

Disability Inclusion and Baby Box: Social protection related capacity development in Kyrgyzstan

Project Overview

The EU Social Protection Systems global programme supports capacity development for social protection in 4 Asian and 7 African countries.

In Kyrgyzstan, social worker curriculum development is the main focus of efforts to systematize capacity development for social protection. Based on an appraisal study that included a systematic background and problem analysis, stakeholder analysis, and SWOT analysis, and upon the request of the Kyrgyz Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs, the following activities were planned:

- 1) Training of trainers for university lecturers in disability inclusion and disability studies
- 2) Collaboration with international agencies for disability inclusion and mainstreaming, and
- 3) Pilot delivery of a disability-specific baby box.

Context

Persons with disabilities are one of the most vulnerable groups in Kyrgyzstan. The care system inherited from the Soviet era considered disabled children and adults as 'medically abnormal' and secluded them into closed institutions.

Despite the progress made towards a human rights-based approach and community- and home-based care persons with disabilities still have very little access to infrastructure, education, health and other social services. Even when receiving constitutionally guaranteed public services they often face violations of their rights and freedoms. They do not have personal assistants yet.

The most important factors restraining their access include poverty, lack of funding, lack of social workers, limited implementation of law even in public institutions and local government bodies, - largely as a result of

weaknesses related to attitudes and professional knowledge.

Many persons with disabilities are not aware of their rights and responsibilities, and how to deal with legal problems. All these factors tend to lead to the isolation of persons with disabilities and their weak integration into society.

Objectives

The EU-SPS capacity development support in Kyrgyzstan aims at systematically integrating disability inclusion as a priority topic into social workers' and other social protection professionals' university education and in-service training. The second objective is to test the feasibility and acceptability of a disability-specific baby box in the Kyrgyzstan context.

The specific objectives were:

- To incorporate disability inclusion in social workers' pre-service and in-service training, and training of trainers for the university lecturers who are going to carry this activity forward.
- To establish disability inclusion in the regulatory standards for social worker in-service and pre-service training
- To mainstream disability in existing social worker capacity building programmes funded by other international agencies (EU, GIZ, etc.)
- To design and test the production and acceptability of a 'Baby Box' tailored to the needs of Kyrgyz families with disabled babies and mothers with disabilities.



Kyrgyz mother with a disability with her baby who received a baby box. Photo by Aleksey Skachkov.





Kyrgyz women with disabilities play a central role in this Kyrgyz programme. Photo by Hisayo Katsui.

Approach: Walking the Talk

The most important method used in this project is active participation of local and Finnish disability experts in all the activities. The Abilis Foundation owned by Finnish disabled people's organizations (DPOs), together with their Kyrgyz partner Ravenstvo, were contracted to bring strategic leadership for the project. The Bishkek University of Humanities and the Osh State University have been the main Kyrgyz partners, while the Ministry of Labour and Social Development is the focal partner within the Government.

In the training of trainers (ToT) for university lecturers in disability inclusion and disability studies, representatives of local DPOs played a central role as trainers of university lecturers. In the mainstreaming of disability into the training programmes managed by international agencies, Kyrgyz, Kazakh and Finnish persons with disabilities (PWD) played significant roles in different kinds of collaboration activities with EU-Technical Assistance Programme and GIZ Kyrgyzstan. Social enterprises of local persons with disabilities were also engaged, for instance for printing materials at Epicenter and the hosting of the last ToT at Bridges Hotel, owned by a former beneficiary of Abilis, turned into a successful entrepreneur.

The pilot project of baby box production and their delivery was implemented solely by a cooperative of Kyrgyz women with disabilities. In these ways, the project has exemplified significant, experiential knowledge and expertise that local persons with disabilities have for realizing disability inclusion and mainstreaming in Kyrgyzstan.

Results

The project produced **teaching modules in Russian on disability inclusion**. This production was a result of a fruitful collaboration with Kyrgyz university lecturers and disability activists. The modules contain among others interactive learning assignments, Kyrgyz-specific disability information, life stories of Kyrgyz persons with disabilities, and visual material links including video materials produced by a Finland funded UNDP-project in Kyrgyzstan.

The university lecturers, disability activists and collaboration partners have been trained to use the modules in their regular pre-service and in-service trainings for social workers but also other professionals such as medical doctors, social housing staff members, families and persons with disabilities themselves.

The EU-SPS has promoted disability inclusion also by helping to **mainstream disability into the work of a large EU funded Budget Support project** (and the related TA), through the involvement of the EU-SPS funded local disability expert. Her disability expertise and networks beyond Kyrgyzstan have been widely at the disposal of the EU-TA as well as **for GIZ programmes in Kyrgyzstan**.

100 baby boxes have been successfully delivered to mothers with disabilities and mothers of babies with disabilities. The mothers received **psychological and peer support** when receiving the boxes, which was even more important than the baby boxes themselves for many mothers. The Kyrgyz Ministry of Labour and Social Development has been satisfied with the Baby Box Pilot and has expressed an interest to continue this support to families with children with disabilities or mothers with disabilities. Discussions are ongoing on a potential continuation of this activity as part of the GIZ-funded Mother and Child Health Care Project.

EU-SPS: co-operation with 11 countries and regional organizations in Africa and Asia

The EU Social Protection Systems (EU-SPS) Initiative supports national, regional and international expert institutions in 11 mainly low income countries in their efforts to develop inclusive and sustainable social protection (SP) systems.

Partner countries:

Cambodia, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kyrgyz Republic, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Togo, Vietnam and Zambia.

Funding:

the EU, OECD and Government of Finland.

Implementation:

OECD Development Centre and Government of Finland's National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL). The four-year initiative was launched in 2015. Germany joined the initiative in 2016, with parallel funding through GIZ on behalf of BMZ.

For more, please visit our website at: www.thl.fi/eu-sps



A Kyrgyz baby with a disability and the baby box. Photo by Gulmira Kazakunova.

