

# Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities in Ukraine

2008 - 2013

*Funded by the Canadian International Development Agency*

***Inclusive education brings a new point of view.  
Those with different opportunities should have equal  
rights too! There is a world in every child, no matter  
how small, Education, respect and equality for all!***



Final Project Narrative Report  
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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The project “Inclusive Education for Children with Disability in Ukraine” was implemented over a five year period (2008 – 2013). The lead agencies for this project were the Canadian Centre on Disability Studies (CCDS), Canada and the Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation (SbS), Ukraine. More specifically, CCDS, as the Chief Executing Agency, was responsible for the overall management of the project and implementation of the Civil Society Component. Grant MacEwan University from Edmonton spearheaded the work of a team of inter-university consultants and was in charge of the Learning Institutions (Education) component. The Policy Component was a shared responsibility of the above two Canadian organizations, which were signatories to the CIDA Contribution Agreement. In Ukraine SbS was responsible for the overall project coordination and spearheaded the work of the Civil Society Component; National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities was the lead on the Policy Component and the Institute of Special Pedagogy spearheaded the Education Component .

The project was implemented within two pilot regions in Ukraine: Lviv and Crimea (Simferopol). Other regions in Ukraine, such as Kharkiv, Vinnytsia, Kirovohrad, Luhansk and Dnipropetrovsk were invited to participate in the dissemination of the project results. The region of Kyiv represented national interests, and representatives from that region were involved in an advisory capacity in the project development, implementation and evaluation stages in all three component areas – policy, learning institution and civil society.

The purpose of the project was to strengthen the capacity of targeted institutions (i.e. national, regional and municipal levels of the Ministries of Social Protection and Labour and Education and Science; learning institutions; and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)) in two pilot regions (Lviv and Simferopol/Crimea) to develop policies in support of inclusion of children with disabilities in schools and communities, establish inclusive education programs and strengthen civil society to advocate and deliver services.

The expected impact of the project was a strengthened civil society and improved policies to establish, support and advance inclusive education. The project worked towards this expected impact in a number of ways. One way was by providing joint training to government officials of two Ministries (Ministry of Social Development and Labour and the Ministry of Education and Science) at the national, regional and municipal levels, educators, and NGOs in policy development, policy analysis and consultative policy development. This training and other workshops helped the project meet the expected result of improved policy development, planning, coordination, accountability and service delivery practices within government and NGOs. Another expected result was targeted at strengthening of the civil society and a capacity to advocate and engage in participatory decision-making with government and other stakeholders regarding equal access to education. Gender equality was a cross-cutting theme that was addressed within all components of the project, with a more detailed strategy outlined below.

This project aimed to change the attitudes of government, education institutions and educators, and non-government organizations towards disability and inclusion by introducing different concepts, methods, and models as a means of demonstrating inclusion of individuals with disabilities in all levels of Ukrainian society. Children and youth were the target population of the project, but all of the citizens of Ukraine benefited from the project activities as issues of accessibility, inclusive education, and partnership were explored. Working in partnership with all three levels of government (municipal, regional, and national), educators, and non-government organizations, the project assisted Ukraine to develop the foundation for an inclusive society, namely: inclusive policies, a sustainable inclusive education program, and, sustainable community-based disability organizations. These activities attempted to build the capacity of the systems to support disabled children in their family home and community, substantially reducing the need to be separated from their parents and sent to boarding schools, and in turn increasing the opportunities for inclusion in Ukraine's society.

The project's methodology was based on equal partnership among academics, governments and community, with a particular focus on the social model of disability, gender equality, and knowledge transfer. The project provided an opportunity for all three levels of government to participate in the implementation of the project including the national level (Kyiv), regional level (Lviv and Crimea), and municipal level (Lviv and Simferopol). A central assumption was that sustainable social change rests upon a foundation of partnership that is closely linked to the target population.

The issue of inclusion of children with disabilities was linked to multiple government Ministries. For the purpose of this project, the focus was on working with the Ministries of Social Protection and Labor, and Education and Science. The former was responsible for the provision of social services to disabled children and their parents, and the latter is responsible for the provision of education, including inclusive education.

