public, about the broad meaning and benefits of inclusive education for all children, including those without disabilities.
- Plan a solid Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework for awareness-raising activities.
- Plan an M&E framework for capacity development of local authorities, professionals and school staff that goes beyond end-of training questionnaires and involves observation and follow-up.
- Ensure that capacity building is not confined just to one-off initiatives but becomes a regular series of activities, both because it requires sustained learning over time and because of staff turnover.
- Ensure that capacity building involves 'learning by doing' at all levels and practical examples and that it aims at developing competencies.
- Ensure the full participation of relevant stakeholders, including children with disabilities who have successfully completed their education and/or representatives from Parents' Associations and/or DPOs, both in awareness raising and in capacity building initiatives (as co-facilitators/role models for example).

NGOs and other civil society actors should consider:

- Supporting the overall capacity building efforts.
- Promoting the collaboration between DPOs, Parents' Associations and children's groups and creating opportunities for collaboration.

Strengthening information systems

- Develop comprehensive education information management systems, leading to improved collection of disaggregated data on disabled children, enrolment, retention, transition and outcomes.
- Form partnerships with UN agencies, NGOs and DPOs to join efforts in data collection.
- Include disability in the next census and invest in capacity building in data collection, liaising with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation which is working in this area. The Washington Group on Disability and statistics has developed six questions for a census based on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in line with the WHO's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF).¹¹⁹

NGOs and other civil society actors should consider:

- Gathering information at local level about systems that are already in use.
- Gathering information about existing plans for collection of data on children with disabilities and advocating for the collection of data related to the inclusive education of children with disabilities (e.g. UNICEF in Albania is planning a baseline on children with disabilities).
- Coordinating a pilot project on data collection that could then be scaled up.
- Investing in capacity building on data collection and information systems.

¹¹⁹ WHO/World Bank, *World Report on Disability*, pp. 26-27 and pp. 281-282.

- Supporting the organization of data collection for the census and within other initiatives.

2. Specific actions to promote access to education

It is recommended that the Government of Albania and Local and Regional authorities take the following actions:

Involve parents/ carers, communities and children

- Develop strategies to increase community and family involvement in school boards/management committees and municipal education offices.
- Ensure that schools organise 'open door' days when parents/other caregivers can meet with teachers/heads in a positive and supportive environment.
- Ensure that local authorities in partnership with community members and parents undertake an analysis of the barriers to the full inclusion of children with disabilities in community life and in education.
- Ensure that local authorities organize Education Programmes for parents of children with disabilities and involve in them also parents of children without disabilities in order to increase their awareness and acceptance.

NGOs and other civil society actors should consider:

- Supporting or developing Parents Education Programmes
- Developing a pilot community project that analyses local barriers to education and then considering it for possible scaling up.

Early identification and intervention

- Ensure that early identification and intervention are carried out, focusing on infants and toddlers 'at risk', so that they can get early support to achieve their full potential. This requires the provision of good information as well as education and support to parents about the nature of particular disabling conditions and about what they are able to do.

NGOs and other civil society actors should consider:

- Making sure that local NGOs with experience in early identification and education (such as Step by Step) are fully involved in the process.

Inclusive learning environments in kindergartens and schools

- Consider adapting and piloting the Index for Inclusion as a tool for self-reflection and for embedding a broad understanding of inclusion in all planning undertaken by schools and achieving increased stakeholder participation in inclusive education.
- Provide training to all school staff, not only teachers but also administrators, head teachers/principals, school management, school board, etc. Engage teacher associations, school boards, and parent-teacher associations.
- Ensure that in the criteria for the appointment and promotion of school staff (head teachers/principals, teachers, administrators) include the commitment to inclusive education.
- Ensure that inclusive policies are reflected in all aspects of the life of the school and kindergartens: classroom teaching and relationships, school and board meetings, teacher supervision, school trips, playground behaviour, budgetary allocations, and any interface with the local community or wider public.
- Monitor schools regularly to ensure that segregation is not taking place either formally or informally. Monitoring should involve parents of children with disabilities to increase transparency and accountability.

- Incorporate into the procedures of the National Inspectorate for monitoring schools a number of indicators/questions about inclusion.
- Ensure that child protection policies and procedures are in place and that there is a child protection focal point selected among the teachers in every school.
- Create child-friendly and accessible complaint and feedback mechanisms for parents and children.

