Armenia

Project title

Improving access to services and participation of persons with disabilities on the conceptual framework of UNCRPD and ICF – Armenia

Data

UN organizations ....................... UNDP, UNICEF
Duration .......... October 2014 — October 2016
Budget .................................................. $349,521

Introduction

“We emphasize the importance of the UNPRPD Project, it is indeed a serious reform in the system. The ideology of the new disability determination model is very important, when we are switching to a social and human-rights based model of disability assessment, which is based not only on the health status of an individual, but takes into consideration participation of the individual and a variety of environmental factors which have never been considered before. As a consequence of comprehensive assessment, we’ll be able to develop and provide more targeted services and support to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities and to promote their inclusion.”

Mr. Artem Asatryan
Former Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia (December 2016)
An integrated social service reform process launched by the Government of Armenia in 2012 created an institutional platform for the alignment of the disability assessment model in the country with a rights-based model informed by the CRPD and the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF).

The precursor to this was the introduction of inclusive education in Armenia and the revision of assessment tools for learners with disabilities within the education sector based on the ICF. This highlighted the need for developing a common approach and understanding around disability and harmonizing service delivery across sectors – education, health, employment and social protection – as disability is multidimensional and addressing the rights of persons with disabilities requires an intersectoral approach.

This resulted in a ministerial commitment to a multidimensional assessment of disability in line with the ICF. The UNPRPD Project that commenced in October 2014 aimed to operationalize this commitment.

The project is supporting a nationwide transition to a new disability assessment process and stronger linkage of the assessment process to allied service delivery based on a rights-based understanding of disability, as well as a roadmap for inclusion of persons with disabilities in all spheres of life.
The testing of the new model also showed that applicants have more space to share their needs and participate in decision-making related to their needs.

The ICF-based assessment model allows for the first time the applicant to participate in the assessment process. This includes the choice to have a DPO representative present during the assessment process.

This is significant as it allows the person applying for disability status to inform the decision-making process, which takes into account personal, medical and social circumstances for the first time.

This marks a significant departure from the previous model of disability assessment, which was based only on the assessment of a person’s impairment.

Recognizing the specific needs of children with disabilities, another key achievement of the project was the establishment of a separate Medical Social Expertise Committee for children.

The new model of disability assessment

Tested and piloted in three regions of Armenia with 1,269 people and was integrated into the social service system. The full roll-out of the new model will impact 17,000 persons in the first year and an additional 72,000 persons in each of the following years.

The results of the tests showed that an ICF–based assessment allows needs– and rights-based assessment of an individual, which in turn allows for tailoring services to the needs of persons with disabilities and their specific contexts. An analysis of feedback from the pilot revealed that 85 percent of persons with disabilities who participated in the pilot were satisfied with the new model of disability assessment, and positively evaluated involvement of social workers in the disability assessment process. Almost half of the participants were satisfied with the practitioners (health staff, social workers and assessment team of medical social expert commissions) involved in the assessment process.

85% of persons with disabilities who participated in the piloting were satisfied with the new model of disability assessment, and positively evaluated involvement of social workers in the disability assessment process.
To facilitate the development and piloting of the new model of disability assessment, the UNPRPD Project supported extensive capacity-building of core practitioners involved in the assessment process, doctors, staff of the medical and social expertise commissions, social workers and occupational therapists as well as representatives of line ministries and DPOs. This facilitated a slow but steady transformation in the thinking and practice on the rights of persons with disabilities.

Post-training self-reports by practitioners and participants involved in the assessment process reveal a transformation in the understanding of the concept of disability and a change in attitudes towards persons with disabilities. One of the most significant changes of attitude within the assessment teams was that they started to see the person rather than the impairment at the centre of the assessment.

More than 85 percent of primary health care institutions (120 out of 140 institutions) have been trained in a more rights-based understanding of disability as well as the ICF. In response to the demand created by the project, training modules were introduced within formal qualification courses in the educational system. A resource pack for multidisciplinary teams on provision of services to children with disabilities was also developed. Social workers, occupational therapists, representatives of DPOs and organizations of parents of children with disabilities have increased understanding of the ICF-CY principles, tools and guidelines.

Overall, 77 professionals comprising 63 social workers and case managers (including 43 women) and 14 occupational therapists were trained to apply their skills and knowledge of ICF principles and tools during testing and piloting. Forty-five representatives of DPOs and organizations of parents of children with disabilities actively participated in the sensitization sessions, trainings and the two-day International Conference on CRPD and ICF.

Capacity of heads of the Medical and Social Expertise Committees (MSEC) and selected social workers in applying an ICF-based model was strengthened, for example through training of trainers aiming at cascade training and knowledge sharing with their staff.

+85%

More than 85% of primary health care institutions have been trained on a more rights-based understanding of disability

All 170 professionals of the entities responsible for supervision, monitoring, mentoring of commissions, and data collection vis-à-vis disability assessment have increased capacities on the use of ICF principles, tools and guidelines.

170 Professionals

All 170 professionals of the entities responsible for disability assessment increased capacities on the use of ICF principles

77 Trained professionals

63 Social workers (including 43 women)

14 Occupational therapists
The transition to an ICF-based disability assessment process necessitates the strengthening of services across a range of sectors in parallel so that services are inclusive and can respond to the demands generated from a multidimensional disability assessment process. As an initial step, the project, therefore, supported a countrywide mapping of services, the development of an accessible database of services and a mobile-friendly website to enhance access to information on services and to facilitate referral of adults and children with disabilities and developmental delays. Further, based on an analysis of different sectors, a roadmap was developed for harmonization and coordination of services across sectors as well as for system strengthening for delivery of more inclusive services.

Project implementation contributed to the establishment of a technical commission to monitor provision of assistive technology. In 2016, 67,801 beneficiaries (34,352 women and 565 girls, 1,166 children under 18) received an individual plan including provision of services and assistive products.

Recognizing the compounded forms of discrimination experienced by women with disabilities, a gender-responsive methodology for individual service planning (ISP) was developed and linked with disability assessment. Assessment of individual service plans (ISPs) from a gender lens was conducted and ISPs were improved based on this.

For the first time for disability assessment among children, information was gathered from the education sector and information sharing facilitated amongst ministries, to enhance collaboration among different sectors.

The project also laid the ground for strong alignment of reforms being carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Health, namely the nationwide efforts on de-institutionalization of children including children with disabilities and the transition to unified electronic information management systems.

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Officially launched in 2011, the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD) is a unique collaborative effort that brings together UN entities, governments, disabled people’s organizations and the broader civil society to advance disability rights around the world. The UNPRPD supports the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) by facilitating policy dialogue, coalition-building and capacity-development at country, regional and global levels. In doing so, it leverages the comparative advantage of multiple stakeholders to advance the vision of a “society for all” in the 21st century.

The UN entities participating in the UNPRPD are the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the World Health Organization (WHO). The UNDP Inclusive Political Processes Team serves as the Technical Secretariat for the Partnership. The UNPRPD also works closely with multiple civil society organizations including the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC).

The UNPRPD is supported by the UNPRPD Fund, a Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) established to mobilize resources for the Partnership. The UNPRPD MPTF is administered by the UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTF Office) and builds on the experience developed by the MPTF Office in managing multiple Multi-Partner Trust Funds and joint programmes around the world.

You can find more information on the UNPRPD and its work at http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/RPD00.