The three main areas of activity to achieve the project aim were policy development, inclusive education, and a strengthened civil society. Specific critical activities for the project included:

- Training in disability and policy development
- Policy analysis
- Composite school education
- Parent empowerment for education
- Upgrade of working teachers
- New course in Bachelor program
- NGO capacity building
- New model of Inclusion Resource Centre (IRC)
- Development of new model of innovation grants
- NGO communication capacity
- Information network

One primary project output emphasized increased capacity of targeted institutions and NGOs to effectively and independently deliver training programs in disability, inclusive education and inclusive policy. Another output was the enhanced ability of key stakeholders to participate collaboratively in designing and delivering services and programs to support inclusion of children and youth with disability in schools and communities in two pilot regions. The evaluation data collected throughout project implementation demonstrated that all of the performance indicators related to the project outputs and outcomes have been achieved. Interviews with parents of children with disability, educators and NGO staff, as well as evaluation forms completed by participants of the trainings indicate that their level of knowledge increased as a result of taking part in the training sessions. The increased capacity of trainers, parents, government representatives and educators has been demonstrated by the manner in which they have implemented this new knowledge and skills into practice.

At the outcome level the project as whole achieved a number of significant results:

The establishment of policy frameworks in Ukraine which promote inclusive education in schools and communities in the two pilot regions and nationally;  
The delivery of inclusive education programs for children and youth with disabilities in the two pilot regions and the introduction of inclusive education to the new regions;  
The increased role and capacity of civil society organizations to support and advance inclusive education in the two pilot regions and nationally; and  
The strengthened capacity of a core group of stakeholders to advance their networks and collaboratively develop and implement inclusive education policies and practices in Ukraine.

The project has strategically focused in four areas to ensure systemic and sustainable changes in addressing social and economic inequalities for children (adults) with disabilities and their families in Ukraine: knowledge mobilization, policy development and practice, organizational development (governmental and non-governmental), and partnership development. Project achievements became prevalent in all of these areas. In addition to existing project objectives, the following overall priorities were identified and addressed by the project:

- Mobilization of value-based disability and inclusion knowledge among professionals and parents;
- Facilitation of further action-oriented collaborative planning among IRC stakeholders in inclusive education in supporting families with children and youth with disabilities in regular schools and communities;
- Sustaining of intersectoral “Network for Inclusion. School for All”, which was established by the project through the work of the civil society component and currently is being facilitated by the Simferopol IRC. The Network for Inclusion has been working towards public awareness and effective and collaborative support to inclusion of children/youth with disabilities in schools and community.

There is growing understanding in Ukraine at the institutional, local, regional and national levels (evidenced by more inclusive policies, government decrees, action programs, change of attitudes, better school-parent collaboration) that inclusive education trend in Ukraine has reached the point of no return. Lead stakeholders in the pilot regions are prepared and motivated to establish themselves as agents of change for proliferation of inclusive education.

Overall, the outcomes of this project are far-reaching and affect change in capacities at the individual and organizational levels, as well as systemic change in how children with disabilities and their parents are supported in Ukraine. The project not only significantly contributed to the systemic changes in education of children with disabilities in Ukraine, greater social and economic opportunities for families with children with disabilities and future independence of children and youth, but also raised significant interest in inclusive education and disability from a social and human rights perspectives among all sectors in Ukraine.

Overall, sustainable project results by component include the following:

#### Policy

The interest in disability issues and inclusive initiatives by government, community organizations, universities and other sectors in Ukraine continue to grow. The most significant forces to this continuously increasing interest in inclusion are: greater understanding of existing attitudinal, systemic and physical barriers in Ukrainian society; collaborative efforts of and pressure on governments and communities by parents of children with disabilities; leadership and commitment by disability stakeholder groups; increasing expectations from the international community with regards to inclusion, especially related to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD); and ultimately, the recognition by the Ukrainian society of the importance of inclusion.

The National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine (NAIU), the lead Ukrainian organization for the policy component, continues to play the lead role in promoting inclusive education throughout Ukraine. With a country-wide membership and consultative status with the UN, NAIU is an important resource for disability community mobilization and capacity building, as well as direct influence on policy makers. NAIU has increased its capacity to build partnerships, promote new knowledge and advocate for changes needed to address disability issues in Ukraine amongst professionals, government officials and policy makers.

