Progress Towards the Implementation of UNCRPD Articles 7, 8 and 24 in Ukraine

Report of participatory research in five regions

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Contents

Abbreviations

DPO	disabled people's organisation
EENET	Enabling Education Network
FGD	focus group discussion
IEP	individual education plan
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OSF	Open Society Foundations
PMPC	Psychological, Medical and Pedagogical Consultation Team
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Having ratified UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in December 2009, Ukraine has committed to its implementation, one way being through the development of inclusive education. Ukraine's government provides regular reports on UNCRPD implementation, and civil society organisations play an active role in developing an alternative report to the UN.

The Step by Step Foundation actively advocates for equal rights for children with disabilities, including their right to education. In 2016, the organisation undertook research, which involved consulting many stakeholders regarding the status of implementation of the UNCRPD. The research aimed to look in particular at the situation with regard to Articles 7, 8 and 24.

Article 7: Children with disabilities
Article 8: Awareness raising
Article 24: Education
Full texts of the Articles are available online.

The research was supported by the Early Childhood Programme of the Open Society Foundations (OSF) and was conducted in five regions of Ukraine: Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa, Severodonetsk (Luhansk oblast), and Vinnytsia.

Enabling Education Network (EENET) was invited to provide technical support for the research. In 2015/16 EENET (also with OSF funding) was working on various activities relating to the UNCRPD Article 24. This included helping organisations in Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine to prepare submissions to the UNCRPD Committee prior to the preparation of the Committee's General Comment on Inclusive Education, and sending feedback on the Committee's draft General Comment. Ukraine's submission to the Committee in March 2015 was edited by EENET and can be found online.

1.2. Methodology

Preparation for the research

Consultants from EENET, Duncan Little and Ingrid Lewis, provided support to Step by Step Foundation with the design of research questions and activities. Questions used in similar UNCRPD-focused research activities in Armenia and Moldova were used as a starting point, but then adapted (the other two countries had focused mostly on the issue of education transition, while Step by Step identified the need to research a wider range of questions).

One of the consultants, Duncan Little, then designed and facilitated an orientation workshop in Ukraine. This was designed to help Step by Step's staff

and local research facilitators to review and co-develop the ideas for the research questions and methodology. The research facilitators were able to find out about and practise a range of participatory research techniques.

From 29 February to 2 March, the researchers developed action research skills; created and adapted guide questions for use with different target groups; and practised and improved their research facilitation skills and focus group discussion techniques and their skills for documenting discussions through drawings and diagrams.

The first day of the orientation workshop – focusing on research question – was conducted in Kyiv. Two further days were conducted in Vinnytsia. Here the researchers conducted sample focus group discussions in schools with different target groups and received feedback/suggestions from the EENET consultant. This enabled them to revise their techniques and questions prior to travelling to the other four regions to carry out the bulk of the research.

Research approach

Following the orientation workshop and practice sessions, a research workplan was finalised (see Appendix 1).

Each researcher carried out research in their allocated location. The focus was on carrying out good quality research in a small number of sites/schools with manageable numbers of respondents, rather than trying to carry out extensive research and potentially gathering only superficial information.

Participatory approaches were used, with a focus on drawing. For instance, at the start of the focus group discussions with children in Vinnytsia, the facilitators created a picture of their school. They drew it on flipchart paper and stuck it on the wall, and children then drew or wrote on it to show what they liked about school. At the other research locations facilitators also asked children to draw on big sheets of paper, in small groups, what they liked about school. Facilitators also used the mountain diagrams to collect participants' views on education barriers and solutions in Vinnytsia.

All information recorded by the researchers was compiled and translated by Step by Step. EENET's consultant provided further guidance, such as a suggested template for organising/analysing the information and quotes from respondents. One of EENET's team also edited this final report.

Reflections on the approach

Positives

The focus groups with children were conducted privately, without teachers or parents present, enabling the children to speak more freely. They were not used to being asked these sorts of questions by strangers, but once they relaxed they did not want to end the sessions. Facilitators rephrased questions, where necessary, to help children understand them.

Schools had chosen children whom they felt could speak out. They had arrived with their parents. The children's focus groups were conducted first and when parents saw their children coming out of the discussions happy and talking enthusiastically to each other, they were more relaxed about engaging in the parents focus groups.

Participants in all groups were informed that their discussions would be anonymous. Teachers were initially the most reluctant group to take part, as it was the first time they had been given an opportunity to openly discuss these issues. However, the promise of anonymity enabled them to share honest opinions without fear of a negative response from superiors. Participants from public authorities were also pleased to be given an opportunity to discuss issues without their management being present.

The facilitation advice from EENET had included the suggestion of having facilitators who work in small teams of three, ensuring that there is a range of skills among them (e.g. skills for leading the facilitation, taking notes, keeping time, analysing information, etc). This worked very well in the field. For future such work Step by Step would train more facilitators, however, especially those with experience of working with children.

Challenges
In Vinnytsia, one of the focus groups with children felt staged, as if children had been primed with answers in advance. However, the facilitators learned from this and in other locations did not share detailed information with the schools about what questions they would ask children.

Some facilitators found it difficult to relate to children and speak in a child-friendly way at the start of a session (following the drawing activity). However, they quickly learned to adjust their tone and ways of speaking with children.

In Luhansk no NGOs attended the requested focus group. Due to the war with 'Russia', education NGOs seem to have been replaced by emergency NGOs, and many who were invited to attend sent last minute apologies.

Participants

Five groups of stakeholders participated in focus group discussions:

Children	**81**
Parents	**82**
Teachers	**137**
School authorities	**64**
Dept of Education reps (local education officers)	**66**
NGO reps	**35**

Research participants by location and gender

Stakeholder group	**Total**	*Female*	*Male*	**Odessa and Odessa oblast**	*Female*	*Male*	**Lugansk and Lugansk oblast**	*Female*	*Male*	**Lviv and Lviv oblast**	*Female*	*Male*	**Kiev**	*Female*	*Male*	**Vinnytsia and Vinnytsia oblast**	*Female*	*Male*
Children	**81**	*42*	*39*	**12**	*6*	*6*	**14**	*8*	*6*	**18**	*9*	*9*	**25**	*13*	*12*	**12**	*6*	*6*
Parents	**82**	*57*	*25*	**12**	*8*	*4*	**15**	*10*	*5*	**18**	*14*	*4*	**22**	*16*	*6*	**15**	*9*	*6*
Teachers	**137**	*126*	*11*	**24**	*22*	*2*	**30**	*24*	*6*	**33**	*32*	*1*	**38**	*37*	*1*	**12**	*11*	*1*
School authorities	**64**	*58*	*6*	**25**	*25*	*0*	**14**	*12*	*2*	**10**	*10*	*0*	**15**	*11*	*4*	**0**	*0*	*0*
Dept of Education reps	**66**	*54*	*12*	**12**	*10*	*2*	**16**	*15*	*1*	**15**	*11*	*4*	**11**	*11*	*0*	**12**	*7*	*5*
NGO reps	**35**	*24*	*11*	**7**	*5*	*2*	**0**	*0*	*0*	**18**	*12*	*6*	**0**	*0*	*0*	**10**	*7*	*3*

For more details of the participants and facilitators, please see the complete record sheet in Appendix 6.

2. Summary of findings

This section provides a brief overview of key points from the findings of participatory research activities in five regions, along with recommendations. Section 3 provides the detailed findings from each location.

