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### Data anonymity

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**FINAL EVALUATION OF THE “MIDWAY - Mainstreaming Inclusiveness for Disabled Workers and Youth” INITIATIVE – June 2010.**

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# Abbreviations

CRS	Catholic Relief Services
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
ISC	Institute for Sustainable Communities
PWD	Person/s with disability
CIL	Centre for Independent Living Serbia
CIP	CIP-Centre for Interactive Pedagogy
FASPER	Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation
CRID	Inclusive Society Development Center
LCE	Local coalition for employment
NES	National Employment Service
MSC	Model of the most significant changes
FPER	Final project evaluation report
CM	City Municipality
LPA	Local Plan of Action
IEP	Individual Education Plan
MIDWAY	“MIDWAY – Mainstreaming Inclusiveness for Disabled Workers and Youth”
FG	Focus group



# 1. Executive summary

Persons with disabilities and children with disabilities are entitled to all the rights guaranteed to all human beings by general international legal acts. Persons with disabilities are substantially the biggest minority in the Republic of Serbia. They are faced with open or hidden discrimination on a daily basis.

Catholic Relief Services in Serbia, together with the Centre for Independent Living Serbia (CIL) and the CIP-Centre for Interactive Pedagogy (CIP), and with the assistance of the Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation (FASPER), Serbian Ministry of Economy and Regional Development, Ministry of Education, National Employment Service (NES) and the City Municipality of New Belgrade, implemented the project "MIDWAY - Mainstreaming Inclusiveness for Disabled Workers and Youth" in order to increase the opportunities of employing persons with disabilities and to help parents in the process of advocating for the inclusive education in Serbia. The project was implemented from October 2008 to the end of July 2010 in seven municipalities in Serbia: Belgrade (City Municipality New Belgrade), Novi Sad, Kragujevac, Niš, Leskovac, Užice and Vranje.

The evaluation process was conducted in four out of total of seven project cities: in Belgrade (City Municipality Novi Belgrade), Kragujevac, Leskovac and Vranje. The evaluation process included the total of 116 respondents (78 women and 28 men, while 10 persons filled out the questionnaire anonymously) in 12 focus groups; 14 interviews were conducted, 10 questionnaires were collected, and 6 stories of the persons with disabilities and parents were collected by the Method of the Most Significant Changes.

According to the evaluation results, the awareness of the people in local community is not developed enough in respect of the needs of men, women and children with disabilities. Local community is not sufficiently involved in solving problems of persons and children with disabilities.

In the municipalities in which the project was implemented, persons with disabilities have more possibilities for effective employment. That was accomplished through certain activities (round tables, Employment Fairs) and tools (Research and the Map of Resources) for increasing employability of persons with disabilities. With this project, persons with disabilities were provided with the access to resources and networks which increase the possibility of sustainable employment.

Through implementing the project activities aimed at providing more possibilities for the persons with disabilities to get efficient employment, 69 persons with disabilities were employed, and 2,129 persons with disabilities were animated.

The research conducted by the Centre for Independent Living of Serbia showed that experience in employing persons with disabilities was the key factor for removing prejudices on working capacities and effects of the work of persons with disabilities.

The employers who took part in the research were of the opinion that participation in MIDWAY project activities contributed to certain changes which occurred in their work and the work of their organisation/firm.

The programmes for the persons with disabilities are mainstreamed in USAID programs, because the emphasis of the education and training for employing persons with disabilities is relevant for all system USAID programmes.

The formal cooperation was established between faculties, schools and kindergartens, as well as organisations of civil society which represented groups of parents of children with disabilities.

Through the project activities, the cooperation with parents was established; although it is still far from satisfactory, it does exist.

The biggest success that was identified is the following: the establishment of the functional cooperation between preschool institutions and primary schools which enables follow-up of the students with disabilities and preparation of higher educational levels for inclusion of the students with disabilities in mainstream schools, mutual cooperation and the teamwork of preschool teachers and primary school teachers, and inclusion of parents and exchange of experiences with experts in certain fields.

The main factor of achieving the project sustainability is the initiative and readiness of the Local Coalition members to keep working on lobbying for education and employment of persons with disabilities. The product of the project activities so far, such as posters, educational films, training courses and similar materials can be used in further work on creating conditions for inclusive education.

The accomplishment of the final project goal that "men, women and children with disabilities are integrated in economic and social life in Serbia" requires a long-term engagement and work of all those concerned with this topic as well as those who can contribute to the process that persons with disabilities exercise their fundamental human rights regarding education and work.

The accomplishment of this goal requires great changes in society on all levels of government, adopted and enacted legislation including bylaws, and the provision of their enforcement. A very important change that will contribute to the accomplishment of the project goal is changing the awareness of members of society about the necessity of solving the issues of persons with disabilities.

This process requires much more time than 18 months the MIDWAY project lasted. Regarding the fact that inclusion is at its beginning in the Republic of Serbia, the implemented activities present a starting point for further work.

## **2. Foothold of MIDWAY goals**

Persons with disability are entitled to all the rights guaranteed to all human beings by general international legal acts.

In order to enable MIDWAY project to have a possibility of high quality implementation and to enable impact of implemented activities to influence changes in society, it was necessary to find footholds in different legal documents that "open the door" to project activities at various levels.

The Republic of Serbia is a signatory of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The right to work is guaranteed by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the International Pact on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It belongs to all people, thereby, to persons with disability too. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability confirms the right of the persons with disability to work and defines measures for exercising the right to work and related rights of the persons with disability. A special emphasis in the Convention is put on the ban of discrimination in this field, equal opportunities, the employment on the open labour market, self-employment, and incentives for employers.

In accordance with the UN Millennium Development Goals, Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) in Serbia, the third strategic direction of activities includes efficient application of the existing and definition of new programmes of measures and activities directly intended to the poorest and socially vulnerable groups, especially in the least developed areas (children, the elderly, persons with disability, refugees and internally displaced persons, Roma people, rural poor population and the uneducated).

The purpose of the United Nations Standard Rules for Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities is to advocate and secure that that girls, boys, women and men with disability, as members of their communities, enjoy the same rights and obligations as other citizens. In all societies of the world there are still obstacles preventing persons with disability from using their rights and freedoms, making their full participation in the activities of their local communities more difficult.

The countries, which the Republic of Serbia belongs too, took the obligations deliberately (in the Preamble of UN Standard Rules for Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities) according to the UN Charter, to organize joint and special activities in cooperation with the Organization in order to promote higher living standard, full employment and conditions for economic and social progress and development.

The policy which refers to improving the position of persons with disability is no longer posed as a problem of social policy, but as an issue of human rights respect.

In the Article 15 of the revised European Social Charter, which was also signed by the State Community of Serbia and Montenegro in 2005, the Council of Europe proscribed that persons with disability had the right to independence, social integration and full participation in the life of the community.

The Council of Europe adopted the Recommendations on a coherent policy for persons with disability which promotes the right of persons with disability to full participation in the society on an equal basis, the right to independent and autonomous life, and the right to equal opportunities.

The MIDWAY Project activities are harmonized with the Strategy of improving the position of persons with disability in the Republic of Serbia. The mentioned Strategy requires:

Development of efficient legal protection, with elaborated and implemented plans of prevention of discrimination of persons with disability, as well as the plans of sensitizing society on the issues of disability.

Development of measure policies and application of programmes, especially in the field of education, employment, work and housing, which provide equal opportunities to persons with disability and encourage independence, personal development and active life in all spheres.

If we see special objectives of this Strategy:

- Raising level of awareness in the community about the persons with disability
- Raising level of awareness of the persons with disability on their rights, position and needs;
- Providing respect and exercise of rights for all persons with disability to adequate education, with providing equal opportunities for studying and development in local community for all children, youth and adults with disability;
- Strengthening the families of persons with disability through the system of providing adequate support of respective services helping integration of persons with disability in community.

We can notice that the goals of the MIDWAY Project are in accordance with the special objectives.

National Strategy for the Improvement of the Position of Persons with Disability in the Republic of Serbia deals with restraining causes and not only consequences of disability understood as a social phenomenon appearing in interaction of the person with disability and the barriers he/she is facing. This strategy is defined as a part of social development strategy whose goal is building successful and fair society with solidarity and equality of possibilities. The strategy is intended to improve the position of persons with disability in the field of employment, more efficient social protection, education, health system, accessibility of environment.

The Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disability, which was adopted in the Republic of Serbia in May 2009, defines the incentives for employment of persons with disability, evaluation of their working abilities, professional rehabilitation, obligation of employment of persons with disability, conditions for founding and running companies for professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disability, working centres and social firms, as well as other issues of importance for professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disability.

There is especially defined obligation of each employer who has not less than 20 employees to employ a certain number of persons with disability. The sanctions are proscribed in the form of paying penalties/fines in the amount of triple minimal pay, defined in accordance with working regulations for non-compliance with the law. The law was adopted in 2009, and the enactment of the article introducing the quota system was left for May 2010, because mostly employer's needs and obligations were supposed to be harmonized and five different bylaws/books of rules which are necessary for the Law implementation were supposed to be brought and adopted.

The adopted bylaws for implementation of the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disability are:

- Book of Rules on criteria, manner and costs of evaluation of working abilities and possibilities of employment and job maintaining of persons with disability;
- Book of Rules on closer conditions, criteria and standards for implementing measures and activities of professional rehabilitation;
- Book of Rules on conditions and manner of working engagement of persons with disability in the social protection institutions for accommodation of beneficiaries and at employers' through Working Centre;

while the adoption of

- Book of Rules on spatial technical conditions, professional capacity of the employees and other working conditions of Working Centre;
- Book of Rules on the manner of follow-up the fulfilment of obligation of employing persons with disability and the manner of proving the fulfilment of the obligation

is expected in 2010.

Early 2010, National Employment Service registered 22,464 persons with disability looking for job. It is about three percent of the total of 767,418 registered unemployed persons in Serbia. The number of unemployed persons with disability is underestimated because "going out to the labour market", that is, registering at National employment service for employment, depends on objective possibilities for employment. If a person with disability waits at the labour market for a longer time or is being rejected by employers several times, he/she often gets depressed and stops looking for a job. It is estimated that only 21,000 persons with disability have jobs, which is only 1% out of the total number of 2,486,734 employed<sup>1</sup>.

Inclusion as a process of including children with disability in regular schools and total social life very often means a conceptual context of understanding inclusion, but also the narrowest. It is about providing human preconditions for adequate inclusion of children with disabilities in regular classes of general educational and vocational schools, as well as inclusion of children in total social life.

According to the Law on the Basics of Education and Upbringing System, each person has the right to education and upbringing.

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<sup>1</sup> "Employment of People with Disabilities in Serbia - Opportunities and Challenges", Belgrade CILS, 2010.

“Citizens of the Republic of Serbia are equal in exercising rights to education and upbringing, regardless of their gender, race, national, religious and language background, social and cultural background, property possessions, age, physical and mental constitution, disturbances in development and disability, political commitment or any other personal characteristic. Persons with difficulties and disability have the right to education and upbringing which respects their educational and upbringing needs in regular system of education and upbringing, in regular system with individual, that is, group support or in special preschool group or school, in accordance with this and special law.”<sup>2</sup>

In the Law on basic system of education and upbringing of the Republic of Serbia<sup>3</sup>, it is emphasized that the “system of education and upbringing has to provide all children, students and adults with:

- equal right and accessibility to education and upbringing without discrimination and separation on the basis of gender, social, cultural, ethnic, religious or other background, place of residence, that is accommodation, material or health condition, difficulties and disturbances in development and disability, as well as on other basis;

Through its organization and programmes, system of education and upbringing also provides:

- the possibilities for children, students and adults with difficulties and disability, regardless of their material conditions, to have access to all levels of education in institutions, and the persons placed in social protection institutions, sick children and students – exercise the right to education during their stay in the institution, and during hospital and home medical treatment;

In order to improve the quality of education and upbringing, the Republic of Serbia established the institutions – Bureau for the improvement of education and upbringing, and the Bureau for quality assessment of education and upbringing (hereinafter: the Bureaus), for performing development, advisory, research, and other professional tasks in preschool, primary and secondary education and upbringing.

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<sup>2</sup> The Law on the Basics of Education and Upbringing System, Article 6, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No.72/09

<sup>3</sup> The Law on the Basics of Education and Upbringing System, Article 3, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No.72/09

### **3. About "MIDWAY" Project**

Catholic Relief Services has been active in Serbia through its Belgrade office since 1996. The first interventions focused on humanitarian needs of the people in need transferring to development projects focused to build the capacity of local civil society organizations and socially excluded groups to advocate for their rights and to raise voice in communities.

**CRS has been active in Serbia in the area of advocacy for rights and services for persons with disabilities since 2003. Together with its implementing partners, the Center for Independent Living (CILS) and the CIP-Center for Interactive Pedagogy (CIP) and with associates of the Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation (FASPER), the Serbian Ministry of Economy and Regional Development, the Ministry of Education, the National Employment Service (NES) and the New Belgrade Municipality, CRS in Serbia implemented the MIDWAY project (Mainstreaming Inclusiveness for Disabled Workers and Youth) to boost the employment rights of persons with disabilities and to support parents to advocate for inclusive education in Serbia.**

The MIDWAY initiative was designed in full cooperation of CRS with partner organizations of civil society at the very beginning of 2008. The project implementation started on 1 October 2008 and ended on 31 July 2010 in seven cities in Serbia: Belgrade (City Municipality New Belgrade), Novi Sad, Kragujevac, Niš, Leskovac, Užice and Vranje. MIDWAY Project is supported through the programme "Civil Society Advocating Initiative" (CSAI) implemented by the Institute of Sustainable Communities (ISC) and financed by USAID.

The strategic goals of MIDWAY Project are the following:

- 1) Persons with disabilities have more options for meaningful employment (SO1)
- 2) Civil society more effectively mobilizes for inclusive education (SO2)

1) SO1: Within the project, Centre for Independent Living Serbia conducted a research on the attitude of persons with disability and employers to employment of persons with disability in Serbia. Five round tables were organized and five local coalitions for employing persons with disability were formed in the selected cities Belgrade – City Municipality New Belgrade, Novi Sad, Kragujevac, Niš and Leskovac, with the goal of gathering several of local stakeholders and organizations of persons with disability on advocating the implementation of the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disability in Serbia. Two Employment Fairs were organized for persons with disability, one in New Belgrade, the other one in Kragujevac. The "Map of Resources", as well as the results of the research "Employment of persons with disability in Serbia – Possibilities and Challenges", and the results of the project were presented to the relevant ministries on 21 June 2010.

2) SO2: In cooperation with FASPER team, the project organized training for selected professionals in education, organized meetings of activation and training for FASPER students, pre/school teachers, parents, organizations of parents and groups of parents, formed a team of training leaders and local teams for inclusive education in: New Belgrade, Kragujevac, Niš,

Užice and Vranje. The research “Perception of attitudes, concern and self-efficiency of teaching cadre in respect of inclusive education” and “The one who wants finds a reason – the one who doesn’t want finds an excuse”, collection of good practice examples of advocating inclusive education in partnership of parents, educational institutions and civil society organizations, were made for the purpose of documenting the project impact the way stakeholders see it. Pre/school institutions and organizations of parents had the support in the form of small grants for advocacy in order to become active carriers of changes in education in relation to the decision-making process.

3) Additionally, within the MIDWAY Project, a significant effort was made on directing persons with disability to other USAID programmes in Serbia through organizing workshops and presentations for employers and projects of USAID implementing partners.

### 3.1. Evaluation subject

The planned evaluation is external end-of-project evaluation that should provide evidence on the accomplished project impact and results and its resonance with local communities and stakeholders, and inform subsequent projects implemented by CRS Serbia, its partners or other stakeholders.

MIDWAY is the project which is the subject of external evaluation and which was implemented in the period from 1 October 2008 to 31 July 2010, on the territory of seven cities in Serbia (Novi Sad, Belgrade – City Municipality New Belgrade, Niš, Leskovac, Kragujevac, Užice and Vranje). The partners on the project are Centre for Independent Living Serbia, CIP – Centre for Interactive Pedagogy, and the full cooperation was established with the National Employment Service and the Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation (FASPER).

### 3.2. Evaluation readership

The evaluation will be used by CRS staff and partners’ organizations in order to make the Final Project Report for the donor which in this case is the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the Institute for Sustainable Communities in Serbia. The Final Project Evaluation Report (FPER) will be shared with the relevant Ministries in Serbia and stakeholders who participated in the project activities. FPER should also be used as a source of learning for subsequent project interventions implemented by CRS as well as by other organizations and/or donors who implement similar projects or projects in similar context/s.

### 3.3. Evaluation objectives of MIDWAY Project

The evaluation objectives are:

- 1. To identify and explore the project impact among project stakeholders.**

The report findings are improved by including the opinions of key informants, more precisely, representatives of the Municipality of New Belgrade and representatives of National Employment Service in Serbia.

The opinions of beneficiaries and other stakeholders are clearly presented by the use of direct quotations from interviews.

**2. To identify lessons learned and best practices which should be used in future phases of this project or other projects of similar kind in similar contexts.**

With the aid of technique of Most Significant Changes, a unique value added by this programme, as well as unique programme methods will be presented. The successes are clearly presented in the form of stories. The programme staff and other stakeholders are included in the conversation about programme values.