The principles and approaches that CCDS and NAIU demonstrate in the project became increasingly important to other stakeholders and are being incorporated in their new initiatives. Examples include: a) an agreement between the project and the National Coalition of Parents in Ukraine to facilitate the development of the national network “Parents for Inclusion”, which is become a broad initiative called “Network for Inclusion. School for All”; and b) numerous regional initiatives project stakeholders

including NAIU, the Institute of Special Pedagogy (ISP), Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation (SbS), schools, parents organizations, University Ukraina, regional access committees, other universities). It is becoming more and more challenging to identify where the project ‘stops’ and where other initiatives start – which is an illustration of positive impact of the project strategies and approaches and is a positive indicator of the project’s success.

The project has become a catalyst to important 25 legislative and policy changes that are conducive to sustainability of results. Please see Appendix J for the list. In recent years, with the assistance of the project, Ukraine has made significant steps that provided for establishing generally sound political, legislative and policy frameworks. Key achievements included:

- In December 2009 the Parliament ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- On August 1, 2012 Ukraine adopted a National Action Plan geared at implementation of provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities during 2012-2020. This comprehensive program among other aspects envisages concrete measures, including financing, aimed at proliferation of inclusive education. In particular, the target for 2015 is to have 107,000 students with disabilities included in mainstream schools; 122,000 students in 2018 and 138,000 students in 2012.

The project was instrumental in information and expertise exchange across Ukraine on disability and inclusion issues, organization of International consultations and working groups promoting inclusion.

#### Learning institutions (Education)

Educators in the pilot regions and other regions of Ukraine start to realize that inclusive education is their professional future. Many of them want to (while some may simply have to) embrace this new reality, seek professional development opportunities, and learn how to work in close partnership with other professionals, parents and students. Lead stakeholders at the national level and in the pilot regions are prepared and motivated to establish themselves as agents of change for inclusive education. In terms of professional development, the following courses have been developed, approved by the Ministry of Education of Ukraine and integrated into the existing systems of in-service and pre-service teacher preparation programs sustained by government funding.

In 2009 the project initiated the establishment of the Inclusive Education Task Force, which was set up at the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. The Task Force included representatives of all Canadian and Ukrainian partner organizations, who worked together with the Ukrainian ministerial officials and policy makers to develop detailed recommendations based on best Canadian practices and expertise with regard to Inclusive Education (IE). The project developed, translated and localized several

guidelines pertaining to the IE legislation/policies. The project used the “Disability Lens” to identify the gaps in the current Ukrainian legislation and policies. As a result, in August 2011 the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted the Policy # 872 “On Implementing Inclusive Education in Schools of Ukraine”.

The project worked together with the Ministry of Education to develop professional competencies and the scope of practice of teacher assistants (TAs). The project developed a guidebook to demonstrate the roles of TAs in inclusive settings based on Canadian and international experience. The project shared materials of MacEwan’s TA preparation program with the Ukrainian partners. In 2011 Teacher Assistant (TA) was judicially recognized as a profession in Ukraine and in 2012 a program for TA preparation at the bachelor level was launched at the Pedagogical College of Ivan Franko National University of Lviv (one of our main partner institutions).

Five 18-hour courses have been integrated into the national IPUT (Institutes for Professional Upgrading of Teachers) curriculum taught to all working teachers across Ukraine:

- Introduction to Inclusive Education
- Leadership in Inclusive Settings at School
- Assessment and Evaluation in Inclusive Classroom
- Differentiated Instruction in Inclusive Classroom
- Professional Collaboration in Inclusive School

The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has also approved a 54-hour comprehensive inclusive education course developed by the project and recommended it for integration into existing pre-service teacher preparation programs across the country. It should be noted that the above courses are accompanied by published detailed methodological guidebooks for instructors such as “inclusive Classroom Strategies” “How to Make Your School Inclusive” “Ukrainian Sign Language” dictionary as well as reading materials that include numerous translations from contemporary international IE literature., “Such as “Supporting Diversity in the Classroom” by Loreman et al.

