



**SAVE THE CHILDREN IN ALBANIA  
BEST PRACTICES  
ON  
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES  
2004-2010**

**DECEMBER, 2011**

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

<b>ACA</b>	Albanian Children’s Alliance
<b>BKTF</b>	All Together Against Child Trafficking
<b>CCTM</b>	Child Centre Teaching Methodologies
<b>CG</b>	Children’s Government
<b>CPU</b>	Community Protection Unit
<b>CRC</b>	Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>CRIM</b>	Child Rights Implementation and Monitoring
<b>CTRP</b>	Child Trafficking Response Programme
<b>CVSA</b>	Children’s Violence and Sexual Abuse
<b>CYLG</b>	Child Youth Led Groups
<b>ECD</b>	Early Childhood Development
<b>EFA</b>	Education for All
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FBSH</b>	Children of the World and Albania
<b>FShDPAK</b>	Albanian Disability Rights Foundation (ADRF)
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>GTZ</b>	German agency for Technical Cooperation
<b>IE</b>	Inclusive education
<b>IEP</b>	Individual Education Plan
<b>IMCCR</b>	Inter Ministerial Committee on Child Rights
<b>IO</b>	International Organizations
<b>MCCU</b>	Mother and Child Care Units
<b>MoES</b>	Ministry of Education and Science
<b>MoH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>ND</b>	Normative Disposition
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organizations
<b>NSC</b>	National Strategy for Children
<b>OPA</b>	Office of the People’s Advocate
<b>PAR</b>	Participatory Appraisal Research
<b>PHARE</b>	Poland and Hungary Assistance for Restructuring of their Economics
<b>REA</b>	Regional Education Authority
<b>RED</b>	Regional Education Department/Directorate
<b>SCiA</b>	Save the Children in Albania
<b>SCR</b>	Subsection on Children’s Rights
<b>THB</b>	Trafficking in Human Beings
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development

## **I. Executive Summary**

Save the Children in Albania commissioned a consultant to perform a combined desk and field research analysis of its good practices in the implementation of Inclusive Education projects, within the 2004-2010 timeframe, with a particular focus on children with disabilities. The principal aim of the analysis was to document the good practices which would then serve the organization to primarily inform its future activities of potential replication, its key teacher and education professionals' capacity-building activities as well as policy and legislation formulation.

Save the Children annual and strategic plans and reports were analyzed and their key messages synthesized, while field research activities were organized and held in Berat, Vlora, Korca, Gjirokaster and Librazhd.

The documents' research sustained by interviews and focused group discussions with key stakeholders, including parents of children with disabilities, revealed a number of good practices which seem to have been well-installed in most of the instances and project locations.

Among the best and more sustainable practices identified are the structured capacity building activities focused on issues of disability and inclusive education practices of classroom and school management, teaching methods and parental involvement. Particularly effective has resulted the implementation and supervision of the use of individualized educational programmes both at pre-school (Portage methodology) and at elementary grades of primary schools. Piloting of support teachers wherever possible seems to be one of the most effective in all pilot inclusive schools when compared to other schools.

The report compiled after the research activities recommend Save the Children in Albania to primarily focus its advocacy strategy in the introduction of its key - above-mentioned - successful practices into education legislation design and implementation. At the same time challenges were observed which suggest the need to strengthen the current interventions and selectively replicate components in other locations in the country.

## II. Purpose of the Report

Save the Children is implementing Inclusive Education practices with a focus on Children with Disabilities through a project applied in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science, in six Regional Education Authorities (2004-2009) respectively in Librazhd, Berat, Tirana, Korca, Vlore and Gjirokaster while gradually focusing primarily in the last three (2009-2011). IE for CWD projects intend to enroll and support the learning of children's with disabilities in mainstream educational settings.

The general goal of the study will be to document SCiA's "Inclusive Education for CWD" project implementation practices from 2004-2010 and come up with recommendations for further steps of implementation and replication.

### **Expected outcomes from this study are the following:**

- i. Document how the IE model with focus on CWD has been established at different stages of the project implementation and how it has enriched with new entrants by associating those adjustments with explanations/justifications why the latter were needed.
- ii. Document the involvement of different actors; describe their roles and responsibilities in this project (parents, teachers, education specialists, psychologists, social workers, health specialists). Describe the necessity of their involvement in accordance with IE principles.
- iii. Describe the role of the in-service teacher training in providing IE for CWD. What are the key training types being conducted? What additional ones are needed?
- iv. Document the procedures identification, enrollment, and those monitoring the achievements of CWD in education settings (who and how has been involved, document showing the type of involvement)
- v. Document what types of adjustments schools/preschools were undertaking to accommodate the needs of CWD (being those in curriculum, mentality or infrastructure)
- vi. Bring the perspective of teachers (mainly those in project schools but compare with those who have not been exposed to the IE concept) on what their role is and/or can be in achieving success)
- vii. Bring the perspective of parents on what their role is and/or can be in achieving success. How much they feel involved in education of CWD? Ways of improvement?

- viii. Find out whether and at what extent the model established in Tirana, Berat and Librazhd is maintained in REA and schools. Explain the factors affecting changes that may occur in order to connect them with challenges that face REA/schools in maintaining the model (those factors may be linked with legislation, budget allocations, decision making processes in education settings, etc)
- ix. Bring out the main successes and challenges of the project throughout the years. Explain how those derive from existing education legislation and MOES strategy.
- x. Bring recommendations on what changes are needed in legislation (Education law and by-laws) based on project experience.

### III. Methodology

The methodology adopted for the purpose of this study entails a two-fold analysis. The first one is a **Process Based Analysis** geared towards understanding how the programme operated/s and how it produced/s its outcomes thus enabling the programme's replication in other Albanian regions or elsewhere in the world.

The second type is an **Outcome Based Analysis** that by using a beneficiary and partner perspective highlights the program's main outcomes and assigns each of them appropriate indicators realizing in this way the programme's impact on individual beneficiaries and key partners.

#### III.I. Process-Based Analysis

During this analysis the following questions will be addressed in order to understand the programme's functioning:

1. On what criteria are the programme's regions/communities chosen?
2. How are the community needs assessed and identified?
3. How are the programme's coordinators/workers chosen and trained to deliver services?
4. What is a typical beneficiary's profile?
5. What is required of beneficiaries?
6. How does the programme select what services will be provided to which beneficiaries'?
7. What is the general process that beneficiaries' go through within the program?
8. How have the services changes during the life of the programme?
9. What do beneficiaries consider strengths of the program?
10. What do beneficiaries consider weaknesses of the programme?
11. What does staff consider strengths of the programme?
12. What does staff consider weaknesses of the programme?
13. What do employees and/or beneficiaries' recommend improving the programme?
14. On what basis do employees and/or beneficiaries' decide that the services are no longer needed?
15. How are the communities and the respective education authorities empowered to take over the process in the future

The aforementioned questions will be answered adopting a thorough analysis of Programme’s Reports and other relevant documents as described in the table below.

<b>METHODOLOGY TOOL</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<b>Documentation Review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze Quarterly and Annual Reports 2004-2010</li> <li>Analyze Strategies 2004-2010</li> <li>Analyze other relevant documents and publications</li> </ul>	Researcher	Tirana	<b>May-June</b>

### ***III.II. Outcomes-Based Analysis***

This methodological tool aims at providing more practical features to the research by including “the voices” of beneficiaries, direct or indirect as they might be, as well as of the main partners of the programme. Hence, it will include questionnaires, interviews, observations etc. The Methodological tools, their purpose, participants, location, and time-frame of research used in both evaluations are presented in the Matrix below.