**3. Based on the input from stakeholders, provide recommendations for the possible next project phase or project intervention based on the context, experience and legislation enacted in Serbia.**

The recommendations are made with the purpose of improving efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, impact and sustainability of the programme.

### 3.4. Evaluation questions

The questions the evaluation gave answers to are the following:

1. What are differences/similarities and what are the main factors that influence the success/failure in small vs. big communities where the project was implemented?
2. What are the most significant changes the project has brought about to project stakeholders (project team, persons with disabilities and persons with disabilities' organizations, pre/schools teachers, parents and parents organizations, FASPER students, National Employment Service, USAID implementing partners, local government, local coalitions etc.)
3. To what extent the project succeeded in meeting its objectives (SO1 and SO2) and mainstreaming persons with disabilities into USAID programs in Serbia.

The additional questions included in the evaluation refer to relevance of project objectives and activities for stakeholders and the context in which it is implemented, efficiency and effectiveness, as well as sustainability of project results.



## **4. Methodology**

The methods for collecting data used in the evaluation process were:

1. Focus groups – Focus group is carefully planned discussion of participants targeted at getting information on the participants' perception of the defined area of interest in an encouraging and non-threatening environment. Focus group is a conversation based on discussion resulting in qualitative data. The main goal of the focus group is better information on the opinions and perceptions of participants on certain issues. Optimal focus group lasts between one hour and half to two hours. The number of participants in the focus group is 8 to 12.
2. Interview (individual and group) – Interview is a conversation with purpose conducted with one or more persons belonging to the same interest group.
3. Questionnaire and web questionnaire – Questionnaires were designed for selected representatives of partner organizations (CIL, CIP, FASPER) and CRS representatives. The guidelines for individual and group interviews and focus groups were created on the basis of the data obtained from questionnaires. Thereby, certain topics were explored in-depth during individual and group interviews. The questionnaire in web form was created and designed for USAID partners and employers.
4. Model of Most Significant Changes – The Model of Most Significant Changes (MSC) provided stories of persons from two interest groups: persons with disability and parents involved in the project, about important or significant changes the project resulted in. MSC stories are about important or significant changes and give a rich picture of development work impact, and create a basis for dialogue on key goals and values of development programmes. The plan of collecting stories is as follows: within the focus groups with the mentioned stakeholders, proMENTE Team gave the information on the Model of Most Significant Changes, and gave instructions on the work and the deadline for writing stories. After that, the selection of the best story was made in two rounds as follows: persons with disability send their stories to CIL branch in their town, and parents send their stories to CIP. Using the instructions obtained from proMENTE Team, CIL and CIP representatives will make a selection of 5 to 7 best stories for each of the mentioned stakeholders' group. The selected stories will be sent by CIP and CIL representatives to CRS representatives. Then, CRS representatives will make another selection of the stories, according to proMENTE Team, and select the total of 4 to 6 stories.

Evaluation process was conducted in four out of totally seven project cities: in City Municipality New Belgrade and Kragujevac, in which the work was done on implementation of both strategic goals (for persons with disability to have more possibilities for effective employment and for civil society to engage effectively for inclusive education), in Leskovac where the work was on implementing the strategic goal for persons with disability to have more possibilities for effective employment (SO1), and in Vranje where the work was on

implementation of strategic goal for civil society to engage effectively for inclusive education (SO2).

The key stakeholders who were involved in the evaluation process are:

- CRS representative in Serbia,
- USAID representative and representative of Institute for Sustainable Communities in Serbia (ISC),
- USAID partners,
- representatives of CIP-Centre for Interactive Pedagogy (CIP) in Belgrade,
- representatives of Centre for Independent Living Serbia in Belgrade and their branch offices in Kragujevac and Leskovac,
- persons with disability who were involved in the project activities in City Municipality New Belgrade, in Kragujevac and Leskovac,
- members of project Coalition for Employment in City Municipality New Belgrade, Kragujevac and Leskovac,
- employers who participated in certain project activities,
- parents, members of project Working Groups in City Municipality New Belgrade, Kragujevac and Vranje,
- project school officials in City Municipality New Belgrade, in Kragujevac and Vranje.

The key informants, that is, persons who were not directly involved in implementation of project activities, but could have information significant for evaluation, were:

- representatives of the City Municipality of New Belgrade,
- representative of National Employment Service in Serbia.

## 4.1. Data collection

116 respondents took part in the evaluation process.

Out of total number of respondents, there are 78 women and 28 men. Ten respondents filled out the questionnaires which did not contain demographic data because of anonymity.

Twelve focus groups and 14 interviews were held, and 10 questionnaires were collected.

The structure and the number of respondents are listed in the table according to the data collection method.

Method	Participants	Number of participants
Interviews	Representative of CRS Serbia	1
	Representatives of Centre for Independent Living Serbia in Belgrade and local assistants in Kragujevac and Leskovac	4
	Representatives of Centre for Interactive Pedagogy in Belgrade and professional assistants in Kragujevac and Vranje	4
	Representative of USAID	1
	Representative of Institute for Sustainable Development of Communities (ISC)	1
	Representatives of City Municipality New Belgrade	2
	Representative of National Employment Service	1
Focus groups	Parents, participants in project activities in Municipality New Belgrade, Kragujevac and Vranje	24
	School employees in Municipality New Belgrade, Kragujevac and Vranje	35
	Persons with disability, participants in project activities in Municipality NewBelgrade, Kragujevac and Leskovac	17
	Member of Local Coalition for Employment in City Municipality New Belgrade, Kragujevac and Leskovac	16
Questionnaires	Representative of CRS Serbia	1
	Representatives of Centre for Independent Living Serbia in Belgrade and local assistants in Kragujevac and Leskovac	2
	Representatives of Centre for Interactive Pedagogy (CIP) in Belgrade and professional assistants in Kragujevac and Vranje	3
	Employers who participated in certain project activities	5
Web questionnaire	Representatives of USAID partners who participated in certain project activities	5



## **5. Evaluation results**

### **5.1. Achieving Project Goal: Men, women and children with disability are integrated in economic and social life in Serbia**

General goal of MIDWAY Project is integration of men, women and children with disability in economic and social life in Serbia. The general goal was tried to be accomplished through two strategic objectives:

1. Persons with disability have more options for meaningful employment;
2. Civil society more effectively mobilizes for inclusive education.

The partner for accomplishing the strategic objective of providing more possibilities for the persons with disability for effective employment is the Centre for Independent Living Serbia in cooperation with the National Employment Service. The partners for accomplishing the strategic objective of effectively mobilizes for inclusive education are CIP – Centre for Interactive Pedagogy and the Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation (FASPER).

#### **5.1.1. Achieving strategic objective: persons with disability have more options for meaningful employment**

The Centre for Independent Living Serbia is a partner organization which coordinated the project activities which were intended to increase the possibilities of persons with disability for effective employment. This strategic objective was implemented in five municipalities in Serbia in which the Centre for Independent Living Serbia has its branch offices: City Municipality New Belgrade, Kragujevac, Leskovac, Niš and Novi Sad. Local teams of Centre for Independent Living Serbia were active in each of the mentioned cities.

The project activities of the Centre for Independent Living Serbia were implemented through two segments which included a spectre of activities:

Research "Employment of persons with disability - Possibilities and challenges" and Map of Resources.

Centre for Independent Living Serbia conducted a research under the title "Employment of persons with disability - Possibilities and challenges".

The research shows the existing legal framework for employing persons with disability in Serbia, identifies the existing incentives for employment, examines and analyzes characteristics of unemployed persons with disability offered on the labour market, and investigates capacities and readiness of employers for employing persons with disability, as well as readiness of persons with disability to get a job. The research also included the initial effects of the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disability, as a consequence of the MIDWAY Project activities. Some research results will be presented in this report.

The research methodology included analysis of basic documents relevant for employment of persons with disability and quantitative analysis of the data collected during the analysis. A survey was conducted in two rounds of poll nine months apart from each other. The first poll included 124 unemployed persons with disability looking for a job, and the largest number is young people of 45 years of age, which means the most productive period of life. The second poll included 132 unemployed persons with disability, out of whom more than half were between 19 and 30. This can be explained by the change in sample due to fluctuation of labour force. The research also included 37 employers and organizations.

Within the project, the Centre for Independent Living Serbia also made a Map of Resources containing strategies and action plans of employment, Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disability, and books of rules on the manner of implementation of the Law, Measures and benefits for employers who hire persons with disability, a list of employers in the cities in which the project was implemented, and a list of employment agencies.

Activities for promotion of the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disability, and the activities for encouraging employment of persons with disability.

In order to promote the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disability and encourage employment of persons with disability, CIL performed the following activities:

### **1. Establishment of Local Coalitions for Employment**

As an inventive mechanism for connecting persons with disability and representatives of the rights of persons with disability and employers, the Centre for Independent Living Serbia initiated establishment of local coalitions for employment in each of the project cities.

The Coalition members are the representatives of:

- National Employment Service,
- organizations of persons with disability,
- local authorities,
- employers,
- centres for social work,
- chambers of commerce,
- institutions offering re-qualification and training
- other interested actors in employment process.

Local coalitions for employment of persons with disability were established in all five cities: Novi Sad, Belgrade – City Municipality New Belgrade, Kragujevac, Niš and Leskovac.

The Coalition was established with the following purpose:

- making a local action plan in the field of employment of persons with disability

- implementation of the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disability
- performing constant advocating and lobbying in local community, institutions of system, and among employers for the purpose of employing persons with disability
- increasing employability of persons with disability.

The Coalition bodies were formed – they are Coordination Board and Working Groups. The coalitions made their plans including different activities such as:

- support during concrete employment of persons with disability
- making Local Plan of Action for employment of persons with disability (LPA)
- lobbying at the City Administration for adoption of LPA in the field of disability
- raising awareness and animating local community on the rights and possibilities of employment of persons with disability
- cooperation of bodies of Local Coalitions with the Working Groups for employing persons with disability at the National Employment Service branch offices
- collecting data done by the organizations of persons with disability and National Employment Service on unemployed persons with disability
- informing employers about benefits and stimulation measures for employment of persons with disability
- keeping records on employment of persons with disability
- encouraging persons with disability who have potential for starting their own business.

## **2. Round tables**

Within the project activities in June 2009, five round tables were held (in Novi Sad, New Belgrade, Kragujevac, Niš and Leskovac) under the title "Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disability and new possibilities of employment of persons with disability". The purpose of the round tables was to connect all local actors who are important for the process of employment of persons with disability. The round tables participants were: unemployed persons with disability, employers, representatives of local governments, organizations of persons with disability, National Employment Service, institutions of public importance and media representatives.

At the round tables, the Advisor for professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disability of the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development presented the following to the audience:

- Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disability
- activities of the Ministry on the Law implementation
- activities of the National Employment Service in the process of employment of persons with disability.

The participants of the round tables got the information about the MIDWAY Project, which is about:

- results of the first analysis of research on positions and possibilities for employment of persons with disability.
- Initiative for establishment of Local Coalitions for Employment of persons with disability.

The round tables were supported by the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development and National Employment Service. This event enabled interactive communication between representatives of governments, employers, persons with disability and their organizations.

### **3. Employment Fairs for persons with disability**

Centre for Independent Living Serbia organized two Employment Fairs for persons with disability in cooperation with National Employment Service, City Municipality New Belgrade, and with media support of the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC). The first fair was held in New Belgrade on 18.03.2010, and the second one in Kragujevac on 25.03.2010. Twenty four employers/institutions participated in the fair in Belgrade, and 19 employers in Kragujevac. The visitors submitted their CVs to several employers; thus, 2701 were submitted in Belgrade, and 349 in Kragujevac.

The importance of the fairs is that for the first time in Serbia, organizations of persons with disability organized the Employment Fair for persons with disability. The previous fairs were organized by National Employment Service, while the first Employment Fair for persons with disability was also organized by National Employment Service in cooperation with Belgrade Municipality Vračar, but without participation of civil society. The goal of the MIDWAY Job Fairs was primarily to get jobs for a large number of persons with disability, but also to connect employers from business and state sector and persons with disability who want effective employment. The fair was an opportunity for employers to learn about the offer of labour force and, through personal contacts, to meet candidates for certain jobs, but also for persons with disability to get in touch with employers and learn about jobs and programmes or training employers offer to persons with disability.

At the fairs, round tables were held at which incentive measures offered by National Employment Service to employers who employ persons with disability were presented.

Interest shown by employers and persons with disability to participate in the fairs was great, which is also indicated by renting a bigger hall for the second Fair, as well as much bigger number of interested employers than the anticipated number for participation in the Fair (the case at the Fair in New Belgrade).

At the Fairs, persons with disability also had an opportunity to get basic knowledge on how to write a CV, but also get assistance in writing it on the spot. They got help for that by assistants and advisors of the Centre for Independent Living Serbia and National Employment Service.

According to the data of National Employment Service, the Fair resulted in employment of persons with disability. In Kragujevac, 16 persons with disability was employed, and in New Belgrade 8. In addition to employing persons with disability, the Fair success is that employers contacted CIL asking for help to employ persons with disability, and it became practice to

them. By the end of the project, 69 persons with disability got employed. The main obstacle is the lack of mechanisms for monitoring the employed persons with disability which get jobs in this way, because after the recommendation and assistance of CILs, the contact with employers and employed persons stops and employers hardly give feedback on accomplishments and the way of the person with disability one, two, three months after the moment of employment.

**In the cities in which the project was implemented, persons with disability have more possibilities for effective employment. That was achieved through specific actions (round tables, Employment Fair) and tools (research and Map of Resources) for increasing employment of persons with disability. Persons with disability were granted access to resources and networks increasing the possibility of sustainable employment of persons with disability (activities of Local Coalition for Employment).**

#### **5.1.1.1. Defined and promoted actions and tools for increasing employment of persons with disability**

Defining and promoting actions and tools for increasing employment of persons with disability are activities regarding increase of understanding the legal framework on which the rights of persons with disability are based, as well as providing the framework for sustainable strategies for increase of employment rate of persons with disability. The mentioned CIL activities also refer to mapping main resources in the process of increasing employment of persons with disability, but also the roles and responsibilities of various actors in the process.

In order to accomplish the above mentioned, CIL team issued a publication under the title "Employment of persons with disability in Serbia – possibilities and challenges" which contains the research results on the attitudes of persons with disability and the employers' attitudes on employing persons with disability. In addition to the research results, CIL team gave the legal framework in the publication, and thereby consolidated and made an overview of legislative framework referring to the process of employment of persons with disability.

As mentioned in the publication, in the field of legal regulations Serbia has more significant regulations providing appropriate legal framework for encouraging employment of persons with disability, providing appropriate strategic framework for encouraging employment of persons with disability in Serbia such as:

- Strategy of improvement of position of persons with disability in Serbia 2007-2015,
- National strategy of poverty reduction
- National employment strategy
- National action plan for employment
- Law on labour
- Law on prevention of discrimination of persons with disability
- Law on professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disability.

Also, fiscal regulations and programmes of Active Employment Policy provide significant encouragement to employers who decide to employ persons with disability, by guaranteeing various benefits.<sup>4</sup>

The research of the Centre for Independent Living Serbia under the title “Employment of persons with disability in Serbia – possibilities and challenges” gives a comprising overview of the situation in Serbia regarding persons with disability and their employment.

During the project activities implementation, CIL team collected materials in order to make a Map of Resources. Map of Resources is designed primarily for persons with disability so that they could have all the necessary information during the process of employment (legal rights, list of employers in their local community, list of employment agencies). Map of Resources is also designed for employers in the sense of availability of information regarding employment of persons with disability.

Map of Resources presents tools identifying possibilities for improving professional qualifications and skills of persons with disability, and containing all resources persons with disability can use in the process of searching for a job.

MIDWAY Project came with its activities in the right time to explain and prepare the actors for the Law application, facilitate contacts and ties between employers and persons with disability. Through the activities, persons with disability got information about certain issues which are of importance to them like, for example, the fact that if a person with disability finds a job, s/he is still entitled to receive so-called “third person assistance” benefit from the State.

Most persons with disability have the information that the Law on Professional Rehabilitation was adopted, and have basic information about what it means. They got the information about the Law through their associations, and they point out that it contributed to a great extent to the changes that happened and progress achieved in relation to the period from a few years ago; much more talk about persons with disability has been present in public, people are better informed. CIL research showed that persons with disability were well informed about the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disability. Awareness of measures on national level is much bigger than the awareness of measures and activities on local level.

Members of the Coalition for Employment are informed about the laws concerning the rights of persons with disability regarding their education and employment. They are informed about what the laws include, when they were adopted and when their application started. It is individual how much persons with disability are informed about the laws.

*Representative of Local Coalition for Employment: It depends on the person. Some persons are very well informed about the laws, and now they really use the rights they have in order to become more independent, while some*

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<sup>4</sup> “Employment of People with Disabilities in Serbia - Opportunities and Challenges”, Belgrade CILS, 2010.

*persons are just looking for excuses not to get a job and blame others for everything that happens to them.*

The opinion of persons with disability on the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disability is that it is qualitatively made in respect of representing their rights and protection, and they point out the importance of the manner of its implementation. Also, now the associations and centres of persons with disability have the responsibility to monitor the implementation of the Law. The assistance in implementation of the Law refers to cooperation with associations of employers, the National Employment Service, associations of persons with disability and all other actors in local community who have an important role in the process of employment of persons with disability.

