

Education, Social Integration and Development: Realizing the Rights of Children with Disabilities

How has children's life changed?

In eleven communities of Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo children with disabilities (CwD) have more potential to achieve the fullest possible social integration and individual development. Children with severe physical and mental disabilities, many of whom were kept at home before, gained the opportunity to attend rehabilitation, education and recreational activities at Community Based Service (CBS) Centres. Empowered families and communities have increased capacity to provide a protective environment for CwDs. As a result, children have opportunities for their life skills development, physical and mental rehabilitation and development, social integration and education, to be equal members of the society.



What did we accomplish?

CwDs became more independent and integrated: Nearly 2,000 CwDs have been provided with rehabilitation and integration services through early detection, individual rehabilitation and holistic guidance and support services. Parents of CwDs report a higher level of social integration and independence through the improvement of their life skills (85% of children). This has been achieved through the provision of a wide range of services including physiotherapy, developmental, behavioural and occupational therapy, psychological counselling, development of skills for independent living, facilitating access to mainstream education and after-class teaching support, and vocational education. It's worth mentioning that all children received services and support tailored to their needs aiming at their social integration. Many of them - after rehabilitation - were integrated into mainstream education. This factor, as well as advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns in target communities, resulted in around 40% increase of CwDs registered in mainstream schools and educational institutions.

Parents are capacitated and empowered to better support their children: Over 1,300 parents/caregivers developed their skills and psycho-emotional strength to support their children. About 90% of supported families report on the improvement of childcare practices, becoming more resilient and able to facilitate their children's physical, psycho-social and educational development. Special training curricula for parents helped them learn about peculiarities of their child's condition and potential for development and rehabilitation and better cope with their children's emotional stress and behaviour problems. In many instances parents were referred to other services, to ensure that all needs for their children are met.

Developed Replicable Model of Community Based Services for CwDs: In many countries (and in Eastern Europe in particular) the concept of **medical model** of disability prevailed as opposed to **social model**: *the social model of disability sees disability determined by the way society is organized. The medical model of disability says people are disabled by their impairments or differences and looks at what is 'wrong' with the person*

and not what the person needs and what abilities have. Our interventions were based on the social model, establishing services tailored to the special needs of children, which were not available in the target community before project intervention. For all centres, financial sustainability has been ensured: the outcomes of the project, the impact on children and their families and the high quality of services motivated the authorities to take over future financing of the centres. Furthermore, the Model has been replicated in two more locations at the request of the governments and due to high demand.

How did we get there?

Establishment of CBS Centres: In 2016-2019, Save the Children has established 11 Community Based Service (CBS) Centres for Children with Disabilities.

Start-up investment: Save the Children and local municipalities invested in renovation and construction of premises for the centres and provided specialized equipment, furniture and tools.

Engaging and strengthening governments and CSOs: We supported national and local authorities capacitating them as duty-bearers to meet their obligations related to CwDs. We partnered with local civil society organizations, increasing their capacity to provide quality services to CwDs, to advocate for their rights and demand accountability from the government.

Awareness-raising: We have conducted 'YES, CHILDREN CAN!' awareness raising Eastern Europe regional public campaign to raise awareness on the rights of CwDs, including various awareness-raising events both nationally and locally.

Capacity building of CBS centre staff: We invested in capacity building of centre staff to deliver quality services. We also ensured ongoing support and mentoring to the staff for technical and operational aspects.

Capacity building tools and materials: We have developed various tools and training materials for the capacity building of centre staff and parents, such as [Augmentative Alternative Communication](#); [Behaviour Management training](#); [Sexuality in Adolescents with Disabilities](#); [Training Manual for Professionals Providing Community-Based Services for CwDs](#); [Transformation of Public Schools with Specialized Profile to the Resource Schools: The Concept and Action Plan](#); [Inclusive Web Design: making a web page accessible to all](#).

Networking within the communities: We ensured active participation of community leaders, enhanced cooperation with different institutions and developed solid referral networks.

Want to know more?

Have a look at the [Supporting Inclusion of Children with Disabilities: Model of Community-Based Services](#) and the package of resources available at Share Point (for Save the Children staff only) and two documentary films:

“Changing Lives” available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cs3IL_TzOrs&list=WL&index=97&t=51s

“Building a Future” available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTpkDSyJV2Q&list=WL&index=89>.