<b>METHODOLOGY TOOL</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
<b>Individual Interviews</b>	To clearly understand the:  a. Impressions  b. Experiences of main beneficiaries, partners and programme staff	-Researcher -Teachers -School Directors -Programme's Staff -MoLSA staff	-Tirana -Korca -Librazhd -Berat -Vlore - Gjirokaster	<b>Sep. – Nov.</b>
<b>Focus Groups</b>	Explore unclear aspects of the programme derived during individual interviews through group discussion, e.g., reactions to an experience or suggestion, understanding common complaints	-Researcher -Teachers -Programme's Staff -NGO staff - Governmental staff	-Tirana -Korca -Librazhd -Berat	<b>Sep. – Nov.</b>
<b>Observation</b>	Observe the synergies created between beneficiaries, partners and programme staff	-Researcher -Teachers -Programme's Staff -NGO staff - Governmental staff	-Tirana -Korca -Librazhd -Berat	<b>Sep. – Nov.</b>

The **Appendix 1** to this report includes the Consent Form distributed to beneficiaries and partners before their participation.

The **Appendix 2** to this report includes the Guide to Key FGD & Interview Questions used with the beneficiaries and partners.

## IV. Findings

### IV.1 Process-Based Analysis

#### IV.1.1 Situational Context Prior to SCiA Partnerships on CWD

By and large, being “different” is a challenge wherever one is found, yet being “different” in a country that offers scarce services and resources towards integrating these differences, within the society one lives, it is much harder.

An old mentality inherited from the Communist Regime and sustained during the first decade of the transitional years in Albania considered children with disabilities as pitiful or charitable subjects. In a country of about 3.5 million people, with a total child population of 1.2 million the population of children with disabilities it's estimated to be ranging between 90,000 to 120,000<sup>1</sup>. At least 20,000 – 30,000 of them are children whose parents and relatives would be typically embarrassed in presenting into their communities as well as those whose parents do not easily admit they have disabilities often keeping them marginalized within the households.

Prior to the SCiA Programme for CWD Inclusive Education, almost all of the available services for this ‘social category’ were offered by only six specialized state schools and six developmental Centers. The geographical dispersion of these services was very limited, that being in only six of the twelve Albania's regions hence only half of the country had coverage with specialized services.

Several assessment studies conducted by INGOs as well as national or local NGOs had revealed that the quality of services in these state structures would often be extremely poor, characterized by centralized management and reclusive premises. In addition, the latter lacked proper equipment and qualified staff, especially when dealing with deaf and blind children.

The problem of CWD integration in the society was and is still more amplified in the rural areas where communities have lesser access to services and the level of awareness regarding education and integration is at the minimum. An additional deteriorating factor is also the obsolete or at times absent infrastructure. The distant - but in some cases even families in proximity with the capital city, Tirana - faced

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<sup>1</sup> This figure is an approximation calculated on the average EU countries' data according to which children with any minor to severe form of disability compose 8-12% of the total child population, with 2% being in the most profound end of the spectrum.

immense difficulties to access these services. Social benefits were offered to families only in cases of severe disabilities based on the same criteria as applied to adults with disabilities.

Very little was also achieved in terms of legislation and legal frameworks regarding CWD.

Considering the aforementioned, civil society actors<sup>2</sup> started as early as the second half of the nineties to provide some uncoordinated services to encourage integration however these services were very limited in comparison to the growing number of CWD being identified who continued to be segregated by their parents and relatives.

Hence, there was a continuous and imperative need to coordinate efforts among the civil society actors in terms of new initiatives as well as improving the existing ones. Stronger and more accessible social welfare agencies, both governmental and nonprofit, needed support to assist CWD and their families.

#### **IV. 1.2 Legislative and Governmental Initiatives on IE/CWD Framework**

In 2004 the Government of Albania created a comprehensive and innovative (considering what was done in the past) long-term Education Strategy, encompassing the time period 2004-2015. This strategy, integrated the Millennium Development Goals, as well as EFA priorities, in spite of skepticism surrounding its ability to be realistically implementable. Meanwhile the Albanian Institute of Pedagogical Research was restructured and the Education Authorities were reorganized at regional level which was intended to bring about a decentralization of this inherited central state function, hence increased efficiencies in financing educational programs. Nonetheless the entire process resulted in de-concentration rather than decentralization of functions, was re-revised in subsequent years and created numerous confusions on the new roles and responsibilities that arose.

In comparison with other Western Balkan countries and also other key national sectors the Albanian government continued to allocate a lesser budget (as a percentage of GDP) to the Education sector. In spite of the newly adopted strategy the increases in the budget remained minimal. Lesser funds were dedicated to the

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<sup>2</sup> Children's Aid Direct, MEDPAK (funded by UNICEF), etc.

in-service teacher training, and the teaching methodology endorsed by most of the Education Institutions remained teacher centered having very low pupil participation.

The low salaries in the sector have discouraged students from majoring and pursuing a career in Education hence the number of teachers in this sector is limited and in the remote areas of the country there are many unqualified teachers which are reflected in the pupils' limited preparation. The number of unqualified teachers has been estimated at 18%, and is particularly encountered in remote areas.

Nonetheless, this strategy created a good framework for Save the Children in Albania's project initiatives in education, being also in line with the organization's principles such as capacity building of state structures as well as promotion and implementation of quality education for children. The Quality Education Project (QEP) was designed to promote a qualitative teaching process, further develop and enhance the profession of the teacher and promote children's participation, all these elements were reflected in the MoES strategy.

Hence, taking into consideration the difficult situation in the sector but also the growing opportunities, SCiA started, in 2002, a 'disability programme' in collaboration with local NGOs and Education and other state Institutions providing services to the differently-able children. The main objective was to help build or rehabilitate facilities in order to host activities for the reintegration of CWD in their communities as well as continuously build sustainable human capacities in the sector.

### **IV.1.2.3 Programme Description**

The programme description that follows is based on the thorough analysis of Reports, Strategies and other relevant document of SCiA regarding CWD and Inclusive Education programmes throughout the time frame 2002-2010. It encompasses the work done in cooperation with SCiA's three main partners: MEDPAK, the Regional Education Directorate/Department of Berat (RED Berat) and Help the Life.

#### **Why MEDPAK**

This is one of the first NGOs created in Albania, its founding dates back in 1993. In March 2006 this NGO transitioned from being a local NGO into a national association. At present this Organization has 19 branches in communes and municipalities of the Elbasan and Tirana regions.

The goal of this organization is the protection of people with disabilities. Whereas its mission is:

“The protection of the rights of people with disabilities through getting to know and implementing the legal and sub-legal acts, providing trainings for its members and other people, providing the community with awareness over seeking after the observance of their rights, lobbying for the ratification and implementation of laws, creating services and monitoring them with the aim to integrate people with disabilities into the community they live, for a dignified life.”

The association is organized in branches at the municipality, commune, and regional basis hence encompassing both urban and rural areas.