NGOs and other CS actors should consider:

- Adapting the Index for Inclusion and testing it.
- Creating 'model schools' where the Index for Inclusion is implemented and documenting the process through video. This could be a very powerful training and advocacy tool of how inclusion is implemented in practice.
- Working closely with local and regional educational authorities to build the capacity of their staff.
- Supporting schools to create child protection policies and procedures and feedback and complain mechanisms and to pilot them.

3. Actions to ensure quality of education for all children.

It is recommended that the Government of Albania, Local and Regional authorities take the following actions:

Pre-service and in-service teacher training

- Review the curricula for pre-service teacher training and ensure that (i) inclusive education as a broad concept is embedded throughout the whole period of teacher training; (ii) a practice-based course is included, focusing on how to do inclusive education in the classroom and on supporting teachers to develop relevant competencies. Teaching practices should include proper feedback and evaluation by the university instructors, teachers in the schools and children. The pre-service curricula and training in relation to inclusive education should mirror the learner-centred methodologies (discussions using different methods, use of different teaching aids, group work, action research projects, etc.) that teachers need to acquire.
- Oversee the above process of revision of curricula through a set of quality assurance criteria for teacher training faculties and 'diversify the funding base for the state-run universities in accordance with the criteria being met'.¹²⁰
- Invest in the continuing development of teachers, for instance by providing systematic in-service training rather one-off initiatives with no or limited follow up.
- Ensure a bottom-up approach in both pre-service and in-service training through:
 - practice-based learning, with limited and short theoretical inputs that enable teachers to apply in practice the principles of inclusive education and child-centred/learner-centred methodologies;
 - training on locally available material that can be used in the classroom;
 - action research projects carried out by teachers – these could support the production and collection of this locally available material;
 - videos demonstrating how inclusive education is happening; to show teachers how other teachers are coping with the everyday challenges of inclusion is a very useful and powerful tool.
- Ensure that assessment of in-service training focuses on monitoring the change in teachers' practice: methods such as action research, observation and the creation of portfolios must be

¹²⁰ E. Ikononi, B. Musai and K. Sotirofski, *Mapping policies and practices for the preparation of teachers for inclusive education in contexts of social and cultural diversity – Albania country report*, Working document, European Training Foundation, 2010, p. 50.

used in addition to post-training questionnaires. Also, mentoring and/or buddying systems should be considered as a follow up to the training. For instance, two teachers can be paired up to share ideas, experiences and challenges. This would also increase the sense of a 'community of practice'.

- Ensure that appropriate support material, adapted to the national context, is presented in both pre-service and in-service training.
- Ensure that training is delivered, preferably by teachers, through mobile teams at municipal level and that there is participation by different stakeholders, e.g. representatives of Parents' Associations and children's groups, whenever possible and wherever appropriate to meet specific learning objectives.
- Ensure that learning outcomes from previous projects in Albania with a focus on teacher training, such as the Development of Special Pedagogy Section (DSPS) at the University of Vlora (funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation), are analysed and the lessons learned are taken adequately into consideration.

NGOs and other civil society actors should consider:

- Supporting long-term plans and efforts that focus on teacher training and a solid monitoring and evaluation framework in order to be able to document challenges, solutions and changes to the participation and achievement of all children, including children with disabilities, as result of more inclusive pre-service and in-service teacher training.
- Supporting the creation of 'mobile teams' and their development to ensure that a quality assurance framework is in place.

Support for teachers

- Ensure adequate staffing levels and ensure that staff are fairly paid.
- Provide teaching assistants (as per the new Pre-University Law) and actively raise funds for the necessary budget.
- Ensure that Intra-school committees (as per the new Pre-University Law) support the teachers in their work.

NGOs and other civil society actors should consider:

- Exploring with teachers, teaching assistants and multi-disciplinary teams how to work together collaboratively and effectively in order to maximise the children's learning outcomes, ensuring at the same time that teachers do not simply depend on or pass responsibility on to the 'specialists' but that teachers and the overall school develop their own capacity to deal with inclusion challenges.

Multi-disciplinary inclusive assessments

- Ensure that assessments carried out by the Evaluation Committee described in the new Pre-University Law focus on helping teachers and schools, in line with the CRPD, to identify barriers to the full inclusion, participation and achievement of children rather than 'labelling' children according to a medical/deficit approach.
- Ensure that the 'other duties' of Evaluation Committees 'to be determined by the Minister', as stated in the same Law, include support to teachers, such as the sharing of resources and connecting teachers from different schools.
- Ensure that assessments of children's educational and other needs include strong parental involvement – this is suggested as an option in the Pre-University Law but it should become a firm requirement.
- Monitor systematically the work of the Evaluation Committee and, if necessary, revise the procedures for assessment in response to evidence about its effectiveness after a certain amount of time. A number of pilots could be organized on a small scale, reviewed and the results proposed as models of national implementation of this specific article of the law.