Presence of children with disabilities in school

In all locations, there was some acknowledgement of examples of children with disabilities being in mainstream schools. However, in four of the five research sites, parents, teachers and/or children mentioned that they were aware of some children with disabilities who did not attend school. Only in Luhansk did no parents mention being aware of out-of-school children with disabilities. Elsewhere, children with disabilities were often noted to be involved in 'individual education' (i.e. a form of home schooling) if they were not enrolled in a special school. Those who were out of school were often thought to have been turned away by educators or school directors, or to have been advised by specialists not go to mainstream school, or simply to be 'unable' to go to school.

Attitudes towards / understanding of inclusive education

In all locations, there was a mixed picture in terms of attitudes and understanding. The overall impression from the research is that there is a lack of understanding about the feasibility and potential benefits of inclusive education, especially among teachers and parents of children with non-disabled children. This seems to be reflected in the popularity of 'individual education' or special schools as the preferred education choice especially among teachers, school directors and specialists. However, there were some respondents – mostly parents of children with disabilities, but also some teachers – who clearly articulated beliefs that inclusion of learners with disabilities is not only feasible but of clear benefit to all learners. Several examples of children with disabilities who did better in the mainstream school were given. A couple of schools (e.g. School #95 in Lviv) seemed to stand out as being much more positive towards, and actively implementing, inclusive education.

The apparent lack of understanding about inclusive education was combined sometimes with explicitly negative attitudes about children with disabilities, their capacity to learn and whether they can/should attend mainstream schools. For instance, some teachers openly said they did not believe in inclusive education and did not think it was possible or desirable for teachers to teach children with disabilities in a regular class. Some school directors were noted to 'block' enrolment of children with disabilities, or advise parents to send their children to special schools or educate them through 'individual education' – even when that was not what the parents wanted. Negative attitudes among education staff seemed more common in rural locations/schools. Overall the research seemed to suggest that children had the most optimistic attitudes towards inclusive education and were most positive about having children with and without disabilities learning alongside and supporting each other.

Various respondents indicated an understanding of inclusive education as being just about learners with disabilities (as opposed to a whole-system/school improvement process for all learners). However, among the respondents there were 'pockets' of more well-informed and positive respondents who believed in and had better understanding of inclusive education, who are potential 'allies' in building wider awareness and understanding.

Recommendations

- Ongoing community awareness-raising sessions about inclusive education and education rights are needed. These sessions can share the success stories of children with disabilities and their families and disseminate messages about the positive aspects of inclusion for society.
- Different groups of stakeholders need opportunities to hear each other's concerns so they can better understand each other, and so that education authorities can plan and respond more effectively to the various attitudes.
- Information dissemination and awareness raising activities need to be carried out in all parts of the country, in both urban and rural communities.
- Teachers, school directors and representatives of local educational authorities all need to routinely receive training (ideally integral to their core pre-service training and professional development programmes) to help them better understand inclusive education, children's rights, quality inclusive teaching strategies, and national and international legislation.

Accessibility and assistive devices

Overall the research responses indicated evidence of piecemeal efforts to improve accessibility (e.g. ramps, painted lines to help visually impaired learners, etc), but with much still to be done to achieve schools that were fully accessible. Lack of access to assistive devices was mentioned, often with comments that the support that should be provided by social services in this regard did not always happen.

Inclusive practices

Despite the reluctance of some respondents to embrace inclusive education, various locations provided evidence of practices in the classroom that are ideal for supporting inclusion, such as:

- Differentiated learning and adapting tasks for different learners, sometimes with the development of individual education plans
- Child-to-child learning/support methods
- Learner-centred, active learning methods.

However, even where such approaches were noted, there were still respondents who feared their children with disabilities may not be actively participating in class. There were also teachers who felt under-prepared to use such approaches, especially in diverse classes, even if they acknowledged that they should be using them. Overall there was a sense that teachers need to be the primary resource for inclusive education, yet currently they are most in need

of attitude change and/or practical training inputs to give them the skills and confidence to change practices.

Specialist support (e.g. from school psychologists and speech therapists) was mentioned as being important for inclusion by all types of respondents across various locations. In all locations there was seen to be a lack of this sort of specialist support, or a perception that it was only really available for children in special schools. Some schools were reported to have recruited teacher assistants to help children in class. This was welcomed, and reportedly had helped some children participate and improve. It had not always been successful, though, in part due to lack of training for the assistants and because the legal requirement is for one assistant for two classes, which was said to be not always enough.

Overall respondents felt there was a lack of teaching and learning materials, especially those adapted to the needs of learners with disabilities, and that this hinders the development of inclusive practice. There was some complaint from teachers that they had to make all materials themselves, although little discussion around skills and innovation to make adapted/accessible materials.

Support for the development of inclusive practice was felt to come from some NGOs, church groups, other local institutions like clinics, etc, more than from government, although there was some mention of positive inter-agency efforts by local authorities. Awareness (by parents/teachers) of the support that may be available locally was sometimes felt to be absent. The role of school leaders' support in moving towards inclusive practices was seen as important.

Recommendations

- Teachers, other school staff and local education officials need to fully understand the concept of inclusive education – from theoretical and practical perspectives. They need to understand and use/encourage the use of appropriate teaching and learning techniques to ensure that all children participate and achieve in their lessons.
- All teachers (including pre-school, primary and secondary school teachers), school directors and other school support staff should receive training in inclusive education theory and practice, children's rights, inclusive teaching strategies, national and international legislation, the social model of disability and the twin-track approach.
- Considering the current de-centralisation reforms, training for school directors needs to be developed to include management for inclusive settings, co-operation with different stakeholders and advocacy for inclusion.
- Teachers need facilitated opportunities to share their experiences of inclusive education – "to see how others do it".
- Mentoring or buddying systems could be introduced to help teachers support and learn from each other.
- Inclusive Resource Centres should be available in every community to provide advice and support to teachers and parents with regard to including all children in regular classes.
- Specialists such as speech and language therapists, educational psychologists and occupational therapists already exist, but more need to be

trained (including training on how to support inclusive education) and made available to all schools and all children (not just where parents are able to pay for their services).
- Alternative/innovative ways of providing additional specialist support to regular teachers, and helping them with adapting and modifying their teaching practices to suit the needs of all learners, need to be considered.
- Information should be readily available about supportive disabled people's organisations (DPOs) and NGOs that can offer advice and practical help regarding children's rights, accessibility, supporting participation in learning, etc.
- Parents of children with disabilities should be encouraged to become involved in (both learn from and inform) the activities of DPOs and NGOs which support inclusive education.
- The potential valuable role of teaching assistants in schooling needs to be recognised through awareness raising. There needs to be commitment to ensure such assistants are appropriately trained and supported so that they can effectively support learners' inclusion.

Rights

There was generally awareness that children with disabilities have rights to education, with different respondents in different places demonstrating awareness of national laws and/or international conventions that mention education rights. There was also some understanding of how to complain or seek redress if rights are not upheld. In most locations, teachers reportedly cover aspects of child rights during some lessons/activities. In general, local NGOs were active in promoting disability rights, but not very aware of the UNCRPD alternative reporting process. However, they were interested in finding out more and engaging in the process.