The reasons that SCiA collaborated with this particular association were the following:

- MEDPAK continuous and successful work with children with disabilities
- MEDPAK longevity and sustainability as an organization
- MEDPAK need for financial support
- MEDPAK interest in adopting new educational methodologies
- MEDPAK location in an economically poorer region in Albania
- Increasing the capacities at the local level

### **Project Activities**

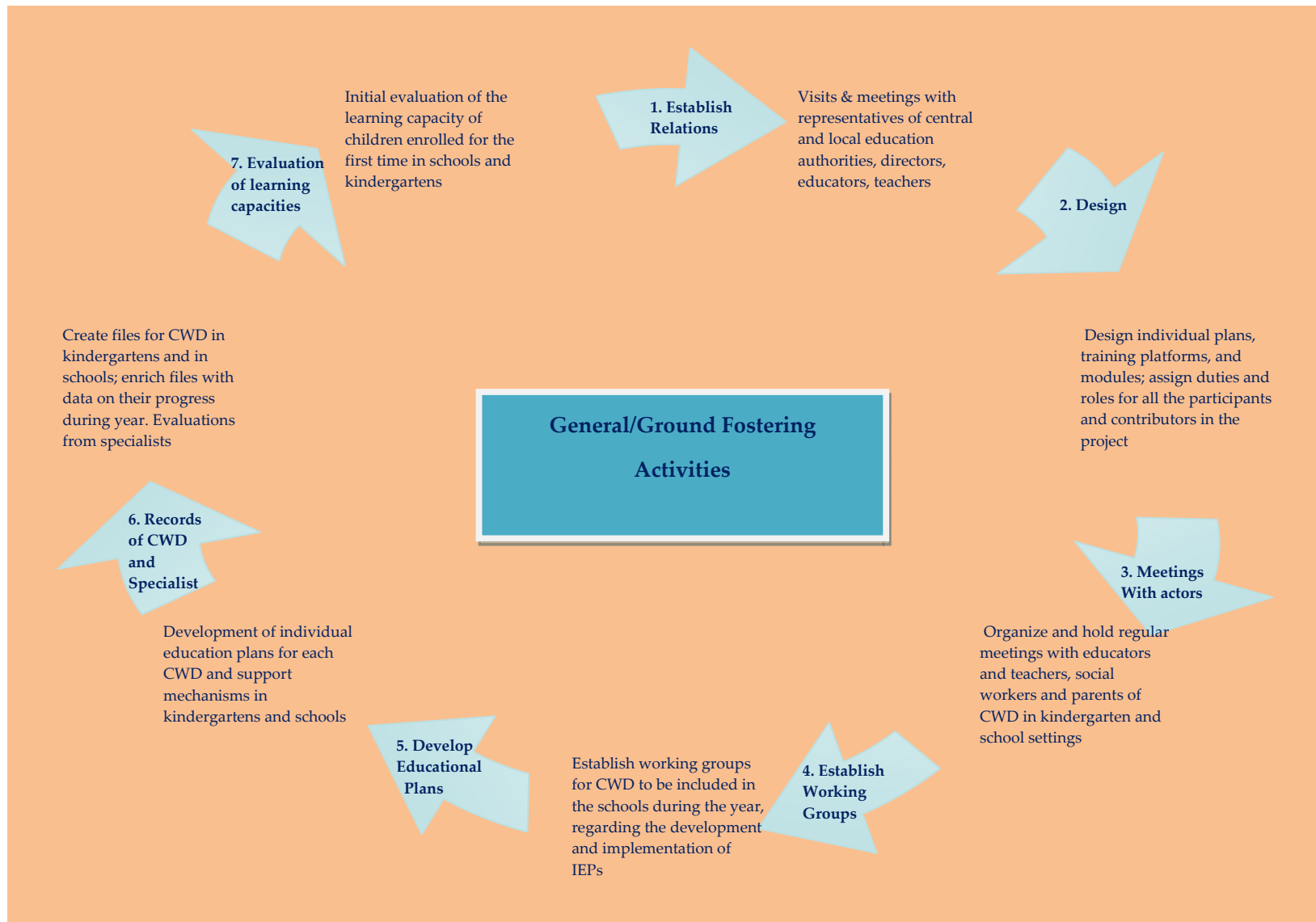
The figures 1 and 2 in the following pages depict the main project activities held in collaboration with SCiA clustered around two main themes:

#### **1. General /Ground fostering project activities**

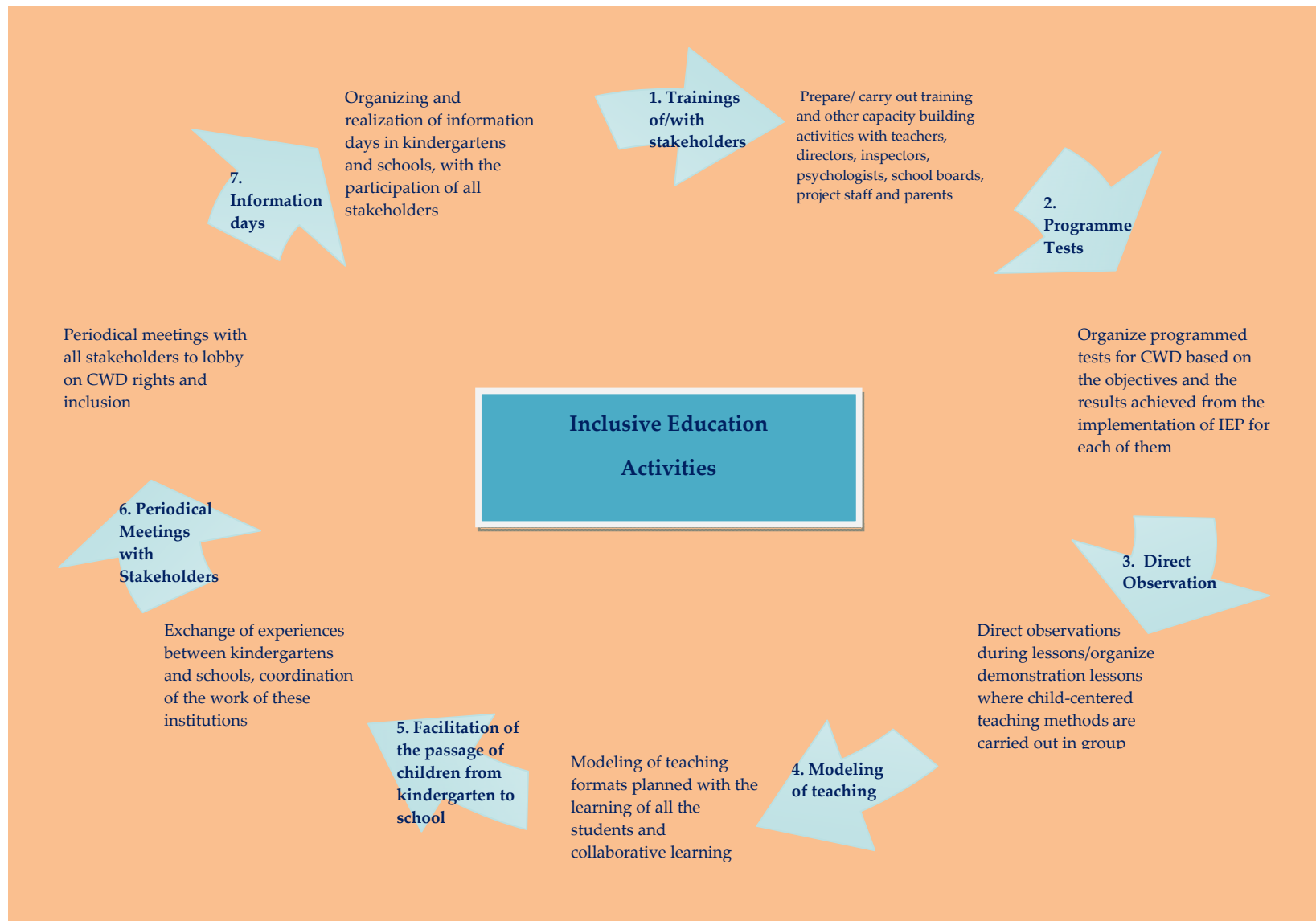
- Establish relationships with key stakeholders
- Design activities
- Meetings with actors/stakeholders
- Establish the working groups
- Develop and sustain working Groups
- Develop records of CWD and progress reports
- Evaluation of the CWD learning capacities