*Person with disability: We are informed about that Law too, we heard about it. It is very important that the Law was adopted at all. Still, if there were not the associations dealing with problems of persons with disability and monitoring the implementation, we are not sure how much the laws would be implemented.*

*Person with disability: It is good that the Law was adopted, but the associations have the big responsibility regarding implementation of the Law.*

With regard to implementation of the Law, there is an inevitable question whether employers will hire persons with disability in order to avoid penalties or they will employ them because they want to?

We have to be aware that the Law adoption does not necessarily change the awareness of people on the importance of inclusion of persons with disability in the society, because there are still barriers in the relation and it requires a lot of work.

*Person with disability: The existence of that law didn't influence the increase of awareness of all people on importance of inclusion of persons with disability in work and society. There is still that barrier in relation to persons with disability; many are ashamed of us at the beginning, but later, when we get to know each other better, the relation becomes much better.*

*Person with disability: We would definitely like to work for someone who accepts us than the one who just hired us in order to avoid penalties. Still, through this project, some of us managed to get a job.*

MIDWAY Project "came in the right time", because it would not be possible to apply the Laws adequately and completely without interventions and changing the awareness of people in society. It is necessary to provide some main conditions which are needed for implementation of the laws concerning persons with disability. It is necessary to develop awareness among employers, as well as all society members in general, and trust to persons with disability, their abilities and possibilities to work.

*Representative of Local Coalition for Employment: The laws themselves have no value if you don't have a ready social community which will start implementing the law. That is where the MIDWAY Project played the leading role. In order to hire a person with disability, you first have to remove prejudices about persons with disability in the society.*

In Kragujevac there is the Action Plan for employment of persons with disability, but it is still in the procedure of adoption. The MIDWAY Project activities are completely harmonized with the plan. The plan already entered its implementation, and the work is done on employment of more persons with disability. A team member of the Centre for Independent Living participated in making the Strategy which was adopted in Kragujevac in September 2009.

*CIL team member: The activities are in accordance with the Strategy of the City of Kragujevac; I had the pleasure to be a coordinator for the Strategy of Social Care for the targeted group of persons with disability which was adopted in September 2009. It helped me give more proposals for improving living conditions of the persons with disability, and of course, proposals for increased employment of persons with disability.*

The Municipality New Belgrade still has no action plan for employment of persons with disability, but it is working on the strategy of social care. They are collecting the information on where the persons in social need are; they are trying to establish communication with associations and non-governmental sectors, and define specific needs regarding employment.

In Leskovac, the Action Plan was made; members of the Coalition for Employment participated in its making. The Action Plan was forwarded to the City Assembly and it is in the procedure of adoption. The Action Plan includes three data bases about the following:

- all persons with disability
- employers
- employers' needs in local community.

In addition to establishing data base, it is also necessary to make evaluation of working abilities of all persons with disability who should get a job and make programmes of training and education of persons with disability. The Action Plan also includes adapting and equipping workplaces for persons with disability. It is of key importance to include members of organizations and associations of persons with disability, as well as representatives of city authorities, in the plan implementation.

Most persons with disability – FG participants do not have information on any local action plan for employment of persons with disability. But, the smaller number of those who are informed about the Action Plan for Employment consider it as the first big step in employing persons with disability, because there was nothing similar before.

*Person with disability: This is the first big step in employing persons with disability. Previously, there was no Action Plan for employment of persons*

*with disability. Some employers already employed persons with disability, but as far as we know, there was no Action Plan for that.*

Centre for Independent Living Serbia with its activities contributed to defining and promoting actions and tools for increasing employment of persons with disability.

### **5.1.1.2. Persons with disability have access to resources and networks widening possibilities for sustainable employment**

Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disability proscribes the obligation for employers to employ persons with disability under certain conditions and criteria. There is supply and demand for employing persons with disability.

But the question is how employers will manage to find qualified persons with disability? Do persons with disability have the necessary skills to efficiently present themselves on the labour market?

A series of actions have been taken for helping persons with disability to increase their own self-confidence and learn about the labour market, as well as learn to present themselves and their abilities efficiently. The purpose of the actions also was to inform employers and unemployed persons with disability within the active employment policy, to employ more persons with disability and to involve all actors in the local community important in the process of employment of persons with disability. The taken actions are the following:

- organizing round tables in all five cities,
- establishing Local Coalitions for Employment of persons with disability in each project municipality,
- two Employment fairs, in New Belgrade and Kragujevac.

How many persons with disability found the job thanks to the project?

Thanks to the project activities implemented in the period of 18 months, 69 persons with disability got the job.

The Employment Fairs resulted in employment of totally 24 persons with disability, as follows: 16 persons in Kragujevac, and 8 persons in Belgrade (out of whom 3 persons are on probation period); the work of the Local Coalitions for Employment also resulted in employment of 45 persons with disability as follows: in Novi Sad – 2 persons, Belgrade – 3 persons, Kragujevac – 23 persons, Niš – 8 persons and Leskovac – 9 persons.

*Person with disability: I found the job thanks to this project, and now I work and get salary regularly. I have the contract on temporary employment at the moment, but it is renewed regularly.*

*Person with disability: I was looking for a job and applied at the Employment Fair, and I finished the secondary school for persons with disability. Now I have a job and I am quite satisfied with it.*

Person with disability: I am satisfied; I think that the project was successful; I managed to get a permanent job.

Through the implementation of project activities with the purpose of providing more possibilities for persons with disability for effective employment, 69 persons with disability got employed, and 2 129 persons were animated.

For most persons with disability, the job they found at the Employment Fair if the first job. Those who already have some working experience, say that it was mostly from temporary, part-time jobs. Many of them got a chance to get a full-time job for the first time.

According to CIL research, most unemployed persons with disability (52.4%) live in households whose incomes are under the level of average salary in the Republic of Serbia. More than half of the interviewed unemployed persons with disability evaluate the living standard of their household as bad. The estimate is that 1/5 unemployed persons with disability live below the poverty line, and it is significantly above the participation of the poor in the total population. The biggest number of unemployed persons with disability (68.5%) lives with their parents and other members of family household (siblings, grandparents, etc.).

With employment the persons with disability improved their financial situation, but also the situation of their families. With regular monthly income, persons with disability got an opportunity to provide their family economically.

*CIL team member: With employment, persons with disability improved their material status, they felt useful, they simply took some new paths leading to better tomorrow. The best example of the changes due to the project is the satisfied beneficiaries of the project.*

Employment is of great importance not only for persons with disability, but also for their families.

*Person with disability: Of course that employment means a lot, first of all, for me, but also for my family. I got the job for the first time, and previously I only had some temporary, part-time jobs. It is also important for the family, because we got some kind of economic security – now I receive salary regularly, regardless of how big it is.*

The employment caused some changes which are of great importance for persons with disability not only in the sense of economic independence, but also on the issue of socialization, social life, involvement and personal feeling of contribution and use. Their self-confidence increased, as well as their will to look for a job. They again got hope to search for a job, with the help and support of persons from associations.

*Person with disability: Thanks to the job I currently have, I feel less lonely, I can truly show myself, I can make a contribution.*

The changes happened at the persons with disability also on personal level regarding the increased satisfaction.

*Person with disability: A lot has changed; the mere going out, to the street, to society, means a lot for us. Since we have been employed and involved in the project, we meet new people, get new acquaintances.*

*Person with disability: We don't just sit at home anymore, in the village, we changed the environment, which is good to do from time to time. We changed as persons, now we are more content, because we socialize more with people.*

It is very important that public, but first of all, employers were informed through this project about the working abilities of persons with disability. There are employers who behave friendly and who offer jobs to persons with disability, because they had the experience with them and achieved good results. But, there are also employers who do not have enough information on capacities and working abilities persons with disability possess, regardless of their disability. It is very important for persons with disability to get an opportunity to show their abilities, to meet employers and for the employers to meet them. That opportunity is "the first chance" for them which will enable persons with disability to prove themselves and for employers to get insight in their abilities.

*Person with disability: With the job we gained the trust of employers, but also other people who work with use and see us every day.*

*Person with disability: It is very difficult to get to employers, to get the first chance to meet them and start working at them. Give me a chance to show my abilities and to show how much I know. If I see that I don't know how to do the job, I will pack myself and leave the job.*

Also, employers are reluctant to employ persons with disability because of prejudices – they are afraid of the unknown, they don't know what possibilities persons with disability have, what they can do. Therefore, according to them, Employment Fairs present a very good opportunity for employers and potential employees to meet, get to know each other better – the benefit is double – prejudices are broken, and the possibility is given to individuals to get jobs and to employers to get good employees.

*Person with disability: No one wanted to give me a chance before; as soon as they see that I am a person with disability, they don't even want to try to hire me.*

Persons with disability propose the employers to give them a chance at least through a temporary job. Giving a chance to get a job and show what persons with disability can do is seen as something most important, they don't think that they need a special treatment.

*Person with disability: Give me a chance to show how much I worth; if I don't satisfy, I can live on my own.*

*Person with disability: It can be noticed that many employers have barriers regarding the approach to persons with disability. We can achieve good working results, but we also need help of others.*

Research “Employment of Persons with Disability in Serbia – Possibilities and Challenges” showed that unemployed persons with disability are active in job searching. In the period between two polls, the job was actively searched by 41.7% unemployed persons from the sample. Relatively small number of persons with disability has positive experience in job searching – 13.7%. More than one third has negative experience in job search. According to the survey results, more than two-thirds of unemployed persons with disability think that the circumstances for employment in the municipality in which they live are unfavourable. Even bigger percentage (71.2%) point out that the circumstances are especially unfavourable for employing women with disability. One fourth of unemployed persons with disability think that the circumstances are now more favourable than before.

According to the words of persons with disability, the MIDWAY Project activities increased the possibility for their employment.

The number of employed persons with disability increased thanks to the Employment Fair, organized round tables in each project city, and the engagement of the members of the Coalitions for Employment in local communities. The number of employed persons with disability during the project supports that, which also created better possibilities for all, in addition to the very act of employment.

*Person with disability: Possibilities increased; before the project, only a small number of persons with disability got a job at all.*

The possibilities of employment of persons with disability increased with the project activities, among other things, because they are harmonized with the Law on Professional Rehabilitation. The adopted Law poses an obligation, according to defined criteria, on certain employers to employ persons with disability, and with the project activities, the process can be implemented more successfully. These are the following project activities: creation of data base of unemployed persons with disability in the project cities, creation of data base of employers in those cities, cooperation and networking of main actors in local communities (representatives of local authorities, national employment services, associations of persons with disability and associations of employers, etc.)

*Representative of local administration: I think that the Employment Fair is a very important step in employing persons with disability, especially because it is followed-up by the Law. What was done through the project activities will define a better framework for employment. We have communication with National Employment Service; therefore, we will continue organizing Employment fairs for persons with disability.*

The established cooperation between some actors in the community, for example, between National Employment Service and local association of persons with disability during selection of candidates for a certain job has great importance for the Law application.

*Person with disability: Regarding the Law, we think that there will be a bigger number of employed persons with disability. We are afraid that now we will have a deficit of persons with disability regarding employment. The employers' demand will increase and there will not be sufficient number of people for the jobs.*

Law on Professional rehabilitation promotes the rights of persons with disability and importance of their equal involvement in the full system, promotes the need of including the persons into society.

According to the words of National Employment Service representatives, the introduction of the Law influenced the change of awareness, people started thinking about the fact that persons with disability exist, that they are an equal part of the society, and they should be treated as such. In relation to the Law, MIDWAY Project oriented to the need of establishing contact between employers and unemployed persons. The part of direct contact is a very important segment.

*National Employment Service representative: this project significantly contributed to employment of persons with disability.*

Local coalitions for employment as a bond between persons with disability and employers

*Representative of Local Coalition for Employment: Our main and biggest role in the whole project is that we represent a bond between employers and persons with disability.*

The main function of the Local Coalition for Employment is to assist in the process of employment of persons with disability. CIL assistants on the project who implemented the project activities are the organizers of the Coalition work. In some places they become coordinators and leaders of the Coalitions. The Coalition members are all actors from the local community who have an important role in the process of employment of persons with disability (representative of local authorities, national employment service, as well as associations dealing with problems of persons with disability, companies employing persons with disability, Chamber of Commerce etc). The members signed the Agreement on cooperation, and the Coordination body, which consist of 6 persons, was established in each Coalition.

*Representative of Local Coalition for Employment: The Coalition which was formed during this project, through connecting various organizations, enabled the increased visibility of the organizations and more to be done.*

The Coalitions started with the estimation on how many young persons with disability were unemployed, analysis of the structure of qualifications of persons with disability, and analysis of appropriate jobs, as well as establishing contact with employers so that they could

employ more persons with disability. One of the important activities of the Coalition in Leskovac is a data base of unemployed persons with disability, and their educational needs, as well as the needs for personal assistance.

*Representative of Local Coalition for Employment: In the process of establishing the Coalition, first it was necessary to make a data base of persons with disability so that we could see what their needs for education are, then needs for employment, and the needs for personal assistance when including in the system of education and employment.*

Participation of employers as Coalition members is important, because thereby persons with disability and their employment are supported.

*CIL team member: First we went to bigger firms, the firms in which we knew some people for whom we knew they would have time for us and receive us. We talked to the people whether they could become members of the Coalition for Employment of persons with disability, whether they could employ persons with disability, whether they could talk about that with others, and similar. After each meeting, we informed individual persons we know about the results of the activities of the local coalition, but also each time we had some new information, we sent letters to all associations as well.*

One of the main activities of the Local Coalition for Employment is establishing communication between employers and persons with disability, and encouraging interest of employers for employment of persons with disability. In addition to employment of persons with disability, that was one of the goals of Employment Fairs. Although only some persons with disability got jobs thanks to the Fair, a large number of interested persons turn to the Centre for Independent Living after the Fair with the purpose of getting information and possible contacts with employers.

The activities of the members of the Coalitions for Employment which were performed during the whole project period were collecting data for research "Employment of persons with disability – possibilities and challenges" and gathering information for Map of Resources. Also, the data on unemployed persons with disability in the local community, and the employers who could hire persons with disability were collected. Data collection about persons with disability was not an easy process. The data was collected with the help of the National Employment Service, organizations of persons with disability and associations.

*CIL team member: The key problem was to find these persons (persons with disability). We did it through national employment services, organizations. We wanted to have such a sample to represent all kinds of disability, to have equal number of men and women, to have equal representation regarding qualifications, and to have their age interesting for employers (from 20 to 45). That is what we opted for.*

The biggest importance of the work of Local Coalitions for Employment is in creating contacts, networking and cooperation of actors in local communities who are of great importance for employment of persons with disability. These actors are employers, associations of persons with disability, associations of employers, local authorities, chamber of commerce and National Employment Service.

The established cooperation which proved to be of great importance for achieving project objectives is with National Employment Service. The cooperation is, first of all, reflected in exchange of information on the data about unemployed persons with disability, contacts of employers who search for employees, and in organization of training courses for persons with disability.

*Representative of Local Coalition for Employment: The cooperation increased, especially with National Employment Service which informed us where workers were needed, and persons with disability had contacts.*

One example of exchange of information is in Leskovac where the Local Coalition for Employment and National Employment Service compared data bases on persons with disability and added them mutually. When employers search for persons with disability through the National Employment Service, they also consult the Local Coalition about the persons with disability who would be adequate for the job.

*CIL team member: We have a data base of persons with disability who need jobs. Our recommendations are taken into consideration.*

In addition to exchange of information, National Employment Service in Leskovac is more open to persons with disability, and gives them more support.

*Representative of Local Coalition for Employment: It is very important to mention the fact that since MIDWAY Project started, National Employment Service has definitely opened more to the persons with disability. Now they really show a high level of understanding and supporting persons with disability. The reason of bigger openness of the Service lies in the fact that the goal of this project was employment of persons with disability. So, this project is the main reason of increased and better openness of Employment Service towards persons with disability.*

The members of the Coalition for Employment intend to continue their activities after the end of MIDWAY Project. Local Coalition for Employment members are motivated to participate, because they have accomplished results in their work and have plans for work in the near future. Also, the activities implemented by the Coalition support the work of some members in their own work (established contacts, flow of information, etc.).

*Representative of Local Coalition for Employment: MIDWAY Project is designed to help us see the problem which exists and, when the project ends, continue with the work of the Coalition and solving the problems and*

*difficulties persons with disability have. So, our organization should continue its work and solving problems of persons with disability, after the project ends.*

It will be easier for them to accomplish the goal as members of the Local Coalition for Employment, then if they try to do that as individuals.

*Representative of Local Coalition for Employment: As a parent of the child with disability, I understood that it would be easier for me to get in contact with other organizations which can hire persons with disability, through membership in the Coalition. It is more difficult to appear alone, as an individual, than as a member of a group. As a Coalition member, I have bigger possibilities to influence others and bigger possibilities to change something.*

Did the project activities provide possibilities for more effective employment of persons with disability?

Employment Fair was a very important and useful event for persons with disability. In addition to employment, persons with disability had an opportunity at the Fair to meet employers, talk with them, talk with representatives of local authorities who were the guests at the Fair, write CVs and meet other persons with disability and exchange experiences. The Employment Fairs are desirable, because they provide contacts for persons with disability. FG participants see the Employment Fair as a very good idea and a unique opportunity for removing some barriers; they think that it is something they could initiate themselves, together with associations, centre and other partners.