Recommendations

- All education settings should teach learners about, and give them opportunities to discuss, their rights and responsibilities, including the right to education.
- There should be a range of information-sharing materials, guidelines and other advisory materials and assistance regarding children's rights and in particular, the right to education for children with disabilities should be available. These could include:
  - leaflets
  - websites
  - case study examples of inclusive practice
  - compiled/distributed list of DPOs and NGOs that support inclusive education
  - telephone helpline
  - community meetings, seminars and awareness-raising events
  - lawyers with knowledge and understanding of education law available to advise parents
  - radio and TV programmes promoting inclusive education and the rights of children with disabilities

  - advocacy events/workshops/meetings with local officials to highlight their 'duty' to inclusive education.
- Action research training should be offered to organisations and government departments working on inclusive education developments, to ensure that children's and parents' voices are heard and taken account of in planning.
- The theme of human/children's rights should be included in all teacher training programmes. This should cover advice on actions to take if rights are being violated.
- It is useful to develop a parent-friendly publication on the issues of children's rights and how to challenge rights violations in school/in the education system. This publication can be used by other groups such as school directors, teachers, and other community members.
- More NGOs/DPOs need to be informed about the possibility of their participation in the development of the Alternative Report, and about recommendations made by the UN Committee, so that NGOs/DPOs can monitor their implementation more efficiently.

Education transition

Challenges with children moving from pre-school to primary school were mentioned, with some pre-school/primary teachers indicating that they try to liaise with each other and parents to learn about/prepare the children. The issue of insufficient pre-schools was felt to mean that many children transition from home to primary school (not via pre-school) and this is often a process during which there is not much support. Parents and teachers felt there was a need for more 'school readiness' support for young children.

Moving to secondary school was also noted to be a difficult time, and some respondents spoke about the problems of young people transitioning from education into employment. Children expressed negative feelings about moves between schools (fears, concerns). Some respondents seemed to feel that transition challenges were only faced by learners with disabilities, not all learners. Overall there was acknowledgement that more could/should be done to facilitate smoother transition processes.

Recommendations

- Pre-schools, primary schools and secondary schools need to develop and run programmes that pro-actively address transition issues and support learners and their families during this time.
- Teachers and school directors need to receive training in how to plan and manage transition periods so that they better support learners who are leaving or joining their school.

3. Detailed findings for each location

3.1. Findings from Kyiv

Presence of learners with disabilities in school

In Kyiv, some parents of children with disabilities mentioned that their children attend Kyiv School #233, and one mother stated that she brings her child from another district as there is no inclusive school there.

During the Kyiv focus group discussions, some parents stated that some children with disabilities do not attend school because:

> "Even when the child is accepted to the school, parents do not like how teachers work with him, do not like attitude to their child."
>
> "It is only possible [for children with disabilities] to attend school if parents have friendly relations with the school administration."
>
> "Some school directors say their schools are overcrowded and suggest that parents of children with disabilities send their children to special schools."
>
> "Sometimes the local educational authority suggests a school, but the school is not ready" [to include children with disabilities].

Kyiv students mentioned that some students left school after the first grade, stating that "they probably moved to another school". They also noted that they know some children with disabilities in their community who do not attend school; one suggestion was that one child misses school because:

> "there are many children in her family and her father does not work".

Attitudes towards education and inclusion

Views on preferred types of education for children with disabilities

Although Kyiv teachers understood that inclusion means that children with disabilities should be educated in regular schools, some demonstrated beliefs that these children should study in special classrooms, separate from their peers because:

> "[regular teachers] are not specialists"
>
> "we are afraid we can harm these children".

Attitudes towards / understanding of inclusion

There was mostly a positive attitude towards inclusion among Kyiv parents (with and without children with disabilities), although they stated, "there will be always some parents who will be against it". All parents mentioned that every school should be inclusive.

Parents of children without disabilities mentioned the positive effect of inclusion on their children:

> "Our children become kinder and more humane when they study together with children with disabilities".

However, some Kyiv teachers mentioned that the attitude of parents of children without disabilities was a barrier to inclusion:

> "They get angry because teachers only pay attention to children with disabilities" (Kyiv School, teacher).

All Kyiv parents expressed an interest and willingness to study sign language and Braille to assist in their children's and other children's education.

Although there was unanimous support of inclusive education among Kyiv parents, some parents of children without disabilities felt the benefits of inclusive schools would happen if they only include children with one type of disability:

> "if there are children with different types of disabilities, it will be more difficult for teachers".

Teachers of Kyiv School #233 observed that changing teachers' attitudes is one of the main necessities for the development of inclusive education. At the same time, they also noted that the attitude of some parents of children with disabilities is a barrier, since they do not want to discuss the individual difficulties of their children.

There was evidence of positive attitudes among Kyiv children towards inclusive education. In their focus group discussions they mentioned that they all help each other "even when not asked to do it".

> "There are children who have problems with hearing, and I help them, and explain if they do not understand something".
>
> "We help them, sometimes they [children with hearing impairments] ask for help". (School #233, children)

Some children who did not have any children with disabilities in their classes mentioned that they were not very aware of the needs of children with disabilities, but noted that there may be children who need additional help, such as children living in orphanages and children with disabilities. They also mentioned that there may be parents and social services who help these children.

The directors of Kyiv schools/pre-schools and representatives of Kyiv's local educational authority complained about negative attitudes towards disability within society, for example, among teachers, parents of children with disabilities and other children. They also noted some parents' unrealistic expectations for their children:

> "Parents [of a child with disability] have very high expectations – they want too much". (local educational authority representative, Kyiv).

The unwillingness of school directors to embrace inclusion was seen as a barrier to inclusion by Kyiv teachers:

> "A mother with twins visited our school. One child has a typical development, but the other has cerebral palsy. The school would not enrol them; she was sure it was because of her child with disabilities". (Kyiv School, teacher)

Kyiv City pre-school and school directors and local education authority representatives demonstrated very different understandings of the concept of inclusive education. The majority had a wide understanding of inclusion

> "education focused on the child with special educational needs – children from eastern Ukraine (war conflict), refugees, orphans, children with disabilities, socially vulnerable children and gifted children"
>
> "children help each other to belong and learn together"
>
> "where all the surroundings are adapted to the needs of children"
>
> "some children need additional assistance".

However, other representatives understood inclusion from the medical viewpoint and/or confused it with special/segregated education:

> "children who are identified by specialists after medical tests as children who have developmental delays".
>
> "when children with one type of disability, like children with autism, are taught in one classroom with other autistic children"
>
> "We have concern that we can have children with epilepsy… we need doctors". (Local educational authority representative, Kyiv).

Access issues

Accessibility of school facilities

Representatives of local educational authorities from Kyiv mentioned the absence of ramps, inappropriate width of the school/classroom doors, unsuitable toilets, which are not adjusted to the needs of children using wheelchairs, as some of the main barriers to inclusive education.

Assistive devices

Focusing on inclusion of children with hearing impairments, teachers of Kyiv school #233 noted they needed additional software, such as "Alive Sound".

Practice issues

Inclusive practice

Some Kyiv teachers understood inclusion to be the creation of special conditions for children with disabilities to learn in, but other teachers argued that some children with disabilities do not require any special conditions and they include these children in their classrooms, though they may also receive additional lessons out of class.

Where children with disabilities are included in lessons and school life, for example in Kyiv primary-secondary school #233, teachers mentioned that they use differentiated and individualised approaches to education for children with special educational needs. Each child with special educational needs has an individual educational plan (IEP). The school has specialists who provide additional support, such as teaching assistants, speech therapists, 'defectologists', social pedagogues and psychologists.

However, there were different understandings of terms like IEP and individualised learning, between regular teachers and specialists.

Support staff

Kyiv teachers and parents argued that the inclusion of children with disabilities in regular schools should be supported by specialists: speech therapists, 'defectologists', and psychologists. They believed that teaching assistants should have some special education background/training.

Kyiv teachers, school directors and local educational authority representatives felt some of the biggest barriers to inclusion are the lack of specialists (teaching assistants, speech therapists, psychologists, etc), the large number of children in classes, and excessive paper work.