#### **2. Inclusive Education project activities**

- Training of/with stakeholders
- Creation of the programme tests
- Direct observation
- Modeling of teaching
- Facilitation of passage from kindergarten to school
- Periodical meetings with stakeholders
- Information days



**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**



## Training Activities

The trainings held in partnership with MEDPAK included the following stakeholders and themes:

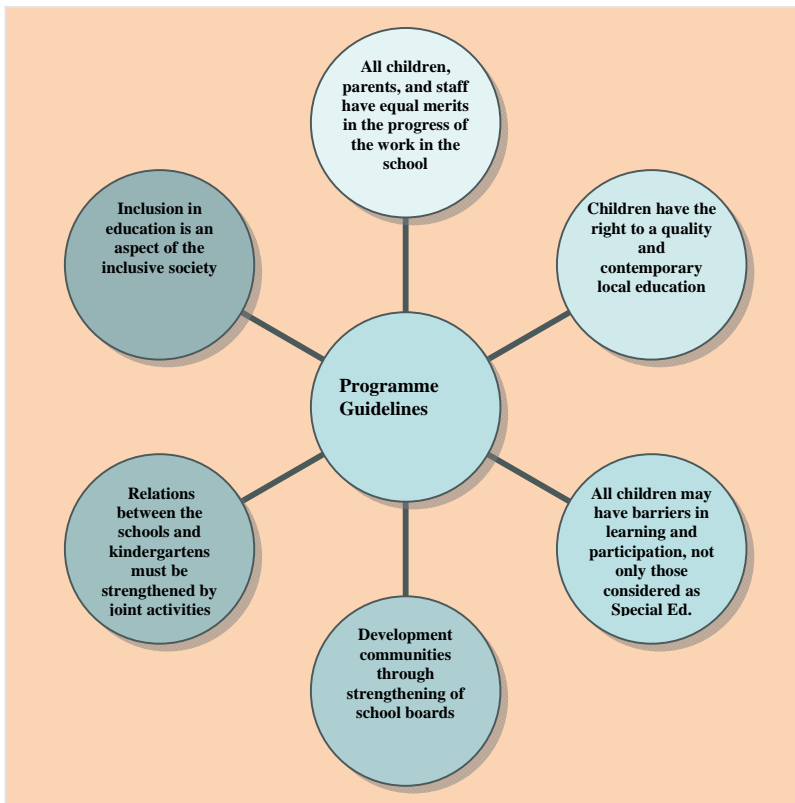
- The Association's branches presidents: providing them the right skills to support the integration of CWD in society
- Caregivers: providing them the adequate skills to work with CWD
- Parents: providing them the adequate skills for their CWD rearing
- Teachers: providing them the adequate skills for to educate CWD and create good synergies between them and other children in the classroom environment
- Volunteers: providing them the adequate skills to assist CWD as well as aiming at the volunteers future employment in the sector
- Doctors: providing them the adequate skills to assist CWD in an improved and faster physical and mental growth especially focusing the training to doctors working in some of the most remote areas of this Regions such as the villages of the Valley of Shkumbin River
- Employees of the social welfare: providing them the right skills in this sector through the exchange of experiences with other centers for CWD
- Inspectors of the Department of Education of Librazhd: training them on the recognition of CWD rights and the obligations of the government in that respect, including the information on the national strategy for the children with disabilities.

The training phase of the main stakeholders was followed by:

- Including CWD in Compulsory primary and secondary Education (grades 1 to 9)
- Organizing joint cultural and sports activities to increase tolerance and understanding
- Organizing various awareness raising events
- Creation of a Daily Center for Development and Integration, 'Inclusive Education – a Claim of the New Millennium'

## Key Project Tools and Practices

Throughout the years the projects implemented in cooperation with this NGO were a continuation of each other hence providing more space for the enhancement of the academic achievements of each child participating in the projects. The projects were led by the continuous fostering of the important guidelines as presented in the diagram below:

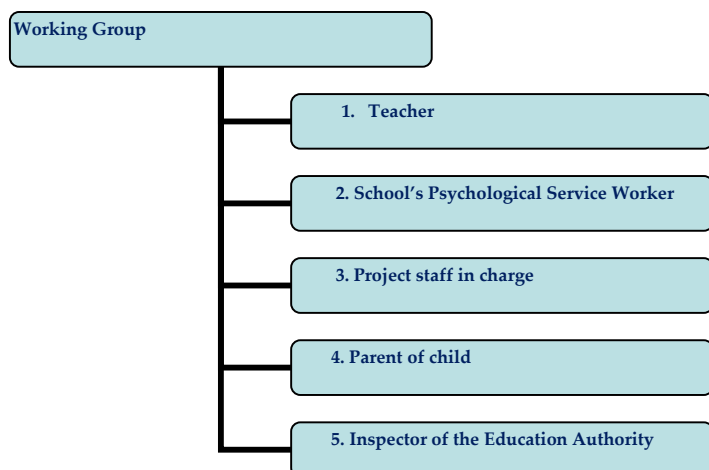


**Figure 3**

Each project implemented with this NGO was kicked off by introductory meetings with relevant stakeholders such as: local education authorities, directors of educational institutions, school psychologist, parents of CWD as well as of other children, and lastly project staff. These meetings encompassed the creation of a crucial component of the project that is a working group.

## Individual Educational Plans/Programmes

The working group for the development, monitoring, and implementation of IEP was composed by:



**Figure 4**

Depending on the particularity of the child's disability, external consultants and/or experts in the specific field were also invited to be part of the working group whereas their role remained simply consultative. The location of assemblies of the working groups were school settings based on the dates established in the IEP objectives for each pupil and child, in order to evaluate and getting to know the child more closely.

The roles for each member were assigned during the first year of the project and were continuously revised based on the needs arising. Each CWD in the schools had his/her working group for the development of the IEP and, during the period of functioning of the group had his/her personal file with the relevant background information and the child's progress in the relative fields and subjects.

Since IEP addresses each child's particularity the IEP format description of a child's situation/status included the child's:

- Mental conditions
- Psychological development
- Family conditions
- Background of his /her education (such as courses, kindergarten, extracurricular courses, psycho-pedagogical interventions and other treatments)
- Evaluation of child's potentials
- Capacities to adapt to the school environment

- Academic and social requests
- Evaluation of the personality

Additional sections were reflected in the IEP format, if the need arose. A considerable space was left blank so that the teacher and specialist could provide quick and relevant notes. However, a general condition was for the section not to include requests which accomplishment was excessively stressful for the teacher or the execution was impossible, especially in larger classrooms settings.

Teachers and other beneficiaries were continuously trained as indicated in Figure 2. With the passing of the years these trainings became more detailed and practical. The training platforms and modules included a considerable number of school teachers, educators, and education inspectors, psychological service workers in the district and project staff as well as parents. The main theme in these trainings was introduction and adoption of child-centered teaching methods instead of teacher centered.

Attentions was also given to strengthening and increase the role of pupils governments and/or school boards in order to create an inclusive culture in schools which would benefit not only CWD but all the pupils, as well as teachers and parents in schools and kindergartens.

**Academic Year Schedule**

Each academic year commencement entailed an intentional advocacy campaign for the identification and registration of CWD in schools and kindergartens implemented in cooperation with the Education Office and school directories.

