

Reorganization of the child care system: school inclusion

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Contents

- Context
- Approaches
- Preparing the process
- Stages of implementation
- Lessons learned
- Recommendations

Context: Legal framework

- National strategy „Education for All” (2003);
- National Strategy and Actions Plan of the residential child care system reform (2007-2012);
- Ratification of the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (iulie 2010);
- Strategy of social inclusion of persons with disabilities (2010-2013);
- Inclusive education development program in Moldova (2011-2020): concept framework of IE that sets the inclusion conditions of deinstitutionalized children and mainstream school inclusion of children with SEN.

Context – Start of SI

- In 2010 there was yet no clear vision of SI at the national level.
- The educational system was not prepared for the school inclusion of children from residential care and of children with disabilities.
- The existing legal and normative base does not cover the entire SI process.
- There were no structures and resources at the national, raion, and community level that could support this process methodologically.
- Inter-sector collaboration within this segment continues to be problematic.
- Local public authorities were put into situation to launch the process without clear support or methodological guidance.

Context: attitudes

- **Stigmatization of children** from residential institutions.
- **Prejudices related to children** from residential institutions and children with SEN, impossibility to include into mainstream education.
- **School resilience and exclusive attitudes.**
- Resilience was caused by **unawareness of the teaching staff** about **methods of individual work with and approaches to** children who have learning and behaviour problems.
- Non-acceptation was caused by **avoidance of certain tasks and additional activities** that required additional efforts, preparation for individual approach to education, although this is the fundamental principle of the entire teaching process.
- **The society** was not prepared.
- **The parents of the pupils** from community schools were unsatisfied with the approach.

Context: Existing models and practices

- Reorganization of Cahul residential school into a Complex of Social Services (2007-2010).
- Beginning of reorganization in 3 auxiliary residential schools: Sculeni (Ungheni raion), Albinetul Vechi and Socii Noi (Falesti raion) in 2009-2010.
- Practices developed by several NGOs, specifically focused on children with disabilities.

Approaches

- SI – on-going and well prepared process.
- Children’s family is an important resource in the inclusion process.
- Connection of the SI to community services, with the creation of an integral system.
- Involvement of LPA as leaders of the process.
- Inclusion in the process of preparing all schools from the raion.
- Skills development and consolidation of the SI stakeholders.
- The use of “cascade” method in the reform, and capacity building for SI.
- M&E
- Setting partnerships with other NGOs.
- Development of SI models that cover all children from residential institutions, and not only those with SEN, and focus on social aspect.

Preparing the process

- Analysis of inclusion models and practices existing in the country and internationally.
- Development of SI models:
 - *social model*
 - *socio-educational model*
- Development of training programs.
- Preparing decision-makers.
- Raising public awareness.

Process of implementation

- Complex evaluation of the child's situation in a residential institution;
- Preparing schools for the child's inclusion;
- Strengthening the family;
- Inter-sector collaboration;
- Community school inclusion of children.

Creation of support systems for SI

- Person in-charge within the Department of Education;
- Key person in-charge of SI from the school;
- Intra-school team;
- Support teachers;
- School resource centre.
- **since 2013 – Psycho-Social Assistance Service (SAPP).**

Complex evaluation of the situation of a child in a residential institution

- ✓ Educational and social needs assessment.
- ✓ Evaluation of family's capacity to support the child in SI and reintegration.
- ✓ Evaluation of schools regarding SI competences.
- ✓ Identification of support services available in the community.

Preparing schools for child inclusion

- ✓ **Preparing children in school**
- ✓ **Preparing schoolchildren's parents**
- ✓ **Preparing school CP, CDS**
 - The training should approach the needs and tasks chartered in the inclusive education laws;
 - The training was focused on building practical skills based on a clear theoretical framework;
 - The training program allowed the theoretic knowledge to be strengthened in practical activities and then extended to other persons involved in the school and social inclusion process, ensuring sustainability of skills;
 - Because the training time was limited, the main focus was basic capacity building that could be further applied in practice by CDS.