*Person with disability: The idea of the Employment Fair is excellent. The fair should be repeated the next years and not only for persons with disability, but for all other employees.*

Organizing round tables was of great importance and a very useful activity for persons with disability. This kind of activities provides a possibility for persons with disability to talk directly with employers and representatives of local authorities about the laws and their implementation.

*Person with disability: Organization of round tables had especially great importance in the whole project. It is important because a large number of employers come to such round tables and then we have an opportunity to talk with them directly about new laws and their implementation.*

*CIL team member: Several round tables were organized; they were attended by people from the Local Coalition, Union of Employers. The Law and its implementation and the problems of employers imposed by that law was mostly discussed. Also, persons with disability were present there and they are very glad to see that someone fights for them.*

Most persons with disability, FG participants think that they are the ones who are mostly responsible for their awareness on possibilities of employment, but also active involvement in society. Although help of others is needed, sometimes even necessary, individual initiative is of primary importance. There are examples of persons with disability who are active in their communities in advocating for their rights and helping others.

*Person with disability: We ourselves are responsible to be involved in the society. If we do not engage first, no one will come to us. In our city there are persons with disability who are interested in involvement in the local community and advocating rights of persons with disability. Such persons should be given a possibility to involve and advocate for their rights, that is, the rights of all of us.*

### **5.1.1.3. Increased awareness of employers on importance of employment of persons with disability/Increased percentage of state and private employers employing persons with disability**

The introduction of the Law on Professional Rehabilitation changed the relation of employers to persons with disability, because, as one person with disability said, "now they can see that we exist". The employers were given an opportunity to get more information about persons with disability, to meet them. Although they were not ready to employ persons with disability, once they met them, their relation changed.

*Person with disability: We think that at the beginning there was resistance of employers to persons with disability. They were not really ready to employ them, but once they met the persons with disability, their relation changed. Now, we can say that there is no resistance of that kind.*

Research "Employment of persons with disability in Serbia – possibilities and challenges" showed that experience in employing persons with disability was the key factor for removing prejudices on working abilities and working effects of persons with disability.

One of the ways to increase the possibility of efficient employment of persons with disability is direct involvement of employers in certain project activities. During the project, the activities related to participation of employers in the Employment Fair, and involvement in the work of Local Coalitions for Employment. Upon joining the Local Coalition for Employment, employers signed the Agreement, thereby, obliging themselves to consider whether they can hire a person with disability when employing people. Thereby, employers will support persons with disability and their employment, and recommend others to employ persons with disability if it is possible.

Searching for new workers, some employers contact the Centre for Independent Living Serbia, Association of Persons with Disability or some members of the Coalition for Employment directly.

*Representative of Local Coalition for Employment: Employers call us when they need a worker; they ask us when new training will be organized so that they could get new workers. They ask for contacts of the persons who finished training to hire them in their organizations.*

Opinions of members of Coalitions for Employment on increasing the awareness of employers on importance of employing persons with disability are divided. On one hand, there is the opinion that there is a very small number of employers who are aware that persons with disability can perform a job which is in accordance with their abilities qualitatively, while on the other hand, there is an opinion that employers have better developed social responsibility and awareness on importance of employing persons with disability. However, the activities of lobbying employers have to continue so that more persons with disability could be employed.

*CIL team member: The level of awareness in the local community on rights and possibilities for work of persons with disability is raised, and there is increased interest of employers for their employment.*

*Coalition for Employment: Employment of persons with disability started, the awareness of employers was raised, they were pointed to the fact that persons with disability can justify trust greatly, because in most cases they showed that they were hard-working and responsible workers. Of course, there is always a possibility for more employment; therefore, further work on lobbying is needed for their easier employment.*

A higher level of employment of persons with disability is expected by the adopted Law on Professional Rehabilitation.

Persons with disability – FG members do not have the information on whether firms/institutions have a plan for employment of persons with disability which would be harmonized with the Action Employment Plan. Most of them are informed that the Law on Professional Rehabilitation was adopted, but not whether there are plans on its implementation in firms.

According to the research conducted by the Centre for Independent Living Serbia, employers do not have clearly profiled attitude on the plans for 2010. Some are indecisive (17.9%), and the others have not thought about that yet (25.5%). Their decision can be influenced by better information and other incentives.

According to the above mentioned research, employers are relatively well informed about the legal measures for increased employment of persons with disability, but significantly less about specific plans and activities for employment on local level. Employers most often express expectations in respect of financial support for new employment of persons with disability and they mostly rely on the state for that.

To which extent realistically are employers capable of employing persons with disability in the way proscribed by the Law?

The employers now have the obligations "imposed" by the law which are far from market reality and possibilities of a large number of employers. Some employers do not have funds; they even have to dismiss other employees due to decrease of jobs.

National Employment Service adopted the Book of Rules on criteria and manner of implementation of measures of active employment policy on 4 February 2010, which proscribes measures of active employment policy for persons with disability. Active employment policy of persons with disability includes measures for the purpose of encouraging employment and self-employment of these persons, measures and activities of professional rehabilitation for enabling these persons to get qualification for a respective job, employment, maintenance of employment, promotion or change of professional career. National Employment Service is authorized for implementation of the following measures:

- programme of training per employer's request,
- exemption from paying taxes,
- subsidies for opening new jobs,
- programme of employment of young people "Prva šansa",
- programme of working qualification and training,
- programme of self-employment.

National Employment Service promotes socially responsible business activities and supports employers in their decision to employ persons with disability. Employers have professional help at their disposal in all National Employment Service branch offices:

- informing about activities and new in the work of National Employment Service;
- pre-selection and selection of candidates for jobs in companies;
- organization of employment fairs for persons with disability;
- preparing persons for employment through training programmes;
- educational and training seminars from the field of professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disability (for employers, professionals for working training and employment of persons with disability and other persons);
- inter-regional mediation in employment;
- financial measures of support through programmes of subsidized employment;
- counselling and support integration of persons with disability at jobs.

*National Employment Service representative: State anticipated by law several programmes for financing employers of persons with disability. At present there are programmes of new employment, fund depend on the level of development of the region in which people get jobs. The money is invested in equipping the working place for the person who came to work there. There is reimbursement which should last 3 years. We hope that there won't be dismissals after the 3 years; if the right choice and selection is made, there shouldn't be any dismissals.*

### The opinions of employers involved in the evaluation process:

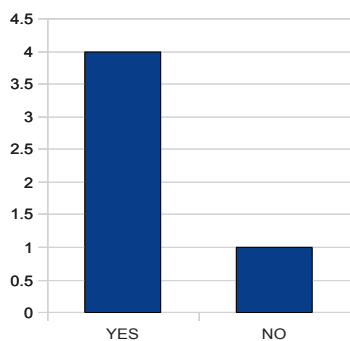
In the evaluation process, we were interested in the attitude and opinion of employers who were involved in MIDWAY Project about employment of persons with disability. The project activities in which employers were involved refer to participation in foundation and work of the Local Coalitions for Employment for employing persons with disability.

All employers are of opinion that participation in project activities of MIDWAY Project contributed to certain changes which happened in their work and the work of their organization/firm.

The changes the employers list are the following:

- improved communication between persons with disability, employers and non-governmental organizations (organizations of persons with disability)
- increased lobbying for employment of persons with disability
- strengthening organizations of persons with disability and their members on the possibility of employing persons with disability
- increased coordination in employment of persons with disability
- achieved cooperation between stakeholders when employing persons with disability
- formalizing and strengthening network for protection of persons with disability
- joint planning and monitoring of activities of employing persons with disability

Out of five questioned employers, two of them have an elaborated plan of employment of persons with disability, while three employers do not. Not all questioned employers have provided conditions for work of persons with disability.



Four employers, out of five in total, said that they established contacts with private/public employers who have the intention to employ persons with disability. The employers say that the established contacts brought them positive experiences regarding the increased possibilities of employment of persons with disability. One person went to a job interview and is in the process of employment. Also, the possibilities of technical-business cooperation increased, which contributed to strengthening ties between National Employment Service and other public institutions with organizations/clubs/associations of persons with disability. But one employer says that they also had negative experiences, and thinks that there is no real interest of employers to include persons with disability in the working process.

Out of five questioned employers, three have employed persons with disability, while two don't. The employers who have employed persons with disability in their organization, have the premises which are accessible in architecture sense. Two employers who employ persons with disability get benefits proscribed by the Law.

Persons with disability most often can learn about employers who employ persons with disability through their associations, employment fairs, regular announcements in media and in the National Employment Service records.

Through the data bases made in each National Employment Service, and the data base made by the Local Coalition for Employment, employers can get information about persons with disability when employing and make a qualitative selection of candidates.

#### **5.1.1.4. Increased awareness of persons with disability on the necessity of personal engagement in the process of active job searching which is in accordance with their possibilities**

Persons with disability had an opportunity at the Employment Fair to get assistance when writing a CV. For such a kind of assistance, at their disposal they have associations of persons with disability, Centre for Independent Living Serbia and National Employment Service. The persons looking for a job and those who get in touch with many people and institutions know the steps in the process of employment. However, there are many persons with disability who rarely leave their homes and who do not have the mentioned information at their disposal. The recommendation of persons with disability is that additional activities should be organized for persons with disability to get more information on the steps in the process of employment, as well as in the process of active job search.

*Person with disability: Everyone who needs help with CV can turn to CIL. Before MIDWAY, we didn't have activities of training people on how to write a CV.*

According to research of the Centre for Independent Living Serbia, over half of the surveyed unemployed persons with disability have knowledge about the steps in employment. Almost ¼ expects help and support in job search from the National Employment Service, a little bit less than ¼ relies on the organizations of persons with disability, and then their expectations are directed to personal and social networks, that is, their friends, colleagues and acquaintances.

A team member of the Centre for Independent Living Serbia says that a large number of persons with disability involved in the project activities are motivated to actively engage in job search thanks to the help and support they got.

*CIL team member: Only with our visits and surveys of the persons with disability, talking with them, we motivated many to start searching for jobs, although they lost hope for it. I am sure that the project strengthened their personality a lot, they got self-confidence, they felt support and security to get to the goal more easily together with us who are ready to help.*

However, persons with disability face certain difficulties in the process of employment, because in addition to the adopted Law, some rules are also complied with and they are the following: in order to get a job, persons with disability have to get a decision of the Commission making an evaluation of their abilities and categorization. Such evaluations can be very stressful.

According to the words of the representative of National Employment Service, the previous system of working capacity evaluation was based on what persons could do. The current evaluation system established the levels on which evaluation will be made. The evaluation is based on social approach and medical report. The evaluation is made of what a person with disability can do. Through the system, National Employment Service will provide a base of persons with disability applying for a job. According to the opinion of CIL representatives, the team for evaluation of working capacity of persons with disability should also include someone from organizations of persons with disability.

*National employment service representative: We introduced the whole system, in each city we have our representative who will make social surveys, and expertise in our premises. The system provides a base of persons who apply as persons with disability.*

The same research showed that the existing disability verification system was not providing a relevant collection of data and information for labour market. The working capacity evaluation of persons with disability and direction to the types of jobs in which their working capacities could be realized optimally is lacking.

The problem which can occur at employing persons with disability is to which extent a job corresponds to capacities and possibilities of a person with disability. However, according to the words of a member of Local Coalition for Employment, persons with disability have to get a job which is in accordance with their abilities. There are labour controls and inspections supervising what jobs are performed by persons with disability.

*Representative of Local Coalition for Employment: We have a team of people monitoring the work of persons with disability. The beginning of the work of a person with disability boils down to the pre-knowledge about certain jobs they do. However, very quickly we can also classify and distinguish them according to abilities and the way of doing the job. Many persons with disability advance in their work, along with their experience. A very small number of them stay at the beginning, at the point from which they started. Most of them proceed further, they develop and differ according to the results of their work. Some aspects of the job organization are adapted to persons with disability.*

The jobs persons with disability performed are, according to the level of complexity and responsibility mostly under their level of education, as shown by CIL research. The surveyed unemployed persons with disability who have working experience gained it, mostly, by performing various jobs within companies in production, services, administration and communications, which supports the allegation that persons with disability work, when they are employed, in low-accumulation activities. The instability of working career is also characteristic for persons with disability. Half of the surveyed have working experience, which indicates that they had an opportunity to work, but not to stabilize their working career. Every fourth persons has the experience of "losing the job".

There are a certain number of persons with disability who are not interested in employment. These are the persons who refuse to get a job for various reasons: from blaming others that they didn't employ them earlier to the fact that these persons have some privileges and don't need a job. Some persons with disability get benefits for care and help and/or disability pension, and because of that they don't want to get a job, because they think they will lose the right to it. But, they are not well informed, because by getting a job, they do not lose benefits for care and help, and disability pension is put on hold, except in the case of receiving family pension.

*National Employment Service representative: There is no high motivation, but it is more a problem of their long isolation from labour market, they are disoriented, they are not motivated, there is insecurity, a lot must be done on their direction and professional orientation. Maybe the reason for that is their lack of information and thinking they might lose benefits.*

It is necessary to work more on motivation of persons with disability who are not interested in employment. It is very important to increase activity of young people and their engagement in their own employment.

#### **5.1.1.5. Persons with disability are also incorporated in other USAID programmes in Serbia/USAID partners use knowledge acquired in workshops and include persons with disability in programme activities**

One of the objectives of MIDWAY Project was incorporation of programmes of persons with disability into USAID programmes in Serbia, especially the ones created to improve employment and economic development through promoting employment models for persons with disability and providing a broad range of resources, capacities, needs for action and field requiring progress and improvement.

Also, MIDWAY Project objective was to contribute to USAID activities focused on raising capacities of civil society to advocate interests of citizens by increasing capacities of organizations of persons with disability for advocating, by mobilizing and engaging parents through development of their skills to become actors of representing interests of their children and themselves before official educational system.

The workshop under the name "Inclusion of persons with disability in current programmes of USAID implementation partners in Serbia" was held within MIDWAY Project activities.

Ten persons from 5 organizations who are members of local staff of various USAID implementing partners organizations participated in the workshop. After presentation of MIDWAY Project activities, international legal frameworks and legal frameworks of Serbia, the participants discussed about possible small and simple steps for inclusion of persons and youth with disability into their programmes which are in the process of implementation. The following steps were proposed:

- informing and using correct and non-discriminatory language by the staff of USAID partners in implementation and partner organizations,

- organizing workshops for raising awareness of local staff,
- networking with local associations and organizations of persons with disability and using their resources.

USAID partners were included in the evaluation process. Out of total of 17, questionnaires were filled out by 5 partners, out of whom 4 participated in the workshop.

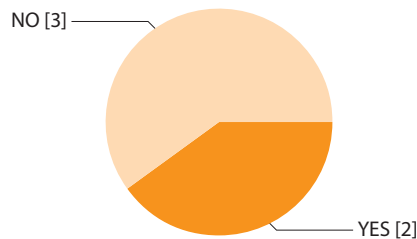
The inclusion of USAID partners was aimed at getting the following information:

- how much they are informed with the legal regulations in Serbia regarding persons with disability,
- were information workshops on inclusion of persons with disability and the existing legal regulations organized for USAID partner staff,
- did they include persons with disability in their programmes, did they harmonize their activities with the needs of persons with disability,
- what are the planned activities regarding inclusion of persons with disability into their programmes.

In the next paragraph we will present the web research results on how much the workshop they attended contributed to their increased awareness in various aspects and rights of persons with disability.

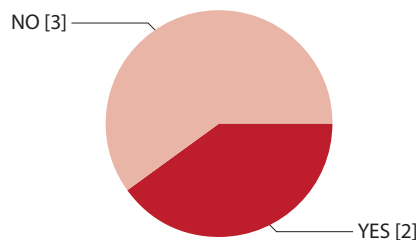
Two partners are informed about the UN Convention on rights of persons with disability. Two partners, who were the workshop participants, are not informed about the Convention (Graph 1).

Graph 1 Are you informed about the Convention of United Nations on the rights of persons with disability?



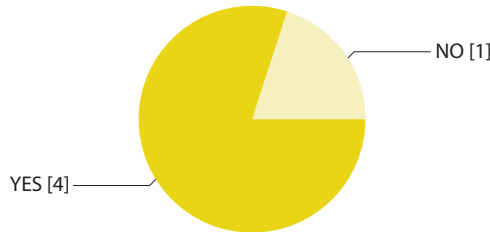
Two partners who participated in the workshop are not informed about the USAID Fifth Report on disability policy implementation in 2008 (Graph 2).

Graph 2 Are you informed about the document "USAID Fifth report on disability policy implementation" in 2008?



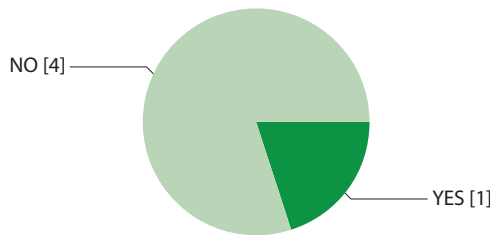
All partners who participated in the web research are informed about the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disability. Exception is one of the partners who participated in the workshop (Graph 3).

Graph 3 Are you informed about the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disability?



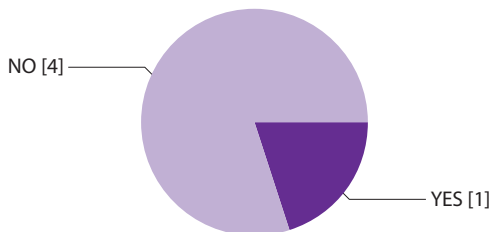
Four partners say that the staff of their organization did not have training on various aspects and rights of persons with disability (Graph 4).

Graph 4 Did the staff of your organization have training on various aspects and rights of persons with disability?



Only one of USAID partner organizations cooperates with persons with disability by supporting organizations of persons with disability financially and voluntarily for many years. Other partners find reasons for their not cooperating in the fact that the partners on the programme are dictated by their Plan of Activities and defined by the nature of project intervention (Graph 5).

Graph 5 Do you cooperate with organizations of persons with disability?



Three partner organizations say that persons with disability are involved as beneficiaries in the organization activities in the same way as all citizens – trough effects of macroeconomic

policies the Government adopts or through increased security of financial sector in which the partner organization is involved.

Only one of the partner organizations included in this part of evaluation process invites persons with disability to apply for grants which are announced. There are no criteria for persons with disability during selection of candidates.

Three partners have accessible architecture structure of their offices for persons with disability. No person with disability was hired in any way by USAID partners in the last six months.

Still, all partners who are participants of this part of evaluation say that the programmes for persons with disability are incorporated in USAID programmes, because pointing out the issue of education and training for persons with disability is relevant for all system USAID programmes. Also, one of the partners mentions MIDWAY Project as the programme which contributed to the above mentioned.

**The information we got from ISC representative contribute to the information we got through web questionnaires regarding the incorporation of programmes of persons with disability into the programmes promoted by ISC.**

**The USAID representative mentioned the existence of clear incorporation of the issue of persons with disability into the programmes of this organization.**

5.1.2. Achieving strategic objective: Civil society more effectively mobilizes for inclusive education.

*Parent representative Belgrade: There are 25 000 blind and weak-sighted persons in Serbia; and 8 and a half million do not see that. To be invisible – it is horrible.*

**The awareness of people in local community is not sufficiently developed with regard to the needs of children with disabilities/persons with disability. Local community is not sufficiently involved in solving problems children with disabilities and/or persons with disability are faced with.**

*Parent Kragujevac: People have little understanding, but still no one puts enough efforts for persons with disability. We think that local community should get more involved, by any methods, in every project regarding children with disabilities/persons with disability. Members of local authorities should be obligatory involved in solving problems parents of children with disabilities/persons with disability have. The only way of achieving this is their obligatory involvement in all projects and activities related to improving position of children with disabilities/persons with disability in local community.*

CIP - Centre for Interactive pedagogy is a partner organization which coordinated the project activities aimed at effective engagement of civil society in inclusive education, and

development and promotion of models based on which the partnerships led from the level of local community between individuals with disability and organizations which represent them and main service providers, local authorities and the broader social community, will promote inclusion of children with disability very successfully.

CIP – Centre for Interactive Pedagogy is a professional, non-party, non-governmental and non-profitable association of citizens, professionals dealing with education. CIP Mission is contribution to development of qualitative education available for all. The experts of CIP – Centre for Interactive Pedagogy think that education is the key factor for progress of society and qualitative life of every individual. This centre promotes Equal Rights for All in its work.

With its inclusion in MIDWAY Project, CIP – Centre for Interactive Pedagogy tried to initiate, implement and maintain cooperation among numerous actors and those who are interested in exercise of the right to qualitative education for all children. CIP gathered all interested parents, employees of preschool institutions and primary schools, teachers from the Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation, representatives of local authorities, representatives of organizations of persons with disability and associations of parents, as well as representatives of other civil society organizations with the idea that everyone should contribute from their angle to understanding and creating conditions for inclusive education. This was the first time for FASPER to involve in a civil society project in Serbia.

The carriers of activities and partners in this project are CIP – Centre for Interactive Pedagogy, Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation (FASPER), City Municipality New Belgrade, primary schools and kindergartens, associations of parents and persons with disability, Parents' Councils at schools and kindergartens, and groups of parents of children with disabilities, professional staff of kindergartens and schools, civil sector activists from five local municipalities (City Municipality New Belgrade, Kragujevac, Niš, Užice and Vranje).

### **5.1.2.1. Does civil society effectively mobilize for inclusive education?**

At the very beginning of the project implementation, inclusive education was only discussed through civil sector activities, while clear legal regulations and clear orientation of educational institutions to inclusiveness didn't exist.<sup>5</sup>

For many of the above mentioned actors, this project was the first meeting and working with organizations dealing with solving the same or similar problems. As this form of cooperation was also formally marked by the Agreement on Cooperation, it had a great importance for each of the organizations.

The previously mentioned strategic goal – civil society is efficiently engaged in inclusive education – was achieved through two specific objectives:

- encouraging parents of children with disabilities, that is, disability to represent the right of the children to inclusive education

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<sup>5</sup> "Those who want find the way – those who doesn't find an excuse!", Collection of the Best Practices in Advocacy for Inclusive Education, CIP

- creating coalitions of parents, organizations of persons with disability, schools and preschool institutions for the purpose of providing positive environment for inclusive education.

For the purpose of implementing the above mentioned specific objectives, the cooperation with 15 educational institutions, 10 primary schools and 5 kindergartens from 5 cities was established:

- New Belgrade: Primary schools: Jovan Popović Sterija, Ratko Mitrović and Isidora Sekulić
- Niš: Preschool institution Pčelica, kindergartens Crvenkapa and Maslačak, primary schools: Stefan Nemanja and Dositej Obradović
- Kragujevac: Children institution Nada Naumović, Kindergarten Sunce, primary schools: Jovan Popović and Radoje Domanović
- Užice: Primary school Aleksa Dežović, Sevojno
- Vranje: PI Naše dete, kindergartens Pčelica and Boško Buha, primary schools: Branko Radičević and Svetozar Marković

Centre for Independent Living Serbia and CIP – Centre for Interactive Pedagogy worked together in City Municipality New Belgrade, Niš and Kragujevac, using mutual contacts and networks and connecting actors from education and employment with the purpose of explaining parents that inclusive education has perspective and leads to employment in the future.

Creation of groups of parents and coordination within and between groups of children with disabilities and children without disability was made in cooperation with organizations of persons with disability and associations of parents: Centre for Inclusive Society Development (CRID), New Belgrade; Centre for Independent Living, Branch office in Niš; Association of Cerebral and Child Palsy, Užice; Association of Parents of Persons with Difficulties – “Egal” from Kragujevac and Association of Multiple Sclerosis of Vranje.

The activities of the specific objectives were implemented on local and national level.

The activities which were taken on the local level referred to:

- Activities on the level of school and preschool institution (kindergarten);
- Sensitization of teachers’ council on the topic of inclusive education;
- Sensitization of members of Parents’ Council in primary school/preschool institution for inclusive education;
- Forming School/Kindergarten team for inclusive education;
- Training of inclusive teams of primary school/preschool institution for better understanding of the concept of inclusive education (one-day seminar);
- Implementation of activities designed by School/Kindergarten team for inclusive education;
- Cooperation of school/kindergarten with Parents’ Group on implementing joint activities planned in mini project;

- Activities on local level – activities on the level of groups of parents of children with disabilities;
- Forming Parents' Group consisting of representatives of parents from various associations;
- Training of Parents' group, together with representatives of Parents' Councils from schools and kindergartens, for representing the rights of all children to qualitative education;
- Making Action Plan and implementing actions supporting inclusive education in local community or some of involved educational institutions;
- Cooperation of school/kindergarten with Parents' group on implementing joint activities planned in mini-project.

The activities implemented on national level referred to:

- Workshops for FASPER students;
- Research of attitudes and self-efficacy of teaching staff about inclusive education conducted by FASPER teachers;
- Series of forums about the models of inclusive education for experts of various profiles in each municipality/city;
- Collecting examples of good practice;
- Presentation of developed model of inclusive education on national level.

Activities of Centre for Interactive Pedagogy within MIDWAY Project can be divided into three fields:

- Training courses
- Research
- Presentation

The training courses organized within MIDWAY Project were designed for professionals in education (teaching staff in kindergartens and school), as well as parents of children with disabilities, and parents of children without disabilities.

The following activities were implemented within training courses:

- three-day training for 25 local assistants of CIP-Centre for Interactive Pedagogy for the purpose of learning about the MIDWAY Project goals;

Five one-day training courses for inclusive teams of primary schools and kindergartens for teachers and educators together. The topics of the training were: right to qualitative education for all and legal regulations in the Republic of Serbia; practice targeted at the child, principles of individual education plan and workshops on activity plan within inclusive team.

- Twenty five workshops for groups of parents: which, besides the above mentioned topics for teachers, contained an additional topic on principles of representation.

The decision was implemented by CIP-Centre for Interactive Pedagogy and their local assistants, representatives of NGO sector and FASPER.

Thus, the mentioned activities:

1. sensitized 2,539 teachers, educators and parents,
2. trained 499 professionals,
3. informed about 500 participants of public lectures in Kragujevac,
4. trained 244 representatives of civil society/non-government organizations.

When we talk about the field of training, it is very important to note the training conducted with FASPER students. In order to explain this project segment, it is very important to enter the very problem of inclusion of this educational institution into the project.

The Faculty of Defectology, now called Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation, started its work in 1975 as it is written on the web page of this educational institution: "That was the beginning of rise of a profession which in last thirty years looked for and found its ways, respected its tradition, developed scientific thought and applied modern tendencies in education of young experts"<sup>6</sup>.

The problem which currently exists at this higher education institution is concern that the purpose of the institution will be reduced with implementation of inclusion in regular schools.

That is not an official position of the institution and a general opinion of all FASPER teachers, but they have the reputation of those who officially do not support inclusion.

How come that FASPER then was included in implementation of the programmes of MIDWAY Project?

As the strategic goal – civil society more effectively mobilizes for inclusive education – is focused on education, FASPER as a higher education institution is relevant as service provider in the segment of education of teaching staff, parents, NGO representatives ... and all those who are in any way concerned by inclusion.

With its expertise in the field of educating experts for work with children with disabilities, and with its rich and long tradition of education of students, future experts for work on special education and rehabilitation of children with disabilities, FASPER can contribute a lot to encouragement of all groups for promoting inclusive education without the fear that the profession of special educators will be at risk.

The Law on Basics of Education and Upbringing System is clear and proscribes in Article 3: System of education and upbringing has to provide equal right and accessibility to education and upbringing for all children, students and adults, without discrimination and separation on the grounds of gender, social, cultural, ethnic, religious or other background, place of residence, that is accommodation, material or health condition, difficulties and disturbances in development and disability, as well as on other grounds; thereby, there is the legal framework and implementation of inclusion is unquestionable in the Republic of Serbia.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Taken from FASPER website [www.fasper.bg.ac.rs](http://www.fasper.bg.ac.rs)

<sup>7</sup> The Law on the Basics of Education and Upbringing System, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No.72/09

In accordance with the above mentioned, and for the purpose of raising awareness of teaching staff, special educators, representatives of school authorities, members of Parents' Council, as well as broader students on the benefits of inclusive education for school as a whole, CIP-Centre for Interactive Pedagogy committed some of its activities to presentation of inclusive practice to FASPER students.

Through three lectures, students were informed about the goals of education reform, conditions for inclusive education, preparation of children and peer sensitization.

At the lectures, students were also informed about the ways in which schools can be prepared for inclusive education. Students were informed about the preparations regarding physical environment, curriculum, working methods, evaluation of knowledge, teaching aid, schedule, teaching staff, as well as the importance of cooperation with parents, basic principles of partnership relation in work with parents, importance of teamwork, and principles of individual education plan for each child.

Teachers who have been accepting children with disabilities in their classes for many years, as well as CIL assistants who are top experts in the field of legislation and legal regulations in the field of disability in Serbia, who themselves are persons with disability were engaged in the lectures for students.

Also, the reasons for changing the present system of education, basic principles of inclusive education, difference between integration and inclusion of children with disabilities, objectives of individual education plan, advantages of inclusive education for children with disabilities, their peers, parents, teachers, from the perspective of parents and teachers, as well as legal regulation important for inclusive education were presented at the lectures.

The research, conducted by FASPER, was conducted for the purpose of inquiring attitudes, concern and self-efficiency of teaching staff in respect of inclusive education. Four hundred and twenty teachers from five cities in the Republic of Serbia were included in the research. According to the research results, teachers have positive attitudes to inclusive education of, primarily, those students who are shy and quiet, who need insignificant adaptation of curricula, and who have mild difficulties in verbal expression, while they are reluctant to include in education process the students with behavioural-emotional difficulties, those who do not understand speech and use sign language or Braille letters, and the students with a more severe level of intellectual disability.

The teachers have the biggest concern, according to the research results:

- in the field of care for students who need constant support and assistance in everyday functioning
- availability of technical means and textbooks adapted to students with difficulties
- paying equal attention to all students in an inclusive class

The teachers also expressed their concern in regard to "insufficient knowledge on the right way of helping a person with disability".

Further, the research showed that teachers feel self-efficient in providing support to parents of children with disabilities trying to help children with studying, while they evaluate

themselves as less efficient in regard to adaptation of evaluation to students with difficulties, informing others on the laws and rules regarding inclusive education, and creating tasks so that they are adapted to individual needs of students.

The research also showed great difference in attitudes to inclusive education between respondents living in different cities. The respondents from Niš have the fewest positive attitudes, they are followed by respondents from New Belgrade and Vranje; the respondents from Kragujevac have significantly more positive attitudes, and the respondents from Užice have the most positive.

In general, the research showed that the attitudes of teaching staff to inclusive education of students with special educational needs are mostly positive, that teachers are not concerned in respect of contacts with persons with special educational needs and possibilities of implementation of inclusive education, and that they feel self-efficient in respect of implementation of inclusive practice in classes.

*Advocacy is speaking up, drawing a community's attention to an important issue, and directing decisionmakers toward a solution. Advocacy is working with other people and organizations to make a difference. (CEDPA, Cairo, Beijing and Beyond: A Handbook on Advocacy for Women Leaders).*

Advocacy takes a very important place in achieving improvement of school programmes by introducing modern approach to doctrine on inclusion. Without this segment of action within the programme, there is a great possibility that such programmes could only remain as academic thoughts and never be put in action.

Advocacy was implemented through:

- forums
- mini projects

### **Forums**

Representatives of Associations of parents, organizations of persons with disability, kindergartens and schools from local community, together with CIP assistants organized a series of five forums.

The clearly given message from the forums was that in every local community there are capacities for implementation of inclusive education which developed thanks to personal efforts of their citizens. The forum participants got material about each of the communities separately. Four hundred persons concerned about the problems took part in the forums.

### **Mini projects**

Groups of parents in all project cities, in accordance with their capacities, implemented mini projects according to priorities of each specific community. These projects were implemented in cooperation with some of the organizations of persons with disability or associations of parents.

The mini projects implemented within this project are:

- "Promotion of inclusive education in primary schools on the territory of the Municipality New Belgrade"

The main goal of this project on the territory of the Municipality New Belgrade was to raise awareness of parents and teachers of three schools on applicability of inclusive education, and to initiate further actions and cooperation in this field.

Main implemented activities are:

Printing and distribution of publication "Bontončić" and multimedia presentation for work in home-room classes;

Creating and displaying posters with messages on the values of inclusive education for all children on 10 buses whose lines go through New Belgrade;

Making a documentary film about activities and possibilities of children with disabilities.

The project was implemented by a group of parents and the Inclusive Society Development Center (CRID) from New Belgrade.

- "Together to inclusion" – Kragujevac.

The goal of mini project "Together to inclusion" is improving inclusive education in Kragujevac.

According to the recognized priorities, the following activities were implemented:

- improvement of competencies of teachers (through three lectures for professional community, parents and other stakeholders);
- purchase of new didactic means for work with children.

The project was implemented by inclusive teams of primary schools, kindergartens and members of association of parents of persons with difficulties - Egal from Kragujevac.

- "Professional strengthening of educators and teachers" – Vranje.

The goal of this mini project was to increase sensitivity of teachers and educators for problems of children with disabilities and to build the relation of trust between educators and teachers and parents of children with disabilities, by professional skills strengthening.

The activities implemented for the purpose of accomplishing the goal:

- organizing seminars for inclusive team members from two primary schools, two kindergartens and for parents' group;
- organizing a study trip to Novi Sad for parents, educators and teachers with the purpose of learning the pedagogical method of Maria Montessori and its practical application in educational work.

The project was implemented by inclusive teams of primary schools, kindergartens and members of Association of Multiple Sclerosis from Vranje.

- "On the same road" – Užice

The goal of the mini project "On the same road" was the improvement of the position of children with disabilities and progress, and supporting application of inclusive education in practice.

The activities implemented for accomplishing this goal were:

- Establishing a local inclusive team for the purpose of strengthening cooperation with schools and kindergartens on the municipal level, spreading the network of inclusive education and promotion of inclusive education practice;
- Organizing a volunteer centre to promote voluntarism as a way of exercising social values through self-initiate activities for the benefit of the community as a whole, and organizing and implementing pilot programmes for work of pedagogical assistants in school through voluntary work.

The project was implemented by the team for inclusive education of primary school and members of the association of the group of child and cerebral palsy from Užice.