<b>Academic Year</b>			
<b>First Trimester</b>	<b>Second Trimester</b>	<b>Third Trimester</b>	<b>Forth Trimester</b>
Assessment of the needs of teachers and educators in order to complete their knowledge inclusive education for CWD Conduct questionnaires within the group of trained teachers to	Transformation of the special education class in a resource class in collaboration with the Education Office	Meetings with:  Inspectors of the Education Office, school directors, parents of CWD and non, teachers, to discuss problems concerning the inappropriateness	An assistant/support teacher for pupils with disabilities was introduced in the first and second grades.  A joint work table organized in partnership with

continuously identify other needs for the permanence of the inclusion process in schools and kindergarten		of the Normative Dispositions for the conditions of the realization of inclusive education.	the Education Office in order to assess/evaluate the achievements of this project and its extension to the other schools of the district
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### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The monitoring and evaluation process included various techniques in order to ensure the legitimacy of the process. The techniques were the following:

- Observation of the attitudes, behaviors and motion coordination and relations of the CWD with his/her peers and adults. The process was documented through the diaries for each CWD. In these diaries, the project workers and teachers documented the most important elements relevant to project's objectives.
- Meetings and colloquies with CWD, peers in the inclusive classes, teachers, psychologists, school and pre-school institutions directors, parents of CWD and other parents, local and central education authorities' representatives, representatives of the partner organizations as well as with other members of the community, according to the needs and possibilities.
- Evaluating files of each child with the basic documents relevant for his/her development and education

### **Center's Operational Model**

In one of the project locations (Librazhd) integration in education for children with moderate to severe disabilities was combined with more specialized center-based support. Children entering the programme for the first time were registered and issued a particular card containing information on their family and mental/physical development background.

Following a colloquial was held between the parents of CWD and the programme staff regarding the services to be provided. Each of the incoming children obtained an individual file containing their initial information and updated based on progress.

For each individual child educative and developmental plans were appropriately created, and the latter were approved by the parents as well as the caregivers of the Center. In addition, a specific program was created for the children and youngsters to work in the kitchen as assistants to the cook.

Children with severe disabilities received specific services that lasted eight hours per day. The Center operated five days per week and hosted CWD as well as their parents from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.

The Center provided the following services:

- Day Care
- Physiotherapy: that included psycho social services and development of the speech for the children who have disabilities in speaking.

Daily activities in the Center included educational lessons, games, and therapy.

### **Challenges**

During the first years of programme implementation one of the major challenges was the lack of synergies and information flow among the main stakeholders such as NGO's, education directorate, parents, and teachers. Hence, a major programme emphasis was directed towards exchanging information on the implementation of the rights of the children with disabilities.

### **Lessons Learned**

The center provided vital services for CWD however there were few important lessons learned on the way that were introduced in the later phases of the project.

- A lesson learned during the years of implementation of this project was the necessity of being more present in the children homes. Hence, a social worker was introduced offering services within the family. The presence of the latter incline, especially village children, to come to the center at least every two months.

- A lesson learned was reemphasizing the crucial role that the parents have in the integration of CWD in the society. Hence, all the services provided to the children were conducted in the presence of parents enabling the latter to work with the children in their homes on same areas as it is done in the Center by the specialized staff.
- The necessity of well organized logistics. A good number of mothers came from remote and hard to access areas hence the organization and good management of logistics were required.

### **Projects Sustainability**

- The projects designed and implemented were based on the experience of a considerable number of developed and developing countries that are under the process of adopting inclusive education strategies hence this provided a form of cushion of security in terms of project sustainability
- The creation and adoption of low-cost models of inclusive education for CWD in kindergartens and mainstream schools provide adequate financial sustainability
- The creation of resource classes and of an inclusive and encouraging environment in the school institutions by increasing the capacities of the school boards and children's governments with the active participation of CWD along their peers are a guaranty to project sustainability
- The strengthening of the capacities of the school boards and children's governments will incline tolerance and understanding in decision-making, hence strengthening the democratization of schools, a necessary condition for the successful realization of the inclusive practices
- The good results achieved over time with this project, not least the overall number of those newly integrated through projects' direct support surpassing 300 in all six project locations or the reportedly high first year retention rates (very few CWD dropping out of school/pre-school and not before the first year of enrolment).
- The designation of the two schools of the town of Librazhd as pilot schools (by MoES) for the realization of the inclusive education process in the plan of

activities for the implementation of the National Strategy of Disability, the understanding and supporting of the project by the local education authorities guarantee sustainability

- The close collaboration with the parents of children with disabilities and the increase of their capacities are indispensable premises for the success of the process of inclusion of CWD in schools and, as a consequence, a guaranty for the increase of the sustainability.

### Why RED Berat?

#### Location: Berat

Similarly as in other regions in Albania, CWD in Berat remained isolated in their households hence deteriorating even more their developmental conditions. Afore partnerships were established with SCiA some forms residential services for CWD were present in Berat however none of them targeted children within the group age 2-7 years old which as aforementioned are critical years in a child's mental and physical development. Data combined and collated from different sources showed that there should have been somewhat 500 or more CWD within the age group of 2-7 years old with a form of disability ranging from slight to moderate.

The reasons that SCiA cooperated with this particular institution were as follows:

- Teachers in preschools, elementary and secondary schools as well as the staff of RED had not participated in any forms of trainings regarding CWD hence all the approaches adopted with CWD were ad hoc (which as revealed by the research in this field can be deteriorating to CWD)
- The opportunities to establish partnerships in this particular region arose not only considering the abovementioned critical situation but also the strong will that parents of CWD showed in finding venues to assist their children's integration in the belonging communities.
- The partnership was established bearing in mind that CWD needed appropriate therapies of development of physical, motor, speech skills which are a priority for this age but also the vital need to prepare the community to accept these children as full members amidst them through awareness campaigns. It was obvious however that both the parents and



the community need a strong support through a chain of applicable methods.

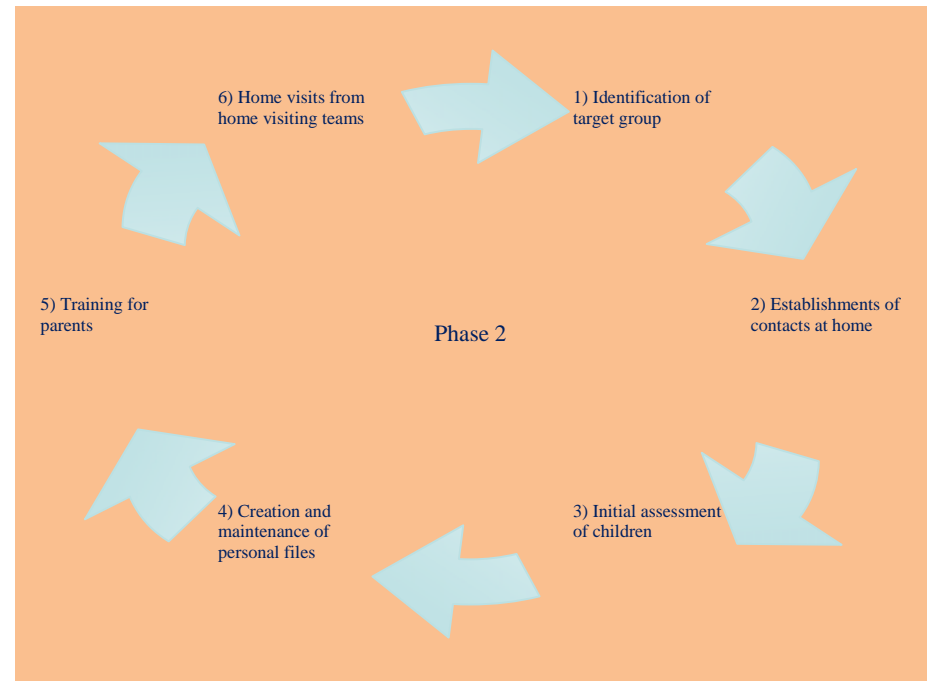
### **Project Activities**

The project activities can be divided in three phases based on the timeframe as well as the nature of activities. During the first phase the main stakeholders were identified and relations were established with the latter. This phase also included the initial trainings with stakeholders and setting of goals, objectives and strategies. Whereas the second and third stage focused directly on the CWD and their parents through assessments, home and exchange visits and various trainings. A summary of the three main phases is presented in Figures 5, 6, 7.

