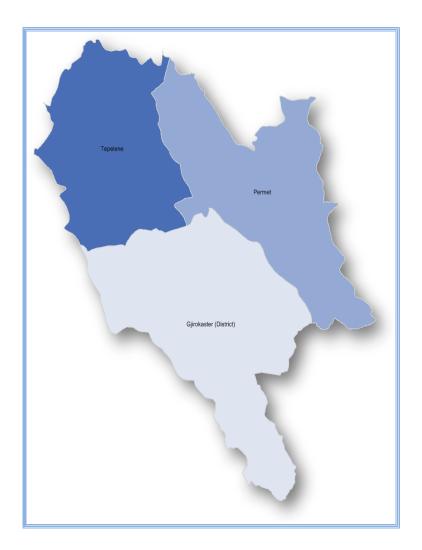




REGIONAL CARD REPORT –GJIROKASTRA REGION

"The situation of children with special needs" for 2011



GJIROKASTRA REGION

LIST OF ACRONYMS

Observatory - Observatory for children's rights

ACA - Albanian Children's Alliance

PHD - Public Health Department

ROSSS - Regional Office of State Social Service

UNICEF - United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

NGO - Non Governmental Organisation

CWD - Children with Disabilities

DMO - Development Millennium ObjectiveMES - Ministry of Education and Science

RED - Regional Educational Department

EO - Educational Office

CPU - Children's Protection Unit

REO - Regional Employment Office

IEP - Individual Educational Program

ODM - Objectives of the Developmental Millennium

I - Foreward and Acknowledgments

"Observatory for Children's rights" is an initiative undertaken by "Albanian Children's Alliance", supported by UNICEF. Albanian Children's Alliance has set up the right mechanism for collecting information and studying the situation of children's rights fulfillment on a local level.

This project has started to be implemented in March 2009. Recenlty 'Observatory' has estbalished its offices nationwide, as well as in 12 districts of Albania. Observatory's offices,

write reports based on children's rights fulfillment within the territorry of Albania, depending on the analyses of 140 different indicators.

The Observatory of Gjirokastër has built collaboration bridges with all the institutions, offices, local structures and NGO-s committed to children.

Some of these institutions are: Regional Educational Department, Public Health Department, Regional Employment Office, Police Department, several NGO-s and has signed a written collaboration agreement between Municipalities and Communes of the District.

In the District of Gjirokastër, Observatory practices its activity since October 2010. Until now, a great number of local units and local and regional structures have been contacted. Since 2010 to present the collaboration agreements with all local partners have been signed. Except collecting data on Children's rights indicators in different sectors such as: education, health, social protection or the right to participate, the Observatory of Gjirokastër has conducted the ''The situation of children with special needs for the year 2011. This study is based on the information gathered from local institutions, meetings and interviews with local actors. The study aims at presenting the situation of Children with Special Needs in 2011 in the District of Gjirokastër.

The Observatory of Gjirokastër would like to thank the staff of the Albanian Children's Alliance (ACA) represented by Mrs. Suzana Sakiqi and Mrs. Elma Tërshana, (Project Director), Mrs. Mina Mata (National Data Administrator) for their support and countinuous counceling during the writing of this report; and Ermira Zace (Administrator and Finance Officer) for technical support offered at any time.

II - Introduction

The aim of this study is to present the situation of children with special needs in the District of Gjirokastër for the year 2011, through the analysis of the main standards and their implementation. The study highlights the problematic of the implementation of the standards and makes suggestions on how to further improve them in order to attain a better security and protection for the rights of children with special needs.

The goals of the research are as follows:

- To describe and evaluate the situation of children with special needs and the realisation of their rights;
- To identify problems and make recommendations regarding the social care system for children with special needs.

This report may be to great value to Residential Centers for children with special needs, Municipalities/ Communes where this centers are situated and also all Municipalities and Communes in the district of Gjirokastër. This research is going to help local government institutions improve the living conditions and standards of children with special needs. Also, this study may be valuable to different donors and other people interested in improving the rights of children with special needs, aiming their full integration in social life.

Also this sudy report aims at identifying the current practices, the offered services and the social situation of children with special needs for the year 2011 in the District of Gjirokastër.

1. Research Methodology

The methodology used in writing this report includes the analysis of all reports, analysis of strategic national and local documents, analysis of laws in vigor that are based on the rights of people with disabilities and especially the rights of children with special needs.

For the realisation of this study, many data were collected from regional institutions such as: RED; PHD, Regional Office of State Social Service, State Social Service Tiranë, Civil Status Office in the Internal Affairs Ministry and data from different NGO-s that operate in the District of Gjirokastër.