> "I have a boy with epilepsy in my classroom and I do not have anybody I can consult with". (Kyiv School, teacher)
>
> "I prepared my presentation until 5.30 am, so it would be interesting to all my children. Unfortunately, I did not use it since I was called out from my lesson because I had to prepare reports. I was so sad".

Local support for inclusion

Kyiv parents of children without disabilities showed little awareness of organisations that can support inclusion, such as the social services, and Vabos and Aurora NGOs. They mentioned that school directors do not always want to co-operate with these NGOs.

Teachers from Kyiv schools complained that they receive little additional support, though some of them mentioned support from the school psychologists and some availability of teaching and learning materials. Kyiv School #233 has good partnership relations with the local education authority, which provides interpretation support and consultation on the changes in the legislation.

Kyiv teachers noted that they receive professional support from the In-service Teacher Training Institute (Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University) and other NGOs such as Vabos, Aurora and the Step by Step Foundation. They also expressed the need for more support from the local special schools and psychological-medical-pedagogical consultations.

In addition to the financial needs, pre-school directors expressed the need for regular training for teachers and school directors.

> "It would be great to provide training for the directors of the pre-schools and primary schools once a month for 1.5 hours, based in the schools" (Kyiv school director).

At the same time primary school and pre-school directors were not aware of the existing local training programmes and did not know where to access funding for this training.

Rights issues

Most Kyiv parents knew something about their children's rights. When asked, they mentioned only the Constitution of Ukraine. However, they gave examples that showed understanding of when their children's rights have been violated (e.g. negative attitudes of teachers, lack of accessible textbooks) and their own actions to address this (mainly letters of complaint to the local education authority, Kyiv city council, and the Ministry of Education).

Kyiv teachers stated that they teach about children's rights during lessons and extra-curricular activities, and they also respond to students' questions when the students see 'different' children in school at the beginning of the school year. They also discuss these issues on 3 December (International Day of Persons with Disabilities).

Kyiv school children (School #233) said they know about their rights from different sources: teachers, parents, other family members, mass-media (television, Internet).

Although principals of Kyiv pre-schools acknowledged that they knew about the UNCRPD, almost all of them had not read it and did not know the content of Article 24. However, they were interested to hear more about it and discover how they can use it. They were more aware of Ukraine's main legislative documents, which include information about children's right to education (e.g. the Constitution of Ukraine, the main education laws and recent legislative documents on inclusive education). They also mentioned that they used these in their work.

Education transition

Some Kyiv primary school teachers voiced big concerns about the transition to secondary school. They argued that they have more practical experience of inclusion at primary school level, and have concerns about secondary schools where many teachers teach single subject areas and are not trained in inclusion.

However, the responses from Kyiv parents of children with disabilities were different. Some stated that their children did not have any problems during transition, and if problems occurred then the parents managed them. Other parents mentioned that they would like to have more information about the school to which their child will transition. They noted that an open day was not long enough to gain adequate information. They also mentioned that they would like to have 'School Readiness' programmes run by the schools.

Kyiv teachers noted that they should co-operate and liaise more with early childhood development provision in their area – for example, pre-school #602, located in the same community as primary school #233 – which also include children with hearing impairments and have relevant hearing specialists, who may be able to help the primary school teachers. They also noted that additional support is provided only if parents ask about it.

Almost all Kyiv children mentioned they had rather negative emotions before moving from pre-school to primary school and during the first days at school, for example, feelings of sadness and anxiety.

> "When I left pre-school, I cried very much and I do not know why".
>
> "I had friends in the pre-school and I did not want to move to the primary school".
>
> "I did not want to move to the primary school – we used to have a fish-bowl in our pre-school and I liked to watch it".
>
> "I did not like my first day in the primary school – I was told to sit close to M and he was badly behaved".

Although Kyiv pre-school and school directors demonstrated that they understood that during transition children with disabilities need additional support, at times this was absent.

3.2. Findings from Luhansk

Presence of learners with disabilities in school

There was a common belief among parents of children with and without disabilities that all children of school age attend school. Parents did not know about any children who were not enrolled in schools:

> "I think nowadays all children attend the schools and pre-schools." (Parent, Lysychansk city, Luhansk oblast).

Attitudes towards education and inclusion

Views on preferred types of education for children with disabilities

Some of the representatives of local educational authorities stated that there was no need for inclusive education since there were three boarding schools in Severodonetsk city.

Attitudes towards inclusion

Parents of children with disabilities mentioned positive attitudes towards their children in school, and observed their children's willingness to go to school:

> "My child with autism studies at school. Everyone gets used to my child and there is good attitude towards him". (Mother of a child with autism).

> "I have a child with Down's syndrome who studies in the 3rd grade. Everyone treats him well, he likes to be in school, he socialises". (Mother of a child with Down's syndrome).

At the same time, teachers and representatives of the local educational authorities stated that negative attitudes of parents of children without disabilities were a main obstacle to inclusive education:

> "Some parents [of children without disabilities] say such children [with disabilities] should be in special schools". (Primary school teacher, school #14, Lysychansk).

> "There are situations when parents of children without disabilities are against inclusive classrooms. They are afraid their children will not receive adequate attention from the teacher". (Representative of the local educational authority, Severodonetsk).

Teachers cited the general attitudes in society as another obstacle to inclusive education, and said this should be changed:

> "Public opinion… not all of the people are ready to share the ideas of inclusion… there is a need for systemic work". (Primary school teacher, school #14, Lysychansk).

Some representatives of local educational authorities mentioned that inclusive education was only for children with disabilities, while others had a wider understanding of it as an educational approach to support different categories of vulnerable children (children with disabilities, children of internally displaced families, children from low-income families).

Access issues

Accessibility of school facilities

Teachers stated that lack of school accessibility was one of the main barriers for inclusive education:

> "I know a girl with cerebral palsy, who moves in a wheelchair; she physically cannot enter the school because we do not have ramps". (Primary school teacher, Lysychansk city, Luhansk oblast).

> "It is necessary to organise transportation for children with physical disabilities to school – we do not have it". (Primary school teacher, Lysychansk city, Luhansk oblast).

At the same time, school directors in Severodonetsk city mentioned some work has being done to improve the accessibility of their school buildings:

> "Next year a child with cerebral palsy will attend my school. We are preparing for it – preparing teachers, building the ramps". (School director, Severodonetsk city, Luhansk oblast).

A similar situation was described by the representatives of local education authorities in Severodonetsk city:

> "There is a girl with cerebral palsy in the school. So, we have managed to build ramps, this year we will finish adjusting the toilet. We also arranged a position of teacher-rehabilitator in the school".

Practice issues

Inclusive practice

Although the majority of children with disabilities receive 'individual education' (home schooling), responses from teachers in school #14, Lysychansk city, demonstrated the first successful examples of involving children with disabilities in their school. They said children with disabilities became more socialised, there was increased understanding and support among the students, and availability of additional specialists (special teacher, speech therapist, educational psychologist).

> "All students help each other and communicate with each other".
>
> "Teachers can see the students with disabilities as equal members of the school community". (Primary teachers, school #14, Lysychansk city, Luhansk oblast).

Parents of children with disabilities also observed the positive results of inclusive education:

> "I have a child with developmental delays. The school psychologist cannot identify the reason for it. We were recommended individual education, but I did not agree. My child was enrolled in the inclusive classroom and I can see the positive result of this experience – my child started to talk, his self-esteem was raised". (Mother of a child with developmental delays).

Primary school teachers in school #14, Lysychansk city, mentioned that they have teacher assistants, who "according to his responsibilities" provide support to the teacher and to children. They also noted that because one teacher assistant works for two classrooms, they always need to work more, "even though they are not paid for it".

