“Leave No One Behind’
and
Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts,
Switzerland –
A 3-year partnership for raising capacities for social service provision at local level

TIRANA, ALBANIA

2018 | 2019 | 2020
Executive Summary

UNDP partnered with Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, in Switzerland, in the framework of the Swiss Government supported UN Joint Programme ‘Leave No One Behind’ (LNB), to strengthen the municipal technical and organisational capacities in relation to social care service provision by providing (i) training workshops for social workers, (ii) study visits to Swiss social service institutions and (iii) training workshops for professionals working with children with disabilities.

This 3-year partnership (2018-2020) aimed to support local actors on decentralized social work, expose them to Swiss models of integrated social services, as well as design and deliver a tailored capacity building programme for professional staff of public community centers for persons with disabilities.

It commenced in 2018 and concluded in September 2020. Given the circumstances under COVID-19 restrictions, the concluding workshop of this partnership was delivered online with the participation of all relevant stakeholders, aiming to share the transferred experiences, methodologies and approaches, as well as discuss the way forward.

A snapshot in figures:

✓ 54 social workers in 5 municipalities trained on integrated social service methods;
✓ 30 representatives from all governing levels acquainted/exposed to good models of social services provided in Switzerland;
✓ 31 professionals from 9 development centers trained on advanced methods to work with children with disabilities, 16 of them trained as trainers as well.
I. Support to Decentralized Social Work

Part of this partnership was directed to the support provided to local actors on decentralized social work, given the responsibilities delegated to the local government units under the decentralization and the social care services laws. Three rounds of trainings took place in Tirana, organized in collaboration with “Help for the Children (NPF)” partner NGO, respectively on October 2018, February and April 2019. Such trainings aimed to strengthen capacities of 54 municipal social workers from Fier, Lushnja, Lezha, Kruja, and Pogradec on how to coordinate efforts into an integrated system of social services. Facilitated from professors of Lucerne University the workshop focused on the most important attitudes and principles of social work, as well as working in the field with families from marginalized communities.

II. Study Visits in Switzerland

The capacities of social care service providers and relevant municipal staff in charge of policy formulation have been enhanced also through the experience gained during two study tours in Switzerland, which took place in May and December 2019. These visits were facilitated by the University of Lucerne, as part of the LNB efforts to set up a model of integrated social services and to contribute to an effective implementation of the social care plans in Albania. 30 representatives from 9 municipalities and other central and deconcentrated institutions were exposed to Swiss models of integrated social services. The municipal representatives were
introduced to some of the best experiences in planning and provision of such services in Switzerland. It served them not only to get acquainted, but also to study some of the most effective models, practices and mechanisms that ensure inclusive and community-based social services to communities in need, including those provided at home. In particular, the structure of social services that put the social worker at the centre, or engaged culturally competent social workers, which doesn’t exist in Albania, was one of the models to be considered in the Albanian reality.

III. Capacity Building for the professional staff of Community Centers for persons with disabilities (PwD)

While supporting the Albanian Municipalities to design development and rehabilitation community-based services for persons with disabilities, LNB programme collaborated with Lucerne University to strengthen the competencies of their professional staff to enable them to provide specialized quality services, enhance their technical and management capacities and prevent burn-out.

In line with this, a needs assessment workshop took place in July 2019, which served to identify the most pressing needs of all staff of the 9 community centers for persons with disabilities (PwD), as well as to tailor the specific training programmes. Three residential workshops were designed, in turn, to provide cascade training on methods considered worldwide effective for working with children with disabilities, in particular those with autism spectrum disorders. The two first workshops, 4 days each, were held in Tirana, respectively, on 14-17 October 2019 and 9-12 December 2019 focusing on topics related to ‘Autism Spectrum Disorders’. On the first 3 days of
methods. In addition, a training of trainers (TOT) workshop, with 2 professional staff from each center, took place on the 4th day of each workshop.

These trainings provided an opportunity for the trainees to acquire new skills and techniques, exchange their professional experiences with each other and the lectors from Lucerne University, as well as acquire skills to train other colleagues.

At the end of each workshop, certificates were awarded to all 31 specialists of the development centers, recognizing their earned skills on use of TEACH and AAC methods. The third residential workshop on "Challenging Behaviours of Children with Disabilities" planned to take place in March 2020, was cancelled, due to COVID 19 pandemic. Instead all the training materials prepared by Lucerne University professors were translated into Albanian and delivered online to the professional staff of the 9 centers for individual consultations.
Concluding Workshop

Given the COVID-19 pandemic, the concluding workshop was conducted online on September 21st, 2020. It aimed to summarise on achieved results, challenges faced, and those ahead, as well as on needs and recommendations for the future support. 40 participants from the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, municipalities, State Social Service structures, social care service providers for various vulnerable groups, shared their perception with the lecturers of Lucerne University on this partnership, level of satisfaction, and needs to fill in further gaps with the potential of a new collaboration in the future.

‘Leave No One Behind’ programme in Albania contributes to the achievement of these Sustainable Development Goals: