

UNICEF in Belarus

## Children with Disabilities in Belarus: an Overview

### Children with Disabilities in Belarus

Belarus' commitment to accede to the UNCRPD and to significantly advance the accessibility and inclusiveness of quality health and education services the most marginalized CWDD in Belarus, especially in rural areas of Belarus. The national legal framework on disability and UNCRPD are to make full use of technical assistance of UNICEF to the Government of Belarus. It sets in motion a process to empower CWDD and their families, so that they can participate fully in society on an equal basis with others. The planned actions will have a tangible impact on the quality of life of an increasingly large proportion of people. The governmental stakeholders will be engaged in joint work with UNICEF Belarus to implement this project to build inclusive system of services for CWDD and their families.

For these reasons, disability issues are a pivotal component for UNICEF-Belarus' country programme with the Government (2016-2020), having a crosscutting nature that works to strengthen support for different stages of a child's life (in early year development, school age, adolescence). Specific interventions include focus on strengthening early identification of developmental delays and special educational needs; early learning and inclusive education; deinstitutionalization and family support services; prevention of discrimination and stigma; and data collection.

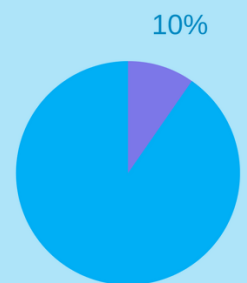
In 2017 in Belarus there were

**149 919** children with special needs

**29 931** children with disabilities

Children with disabilities and special needs

comprise about **10%** of the total child population in Belarus



Every year round

**3500** children qualify for a degree of disability at 0-18 years old

**48%** of children at institutions are children with disabilities.

**Disability** is the main reason for institutionalization in Belarus.

## Challenges

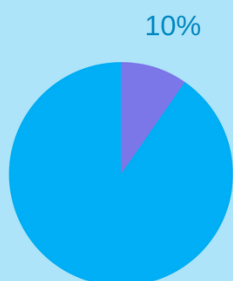
Despite significant efforts of Belarus in promoting rights of CWDD, children and their families continue to face multiple institutional, attitudinal and structural barriers to fulfilling their human rights. In particular, there is a widespread lack of understanding that most families with CWDD could fully enjoy good health, education and social protection, if given adequate support. Government policies are largely based on medical model of disability and do not address complex societal and other barriers that CWDD face. The state programmes supporting CWDD are often uninformed by evidence and reliable comprehensive data, as well as poorly coordinated across sectors.

Statistics in Belarus portray vulnerabilities of children with disabilities, with a 14% increase over the last five years of children registered with disabilities – being at 29,588 children at end 2016. Families with children with disabilities are at greater risk of falling into poverty; and 44% of the children in institutional care are children with disabilities. With a post-Soviet history, Belarus has had a tradition of addressing disability with a ‘medical model’ that excludes children from their peers in schools, communities and sometimes even from their parents when residential care has been proposed as the only form of ‘rehabilitation’.

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Early Intervention Centres around the country service about 4000 children with disabilities and special needs annually

268 schools, which is about **10%** of schools in the country, have barrier-free environment



450

teachers were trained to work within the inclusive education settings at the newly established Inclusive Education Centre in 2017



## UNICEF Priorities

### Counter Stigma

Raise awareness of the achievements and challenges in the area of child’s disability, campaigns, public opinion polls etc., while seeking the maximum involvement of CWDD and their families and of their representative organisations.

### Collect Data

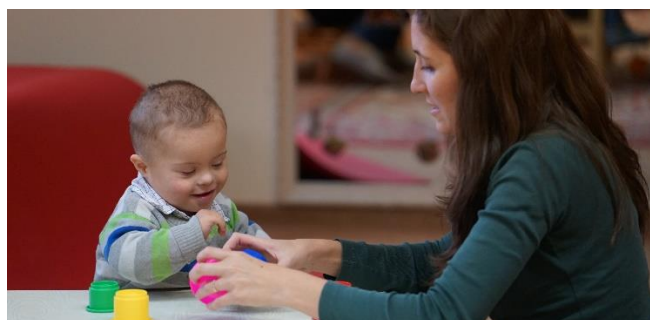
Data collection will guide the concrete measures to fulfill unmet needs and rights of CWD and their families and their communities. Major efforts should be directed at eliminating the existing gaps in the systems of accounting data on CWDD among education, health and social protection sectors.

### Assist in Service Provision

While the UNCRPD provides a “renewed” starting point for recognizing the rights and needs of CWD building on existing initiatives, a sustained commitment is required to mobilize and support stakeholders to develop inclusive, needs-based and family-centered services for all CWD. UNICEF will support the Government in enhancing the national system of early identification and intervention and rehabilitation where families play an active role. Considering that disability is one of the main reasons for child institutionalization, this component will strengthen family-centered and relationship-based early intervention and support services for better health and development outcomes and greater social inclusion of CWD. Particular attention will be paid to a continuum of care from pregnancy through adulthood.

### Realize the Right to Education

**Right to education.** Achieving the right to inclusive education for children requires that all levels of government, public officials, those delivering services, and CSOs have the capacity, commitment and resources to implement the laws, policies and programs in place to support that goal. Forming partnerships between schools, parent groups, community leaders, NGOs, and government and professional groups is essential in the promotion of inclusion in schools and the community.



A mother and her child at an individual training session at the UNICEF-supported ECI centre in Minsk.