- “Knowledge for all children” - Niš

The goal of the mini project “Knowledge for all children” is creating conditions for inclusion of children with disabilities in regular education system through improving competencies of teachers in primary schools for inclusive education, and creating conditions for inclusion of children with disabilities in education through a campaign of representing the rights of all children to qualitative education.

The activities implemented for the purpose of achieving this goal are:

- training of teachers of primary schools through accredited seminar;
- informing teachers about the characteristics of children with disabilities through professional lectures at Teachers’ Council;
- realizing media campaign by appearing on local TV;
- realizing public campaign by organizing art workshops.

The project was implemented by two primary schools and groups of parents of children with disabilities, members of the Centre for Independent Living, Branch office in Niš.

#### 5.1.2.2. Did the parents, due to the project, become efficient representatives of the children’s right to inclusive education?

**CIP-Centre for Interactive Pedagogy and FASPER identified and mobilized parents of children with disabilities or children with disability. Groups of parents were established for the purpose of their strengthening in the sense of their better understanding of social model of disability (as opposite to medical model). Parents are informed about the children’s rights and legal framework which supports their integration in formal education system.**

Before this project implementation, parents mostly worked with service providers who work on the basis of medical model and medical approach to disability. For the purpose of better understanding of the term disability from perspective of human rights and understanding the barriers for inclusion of children with disability/difficulties, CIP and FASPER implemented the activities with parents in the way to help finding ways they can be able to represent rights of their children on all levels.

All groups of parents formed Working Groups within in order to develop action plans and activities and ways to identify and note their stories about successes and efficient strategies of advocacy. The Working Groups were in contact with Parents' Councils in each school in order to participate in promoting inclusive approach in school.

The groups of parents received small grants (1.500\$-2.500\$) to implement the campaign of raising awareness on inclusive education for all children.<sup>8</sup>

*CIP representative: As, in our experience, there is little cooperation between civil sector, especially organizations of persons with disability, and educational institutions, and as the attitudes of parents of children with disabilities were mostly shaped in medical model without important information on inclusive education and children's rights, the project goals can be considered as accomplished, because both organizations and parents themselves found themselves in the role of advocates of rights and carrier of activities in relation to educational institutions which they implemented successfully.*

Why do some parents engage actively and some don't?

*School official Vranje: 40-50 parents sensitized, but the cooperation was successfully established with 5-6 parents, they always participated, were active and open for communication. They are ready to cooperate when invited, but when a concrete action should be performed, they are not so active.*

Although at the beginning of implementation of the project activities, a larger number of parents responded, still not all of them were equally active. The reasons which can present obstacles for involvement of parents in the process of inclusive education are the following:

- their fear whether their child will manage to fit into such environment
- how will the child do the tasks given to it
- whether the child will be accepted by other children and their parents
- whether the parent will get support from the teacher and other parents

One of the reasons of parents' inactivity in advocacy is the absence of support service on the local level. When all family options are exhausted, there is no other support to whom parents, primarily mother, could leave the child and attend a series of seminars or meetings. Especially if she is unemployed, and she is in most cases, mother also pays the costs of baby-sitting which is the reason why she gives up participating in project activities.

In order to have more parents actively involved in the process of inclusive education and activities of advocating, it is necessary to find the way for qualitative information to be available to all parents, and provide them support from all relevant actors in the community.

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<sup>8</sup> Projects of Small Grants for each region are described in section 5.1.2.1.

*School official Vranje: There should be a team which will recognize what the child is capable of, in which direction one should work with the child, and what should be developed in the child. They are afraid of defeat if the child fails.*

Parents of children with disabilities found their motive for involvement in the project in gaining new knowledge they didn't have before, but also being able to talk to each other about the problems and difficulties most of them are facing.

*Parent Vranje: Involvement in such a project meant a lot for participants, because many of them never had an opportunity to talk with others about their children and difficulties they meet. Participation in this project was definitely useful, because, as parents, we saw that our children have the ability and the possibility of adaptation. Also, parents saw importance of paying attention to the child's developed capacities, its strong sides, and not only its disease and difficulties.*

Through the project, parents managed to partially learn about the rights of their children, they managed to acquire new knowledge through educational activities, but also new experiences with their own and other children who were involved in the project.

*Parent Vranje: We understood that inclusion is a process involving all children, that all children at school need certain adjustment, and some of them adjust more easily, and some with more difficulty. Inclusive education is important because it is an opportunity for a child with difficulties, but also for other children to learn to accept each other, and notice their mutual strong sides. Also, inclusion enabled joint work of parents, educators, and enabled application and use of children's rights.*

### 5.1.3. Which effects did the project result in: to stakeholders, users of project results, to environment? Which are probable long term effects?

The effects of the project activities to persons with disability are:

- awareness of persons with disability that they can be a part of social community which they can contribute through their work to,
- importance and significance of employment for persons with disability and their families,
- increased information on legal regulations in the country referring to employment of persons with disability and their application,
- increased information about possibilities of employment,

- employment of persons with disability.

The effects of the project activities to employers are:

- increased awareness of some employers on importance of employment of persons with disability,
- involvement of employers in the activities aimed at increasing employment of persons with disability (participation in the Fair, at round tables, as members of Local Coalition for Employment),
- employers contact the Centre for Independent Living Serbia searching for unemployed persons with disability,
- informing other employers about the importance of employment of persons with disability.

*CIL team member: The real changes which happened through the project are raising awareness on persons with disability, especially raising awareness of employers, because as long as they don't understand that it is their benefit, we will never have a result. We will try to present that through the examples of good practice.*

The effects of the project activities to actors in local community important in the process of employment of persons with disability are:

- informing the wider public and raising awareness on employment of persons with disability
- established contacts,
- established cooperation in implementation of concrete activities which led to employment of persons with disability.

The project activities as a result also had the effects to community in the sense of informing and raising awareness about relation to persons with disability in their local community.

*Representative of Local Coalition for Employment: Significant changes happened among all members of our society, the citizens of Leskovac, but also other towns in Serbia, who became more open to persons with disability; they noticed that problems of persons with disability are very important and that they can influence on its reducing, and that no decision related to persons with disability does not have its full legitimacy if it is not made in their presence.*

*CIL team member: The biggest problem in implementing the whole project was the lack of data base about persons with disability. The data base is something that is necessary in this city, because if you have it, you know the situation, what is needed, in what situation persons with disability are, and in fact it presents the basis for all further works. A large number of projects and donations for this city failed, because there was no data base according*

*to which it could be seen what should be done and what project should be planned.*

*CIL team member: The achieved results are: employment of persons with disability and establishment of the Coalition. There are many things we would like to do differently; firstly, cooperation with the same or similar associations, regardless of how good it is, is always insufficient. Cooperation is very important in the project; although in the coalition we have 50 associations of persons with disability, only 13% persons with disability have jobs. We need to activate young people more.*

One of more significant results of the project activities in employment of persons with disability is established contacts and cooperation between the project participants.

The evaluation participants especially emphasize the importance of establishing cooperation between members of Local Coalitions for Employment, which resulted in implementation of many activities aimed at employment of persons with disability.

*CIL team member: We are especially satisfied with the fact that many institutions networked through this project. Institutions now communicate with each other, they cooperate and inform each other, and the awareness on the importance of employment of persons with disability is raised among all of them.*

They especially highlight the importance of cooperation of the National Employment Service with the Local Coalition for Employment and other project partners.

*CIL partner: One of the most important project results is establishment of cooperation between the Coalitions and National Employment Service, which resulted in constant exchange of information and data on unemployed persons with disability, as well as flow of information on employers' demand for unemployed persons with disability.*

The difficulties in cooperation of Local Coalitions for Employment appeared with associations of persons with disability which do not have enough trust to work together, or it is difficult to get in touch with them. According to the words of CIL partners, in Kragujevac there are three associations dealing with problems of persons with disability, and all organizations are involved in this project and solving problems of persons with disability. Each association has its plans and programmes of activities, but the cooperation between them is weak, because everyone is afraid that they could damage themselves with the cooperation.

*Representative of Local Coalition for Employment: We have problems in cooperation with associations of persons with disability which do not have trust to us and what we do. Everything we do and any cooperation we try to establish is seen by them as using their members, and not as benefit for them.*

*It is very difficult to get to some associations, and with them we communicate through persons we know privately.*

The lectures organized by CIP-Centre for Interactive pedagogy and FASPER enabled the teaching staff of kindergartens, Parents' Councils in primary schools and kindergartens, and informal groups of parents of children with disabilities to get information about inclusive education.

Formal cooperation was established between faculties, schools and kindergartens, as well as civil society organizations which represented groups of parents of children with disabilities.

There are agreements on cooperation made for implementation of planned activities of mini projects.

*An Official of the New Belgrade Municipality: Many different associations joined the coalition, some progress was made in a certain part of education system, but there is space for involvement of schools, so that the awareness could be additionally raised in the schools which have not consider inclusion as something important.*

The activities planned according to strategic goal on effective engagement of civil society in inclusive education were implemented, moreover, there were additional activities for which idea appeared during implementation of the planned ones, as follows: films made about the practice with children showing work in accordance with inclusive principles, training for professionals on cooperation of institutions and parents was created and accredited.

*CIP representative: The project effect is reflected in increased awareness of the problems of inclusive education, concrete knowledge and experiences in implementation of advocacy activities; the contacts and various channels of cooperation were established with representatives of various institutions and public media. A higher affirmation of capacities on local level was achieved for application of inclusive education, and expert competencies of teachers and educators increased, so schools/kindergartens are now better prepared for application of inclusive education."*

*CIP representative: as a project result we involvement of broader social community: support of municipality, school administration ... cooperation with special school (pretty rigid and denying, but still present), forums held on the city level, about dyslexia, autism, hyperactivity, mental disturbances and purchase of didactic material.*

As the project originated from the community needs, also the motivation of all those who were involved in the project was the realistic need for additional knowledge and networking of all key actors, as children with disabilities in some schools/municipalities are already included in regular classes. The inclusive process is supported by didactic material provided through the

project activities to enable inclusion of a certain number of the children in regular schools and kindergartens.

*Parent Vranje: The organized workshops were very useful for parents. At the beginning there were very few parents, but later more and more got involved. That is how parents had the opportunity to gain more trust in kindergarten staff, and see that they had the support of all employees from educator, pedagogue, psychologist, to cleaning lady. Also, the cooperation with parents of children without disabilities who should teach their own children to treat others with respect, not to tease them, and to accept children with disabilities, is important.*

Through the project activities, cooperation with parents was established, and it is still far from satisfactory, but it exists.

The education of teachers which is considered as necessary was held within the project.

*Parent from Kragujevac: Very few parents responded. We are led by the idea that we will learn more. Inclusion requires more staff, assistant. There are many prejudices. Mothers and fathers do not want to attend meetings, they avoid them, they do not accept that they have "different" children.*

In the project cities, the awareness of parents, as well as broader community on inclusive education is on different levels.

For Kragujevac it can be said that it is a community which has long practice of inclusive education in some schools, therefore, the activities planned by the project do not present a novelty for school officials involved in the project.

*School official Kragujevac: We speak about inclusion as something new, but in fact we have been doing it for years. Some schools in Kragujevac are traditionally recognized as open and understanding.*

The schools and kindergartens included in the project were attended by children with disabilities in previous years as well. It was one of the reasons for including the schools and kindergartens in the project so that they could get new knowledge and establish necessary cooperation. CIP – Centre for Interactive Pedagogy also had an important role in inviting schools and kindergartens to involve in the project.

*School official Kragujevac: We fought with that before the best we could.*

*School official Belgrade: "We got new ideas, we got stronger through the project.*

The cooperation of educational institutions (schools and kindergartens), parents and local community was established and/or strengthened, and all activities were planned and organized jointly.

**The biggest success was: establishment of functional cooperation between preschool institutions and primary schools which enables monitoring of students and preparing of higher education levels for inclusion of students with disabilities into regular classes, teamwork of educators, as well as teachers, and inclusion of parents and exchange of experiences with experts for certain fields.**

*School official Kragujevac: It means a lot when you hear, and the expert confirms, that what you have been doing is good. It gives you back self-confidence and strengthens your motivation for further work.*

For the purpose of raising awareness of broader social community, public forums, lectures for broader local community held by eminent experts were organized, which proved to be very effective and useful.

*School official Kragujevac: ON the forums we understood that there was a great need for such lectures.*

Teachers, and parents, and students, and representatives of local authorities, as well as other members of local community had the opportunity to learn a lot about different difficulties some children and adults meet. Parents of children with disabilities had the opportunity to get the information on who to turn to and what the possibilities of dealing with certain difficulties are.

The mission of inclusive education cannot be just achieving educational objectives. Emotional development of child and socialization are very important. This refers to all children in inclusive class, and not only children with disabilities. Therefore, it is necessary to provide adequate environment for inclusive education for each child.

*Parent Kragujevac: Inclusive education means rising above educational objectives.*

*School official: We worked before this, this is just another plus.*

School officials think that at the moment "total inclusion" is not possible, and that the schools are still not ready; expert support is needed, as well as assistants in lectures, establishment of expert teams, and higher involvement and engagement of local authorities. Pointing out the project importance for all environments, school officials think that establishing cooperation of preschool institutions and primary and secondary schools is priority, as well as improvement of cooperation and communication with Development Advisory Office, which presents basis for setting inclusive education on firm foundations.

*School official Vranje: Thanks to the project, certain progress has been made, children with disabilities became more visible, cooperation was established, schools are more open, community is more sensible.*

There are obstacles for inclusive education and it seems to the evaluators that acceptance of children with disabilities in regular classes mostly depends on teachers and educators.

*School official Kragujevac: Children don't accept them and don't know how to treat them. It is up o us to show them, and support to parents is of key importance.*

#### 5.1.4. To which extent the project objectives have been achieved?

The accomplishment of general goal that men, women and children are integrated in economic and social life in Serbia requires long engagement and work of all those concerned about the problem who can contribute to exercising of fundamental human rights regarding education and work.

The accomplishment of this goal requires big changes in the society on all levels of authority, arranged legal documents and bylaws, and their enforcement. A very important change which will contribute to the goal accomplishment is the change of awareness of the society members about the necessity of solving the issue of persons with disability.

This process requires much more time than 18 months the MIDWAY Project lasted. Regarding the fact that inclusion is at the beginning in the Republic of Serbia, the implemented activities present a starting point for further work.

The project activities increased the possibilities for effective employment of persons with disability. This objective was achieved through implementation of all planned project activities: tools and actions for increasing employability of persons with disability were defined and promoted, access to resources and networks expanding possibilities for their sustainable employment was provided to them. The provided tools are the research data "Employment of persons with disability – possibilities and challenges" which gives a complete overview of the situation in Serbia regarding persons with disability and their employment, and the Map of Resources which presents the tools identifying possibilities for improving professional qualifications and skills of persons with disability, and contains all resources which can be used in the process of job searching. The taken activities aimed at increasing possibility for effective employment of persons with disability were: two Employment Fairs, organization of round tables and establishment of Local Coalitions for Employment in five cities in which the project was implemented. The results of the mentioned activities are: 69 persons with disability got jobs, the persons with disability who visited the Employment Fairs learned about the steps for job search, had the opportunity at Round Tables to directly talk with employers and representatives of authorities, cooperation was established between all actors in local communities important for employment through the Coalitions for Employment, Coalitions for Employment create data base of unemployed persons with disability and employers.

*National Employment Service representative: The project is successful, because it initiated the mechanism of movement, people are more aware, creation of coalition is also very useful, everyone can function on their own*

*in this process. All actors should gather on one place, the roles of all factors should be clearly defined and reporting should be done.*

The implemented project activities contributed to creation of better conditions and more possibilities for effective employment of persons with disability. The success indicators are employed persons with disability, active Local Coalitions for Employment of persons with disability and done Action Plans for Employment, as well as for informing local communities and changing awareness of the importance of active engagement of persons with disability in social processes.

*CIL team member: The project set the whole town in motion. Everyone talks about employing persons with disability, and before, no one took anything concretely.*

One of the significant results achieved by MIDWAY Project was established cooperation among a large number of associations, governmental and non-governmental organizations dealing with persons with disability and employers who can employ persons with disability through starting an initiative and forming Local Coalitions for Employment of persons with disability. Regarding the economic situation in the country and the difficulties with job finding all persons have, persons with disability need support in the process which they got.

*Representative of Local Coalition for Employment: The most important result which was achieved is in fact the main goal of the project, which is employment of persons with disability. On the way to employment, cooperation with institutions and associations was established, through the Coalition for Employment.*

The project goals are still valid and will be until all persons with disability who are registered with the National Employment Service get employed, as well as those who have never been registered and want to work.

*CIL team member: MIDWAY Project is a very good start for the total process of employment of persons with disability. The project activities greatly contributed to the start of the evaluation of the real situation in the community – to revise the number of unemployed and identify possibilities of employment. Contact and good cooperation were established with organizations, institutions (National Employment Service), employers from the community, which is considered as the most significant project contribution.*

The activities which were taken for implementation of the objectives regarding inclusion of persons with disability in USAID programmes and programmes of other donors created for improving employment and economic development include models for promotion of

employment of persons with disability in different contexts in the region and are complementary with programmes and efforts of USAID and other programmes of job creation.