A 4 year bachelor level Teacher Assistant program was successfully launched at the Lviv Pedagogical College of the Lviv Ivan Franko University, one of the project partner organizations. Master’s level courses on IE were integrated into the Master of Education program offered by Kyiv-based Hrinchenko University.

Instructors from the Ukrainian Institutes of Post-Diploma Education (IPUTs) and pedagogical universities were sensitized and trained on all the newly integrated 18-h and 54-h IE courses to be methodologically and conceptually ready for practical delivery of the courses to pre-service and in-service teachers.

The Ministry of Education and Science approved the Ukrainian Index of Inclusion, which was developed by the project in collaboration with the Open Society Foundation as a

comprehensive national tool for ongoing evaluation of “inclusiveness” of schools in the policies, school practices and classroom strategies domains.

The project has been instrumental for developing long-term programs to promote and support Inclusive education in the pilot regions. The total number of children with disabilities that study in inclusive settings in 2012/13 is: 106 students in Crimea (including 10 students with special needs in Simferopol pilot school #3); 90 in Lviv (including 27 students with special needs in Lviv pilot school #95).

## Civil Society

Since 2008, there is a significant increase in new projects initiated by civil society groups and supported by different foundations (international) and local and national governments. Among others, the most illustrative example is the International Renaissance Foundation (IRF) that accentuated its focus on inclusive education. During the Inception Visit (June 2008), project partners met with IRF, a Ukraine-based fund. Follow the meeting, the IRF allocated \$100,000 in US funds towards inclusive education programs supporting the project. Between 2009 and 2012 there are almost 30 projects with the direct connection to inclusive education and access to education for people with disabilities that received financial support from IRF. The grantees are civil society organizations from different regions in Ukraine, including our pilot regions. The project partnered with some of them (such as Inclusion Index development or Network for Inclusion). The project regularly received requests to provide consultation, advice and to develop partnerships on a regular basis.

Significant progress has been made in the work of Pedagogical Medical Psychological Consultations (PMPC). PMPC was not included in the key project partners at the beginning of the project due to a historical role in lives of families of children with disabilities in Ukraine, which was not always positive. Working with PMPC was an important focus in removal barriers to education, building intersectoral collaboration and ensuring transformational and systemic changes in Ukraine. CCDS faced substantial reluctance from some parents and educators about working with PMPC and it took considerable efforts and skills to develop partnership with a focus on common goal – improving lives of children in the community. The development and approval of a new PMPC regulation allows for a shift from focusing on diagnosing children with disabilities and designing a segregated education program, to providing recommendations to parents and teachers regarding inclusive education options and supports while taking into consideration the child’s functional abilities.

Currently, more and more PMPC staff are involving parents in the decision-making process, as well as reaching out to the regular schools. In the last two years of the project, there has been a significant increase in parents’ lobbying for the rights of their children with disabilities. This role of parents is increasingly accepted by professionals and policy makers. New opportunities for advancing public awareness are arising from project collaboration with such organizations as the Ukrainian Down Syndrome Organization and Parents of Children with Autism.



However, what is most notable is the significant impact the project has made in facilitating the change in attitude in Ukraine towards the inclusion and full participation of children and youth with disability. The project was able to achieve results within three components and across two regions that were necessary for the change to occur. Not only did the shift occur due to successful completion of the activities within each component but it also contributed to the social stability and reform process in Ukraine promoting democratic values, human rights and inclusion of all citizens. People became more interested in such issues as disability, inclusion, accessibility, human rights of persons with disability, and children's rights were able to access the project trainings and resources, which were disseminated and promoted in mass media in different regions of Ukraine. Not only children with disability but also parents with disability (Tatiana Barantsova, a wheelchair user from Luhansk) were able to access the mainstream schools where their children study. Persons with disability became more proactive in sending their message to the Ukrainian society (Bohdan Mojsah, a blind person from Lutsk now publishes information regularly in the journal *Disability and Society*). Overall, persons with disability became more active in public life (paraplegics Lilia Shkolnik and Oleh Myskiv are permanent members of the Crimean public committee on accessibility). More and more websites become accessible for persons with disability across Ukraine (the website of the National Assembly of persons with Disability is accessible for blind).