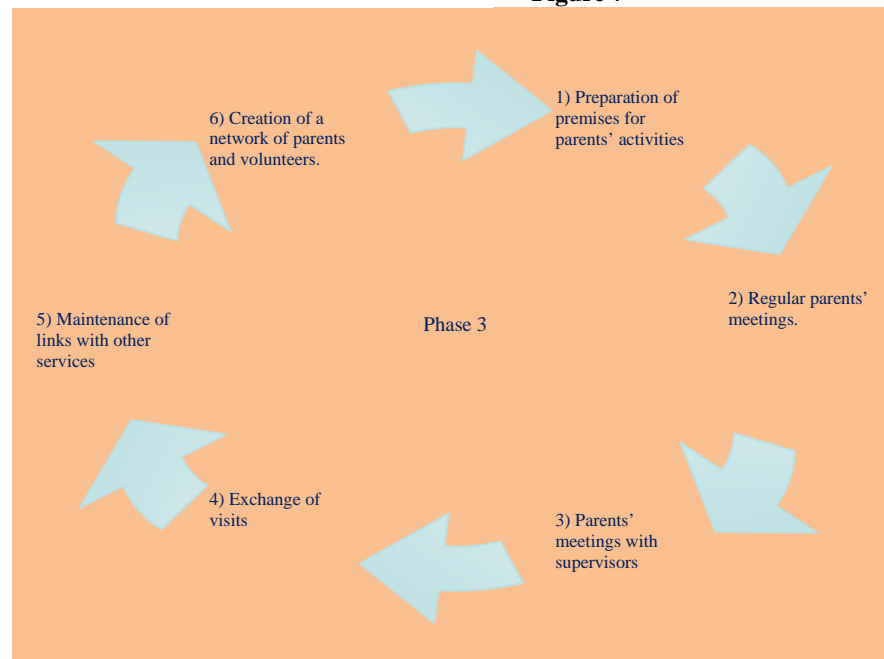
Each of the phases was characterized by a 3-monthly, 6 monthly and annual M&E events took place mainly through interviews, questionnaires and home visits however meetings were also held with teachers, parents and talks with children and community members. The end of the project was marked by a conference discussing and evaluating lessons learnt. The project sustainability was ensured through the mutual agreements and MoUs specifying elements or the whole project to be taken over by RED or municipality in case of evident success.



**Figure 6**



**Figure 7**



**Figure 5**

### Project methodology

The project's initial action was identify CWD within the group age 2-7 years old, establish contacts with their parents, sensitize the latter on their children's special needs and rights to obtain practical skills. After the initial identification the work with the children would begin in order to improve their practical skills and abilities through the stimulation of their development stages. At the same time capacities would be raised for pre-school teachers acting as home visitors who would be trained using a specific methodology of work, namely 'Portage', whose main advantage was its strong focus on the professional-parent partnership. Other teachers, educators and community workers would also be trained on issues related to disabilities as well as capacities of RED specialists and inspectors would be built through training sessions and workshops aiming to improve curricula for CWD.

Hence the beneficiaries of this programme were not only more than 100 CWD but also their teachers, parents, educators, directorate's inspector's peers who benefited from a more inclusive curricula and the entire communities in the region encompassing a then population of roughly 65,000 inhabitants.

## Why Help the Life

### Location: Tirana

Of the 120,000 estimated CWD in Albania, only a lower number attended compulsory primary or secondary education by this year. However even in the cases when CWD attended basic education, this was mainly done in specialized schools. Data collated from empirical studies usually reveal that 2, 7% to 3, 2% of school-age children have small to moderate disabilities (mental retardation, emotional disorders, physical or sensory impairments). A study conducted by FSHDPAK on the integration of CWD in mainstream schools indicated that among 500,000 pupils attending the 9-year compulsory education, 10-13% show different learning disabilities (such as in speaking, reading, writing and mathematics). These facts emphasized once again the need of intervention through supportive services targeting these children. From the evaluation of needs and services in the city of Tirana, carried out by Tirana Municipality and UNICEF, it resulted that only 6% of the 94 % of children with disabilities in Tirana who need to receive education in public kindergartens and schools, actually receive it in kindergartens and schools, including special schools. Thus, the implementation of inclusive education projects became a priority.

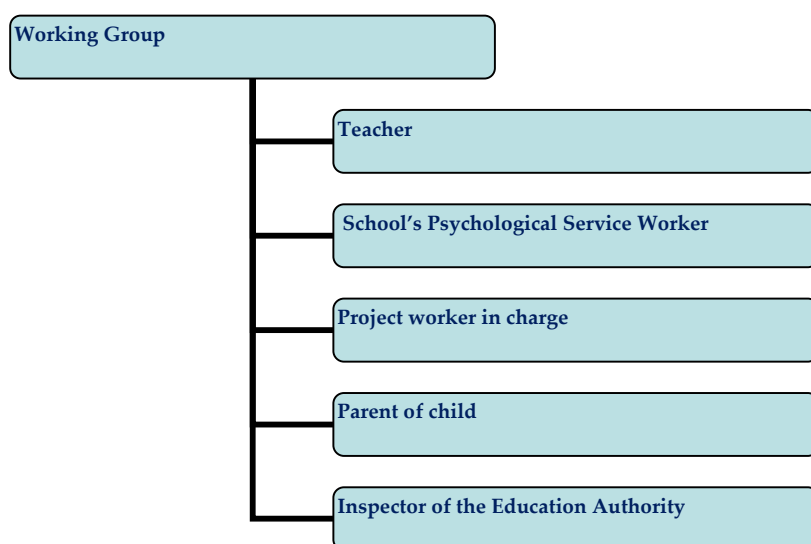
Despite the efforts, the process of inclusion of CWD in public schools did not constitute a massive phenomenon. As a result of the many pressures made by the parents, some of the CWD (a part of which having mild disabilities) managed to be included in mainstream schools, but through the years their progress in school becomes difficult, or even impossible.

From Save the Children's "I'm like You" report of 2003, it resulted that prejudices and old mentalities of parents of children with disabilities and of their teachers and educators made the attendance of the compulsory education in mainstream schools by these children very difficult. There are, nevertheless, a very low number of children with mainly physical disabilities who, owing to the dedication of their parents and the goodwill of their teachers, attend the mainstream schools; however, not only this phenomenon isn't much diffused, but the evaluation standards for these children are the same as the ones applied for other children.

## Programme's methodology

The project was composed by a steering group that had the function to organize and hold meetings with local and central education authorities, school and pre-school institutions' directors, school psychological service workers, parents of children with and without disabilities, etc.