Module I: Inclusive Education – from theory to practice

- ✓ Learned about the national and international legal context of SI;
- ✓ Defined the main concept of SI;
- ✓ Became aware of the importance of school and social inclusion of children;
- ✓ Learned about types and characteristics of disabilities;
- ✓ Learned about the essence of developed inclusive practices;
- ✓ Learned the essence of individual methods of training and education;
- ✓ Became aware of the role of the teacher and support person in school inclusion.

Module II: Problems and solutions in the inclusive education

- ✓ Gained knowledge about problems that may appear in the SI process;
- ✓ Learned about institutions that can be involved into the solution of problems faced by parents in the context of school and social inclusion;
- ✓ Learned and apply methods of solving problems in the inclusion process.

Module III: Inclusive educational and family environment.

Follow-up

- ✓ Methodology of organization of the educational process in an inclusive class;
- ✓ Methodology of family support.

3 modules, 3 days each, total 54 hours

Follow-up

Practical aspects of the work with the child, based on the IEP and adapted or modified curriculum.

Study visits to inclusive schools in Chisinau.

302 teaching staff from 151 schools.

Strengthening and training the family

- ✓ Strengthening the family environment and protective factors within the family;
- ✓ Parenting capacity building;
- ✓ Development of capacities to overcome difficulty;
- ✓ Creation of the family's social network and capacity building to provide support in difficulty;
- ✓ Supporting SI;
- ✓ Understanding own role in supporting own children in SI process.

Inter-sector collaboration.

Community schools inclusion of children – social model

- Residential schools staff is a resource for supporting children in SI;
- Training teachers from community schools where the children will be integrated;
- Awareness raising among classmates, and creation of friendly environment;
- Awareness raising among the classmates' parents;
- Connection to community services.

Community schools inclusion of children : socio-educational model

- Every child has a ST who helps in the SI process.
- The school team, together with the child's parents, produce the IEP that indicates the child's curriculum.
- The IEP is periodically revised, highlighting the child's achievements and failures.
- M&E of the child's inclusion.
- The teachers, along with the support teachers and parents, help the child in the social integration.
- Connection to community services.

SAPP capacity building

On-going monitoring and support of the included children.

Results

- Over **417** persons trained in the IE.
- Over **358** children are deinstitutionalized and integrated into school, including **299 with IEP**.
- Every family and child received support.
- School inclusion models developed.
- The experience gained in the process informed the existing policies:
 - Inclusive education development program for years 2011-2020.
 - Structure: model and guide of IEP implementation.
 - SAPP organization and functioning regulation.

Lessons learned

- School inclusion is successful only if the child, family, school is prepared.
- The leading role in SI belongs to the Education Department, which determined successful inclusion.
- Capacity building of all SI stakeholders was crucial, changing attitudes and building professional capacities.
- SI was only possible with the support provided by teaching staff who prepared the inclusion, adapted the educational process to the child's needs, and monitored the process of child's adaptation in the school.
- Selectarea persoanelor potrivite pentru funcția ST - este una decisivă.

Lessons learned

- Lack or absence of specialized services for children with SEN that could complement the IE will reduce the effects of inclusion.
- The children's parents need to be supported.
- Schoolmates of children with SEN can be a resource of support.
- Inter-sector collaboration favours the inclusive process.
- School inclusion is easier in urban than in rural areas.
- Synergy between NGO initiatives contributed to the unification of efforts in the production of the best model of school inclusion.

Recommendation

- SI should be permanently monitored by the ME, LPA, and school administration.
- A complex evaluation is needed too identify the children's educational needs, which will allow choosing appropriate methods and support level for the inclusion of these children.
- The educational process in residential schools that continue working should be transferred to community schools, while residential facilities should only be in charge of social services in the context of the children's family and community reintegration.