There were quite different responses from primary teachers from other schools, where there were no 'official' inclusive classrooms. They mentioned that the majority of children with disabilities are at individual education (home schooling) or they are included in the mainstream school, but without adequate support (what they referred to as 'spontaneous inclusion').

Support staff

School directors in Severodonetsk city noted that they were used to the lack of funding so they did not even ask for additional specialists. Some of the school directors mentioned that they had one teacher assistant position for two classrooms (as outlined in legislation).

Although representatives of local education authorities noted there was not much need for inclusion due to the work of three special boarding school in the city, they also described some examples of the inclusive schools and the additional specialists there:

> "We have three children with mental retardations in one school. This school has a teacher assistant, special teacher (4 hours), speech therapist (2 hours), and school psychologist (2

hours). Moreover, we can see positive results there – when children entered the school for the first time they didn't speak. Now they speak and can ask questions."

"… we have managed to arrange the position of teacher-rehabilitator in the school, where the girl with cerebral palsy studies".

At the same time, the representatives of local educational authorities complained that they lacked funding, including funding for specialists.

Teaching and learning materials

Many teachers complained that they do not have appropriate teaching materials such as textbooks adapted to children with different disabilities, didactic materials ("everything teachers should make by themselves"), and equipment to print and copy methodological materials. As one of the strategies, they suggested an exchange of textbooks between the mainstream and special schools.

Local support for inclusion

Parents of children with disabilities were not aware about other organisations that can provide support to their children. They considered financial support and specialists in schools as the most important steps in implementing inclusive education:

"School needs speech therapists, special teachers". (Parent of a child with disability, Lysychansk).

Teachers at school #14 in Lysychansk mentioned that they feel supported by their school administration, local educational authority, and city Psychological-Medical-Pedagogical Consultation (PMPC), although they needed more information and methodological support (experience exchange, training, etc.) Teachers also emphasised the role of parents' support in their children's education – they wished parents would listen to them more and implement their recommendations.

Despite limited funding, school directors in Severodonetsk said that they try to establish partnership relations with other organisations – community centre, local clinic, etc. They admitted that lack of intersectoral co-operation is one of the main obstacles to inclusive education. They felt that the PMPC could be the main agency for co-ordinating the work of inclusive schools and providing training for teachers.

Representatives of the local education authorities also mentioned social services as an agency they cooperate with.

Rights issues

Teachers said that they inform children about their rights not only during lessons – e.g. during Health Education, Children's Rights and Duties, where

they also mention about the rights of children with disabilities – but also during other times (e.g. breaks, other activities).

> "I heard about children's rights from my teacher". (Primary school student, school #14, Lysychansk).

Although parents of children with and without disabilities did not seem to know much about the rights of their children, they named the right to join education (inclusive education) and expressed their intention to familiarise themselves more with the issue of children's rights.

School directors in Severodonetsk city commented that they mainly use the Law on Education, Constitution of Ukraine and other legislative documents in their work; these require them to uphold children's rights, including their right to education. Although they had heard about the UNCRPD, they believed that children with disabilities studied in their schools before the Convention was adopted in Ukraine, so they did not consider the UNCRPD to be the main document they should use in their work.

The majority of representatives of local education authorities in Severodonetsk mentioned that they knew about the UNCRPD, but again in their work they used mainly the national legislation. However, they use UNCRPD in developing their action plans.

Education transition

Parents of children with and without disabilities emphasised the role of teachers during transitional periods. The majority of parents mentioned that their children did not have any additional support during transition, but some described support from a teacher and all emphasised the importance of such a support:

> "Our teacher even comes earlier to school to work additionally with my child".
>
> "Such a support is much needed".
>
> "Everything depends on a teacher of the 1st grade, where our children enter".

Primary school students described how they were wary of entering the school for the first time:

> "I was wary so much and stopped being wary only when I finished the first grade".
>
> "I was afraid the teacher would shout at me when I do something wrong".

In order to provide smoother transition from primary to basic school, teachers from school #14 in Lysychansk suggested that teacher assistant could move together with children with disabilities.

Respondents mentioned activities during the transition period from the primary to basic schools, where primary teachers and school psychologists develop recommendations to the new class teacher according to each child.

Early intervention was emphasised by primary school teachers as one of the important factors for providing support and transition for children with disabilities at early ages.

Teachers potentially saw transition as just an issue related to learners with disabilities, and felt transition from pre-school to primary school was not an issue yet because there is no inclusion in pre-schools yet.

> "We will have inclusive pre-school classroom only at 2016/2017 school year, so then we will see how to provide transition between pre-school and primary school." (Primary school teacher, school #14, Lysychansk).

School directors in Severodonetsk also associated transition only with the children with disabilities and noted they had only just started to implement inclusive education, so they did not consider transition to be a priority for the school yet. They mostly saw PMPC as the main agency to provide smooth transition for children.

During discussions about inclusive education, one of the representatives of local education authorities in Severodonetsk said that the work with parents before the school year was one of the conditions for successful inclusion. They also expressed their concern about the transition of students with disabilities into employment.

3.3. Findings from Lviv

Presence of children with disabilities in school

Parents of children with disabilities in Lviv who participated in the focus groups stated their children attended school, although they knew other children with disabilities who did not.

> "A girl has some psychological disabilities and her parents do not want to put her in the school…[or] even [in] the 'individual education' (home schooling). They do not want themselves or the girl to be criticised or censured". (Parent of a child with disabilities, Lviv).

Primary class students at of one of the Lviv schools also mentioned they knew children who did not attend school, for various reasons:

> "He does not attend, because he has autism".
>
> "[He does not attend] because of cerebral palsy".
>
> "We also have such children who do not attend school because they cannot walk or they are afraid [of getting bad marks]".

Representatives of local education authorities stated that all children in Lviv oblast are involved in education, but responses from parents of children with disabilities and children themselves indicated otherwise:

> "I know a boy who does not attend school – I used to go with him to pre-school. He has cerebral palsy. Sometimes I visit him at home." (Primary student, Lviv).

Responses from school directors and teachers from rural schools in Lviv oblast also demonstrated that children with disabilities in rural areas are mostly educated at home or not at all.

> "We have a boy with cerebral palsy… he did not go to school, but he liked to go to church… [and] had many friends". (Primary school teacher, Lviv oblast).

Some respondents indicated that children with disabilities may start attending school later than their peers:

> "We had a child who first came to the school when he was nine years old. He had cerebral palsy". (Primary school teacher, Lviv oblast).

Attitudes towards education and inclusion

Views on preferred types of education for children with disabilities

Respondents had various views about the best forms of education for children with disabilities.

Some school directors had negative opinions about having children with disabilities in their regular school, and there was a tendency to favour special schools or home schooling:

> "We used to have a child with hearing impairments. Mother did not pay adequate attention [to the child] and it would be better for [such] a child to go to the special school or at least to be educated at home. In 9th grade, the child totally 'closed' and just spent time at the lessons. Other children did not communicate with her because it was difficult to communicate with her."

Representatives of Lviv NGOs (mainly organisations of parents of children with disabilities) also expressed positive opinions about boarding schools for some children, such as those who are blind, deaf or from socially vulnerable groups. They expressed concerns that regular schools could not provide all the necessary services for children with disabilities and concerns about organising after-school time for children with disabilities:

> "Regular schools should provide after-school groups with the necessary social and pedagogical support."
>
> "Our child is in a school for three hours, but what should he do after this time?"
>
> "A child needs to visit specialists who are in different places, but we want them to be at one place."
>
> "It is necessary to organise the day groups (after-school groups) for children with severe disabilities, where they can have play time and a possibility to develop their self-help skills".