The social workers assisted in the establishment of the new working groups for each new child that were included in the project and in the reactivation of the existing working groups for children. The working groups were composed as follows:



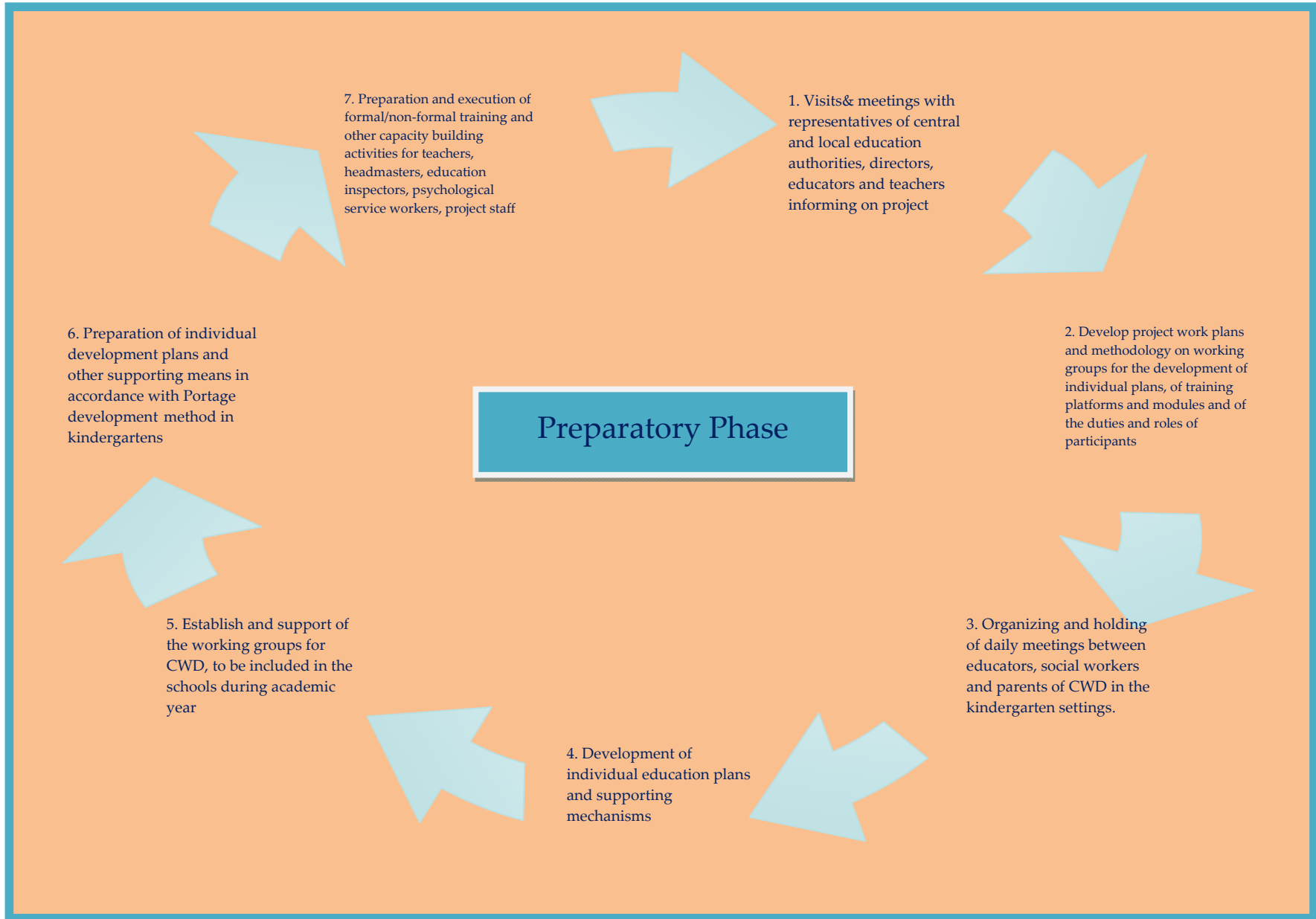
The purpose of the working groups was to meet within the school facilities reflect, and report the observations on child's progress. A specific work plan with the learning objectives of the child was discussed and a draft suggesting the actions to be taken subsequently was assigned. Each CWD in the schools had his/her working group for the development of the IEP and during the period of functioning of the group they also had their own personal file containing relevant information and the child's progress.

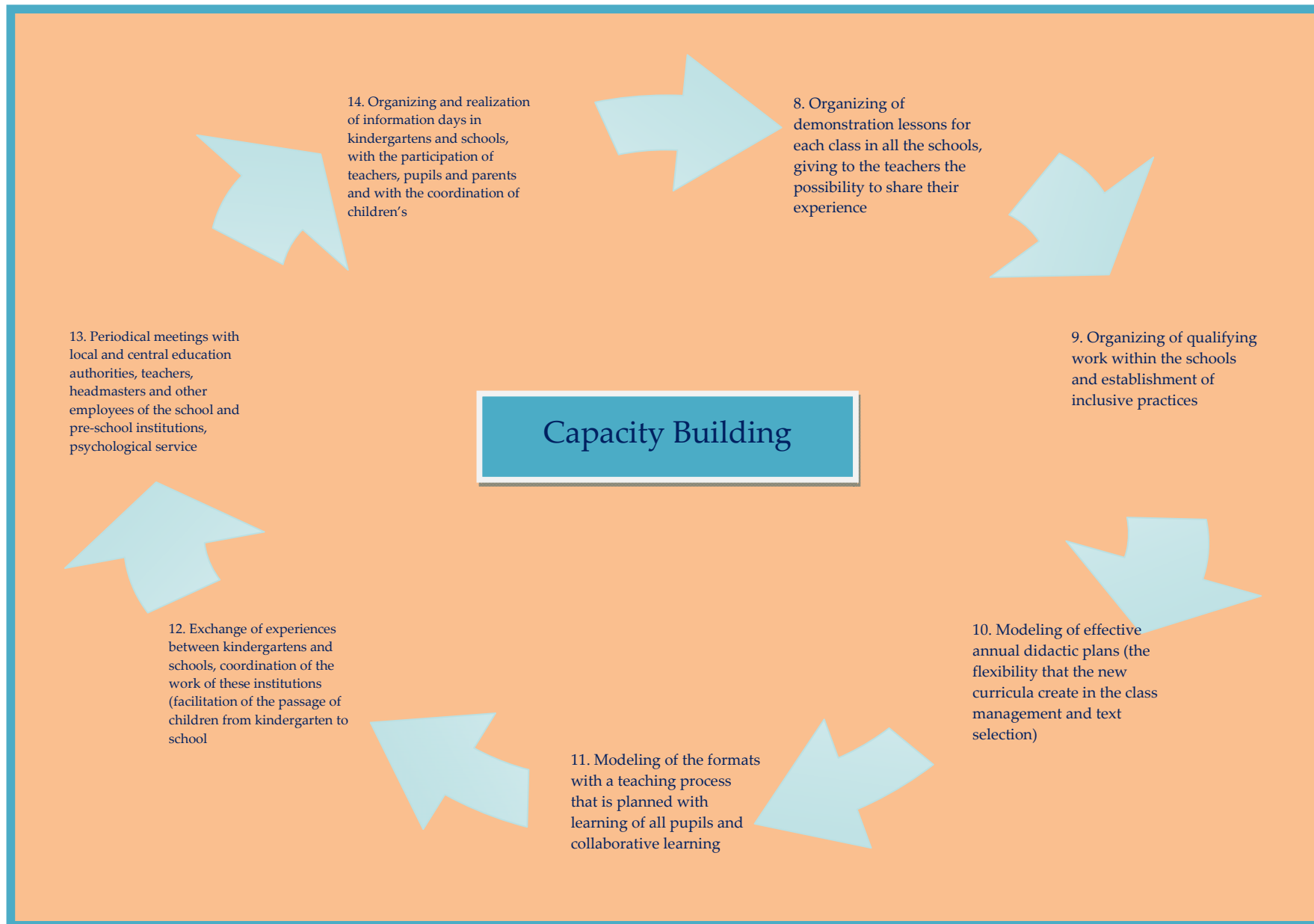
Training's platforms and modules of about 90 teachers of the elementary classes, about 95 parents, education inspectors, psychological service workers and project staff, was jointly designed by Help the Life and SCiA. External trainers were recruited whenever necessary.