The relevant documents consulted during the Desk Review phase are as follows:

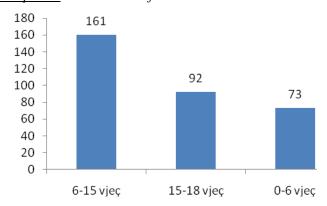
- National Strategy for People with Disabilities 2004 2015
- Reports of the Children Protection Units regarding People with Disabilities
- Pre-University Education Law

III – Study Analysis

The UN terminology states that 'Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others'.

The District of Gjirokastër has a surface of 2,884 km² with a registered population of 154,4441 inhabitants living in 42,660 families2 and with a population density of 53 inhabitants /km². Comparing with the year 2010 there is a decrease of population of 1.4% (2307 inhabitants)³. According to the General Department of Civil Status in Tiranë, the total population of the age group 0-18 years old for the year 2011 is 32,688 inhabitants or 21% of the total population in the District of Gjirokastër.

The percentage of children (0-18 years old) with special needs in the district of Gjirokastër has increased despite its number falling by <u>1 child</u> from the previous year. In 2010 the percentage of children with special needs was <u>0.9% (327 children)</u>⁴ while in 2011 the percentage of children with special needs is <u>1% (326 children)</u>⁵. If we compare the number of children living in urban areas with those living in rural areas, it results that <u>155</u> live in the city and <u>171 children with</u> <u>disabilities</u> (0-18 years old) live in the countryside. The biggest number of children with disabilities comprises the age group 6-15 years old <u>(161 children)</u>, followed by the age group 15-18 years old <u>(92 children)</u> and finally the age group 0-6 years old <u>(73 children)</u>.



Graphic 1: The number of children with disabilities divided according to age groups for the year 2011

Source: State Social Service, Tiranë (2012)

Referring to graphic number 2 we can say that the number of children with special needs registered in the ducational system, is <u>153 (or 47%)</u>. <u>24 children (or 32%)</u> of these are pre-schoolers, <u>97 children (or 60%)</u> frequent the obliged educational system and <u>33 children (or 36%)</u> frequent high school. The other children are not integrated in the educational system.

<u>Graphic 2:</u> The number of children with special needs that are in the educational system and out of it for the year 2011

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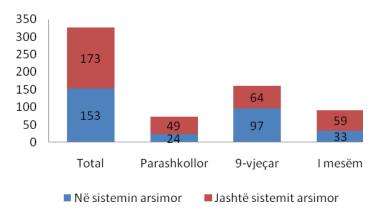
¹ General Office of the Civil Status, Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2012;

² State Social Service Tiranë, 2012;

³ Primary data was acquired from the General Office of the Civil Status, Ministry of Internal Affairs,2012, while the calculations have been made by the Observatory Tiranë;

⁴ State Social Service Tiranë, 2012;

⁵ Ibid;



Source: State Social Service, Tiranë (2012)

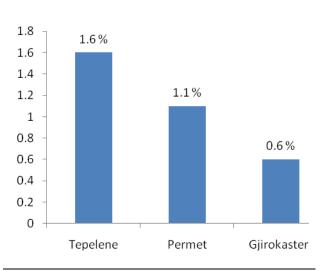
The Tepelenë region is the one with the highest percentage, for the District of Gjirokastër, with <u>1,6 % or 147 children</u>. Meanwhile the two other regions have a lower number of disabled children, such as the Region of Përmet with <u>83 children or 1,1%</u> and the Region of Gjirokastër with <u>95 children or 0.6%</u>.

The percentage of disabled children < 18 years old, by region, in the district



Map 1. Percentage of disabled children (<18 years old) on a Region level for the district of Gjirokastër, for the year 2011.

Source. The primary source information is "State Social Service of Tirana" 2012; The calculation was realised by the Observatory's Office in Tiranë.



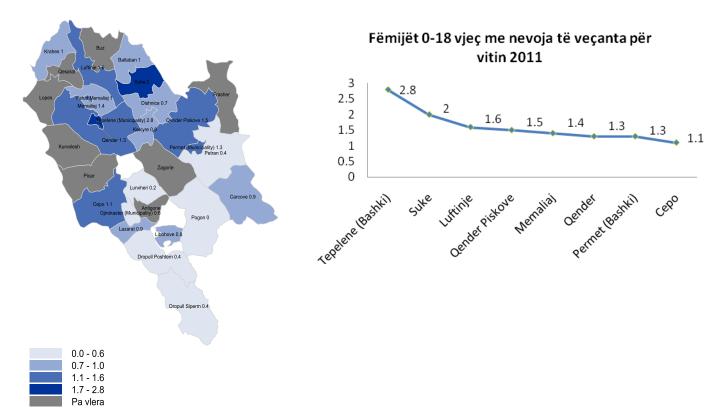
<u>Graphic 3.</u> Graphic presentation of the regions with relevant percentages of children with special abilities (0-18 years old), for the year 2011.