Primary school teachers from rural schools indicated a preference for home schooling of children with disabilities.

> "We have children with cerebral palsy, children with hearing impairments, children with the developmental delays – all of them study through the individual form of education".
>
> "We used to have such a girl – she was smart, but we had to put her in individual education (home schooling) because she made different sounds and bothered other children".

Rural school directors in Lviv oblast noted they have the biggest number of children with disabilities who study through 'individual education' in the country.

Some of the responses indicated that parents of children with disabilities did not always agree with the education approaches suggested by education personnel:

> "We used to have a child who cried during lessons, walked [around] in the classroom… but her mother did not agree to put her in individual form of education [home schooling]… and she was right". (Primary school teacher, Lviv oblast).
>
> "We had a child who could hardly speak. We went to her grandmother… we saw the child was sitting on a table because she did not know how to sit in a chair. We organised a consultation by a psychologist and psychotherapist and they recommended a special school, but the parents did not agree." (School director, Lviv oblast).
>
> "We have children with mental retardations in our school. Their parents do not want to put their children in the boarding school, and these children just sit in the classroom and do nothing". (Primary school teacher, Lviv oblast)

Attitudes towards / understanding of inclusion

Parents of children without disabilities in general expressed a positive attitude. However, during further discussion they complained that their children had to help children with disabilities in the classroom and felt their children consequently could not work efficiently. They also emphasised safety of their own children as a main concern and in general wanted to see children with disabilities (mainly children with hearing impairments) in a special classroom.

> "I am not against their joint education, but not taking the time of my child." (Mother of child without disabilities).

Some parents of children with disabilities mentioned the attitude of other parents/children as the main obstacle for inclusion:

> "Some parents even took away their children [without disabilities] from the school, when they heard children with disabilities would study in the same classroom." (Mother of child with disabilities).

Others noted a positive climate in their classroom:

> "In our classroom everyone treats my child well". (Mother of child with disabilities).

There were rather negative attitudes to inclusion among teachers from rural schools. They saw home schooling as the main option for children with disabilities, despite sharing some positive cases of inclusion:

> "In general, I am against inclusion".
>
> "It is very difficult to work when there are 33 children in the classroom and a child with disabilities…"

Teachers also mentioned children's attitudes, describing how they changed from negative to positive when they saw children with disabilities more often:

> "When children never see other children with disabilities, they will not understand them. When they can see them, their attitude will change". (Primary teacher, Lviv oblast).

The teacher's role in developing positive attitudes among children was emphasised by parents of children with disabilities:

> "Sometimes my son [a child with autism] wants to go to school, sometimes he does not. Children in general treat him rather well…but they do not feel comfortable to ask the teacher some questions about my son. They are afraid to be incorrect. The teacher should encourage such a discussion". (Mother of a child with autism, Lviv).

In general, the teacher's role in promoting or hindering inclusion was emphasised:

> "…a fear, lack of knowledge, lack of motivation of the teachers. For them it is an extra problem." (Representative of non-governmental organization, Lviv city).
>
> "We have problems with the teachers…we used to have a child with severe cerebral palsy…not every teacher could work with that child." (School director, Lviv oblast).
>
> "Good teachers immigrated to Italy to take care on elderly people…to make money… we have a lack of good teachers." (School director, Lviv oblast).

Both representatives of non-governmental organisations and local education authorities stated the need to change the attitude of society in general. One respondent gave the example of a young man with disabilities who was expelled from a café in Lviv, a situation that raised a lot of criticism in society. A powerful way to change attitudes was noted to be sharing success stories about children with disabilities:

> "We have a girl with cerebral palsy who studies at the 4th year of University to be a lawyer… she overcomes the barriers in souls of other people by her own example". (Representative of district educational department, Lviv city).

Children with disabilities mentioned positive attitudes among classmates, who, for instance, brought them cakes from the school cafeteria, helped them make new friends in school, and spent time together during the breaks:

> "I live in one building with a boy who is my classmate. We started to be friends now". (Female primary student with disabilities, Lviv school).
>
> "I used to be in England – there is such an attitude there, so everyone has to go to school. People here do not understand it. I like our school because it is like in England – people have good attitude". (Female primary student with disabilities, Lviv school).
>
> "There was one boy in my classroom who bullied me…other boys protected me and he stopped. I feel very cool". (Primary student, Lviv city).

Access issues

Accessibility of school facilities

The majority of teachers mentioned physical barriers as one of the biggest obstacles for inclusion:

> "School premises are not adapted". (Primary school teachers, Lviv oblast and Lviv city).
>
> "…no adapted toilets." (Primary school teacher Lviv city).

Parents of children with disabilities also complained that the school was not accessible for children using wheelchairs – one mother of a child with disabilities had to carry him to school:

> "It is good he is in a primary school and his weight is 23 kilos, but what will it be like in the future? He is smart, he knows maths very well, but he cannot walk" (Mother of a child with cerebral palsy, Lviv oblast).

School directors of some rural schools stated they have yellow markings to assist children with visual impairments in their schools, while some big rural schools said they have ramps.

Representatives of district local education authorities explained that district strategies for the development of education have chapters focusing on the development of inclusive education (of inclusive and special education and early intervention). These show specific budgets, but the representatives expressed concerns about whether the budgets exist in reality. In general, local educational authorities mentioned gradually overcoming physical barriers and making some progress in improving school accessibility, though details were not given:

> "Recently we made two schools accessible". (Representative of local educational authority, Lviv oblast).

Assistive devices

Parents of children with disabilities and representatives of non-governmental organisations in Lviv complained that assistive devices, which should be provided by the social services, were very often not available to them. These devices included communicators (tablet computers enabling communication by selecting images), wheelchairs, orthopaedic shoes, computers, etc.

One mother mentioned that social services have to compensate for unavailable assistive devices by providing financial support. In many cases, parents use this financial support for rehabilitation services for their children, but the child does not receive any assistive devices.

Representatives of local education authorities mentioned that they provide hearing devices to schools, which have enrolled children with hearing impairments.

Practice issues

Inclusive practice

Teachers often expressed disbelief that children with disabilities could study in a regular classroom with non-disabled peers:

> "… it is unreal to have 4-5 children with disabilities in one classroom". (Primary school teacher, Lviv oblast).
>
> "I cannot imagine how to sit them [children with disabilities] in one classroom with other children." (Primary school teacher, Lviv oblast).

However, some teachers shared examples of parents who did not agree with home schooling their children, and whose children subsequently showed positive results from being included in regular classrooms:

> "Some of the parents do not agree with it [education at home] and they are right! [One] child learned to read, to write… Maths – not so much, but I allowed him to use a calculator. Now the child is in the 6th grade. He does not study well, but his behaviour is good." (Primary school teacher, Lviv oblast).

A quite different description of inclusive education was demonstrated by primary teachers at Lviv school #95, who stated that children with disabilities who live in their community attend their school and the school meets the children's needs. These teachers mentioned: "availability of teacher assistants", "additional funding for specialists (speech therapist, psychologist) and equipment", "lower number of children in a classroom", and "participation in different projects".

Respondents indicated that teachers at this school make adaptations and modifications to respond to the different needs of children:

> "I have three left-handed children, so I think how to sit them so they can work comfortably". (Primary school teacher, school #95, Lviv city).

> "I could not write down the tasks and my teacher told me I could speak [instead]." (Primary student, school #95, Lviv city).