The relevance of the programme goals for the area in which the activities were implemented is obvious. The fact that the preparation for inclusive education, information and advocacy was made in the period when the state was getting ready to adopt key laws in education regarding inclusive education, and the very sensitizing of professional and broader public for inclusive approach to education, professional training of employees in kindergartens and schools, established cooperation among all stakeholders led to the conclusion that the project followed up the need of the communities, as is the case with employment of persons with disability and relevant legal framework.

It is definite that there will be need for similar activities in the longer time period, because establishment of efficient cooperation between non-governmental and state sector, and between professionals in education and parents of children with disabilities is still a challenge for most actors, and especially in this specific field where it was isolated and marginalized for decades before.

Certain preconditions for inclusive education in the Republic of Serbia were not fulfilled. There are architectural barriers, teachers need education, parents of children without disability are not prepared for inclusive education – are some the reasons which will slow down implementation of inclusive education.

*Parent, Belgrade: Previously, only the school Ivan Goran Kovačić in Zvezdara wanted to include children with disabilities in classes. But that is also the school which is inaccessible in architectural sense, and always one parent has to stay with the child. As a parent, I want my child to go to school with other children, but preconditions are not met.*

All planned activities of this project were implemented. As these are limited locations and short period of implementation, and taking into consideration the fact that still there are no Book of Rules for application of the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disability and the Law on Basic System of Education and Upbringing, the objectives are fulfilled to the extent it was possible regarding the above mentioned.

This project started and made first steps for two processes which are very important for the society as a whole.

All activities planned within the project are implemented, but there is a question whether they are sufficient for accomplishing strategic goals?`

*An Official of the New Belgrade Municipality: The project as a whole is very good, especially the part about education and strengthening of people who need it the most. Something that couldn't be seen in other projects. The right thing is when money goes to the right users.*

It is clear that most participants in the project went a step ahead of legal regulations regarding inclusion, so they established inclusive team in school and kindergarten (teachers/

educators and parents). They expanded their knowledge by attending seminars and participating in forums. They increased sensibility and they are better motivated for work with children with disabilities.

But, what about those who were not included in the project?

In Vranje, the difference can be noticed in the level of achieving results among teachers/educators in relation to parents. While readiness for involvement in the working processes in inclusive education can be noticed among teachers and educators, such motivation is smaller among parents.

*CIP representative: Parents of children with disabilities did not receive concrete help for their children individually, which was not planned in the project, but they got full support in the domain of advocacy, planning actions and informing about the importance of inclusive education.*

*CIP representative: I think that the implemented activities are insufficient for the city with over 20 schools and plenty of kindergartens. Therefore, I suggest a similar project which would include all schools and all kindergartens, and it would be good to include as many educators, teachers, parents... as possible.*

*CIP representative: On the other hand, the extent to which the goals were accomplished can increase, because it is necessary to continue supporting parents, activists, NGOs, educators and teachers to develop habits, mechanisms and practical skills of mutual cooperation and work on exercising the right to qualitative education for every child.*

*CIP representative: These activities just scratched the surface.*

*CIP representative: Project activities should increase, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Increasing parents' motivation is especially needed.*

**Regarding the fact that inclusion is at its beginning in the Republic of Serbia, the implemented activities present a starting point for further work. Still, it is important to stress that there is a certain number of schools which managed on their own before the project and implemented inclusive education the way they could.**

In selecting schools, there were clear criteria such as: the schools do not have development i.e. special class and they don't have a current inclusive project with another organization, and they express readiness for cooperation.

A part of project results which referred to establishment of cooperation between kindergartens and schools; raising awareness, and education and inclusion, was achieved.

*Parent Vranje: Thanks to this project, many educators and teachers understood the importance of cooperation with parents. We made a small step, but the small step is important for our environment and us as parents.*

MIDWAY Project is the first project which included parents from the community. The previous experience shows that parents were reluctant to involve. Mostly parents who are educational staff, parents of children with disabilities, and parents who deal with inclusive education because of their professional engagement were involved.

The level of parents' involvement is not the same in each city. Smaller involvement of the parent group was noticed in Vranje.

*School official Vranje: Some parents were coming and asking for exclusion of child with disability from the class, because their children suffered. There is disapproval, because parents are aware that children learn by imitating. The parent group is still not strong enough.*

Thanks to the project activities, the parents who were involved in the project got informed, they had the opportunity to exchange experiences, and provide support to each other. The parents think that it is necessary for local authorities to engage more and take some obligations and responsibilities; they also point out the importance of the Law and its implementation.

*Parent, Vranje: Now people are emotionally disabled and if something is not proscribed by the law, nothing will happen.*

The project results can also be observed through change of attitudes of the project participants towards children with disabilities. The evidence for that is the use of adequate language in communication with and about persons with difficulties/disability. It was noticed that the parents who participated in the project talk about the problem more openly.

The establishment of qualitative communication between kindergartens and schools, parents and educators, parents and teachers is a very important result of this project; both are more open for cooperation which used to be low or none, which presents the key segment of building partnership relations which will contribute to complete implementation of the process of inclusion.

One of remarkable, unexpected outcomes is cooperation of teachers who apply inclusive practice in their work with some professors at FASPER. In accordance with mutual need for exchange and spread of experiences, they agreed on making four educative films about inclusive education in the classes from the first to the third grade in one school in Novi Sad, where practice focused on child is applied. In addition, an agreement on cooperation was concluded with one school in Pančevo, according to which the university students, within their practical lessons, can attend the classes of the teacher who has been working on principles of inclusive education for years. Thereby, FASPER "opened ajar" the door to inclusive approach to education.

The above mentioned cooperation resulted in the idea of organization of a training course by CIP – Centre for Interactive Pedagogy for teaching staff and parents as allies in developing inclusive education. This training passed accreditation of the Institute for Improving Upbringing and Education as a programme of professional development for employees in kindergartens and primary schools for academic 2010/2011.

Still, we have to point out the need of increased work on building capacities of some teams depending on the city. Also, better effects can be achieved by bigger centralization of management and more direct introduction; this way it was accomplished that the carriers of project activities in the local community consider all activities as their own, which provides longer, more profitable effects, because their personal capacities were developed on their initial forces.

*CIP representative: We are still uncertain in our work, so it was easier for us to have joint activities; and everything that was supposed to be done individually, went with difficulties. But, I do not consider it as a flaw, but advantage, because at the beginning mass attendance is needed, and in time quality will rise from quantity and will be able to "pull the strings".*

5.1.5. The issue of sustainability of project results: what is the probability that the project results will sustain after the project activities?

**The number of employed persons with disability, awareness of persons with disability on how and in which way they can get to employers, support which is given to persons with disability by all key actors in the community, and public awareness on the possibilities of persons with disability are the results of the project activities which are sustainable to a great extent.**

Sustainability of the project activities is provided through work and enthusiasm of individuals. Those individuals, CIL partners are initiators in their local communities; it proved to be very important who coordinates the project, and who is directly involved in the work with persons with disability. These are the persons who successfully work and lead the Association for persons with disability and who already have very well-developed relation and permanent contact with persons with disability in the community and with local partners. The success in implementation of activities and accomplishment of project objectives was greatly supported by selection of partners who worked in selected project cities.

The project sustainability exists, because the activities planned for the future exist.

*Representative of Local Coalition for Employment: The main project result is employment of persons with disability, but another equally important result is cooperation of all the institutions which were involved in the project, because the cooperation will continue after the project finishes.*

**The main factors of reaching sustainability are initiative and readiness of the members of Local Coalition for Employment to keep working on lobbying for employment of persons with disability, Law on Employment of Persons with Disability, Strategy of Social Protection, re-qualification and training for known employers.**

*CIL team member: The signatories of the agreement of the Local Coalition for Employment will continue its work after the end of MIDWAY Project in order to help employment of more persons with disability.*

*CIL team member: Cooperation will be better every day, lobbying for their employment will continue, because all employers who were contacted, I believe, will always turn to us when hiring because of our recommendations when accepting new employees, especially now when the law on employment of persons with disability came into force.*

The planned activities of the Local Coalition for Employment refer to developing and implementing Local Action Plan for employment of persons with disability, continuation of cooperation with local authorities and National Employment Service on exchange of information about unemployed persons with disability and demand of employers, as well as lobbying and informing public about the importance and possibilities of employment of persons with disability.

*Representative of Local Coalition for Employment: MIDWAY Project was designed to help us see the problems which exist and, when the project ends, continue with the Coalition work and solving problems and difficulties of persons with disability. So, our organization should continue its work and solving problems of persons with disability after the end of the project.*

City Municipality New Belgrade is interested in continuing providing support to vulnerable group of citizens who are not able to represent themselves independently. The plan is to work a lot on overcoming physical barriers, which would indirectly improve various segments of individual lives. The municipality plans to continue providing support to the Employment Fairs.

Definitely, political and economic situation and its stability on local level can influence sustainability of project results.

What could improve sustainability of the results is provided financial support to the work of Local Coalitions for Employment.

When we talk about the project part regarding inclusive education, it was focused on building human capacities for creating conditions for inclusive education. All project participants now have immediate profit from participating in it, because they are better prepared for the upcoming changes in education system, and will be able to use the profits of the project in their work as long as the system orientation is clear.

CIP representative: It is expected that in the future, it will be easier, quicker to establish cooperation within the upcoming activities on introduction of inclusive education in kindergartens and schools among all stakeholders; and one of the possible models of its establishment which can be applied again easily was tested.

Everything that was created during the activities presents a foundation on which it will be possible to upgrade the same or similar actions in the future. The products of the project

activities, such as posters, educational films, training courses and professional material, can be used in further work on creation of conditions for inclusive education.

*CIP representative: The benefits will be seen only next year when inclusion becomes a legal obligation. Then, I hope, kindergarten and schools which were in this project will go a step ahead of the others and be "examples of good practice" in the region.*

*CIP representative: If we see the long term goal of the programme, kindergarten and schools will be ready for the next academic year and legal obligation with inclusion. All children will be educated at the same place, under the same conditions....*

The long term effects are also seen in the cooperation established with the local NGO and parents' group. Further activities can be focused on promotion and implementation of inclusive education on the same of these territories, as well as supporting activities which will be implemented on these locations by the group of parents and their children, and the NGO.

The parents, the project participants, thinks that it is very important to provide the necessary support to parents of children with disabilities, and it is necessary to establish a form of a centre and/or club for additional activities intended for persons with difficulties.

The possibility of failure due to stopping the programme on this level should not be ignored.

## 5.2. Differences/similarities and main factors influencing success/failure in small against big communities in which the project was implemented

### 5.2.1. Are there differences in implementation of project activities and achievement of project objectives in bigger and smaller project locations?

**There is no significant difference in the level of achieved objectives in smaller and bigger towns. There is a difference in implementation of activities related to certain circumstances which made the project implementation easier or more difficult.**

In the smaller communities, the flow of information is faster, and some activities were implemented faster. In a small community, the information spreads faster, because everyone knows each other and information is passed "from ear to ear" faster than in the case when information is spread only by media.

In smaller communities it is easier to comply with procedures in a timely manner on any level, for example, to make an appointment with a representative of authorities. The connectedness and knowing people in smaller communities is the key factor for easier implementation of some activities.

*CIL team member: "I am familiar with the activities in other municipalities and I can say that it is the best here. We had the support of all the people with whom we cooperated and who were involved in this project. So, there is difference in what results the project will give regarding the size of the town. In bigger towns everyone minds their own business, everyone is in a hurry and has no time to solve problems of persons with disability. In smaller towns like ours, people have more understanding and compassion for each other."*

The differences in implementation of activities in smaller and bigger communities can only be noticeable when the project activities expand to other actors (for example, all schools in the project municipality/city).

### 5.3. What are the most significant changes that project brought to stakeholders (persons with disability and parents of children with disabilities and parents of children without difficulties)?

Through the model of the Most Significant Change (MSC), we gathered stories of persons with disability and parents of children with disabilities about important or significant changes produced by the project. These stories of beneficiaries of the programme about important and/or significant changes – give a rich image of influence of development work and create a base for a dialogue about key goals and values of development programs.

First three stories that we present are selected stories written by persons with disability, and other three stories are from parents of children with and without disabilities.

#### STORY 1: ' HOW I GOT A JOB ''

I was born in Sremska Mitrovica, where i finished Secondary School of Economics. In October 1999, I started studying at the Law Faculty at the University of Novi Sad. Soon after that, I became a member of the Association of Students with Disability of Novi Sad, where I help in struggle for rights of students with disability. This is where my path from a student to a human rights activist begins. I become active in the movement of persons with disability.

In October 2006, I finish my basic studies and become a graduated lawyer. In NGO sector, I am active in projects of free legal aid. Also, I acquire a high quality informal education.

Among other things, I was a member of University Program of Internship in Provincial Authorities and Assembly of AP Vojvodina. I used this opportunity to apply for an internship job. I have completed my internship in the Office for Roma Inclusion, and after that I passed a qualification exam for working in public administration.

Centre for Independent Living Serbia started the project "MIDWAY – Mainstreaming Inclusiveness for Disabled Workers and Youth", so they offered me to be a member of the team project as an assistant for Novi Sad. So it happened that since February 2009, until today, I have been dealing with the problems of employment of persons with disability.

Although I was active in projects of various citizens' associations in the past, this project was my first significant experience, because until then I was mostly focused on the tasks that were directly tied to my profession.

This project made me recognizable in the local community. I became a person that deals with the problem of employment of persons with disability. With great efforts, but great success as well, MIDWAY put the topic of employment in the spotlight, and I was personally in function of the idea that the time has come for persons with disability to get employed. As the Project Assistant, I had an opportunity to directly interact with all the relevant institutions in the field of labour and employment, which was an opportunity to raise a logical question, in an informal conversation: "Am I employed somewhere, what are MY ambitions", etc.

That is how the idea that I should get employment, i.e. that I should be employed, was "conceived". Thanks to MIDWAY, the contacts were continuous, and that enabled the idea to live long enough to be realized in the end.

This project was, even with problems in employers' motivation, welcome in Novi Sad.

My employment can be considered as a good example of implementation of the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disability. In that sense, the local authorities should be praised for being inventive in implementation of the Law provisions.

My engagement in the Project contributed to a great extent to my professional promotion. Thanks to good will, things are slowly but steadily moving in the right direction when talking about employment of persons with disability. Employment of persons with disability will greatly contribute to quality of their lives, which is an indicator of democratization of the society which we live in.

## STORY 2: LIGHT OF THE NEW DAY

Former greyness, rains and gloomy weather were chased away by a single ray of sun, and after that the sun itself appeared too, blueness of the sea was smeared all over the sky.

Until recently I was unemployed, without any hope for some success and security, without a thought that something in my life can be changed. I live in a village called Bukova Glava, 25 km from Leskovac. Every day was the same for me. I was always asking myself whether I can

serve some cause, if I can be of use to somebody with my disease, how I could contribute to this society. The answer was always the same, and fear of reality and that rainy side of life was almost always present.

A lot of it has changed, I am more secure, I am financially independent, I feel as a useful member of the society, and especially that I am in touch with people and I can help others, in one word – I am equal to other people.

On the initiative of Centre for Independent Living Serbia, it was suggested that a part of the project called “MIDWAY – Mainstreaming Inclusiveness for Disabled Workers and Youth” is implemented in Leskovac. A call from the Project Assistant for Leskovac happened and changed my life, lightened my day. With reserve and fear, I made a brave step and accepted the challenge, I accepted the call for job.

I am a bright, positive and happy person, I can work, I can behave and smile like the world around me, there are no differences, there are no boundaries. The job offer gave me courage and hope, it spilled a smile on my face. I am happy, I am worthy. My world is changed.

Every morning, with smile and happiness, I go to work, I work as a Technical Secretary in the Association of Paraplegics in Leskovac, I am looking forward to every new day and every day of mine is different and brings a new inspiration. I go to meetings every day, attend various lectures, learn how to work on computers, acquire new abilities. After work I return to my village, to my house. I complete my chores. Now it is easier, my day is fulfilled.

After rain, sun comes; after evil, the good comes; we should never be desperate because our happiness is right there, around the corner and is waiting just for us, I grabbed it.

My sun is shining, I live...

### STORY 3: LIFE ANEW

With how many words I should start and fill the space, and manage to tell you that I have, thanks to the people of good will, started life from anew. How should I compose the sentences so that you could understand how my days are happier since my employment.

We who find ourselves in the mirror of life, we who are the other part of world whose youth is restricted by the lack of stride, often try what is almost impossible... In my life, there was too much sorrow and pain. Because of the severity of the illness itself (cerebral paralysis), I fell many times and lost the strength to go on. Above all, it was hardest to accept that because of it, I might never be able to work. For years I have persistently tried to do anything, but without success.

Thanks to the people of good will that supported the Centre for Independent Living Serbia from Belgrade, it was decided that one of the cities where the project “MIDWAY - Mainstreaming Inclusiveness for Disabled Workers and Youth” will be conducted, is Kragujevac.

I was introduced to the project through cooperation with the Project Assistant Brana Ristić. Her earlier experience in work with disabled persons enabled her to use all of the project's advantages and help in employment of disabled persons even more, by forming the Local Coalition for Employment. I believe that, thanks to the engagement of the members of the Local Coalition, a large number of employers became more aware during these months, and now they are more ready to hire disabled persons.

To me and many of my friends that are disabled in any way, employment is of great importance, because we feel more useful and closer to healthy persons in every moment. I do my job with ease, with great determination. Thanks to the job I do, I have made my dream come true. I used my salary to go on vacation to Greece.