<u>Source.</u> The primary source information is "State Social Service of Tirana" 2012; The calculation was realised by the Observatory's Office in Tiranë.

Referring to the Map 2 or Graphic 4, in the District of Gjirokastër, the municipalities/communes that have the higher number of disabled children (0-18 years old), in comparison with other local units of this District, are: Municipality of Tepelenë (2,8% or 49 children), Sukë (2% or 13 children), Lutfinjë (1,6% or 21 children), Qëndër Piskovë (1,5% or 12 children), Municipality of

Memaliaj (1,4% or 20 children), Qëndër (1,3% or 20 children) and continuing (for more information refer to the map and graphic below).

According to CENSUS 2011, the percentage of females over 15 years old with at least one disability in relation to the total number of females over 15 years old in the District of Gjirokastër is <u>8.9%</u>, while the percentage of males over 15 years old with at least one disability in relation to the total number of males over 15 years old is <u>7.1%</u>.



<u>Map 2:</u> Percentage of disabled children of age 0-18 years old, in relevant communes, for the year 2011.

<u>Source:</u> The primary source information is "State Social Service of Tirana" 2012; The calculation was realised by the Observatory's Office in Tiranë.

Graphic 4: Percentage of disabled children of age 0-18 years old, in the communes with the highest numbers, for the year 2011.

Burimi: The primary source information is "State Social Service of Tirana" 2012; The calculation was realised by the Observatory's Office in Tiranë

The Albanian legislation acknowledges two assistance schemes regarding disability. The first scheme is the assistance from social insurance, from which benefit people that became disabled at work and precisely <u>53,965 people</u>. The second scheme refers to people that were born disabled or became disabled before they were wmployed. The number of beneficiaries from the second scheme is <u>15,098</u>. The first Albanian law regarding social protection, law nr. 7710 year 1993 applied for the first time payment for disabled people. This payment was just a help in the form of economic assistance for the breadwinner of the family. (22\$/month). Afterwards these people started to receive individual payment according to medical advice. Insufficiencies of year 1993 law reflected on the law about assistance care of the year 2005. Currently physically and mentally disabled people benefit <u>90\$ per month</u> and their caretakers benefit the same amount.

In Albania currently there are 11 public centers that operate in favour of disabled people. These centers are distributed in the 8 biggest regions of the country. These centers are frequented by $381 \ people$ that constitute 0.3% of the totality of registered disabled people. Also in these cities operate 14 public centers besides national development centers. The total number of beneficiaries in these centers is 1210 or 1% e of the total number of disabled people in the District of Gjirokastër. These centers are situated in urban areas, by leaving uncovered 95% of the administrative units of the country and all rural areas.

According to the electronic map of Social Services, in the District of Gjirokastër operates a center of "Save the Children Albania", that offers daily services for the age 6-14 years old and educational services for disabled children of age 3-16 years old.

The Albanian Foundation of Disabled People, in collaboration with UNDP and English Church "Jesus Christ", are making possible the distribution of <u>90 wheelchairs</u> for paraplegic and tetraplegic persons in 6 prefectures of the country. Part of this project is the district of Gjirokastër. The Director of State Social Service, Kozeta Mesiti, during her speech at the distribution ceremony of the appointed contingent for the Prefecture of Gjirokastër, emphasized the importance of the work that needs to be done by institutions to overcome the obstacles between society and disabled people.⁷

State initiative and legislation about disability

The current legal framework that guarantees the education of children with special needs in inclusive educational conditions has its roots in the Albanian Constitution.

After signing the International Convention of Children's Rights (February 1992), Albania has reacted positively to the rights of children with special needs. In this framework, on 21.06.1995 was approved the law nr. 7952 "On the pre university educational system" which declared that:

- Special public education is an integrated part of the public educational system which aims at a fuller development of the potential of people that present physical, mental and emotional disabilities.
- The education of children with special needs is free of charge.

This law (Law nr. 7952 "On the pre university educational system") in the Article 1 of the Normative Disposition⁸ gives specifications about the pre university education in public schools, approved by the Ministry of Education and that obligated the competent authorities to execute it. This Disposition allowed the education of children with special needs in special schools as well as in ordinary schools.