It was also emphasised that all teachers working in these inclusive classrooms had training in special education, which they considered a key pre-condition for successful inclusion.

Some parents of children with disabilities mentioned they participated in the development of IEPs for their children, while others said they only received the IEP for signing. Some parents had not heard about IEPs at all. One mother complained that because of the large number of children (31 children in the 2nd grade), her son cannot hear the homework tasks given by the teacher and consequently does not do the work and gets bad marks:

> "…and it is not because he could not do it [homework task], but because he did not even know about it". (Mother of internally displaced child).

Some parents complained that very often teacher assistants are not ready to work with their children.

> "The teacher assistant does not always understand the needs of my child… she [my child] is very sensitive emotionally…. One time my child wrote words and didn't divide them. The teacher assistant underlined all the words with red pen. Now the child does not want to write at all." (Mother of a child with disabilities).

Support staff

Rural school directors noted that having support staff (teacher assistants, school psychologists, special education teachers, nurses) will be critical for inclusive education. Because some of the rural schools already have children with disabilities, local education authorities managed to introduce five teacher

assistant positions into these schools. However, the teacher assistants subsequently quit their jobs. Local educational authorities emphasised the need to train such teacher assistants.

Teachers at Lviv school #95 noted that they have teacher assistants in each classroom, where children with disabilities are present. They complained that having one teacher assistant for every two classrooms (according to legislation) is not enough. They mentioned that a Statement on teacher assistants should be revised to reflect real practice. Other specialists in Lviv school #95 include speech therapists and psychologists.

Since it is the local (district level) administration, which makes decisions about funding additional staff, the representatives of local education authorities described their role to raise this issue and to explain the importance of additional staff for inclusive schools. They also noted that district strategies include a section on inclusive education with an appropriate budget, but they doubted whether this money would actually be available. Representatives of local education authorities expressed concern that the current administrative reform could have a negative impact on inclusive education since inclusive education will be not a priority for local communities within the limited budgets.

Teaching and learning materials

Teachers at rural schools in Lviv oblast expressed a need for special textbooks for children with disabilities. They also mentioned the complexity of the curriculum, but did not discuss if/how they adapt/differentiate the curriculum:

> "Existing curriculum is too difficult even for a child without disabilities because it is focused on a 'strong' student."

Lack of textbooks was a common problem emphasised by parents of children without disabilities.

Local support for inclusion

Teachers at Lviv school #95 mentioned that they had received training support through the Canadian-Ukrainian project "Inclusive education in Ukraine" and that they continue to receive professional support through seminars and exchange of experience. Through co-operation with the neighbouring "Dzherelo" rehabilitation centre they receive practical support from specialists on working with children with disabilities.

Rural school directors emphasised the support provided by the local church. Church initiatives meant that people from the local community helped to purchase a computer for a child with disabilities, as her mother could not afford it. Another church organised a Charitable Foundation managed by a mother of a child with autism. Through fundraising they bulit a swimming pool, which can be visited by all children in the community.

The research responses indicated very little evidence of inter-sectoral co-operation and a lack of specialists in different sectors:

> "… social service on the issues of children and youth, non-governmental organisations, health protection… they respond only when you call them. Many of them consider disability as a health protection issue only." (Representative of local educational authority, Lviv).

Parents of children with disabilities often need support, including financial support to pay for rehabilitation services and assistive devices. This should be provided by the social services, but in reality parents rarely receive such support.

> "Rehabilitation for my son costs about 7-12 thousand UAH, and doctors say if we will work with him, he will be able to walk. This is what I need the most!" (Mother of a child with cerebral palsy, Lviv).

Rights issues

Representatives of Lviv NGOs (mainly parents of children with disabilities) knew about the main international instruments (UN Convention on the Rights of Children, UNCRC, UNCRPD), national instruments (main laws and legislative documents), and specialised documents (like the Statement on Teacher Consultant developed by the organisation of specialists working with blind persons). They actively use these documents in their work: lobbying for the interests of their children, providing consultations to other parents, participating in radio programmes, and participating in discussion on national legislation. To find out how to use these documents more efficiently, NGO representatives participate in different conferences, seminars, and organise different activities for children.

However, although all NGO representatives knew about the UNCRPD, they had limited knowledge about the possibility of participating in the development of the Alternative Report.

Representatives of local education authorities stated they have a children's organisation at the City Council and often children participate in meetings of the City Council and express their views. The education authority representatives expressed the idea of including children with disabilities in this organisation in future.

These representatives also spoke about children's organisations at school level – Students' Councils (a child with cerebral palsy was a chair of one); the School of Junior Volunteers – and mentioned that such organisations help to hear children's voices.

Although all school directors in Lviv stated they were familiar with the main international and national documents on the right of children to education, they also said the existing legislation and practice allow situations were children are recommended to special schools:

> "The right to education is declared by the Law on Education. According to the law, the school has to enrol every child based on the letter of interest of parents and medical certificate of a child. However, the psychologist can write that a child needs correction of psychological/cognitive development, and then the commission recommends the certain form of education". (School director, Lviv oblast).

Teachers actively use the UNCRC and UNCRPD in their work with children – training activities, lessons on Health Education and other activities. While older children can read the Convention, teachers organise activities that are more practical for younger students. For example, they organised a trip to "Dzherelo" rehabilitation centre where they conducted different joint activities and used the experience to talk about children with disabilities:

> "[We tell them] these are the same children as you are. If they cannot do something, it does not mean they do not need feelings and contacts". (Primary teacher, Lviv school).

Education transition

There was a big concern among parents of children with disabilities regarding their children's transition to secondary school and further employment. Parents were afraid their children would experience difficulties moving to different classrooms with different subject teachers and expressed the wish that their children could stay in one classroom as much as possible and have the teachers visit them.

Parents appreciated the support their children received before entering primary school, which was provided by the non-governmental organisation "Piznayko" from the local community.

Representatives of local education authorities stated that the transition from primary to basic school is supported by the school psychologist and speech therapist, but the problem is that not every school has such specialists. They emphasised the role of the school psychologist during the period of choosing a future profession. Again, they expressed concern with the administrative reform, which will mean some children have to move to another school, which might be located in another community.

3.4. Findings from Odesa

Presence of children with disabilities in school

Parents of children with disabilities at Bilyaiv School (Odesa oblast) stated their children attend the school, very often because of the support from the school director:

> "My grandson studied at a special school, but I wanted to put him in a regular school. The doctors were against of it… I met with Alla G. (director of the school) and she helped me to arrange the necessary documents". (Grandfather of a boy with cerebral palsy, Bilyaiv School #2, Odesa oblast).

However, they also mentioned some children who are in 'individual education' (home schooling).

Attitudes towards education and inclusion

Views on preferred types of education for children with disabilities

Some teachers of Odesa city, other district centers and villages of Odesa oblast were not in favour of inclusive education:

> "I am against inclusion. These children should study at the special schools. The majority of parents of children without disabilities are against inclusion too. And I support them…"

There was evidence from teachers that parents often preferred their children to be enrolled in mainstream classes, even if teachers were not so sure:

> "There is a child with disabilities in our classroom. Initially she was in 'individual education'), but her parents wanted her to be enrolled in the mainstream school. There is no teacher assistant. It is better to work with such children individually, even in a school".

> "A mother approached the teacher and told her that she did not need her child to get good marks… [just] let her communicate with other children. Now the girl is well adapted and her behaviour is good".