We who have a mark of physical difference, which today usually determines a person, find it hard to find employment for ourselves, and employers can understand us even less until they get to know us better. But a falling star – a star of happiness, fell onto my palm. And just as a falling star never extinguishes, the hope that we carry in our hearts never extinguishes either...

I am grateful to all people of good will that enabled us to earn living for ourselves and achieve a quality life worth of man.

#### STORY 4:

#### 'Things have a shape our souls give them.'

The idea about inclusive education came from a teacher in my child's kindergarten. She organized a parent-teacher meeting at which she announced that their kindergarten was included in a programme about inclusive education of children with disabilities. Although I knew very little about that, I did not even think about that, I got curious, interested and motivated for a new discovery.

The same teacher invited me to attend lectures held by people who explained to us the purpose and the goal of inclusive education. Unfortunately, because of private obligations, I was not regular at these meetings, but even what I found out was enough to understand how necessary inclusive education is, not just because of evident positive results and achievements it brought in work with such children, but because of ourselves too. For moving the boundaries in ourselves. For given chance to accept new, other and different. To become better people. More noble and better persons. To understand that this difference, in no way, can be characterized as a tragedy and a flaw of society, but that the difference can be an advantage! That everybody has the right to live and that everybody has the right to spend their life in quality and worthy of a man.

My maturity exam, my self-examination, and belief that all this that I wrote is not just some half-pathetic words, squatted in some romantic feeling and as such not applicable in life, was the situation when my best friend told me that she gave birth for the fourth time, and when she literally said: "But, I do not have good news, the child is born with the Down Syndrome."

I surprised myself when I said, completely spontaneously: "But that is wonderful! The children are God's angels! Lucky you, God chose your family to take care of one such soul. Children like that need only love, and you have it; besides, there is inclusive education!"

She found out from me about that education, and really calmed down. Later we, accidentally again, met my friend that is a defectologist, and among other things, deals with disabled children, and she had a similar stance like me and complete openness towards inclusive education. It is interesting that the children that were in her office, after some time spent with them, and that was my first experience with such children, did not make me feel uneasy, just gentle; and I felt that such children are worthy of quality life, attention and love.

I would end like I started, with a thought of a great man and poet:

"Things have shape our soul gives them."

Let our soul be open enough, noble and serene, so it can recognize this new, other and different as its own.

## STORY 5: One Experience

Seven years have passed since my son was diagnosed: autistic spectre disorder. Since then I have a feeling that my life has been going in two phases: short periods of rest, between the attacks of hard problems which are complicated and seemingly unsolvable, but with a feeling that solution must be found, because every giving up, lack of strength and will would mean the end of a chance for my child.

My son is now ten years old and this June, 2010, he has successfully finished the second grade of elementary school in Kragujevac. The amount and weight of the problems we solved so far on our life path, I think, can only be understood by someone who had the same or similar problems: starting with getting into regular group in kindergarten, then rejection of the teachers to accept him, then transfer to special, so called development group in kindergarten, then inability to attend mandatory preschool, and the hardest, getting into regular school. The need to include my child in regular life of his peers was not just my wish, but opinions of psychologists, psychiatrists, logopedes that I collaborated with, because that would be very beneficial for the child's further development.

Because he was accepted to school "with a little help from friends, and a small cheat", because otherwise he would not make it, the start of the first grade was the hardest. Teachers were angry, felt fear, were repulsed, and thought it would not work. The management of the school was not inclined towards my son's staying in school either. Luckily, a "small miracle" always happens, and just when I think there is no more hope, somebody with a wider understanding appears, better comprehension, without fear, with a lot of altruism in them, and contributes that the situation changes. In this case, it was the arrival of a new school psychologist and engagement of a teaching assistant. Situation changed gradually. With the help of the teaching assistant, teachers tried to get to know his habits, characteristics, qualities, weaknesses and

abilities. The management of the school as well. We cooperate well. Small problems always appear, but we manage to solve them and get over them.

Of course, the key improvement was acceptance of the school administration to have a student with difficulty officially and to accept the inclusion practically and directly, not just formally, as a possibility and legal obligation that maybe is not even practical. The next step was opening of the school and understanding of the need to include and participate in projects that deal with understanding the importance and raising awareness about the necessity of inclusive education, like MIDWAY project. By participating in this project, absolutely everybody at the moment connected to further development and life of the child benefited. School administration is now much better prepared to make a special plan and program for a child with difficulties, through examples of good practice, experiences and expert advices. Changes are important and inspiring. Teachers are better informed and more relaxed in trying to get to know the child better and start working with it, in a way it is acceptable to the child. Child feels it and becomes calmer and in the mood for learning. And the most important – fear of a child that is different is gone! The fear itself of somebody that is different and the lack of will to get to know such a child and give it a chance is the key problem and something that requires more work, not just in schools, but in a local community and the whole society as well. .

Only now I can mention school friends of my child. With them, there were almost no problems. Children accept him much more quickly, with all his characteristics and try to help him as much as they can, in their own child way, or at least not to bother him.

In the end, I am a single mother and I had to leave my full-time employment so I can give full support to the teachers and regular education of my child.

## STORY 6:

During my participation in this Project, the atmosphere of working in a parents' group, but also in a group with teachers and educators as well, was very encouraging. The atmosphere was warm and comfortable. It meant a lot that all the time I felt I was not alone and the only one with a problem of such kind. Experiences of other parents helped me a lot to see mine and the problem of my child, from another perspective. An opportunity to talk openly about my problem and hear experiences of other parents meant a lot in a sense that I opened myself to others. Something new is always heard, something that brings the light. I got impression that I know those people for a long time, although I saw most of them for the first time.

It meant a lot to me that parents of other children are with us. I understood that they are completely different people when you talk to them openly and directly and when they are a part of the same story. When they get to know our problems and problems of our children they do not boycott us or our children, because I was often in a situation to feel like a second-rate parent because my child too is – a second-rate child (at least it is how most people behave).

I am sorry that teachers from the school my child attends did not take part in the project, if only they did... Some of the teachers are repulsive, when you hear their voice, you

shiver. I have noticed that teachers and educators talk with warmth about how to approach such children. A teacher has to have a nice word. Everybody should be included, from the principal to courier, and when the parent is absent, everybody should be ready to help. Couriers have a big role.

## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

CONCLUSIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
All estimated activities of the MIDWAY project were carried out as planned	Project activities can be multiplied as examples of good practice
Disabled persons, in towns where the project activities were realized, have better chances of getting effective employment	Encourage active mutual cooperation between the Association of Persons with Disability and all other actors in the community that are significant in process of employing persons with disability
Persons with disability have become "more visible" in their local communities , thanks to project activities	Continue with public campaigns and media promotion for the purpose of informing the broader public about the problems of persons with disability, but about their abilities as well
Employers that were engaged in project have more information about persons with disability and their abilities	Inform employers and broader public about the abilities and skills of persons with disability in performing working tasks, with the purpose of removing prejudices and barriers. Examples of good practice of employers that hired persons with disability as well as examples of good practice of employed persons with disability can help achieve the aforementioned
Persons with disability that were engaged in the project possess more information about the legal framework that concerns their right to employment, while there is information that say that many persons with disability that were not engaged in the project activities do not have adequate information	Encourage Association of Persons with Disability to create special actions that will make adequate information available to all persons with disability Continue with educative workshops/trainings/ lectures with the purpose of introducing persons with disability to all aspects of their rights
Association of Persons with Disability monitored the implementation of the Law on professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disability	Secure additional resources for the Association of Persons with Disability and for members of Local Coalition for Employment so that the process of monitoring of aforementioned Law could be more successful
In the process of employing persons with disability, most important thing is that there is a database with persons with disability in the local community and database of employers that hire persons with disability	In cooperation with NES (National Employment Service), create complete databases about unemployed persons with disability and a database of employers and possible jobs that will be updated regularly

CONCLUSIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
In the process of employing persons with disability, it is of great importance to establish cooperation between different actors in the local community that functioned together as an informal group – Local Coalition for Employment, and as such were a bond between persons with disability and employers	Support Local Coalition for Employment to continue with their activities undisturbed
By realizing project activities aimed at securing more possibilities for effective employment for persons with disability, 69 persons with disability have been employed and 2129 animated	
MIDWAY project contributed to the activities of USAID that were focused on raising the capacities of civil society to advocate interests of citizens in a way that it strengthened capacities of organizations of persons with disability for public representation, by mobilizing and engaging the parents, by building their skills to become actors of representing the interests of their children and themselves before the official education system	Formulate a Checklist of inclusiveness of persons with disability in USAID programs
Smaller number of parents that participated in the project are empowered to represent the interests of their children	Through different kinds of joint activities animate as much parents as possible that will help promoting principles of inclusive education as key actors in inclusive education Secure additional training/lectures that will enable removing prejudices about the possibilities of children with disability, and give parents skills in making individual education programs
For the first time, Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation was engaged in a project connected to civil society, that is, inclusive education	For inclusion of children with disability in inclusive education, it is of great importance that all important actors in the community which can contribute with their knowledge are included, especially to teachers and directly/particularly to parents of children with disability
All small grants dedicated to advocacy were successfully implemented in every community	Realization of small grants can serve as a good example for cooperation of schools personnel and parents

<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>
<p>Quality cooperation has been accomplished between pre-school institutions, school officials and representatives of the local community in Kragujevac and Vranj, while in New Belgrade that cooperation was established only between schools and representatives of the local community</p>	<p>Proceed with aforementioned cooperation and expand it through mutual activities (to other cities in Republic of Serbia), and thereby enable its sustainability                      Animate and expand activities in City Municipality New Belgrade and include other municipalities in Belgrade that want to cooperate</p>
<p>Activities of raising awareness in local community about inclusive education provided the possibility of informing broader public about including children with disability in regular educational system</p>	<p>Proceed with public information campaigns with aim to efficiently engage civil society in inclusive education</p>
<p>Most of the schools are not architecturally accessible to children with disability</p>	<p>Motivate schools to, together with parents and School Administrations, find a solution for architectural accessibility by finding different solutions that do not require big material investments (moving classrooms to the first floor, adjusting toilets, etc)</p>
<p>Annual school plans still do not include principles of the inclusive education</p>	<p>Give support to School Officials on creation of school plans on principles of inclusive education</p>



## **7. Annexes**

### 7.1. Annex I: Example of methodology guide of the Most Significant Change

Compilation of stories (instructions for persons that write stories)

We would like to gather stories of individuals, direct users of the project "MIDWAY – Mainstreaming Inclusiveness for Disabled Workers and Youth":

- parents with children with disabilities and parents of children without difficulties
- persons with disability included in the project

about the most significant changes that happened to them (or people they know, and were included in the project), affected by the project.

It should be stories about changes that happened during any of the CRS activities, and those changes are:

- Remarkable
- Inspiring
- Valuable/Important
- Good

These changes can be related to the person itself, community, organization, etc! They can be changes in human behaviour or the most significant improvement in school, kindergarten, city, community, institution...

Stories should be from one half to one card of text long.

Stories should not be lists of achievements and without a form, or in a cut-and-paste form, like standard reports.

It would be ideal to explain:

- Who told the story (e.g. "teacher, thirty-year-old". Please do not name names)
- Who benefited (if that is not the person, tell the story)
- When
- How
- What was the change
- Why is the change the most significant

Selection of the best story:

By the model of Most Significant Changes, stories of the persons from two stakeholders' groups will be secured: persons with disability and parents involved in the project, about important or significant changes that the project caused. Selection of the best story is performed in two rounds, as following:

Persons with disability send their stories to the branch office of the Centre for Independent Living in their town, and parents send their stories to CIP.

Contact person for sending story is: \_\_\_\_\_

With the help of instructions they will get from proMENTE team, representatives of CIL and CIP will make a selection of 5 to 7 best stories for each of the two mentioned stakeholders' groups. Representatives of CIP and CIL will send selected stories to the representatives of CRS.

Representatives of CRS will then make another selection of stories, according to the instructions of proMENTE team, and thereby select 4 out of 6 stories.

## 7.2. Annex II: About proMENTE: quality and expertise in evaluation

proMENTE provides consultant services of social research and solutions for companies, as well for non-profit organizations. ProMENTE works on international level, and is located in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This organization was registered by three experts for social sciences as an association in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in October 2002.

All proMENTE employees have at least a degree in social sciences; three senior researchers have a master title or Ph.D in social sciences, with five to twelve years of work experience in planning and conducting researches in the field and evaluations in West Balkan.

proMENTE presented results of their researches in:

- European Parliament (youth volunteerism: [www.promente.org/avsoreview](http://www.promente.org/avsoreview))
- World Bank, Washington (youth volunteerism: [www.promente.org/v](http://www.promente.org/v))
- White Hall of Parliamentary Assembly (child labour and children trafficking, especially Roma: [www.promente.org/scn2](http://www.promente.org/scn2))
- XIII World Congress of Comparative Educational Societies, and other forums (Content of analysis of all schoolbooks in geography, history, language and religion in BiH: [www.promente.org/node/495](http://www.promente.org/node/495))
- Conference on Easy-eco Evaluation, Vienna (inventive evaluations of projects of civil society: [www.promente.org/sida2eng](http://www.promente.org/sida2eng))

### **Mission**

To help individuals and organizations in achieving their full potential – by doing researches and evaluations, as well as empirical advices and training.

### **Why can proMENTE do this evaluation well**

#### **Action, but research as well**

proMENTE also conducts its own projects in the field of education policies, active measures against unemployment, and career advices. ProMENTE is a member of the OSF-assisted World Network of Education Policies. That means that we are familiar with the world of non-government organizations and development from the inside, but outside as well.

## **Methods**

proMENTE has experience with wide spectre of M&E approach, combining quality and quantity methods. In addition to doing external, post-hoc evaluations, we are also specialized in giving support to organizations on building or improving their own M&E systems. We are the first organization in Bosnia and Herzegovina that applies methodology of Outcome Mapping and Most Significant Changes.

## **Quality**

We see evaluation as a possibility for organization to fully use the quality of their activities with the help of evidence of project functioning. Maintenance and full efficiency is the goal all stakeholders can agree on. We understand the world of non-government organizations from the inside and we have experience with complex projects of research and evaluation that are related to non-governmental organizations; we think that the quality is the concept that suits this kind of interest group much better than evaluation.

## **Web technologies**

ProMENTE uses web research methodology since 2002 (as an example, look at our websites [www.mojakarijera.com](http://www.mojakarijera.com) and [www.qimpl.com](http://www.qimpl.com)) that we usually design and realize ourselves. We have four different systems available to us for conducting web researches that suit our clients the best. Most of our research and evaluation projects now include web modules too.

## **International standards and local know-how.**

We conduct researches and evaluations in BiH and other parts of Europe according to international standards. We are proud of professionally presented research reports with attractive graphics and clear and concise summaries. You can see some examples at [www.promente.org/en/report\\_list](http://www.promente.org/en/report_list). You can find our reports also in original English.

## **Expertise**

proMENTE has experts in the field of social research and evaluation in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina on the issues relevant for the present proposal.

proMENTE has experience in research and evaluation of programmes and projects regarding inclusive and intercultural education (Mozaik, "Društvo ujedinjenih građanskih akcija-DUGA, KEC, UNICEF etc). Thanks to their previous working experience, members of proMENTE expert team have competencies and skills for work with adults and children with disabilities.

## **Evaluation principles**

### **Ethics**

Methodology of evaluation will be in accordance with ethical guidelines of British Evaluation Society (<http://www.evaluation.org.uk>). More specifically, it means:

- Full respect of data protection
- Stakeholders are completely informed about evaluation and have access to "evaluation ombudsman" if necessary.

## **Participation**

proMENTE evaluations include stakeholders in as many phases as possible and purposeful, and try to involve interviewed stakeholders in active debate on how to improve the project quality.

## **Multi-sources, multi-methods**

Reliability and validity of information and conclusions drawn from it are of the biggest importance. ProMENTE is specialized for evaluations of multi-sources and multi-methods. It means that different staff performs and analyzes a certain number of different methods, from control lists and questionnaires to Internet surveys, focus groups and interviews. For example, our clients found that qualitative techniques such as methodology of the Most Significant Changes, are of essential importance for discovering what the project really accomplishes in the eyes of beneficiaries and other stakeholders, which is often significantly different than the project plan; at the same time we really use qualitative techniques for helping clients to really measure changes in attitudes, beliefs and behaviour, which is often in focus of project goals but rarely measured systematically.

Each of these methods and sources gives its own contribution to accuracy, relevance and objectivity of final report, which is written as explicit synthesis of the various sources. In addition, we encourage stakeholders, especially higher levels of administration, to read a final draft and give comments. Synthesis of those comments is then included as a part of final report.

## **Affirmative inquiry**

In our consultancy work for profit and non-profit organizations we find inspiration in principles of affirmative inquiry: focus on what functions, creation of joint visions and finding creative ways for achieving the vision.

## **Objectivity**

This evaluation will primarily be given to the client as a favour. Focus, method and reporting structure will be adapted to the client needs. However, proMENTE intends to get an independent view of the project functioning and quality, primarily by the approach of multi-source, multi-methods described in the previous text. Differences in opinion which appear during drafting the report between the one who is evaluated and proMENTE should be solved by negotiations, if possible. However, the text of the final report is responsibility of proMENTE.