Also, on 29.03.2002 was approved the law nr. 8872 "On the Education and Professional Formation in the Republic of Albania". This law gives the right to education to every citizen regardless of their social status or health condition. This law foresees the opening of schools and

URL:http://www.shssh.gov.al/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=125:persona-me-aftesi-te-kufizuara-paisen-me-karroca-te-standarteve-bashkekohore&catid=11:njoftime<emid=24, accessed on March 2013

⁶ Albanian Caritas (2011), Social Care for Mentally Disabled People, Tiranë

⁷ State Social Service (2013),

⁸The Normative Disposition for pre university education has become effective starting by the academic year 2002-2003

specific classes and also the qualification of the staff that will be working with children with special needs. Regardless of its existence, this law has not yet found the terrain to be implemented.

The Albanian government in 2004 created a new and iclusive strategy in the field of education for the period 2004-2015. This strategy, has well integrated DMO-s, "Education for All", and has appointed many priorities aiming inclusion. This vision seems like the appropriate road towards the improvement of the quality of life if children with special needs, contrary to the scepticism that exists regarding the real implementation potential of this trategy.

Regarding social care of disabled children, there is an instruction⁹ of MES (Ministry of Education and Science), which aims at ensuring psychological and social services in schools.

The new Law on pre university education foresees the creation of regional multidisciplinary committees¹⁰ mandated to evaluate the capacities of disabled children; a committee that also suggests if the child can be integrated in a normal school or in a "special school". Also this law emphasizes that, special cases like disabled children should benefit from alternate educational services. According to law nr. 69/2012, date 21.06.2012 "On the pre university education" these services¹¹ include psychological services in educational institutions. The local government in collaboration with RED are responsible for the identification and inclusion of every child in the normal educational system and make sure they receive psychological-social services. Disabled children also benefit from special educational programs approved and adjusted case by case basing on the chil's higher interest.

Also based and predicted in the article 44 of the same law, special curricula should be developed for disabled children, by taking in account the child's physical, social and mental development and also the individual capacities of every case. The law follows by declaring that the education of children in special schools must be temporary¹², while the integration in normal schools is foundamental and permanent. Also EO-s have the responsibility predicted in the article 64 to create a special committee (as stated above, existent in Korçë) composed of a specialised doctor, education professionals, psychologists and representatives of the local government, whome, after revising the request of the parents or teachers, suggest and recommend the road that the child will follow, if they must frequent special educational institutions or the normal educational system.

Anyhow, it is the parent that decides if the child is going to frequent the special school or normal education. Educational institutions must create and work with individual educational programs (IEP). This plan is prepared by a committee composed of:

- Teachers of different fields,
- Psychologists and
- Parents

⁹ Instruction Nr.18 date 21.04.2008 " On the functioning of psychological services in the pre university educational system"

 $^{^{10}}$ Law nr. 69/2012 "On pre university Education" article 5 "The right to Education" and article 6 "General Principles on a Child's Education"

¹¹ Article 29 Law on Pre university Education, 2012

¹² Article 63, Law nr.69 /2012 On Pre University Education

Disabled children must have and assistant teacher and benefit from rehabilitation services. The educational staff that works with these children must be trained and licensed (certified) by MES.

IV – Recommendations

The objective of this study is the evaluation of the situation of children with special needs and the identification of the areas that need improvement, by guaranteeing their inclusion in social life and specifically the right to education. Regardless of the countinuos work of different agencies as well as governmental initiatives to improve this situation, there are still issues which need to be worked on even more.

There are still many children that remain unidentified as children with special needs. Also more than a half of the children already identified as children with special needs are not part of the educational system. The possibility for these children to access centers that offer services for them is very small, because these centers are located in urban areas. Based on these findings we can state that:

- -The education adjusted to children with special needs can be achieved based on a total reform of the educational system and by changing the culture and social practices;
- -Keeping a data base of children with special needs and specifically data about their problems is very necessary;
- -There is a need for supporting services for teachers and to facilitate their work by providing them with an assistant that can be a volunteer, but that feels capable of communicating with these children;
- Must raise awareness on pre school education conditions and provide them with means and necessary practices to welcome children with special needs;
- -Predict in the law the curricula that must be used for this category of children;
- -Include the problematic of children with special needs in the early stages of the educational cycle aiming at avoiding the discrimination of these children and accepting them naturally;
- The correct appointing of acceptance procedures and initial evaluation of children with special needs regarding their first grade registration in normal schools.