NGOs and other civil society actors should consider:

- Piloting and supporting the participation of parents and children to make sure that it is fully implemented.
- Support the provision of training the Evaluation Committees to make sure that the assessment does not apply the 'defectology' model (the training should be very practical and if possible a video with examples of good practices in multi-disciplinary participatory assessment could be produced as result of a pilot project).
- Monitoring the process of assessment after a certain period (challenges, success, impact on children, on teachers etc.) and sharing lessons learned for future implementation.

Individualised Education Plans

- Introduce Individualised Education Plans (IEPs) as a key strategy for supporting children with disabilities in mainstream schools, as indicated in the Pre-University Law. IEPs are an invaluable tool for helping teachers understand children's needs and plan appropriate activities to reach a number of goals, which are not necessarily all 'academic' but can relate also to life skills.
- Develop standardised forms for IEPs and explanatory booklets to be used by schools and kindergartens with simple information to guide the teachers through the process of filling them out in a participatory way and giving clear practical information. The development of IEP forms and booklet should be carried out in collaboration with a number of representatives from key stakeholders and also with representatives of the Evaluation Committees, whose assessment should ideally contribute to the child's IEP. The development of IEP forms and booklets can be seen as a stand-alone tool or as part of a wider resource with overall practical information about inclusive education in Albania and the implications for the work of teachers.
- Provide teachers with practical training on how to fill out an IEP in a participatory way, moving them away from the assumption that external 'specialists' are needed to do it.
- Encourage the involvement of parents (as indicated in the Law) and children in the production of IEPs. Children's involvement is not mentioned but it is very important: parents and children should each have their own sections in the IEP.
- Establish partnerships between service providers, NGOs, research and teaching institutes to support children with disabilities in an holistic way and support the teachers when the learning outcomes of the IEP cannot be achieved by themselves alone.

NGOs and other civil society actors should consider:

- Developing and piloting a child participation page/section in the IEP and promoting its development and use.
- Monitoring the use of the IEP after a certain period (challenges, success, impact on children, on teachers, etc.) and then supporting the government to make any relevant changes.

Curricula, assessments and learning material

- Ensure that multi-level and multi-ability teaching materials are available.
- Ensure that evaluation systems focus on individual progress rather than on measuring all students with fixed criteria of academic performance.
- Provide assistive devices to schools, including Braille devices and information and communication technology (ICT), i.e. computers, telecommunications and relevant software, to enhance the inclusion and participation of children with disabilities.
- Ensure that children with disabilities do not repeat the same class.

NGOs and other civil society actors should consider:

- Training teachers on curriculum differentiation and on the use of ICT.

- Ensuring that the issues of curriculum flexibility and, if appropriate, more accessible textbooks and adapted evaluation systems are included in advocacy efforts towards inclusive education

Children's Participation Rights

- Ensure also that the child's own views are given prominence in the different stages of his/her education.
- Introduce legislation guaranteeing that children can establish democratic bodies such as clubs/school councils that comply with the principles of non-discrimination and that promote inclusion of children with disabilities.
- Develop guidance for government authorities on developing opportunities for child participation at local, municipal, regional and national level.
- Facilitate the participation of children in decision making, according to international practice standards, at school, community, regional and national level.
- Introduce child-friendly accessible feedback and complaint mechanisms for children and child-sensitive counselling at different level, starting from schools.

NGOs and other civil society actors should consider:

- Training children to enable them to participate meaningfully and advocate for their rights according to their evolving capacities and in matters concerning them.
- Support the creation of child participation constituencies at local level and mechanisms to feed into national level groups such as Child Parliaments, to make sure that the latter are strongly connected with the children at local level and that they do not become unaccountable.
- Promoting partnership with DPOs and Parents' Associations and their participation in decision making at different levels
- Supporting the creation of mechanisms for close cooperation between civil society and governments.

It is recommended that pilot projects and testing should be carried out whenever possible, especially for practices adapted from other contexts (such as the *Index for Inclusion*), before projects are scaled up. It is also recommended that NGOs and other civil society actors find a structured mechanism (Network, Working group/s) to coordinate their actions so as to maximise their effects, including advocacy initiatives, to avoid duplications and to share systematically lessons learned.

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