The designing of the individual development plans used the Portage development method. The process was carried out jointly by each pre-school

teacher and the parent of each child, after the regular schedule of the related institution, and the respective teacher spend around 45 min/child. During the meeting, the pre-school teacher monitored the execution of the Portage development elements from the parents and developed, together with the parent, the respective plan. The process was carried out in continuous consulting with the kindergarten psychological service worker and is supervised by the project worker in charge of this task. At the end of the first six months, this process was lead by the kindergarten psychosocial service workers monitored and supervised by the project staff.

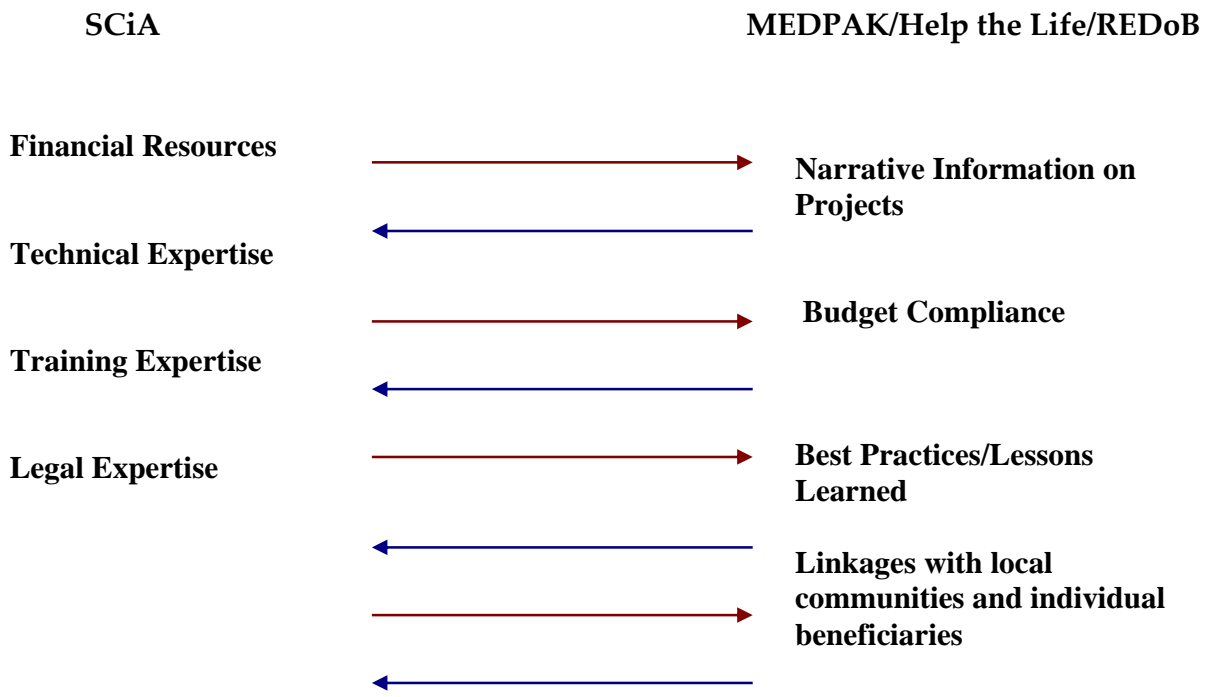
The project staff organized periodical meetings with the local and central educational authorities as well as with teachers, directors and other employees of the school and pre-school institutions, psychological service workers, CWD and their peers and parents, in order raise awareness on the CWD rights.







## General Scheme of resource flows between SCiA and Partner Organizations



## APPENDIX 1

### CONSENT FORM

I voluntarily agree to participate in the analysis report of the Save the Children in Albania Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities Programme.

I understand that Mr. Estevan Ikonomi, Programme Consultant, is conducting this evaluation with the purpose of improving programme features and generating future programme replications.

I understand that the methods, which may involve me, are:

1. The Consultant recorded observations and questions during focus groups and/or
2. My participation in a 30-60 minute interview

I grant permission for the interview to be tape recorded and transcribed, and to be used only by Mr. Ikonomi for analysis of interview data. I grant permission for the evaluation data generated from the above methods to be published in an evaluation report of Save the Children in Albania on and future publication(s).

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Researcher

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Participant

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Date

## APPENDIX 2

### Guide to Key FGD & Interview Questions

#### *Teacher Focused*

##### **Question 1**

What do you consider has been your role and contribution in the programme implemented in partnership with SCiA? How did you personally benefit from it?

##### **Question 2**

How have the beneficiaries (children) changed throughout the lifetime of the programme?

##### **Question 3**

What do you consider the strengths of the programme implemented in partnership with SCiA?

##### **Question 4**

What do you consider the weaknesses of the programme implemented in partnership with SCiA?

##### **Question 5**

How do you envision the programme's future implementation and your role in it?

##### **Question 6**

What are your recommendations regarding programme improvements or overall changes?

*NGO staff Focused*

**Question 1**

What has been your organization's role in the implementation of the programme in partnership with SCiA?

**Question 2**

Have your organization's capacities changed throughout the partnership?

**Question 3**

What is the longevity of this partnership and how do you view the further cooperation with SCiA?

**Question 4**

What do you consider the strengths of the programme?

**Question 5**

What do you consider the weaknesses of the programme?

**Question 6**

Is the programme likely to be implemented by your organization in other communities and to other beneficiaries?

*Governmental Staff Focused*

**Question 1**

To your best knowledge, how has the programme contributed to legislation changes or legal frameworks in Albania?

**Question 2**

How does the programme contribute to your Institution's and overall Albanian State Strategies on IE and CWD?

**Question 3**

What do you consider the strengths of the programme?

**Question 4**

What do you consider the weaknesses of the programme?

**Question 5**

Have your capacities changed throughout the partnership?

**Question 6**

What are your recommendations on the future implementation of the programme?

## *Parent Focused*

### **Question 1**

How were you connected to the programme?

### **Question 2**

In what ways has the programme affected your child development?

### **Question 3**

What has been your role in throughout the programme?

### **Question 4**

What do you consider the strengths of the programme?

### **Question 5**

What do you consider the weaknesses of the programme and what are your recommendations for improvements if any?

### **Question 6**

What is the next educational venue for your child?

## APPENDIX 3

### Sample of Individual Education Plan

<b>INFORMACIONE MBI NXËNËSIN</b> Emri i nxënësit _____ datëlindja: _____  Klasa: _____ Sesioni: _____  Nevoja të veçanta arsimore/ nevoja mjekësore _____  <i>Prezantimi i nevojave: PO/JO/E përcaktuar</i>
--

<b>ANËTARET E STAFIT PËRGJEGJËS PËR PEI</b> Anëtar i ekipit drejtues _____ Stafi në mbështetje të mësimit _____ Mësuesi kujdestar/udhëzues _____
---

Ndihmesë shtesë e përcaktuar: Po/Jo      Koha _____ (ne orë)
--

<b>AGJENCITË E PËRFSHIRA:</b> Shërbime psikologjike:      PO/JO Kontakt _____ Data e raportint të fundit _____ Shërbime mjekësore: PO/JO Kontakt _____ Data e raportint të fundit _____ Terapitë:      PO/JO Kontakt _____ Data e raportint të fundit _____ Ndihma ekonomike: PO/JO Kontakt _____ Data e raportint të
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<b>Personale dhe shoqërore</b> (përfshin faktorët shoqërorë dhe emocionalë/aftësi dhe mundësi)
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## **Strategjitë**

## **Informacion tjetër në lidhje me lartshënimet**

(duke përfshirë pajisje të specializuara)