Attitudes towards / understanding of inclusive education

There were many responses from parents of children with disabilities and from children themselves in Bilyaiv School #2 Odesa oblast indicating positive attitudes towards inclusive education and children with disabilities. Parents noted that children here were educated how to be tolerant and to respect other children, starting from the first grade. They also emphasised that education of children with disabilities in the school had a positive impact, not only on their social development, but also on other spheres of their development:

> "My older daughter had language difficulties… When she entered the school, she spoke very badly… She was moved to the special school. Later my younger daughter was directed there, too. When we saw there was no progress in their language development, we moved them to the mainstream school. Now, the younger daughter speaks well and has only the best marks. Our older daughter also started to speak better".

> "We have a boy who walks with crutches, and a girl L., who has language difficulties. Everybody treats them well – we don't have situations where someone tells them: 'You are walking badly', or 'You are not speaking well'. Nobody makes fun of somebody's disabilities".

> "My daughter [child without disabilities] tells me: 'You know, Mom, children with disabilities (she doesn't say 'invalids') are much kinder than others".

However, one mother shared an example from a special school which showed that children at the school were scared of the negative attitudes they thought they might meet in the mainstream school:

> "I visited my friend who worked in the special school and heard the conversation of two boys… Some of them were angry with another and said he would complain to his parents and they [parents] would move him to the regular school. Another boy responded: 'You will not be like others there. Here we are all the same, and you will be different there".

NGO representatives in Odesa emphasised that dissemination of success stories helps develop positive attitudes in the society.

There were many responses indicating positive attitudes to inclusion, and towards children with disabilities, among other children. Primary school students said:

> "We never laugh at children with disabilities."
>
> "The physical disabilities of the children do not make any difference to our friendship."
>
> "We help them to play new games, to do homework."
>
> "When D. falls down we help him to raise himself…I shared apples with him."

Most local education authority representatives expressed their positive attitude towards inclusion:

> "We are happy to have these children in our schools" (local educational authority in Chernomorsk city)

However, they also mentioned:

> "Not all of the parents want their children to study with children with disabilities."

That idea was also expressed by the deputy school directors of Odesa oblast:

> "Parents of children without disabilities do not want their children to study together with children with disabilities – they are afraid they [children with disabilities] would teach their children the bad habits."

Quite different responses came from vice-school directors in Odesa oblast, who mainly expressed their negative attitudes towards inclusion:

> "We cannot see any advantages of inclusive education, although we pay so much time to these children [children with disabilities]".

In addition, they mentioned negative attitude to inclusion within society as one of the main barriers for inclusion.

Despite numerous difficulties, (lack of funding, inaccessible school buildings, lack of adjusted equipment) teachers saw many advantages of inclusive education for children with and without disabilities:

> "Children with disabilities learn to live in the society, to communicate with their peers, and other children became more tolerant and sensitive. They [children without disabilities] can see children with disabilities are the same as they are, they are talented as well."
>
> "Another advantage is involving parents in co-operation." (Teachers of Bilyaiv School #2, Odesa oblast).

Teachers of Odesa city, other district centres and villages of Odesa oblast often mentioned inclusion in the schools as being associated only with ramps and adjusted toilets, bot as being about providing other necessary support like teacher assistants or teacher training.

One university graduate had left the school because she felt she could not work in the inclusive classroom because she was not ready:

> "I changed the school… I was not ready and I felt I did not have any moral right to work with those children [children with disabilities]." (Graduate from University, Odesa).

Deputy school directors in Odesa oblast expressed an understanding of inclusive education as being only the provision of additional teachers and other adapted conditions ("special table", "accessible school entrance", "special room for rest", etc.):

> "Inclusive educational approach is needed only for children with disabilities, other children do not need it."

A competent level of understanding of inclusive education was demonstrated by the representatives of the local education authorities in Odesa oblast:

> "[it means that] all children learn together despite whether they have disabilities or not"
>
> "… inclusive education requires providing special conditions for joint education for all children".

However, they also mentioned that inclusive education had not become systemic – due to the lack of funding it is not always possible to reconstruct school buildings, or provide funding for teachers' assistants, additional specialists, etc.

Access issues

Accessibility of school facilities

Teachers at Bilyaiv School #2 considered the lack of physical access at their school to be one of the main barriers to inclusive education:

> "The school building is not adjusted to children with disabilities – the doors are too narrow, and the entrance to the school is not adjusted either."

Representatives of local education authorities in Odesa oblast expressed their concern that it is easier to provide access to one-floor school buildings, usually located in villages and small towns, therefore such schools can become the special ones due to the big number of children with disabilities.

In some cities (e.g. Chernomorsk), there are regional programmes where architectural accessibility is planned together with other actions, necessary for successful inclusion (funding of speech therapists, teacher assistants, etc.).

Assistive devices

Teachers at Bilyaiv School #2 complained that there was no adjusted equipment for children with physical disabilities, in particular children with cerebral palsy.

Practice issues

Inclusive practice

There were different opinions among the teachers of Bilyaiv School #2 regarding the inclusiveness of their school. Some teachers were quite sure their school was inclusive because: their teachers had received the necessary training (at the Odesa oblast In-service Teacher Training Institute); teachers were ready to work with children with hearing impairments; and children with language difficulties were already in their classrooms. However, they also mentioned that the conditions were not accessible for enrolling children who use wheelchairs.

Some teachers' responses mentioned adjustments that have happened in the school (teacher assistants, ramps, adjusted toilets) as well as the support from teachers and classmates:

> "…since there is an adjusted toilet only on the first floor, teachers and/or elder children carry a child who is in a wheelchair in their hands at the second floor".
>
> "When a child with disabilities entered my first grade, I had 'informational shock'… Now she is the most cheerful girl in the classroom".

Support staff

Teachers at Bilyaiv School #2 stated they had one teacher-consultant in their school. There were also teacher assistants and a school psychologist.

Lack of speech therapists in schools was cited as one of the barriers to inclusive education, both by the teachers of Bilyaiv School #2 and other teachers from Odesa, other district centres, and villages. Rural school teachers also complained that they did not have school psychologists. Education authority representatives shared similar opinions:

> "Although there are cases in Odesa oblast of introducing additional positions of teacher assistants and other specialists (e.g. speech therapist), because of the lack of funding, it is still one of the problems in implementing inclusive education." (representatives of the local education authorities, Odesa oblast).

When necessary/possible, additional support is provided to children with disabilities by support staff: teacher assistants, school psychologists:

> "I am a teacher assistant, working in a basic school with a girl with language difficulties. I repeat to her what she did not understand. She also can copy the information from my note book, when she does not have enough time to copy information from the blackboard".
>
> "D [boy with cerebral palsy] has a separate schedule, but he visited all lessons."

Teachers from various schools testified that there were teacher assistants in their schools. However, very often those teacher assistants were assigned to individual children, which created a problem in upper grades:

> "The teacher assistant sits near by her [student with disabilities], accompanies her during the school breaks – and it is 7th grade already! The girl 'closed', saying 'I am not like others'

and started to give up going to school. Her mother asked the school administration to let the teacher assistant not to be in the classroom. The girl was stressed. Before the teacher assistant was assigned to the classroom, other students treated her well, but afterwards their attitudes changed."

There was common agreement among the teachers that all support staff should be trained on inclusive education.

Teaching and learning materials

Representatives of local education authorities mentioned lack of textbooks as one of the main barriers to inclusive education.

Local support for inclusion

Parents of children with and without disabilities at Bilyaiv School #2 (Odesa oblast) stated the biggest support for inclusive education is provided by the school director, teachers and parents themselves. They mentioned that the local government provide almost no assistance, just formal approval of parents and schools' initiatives. They also noted some support from social services (providing shoes, etc.) and NGOs:

> "Youth NGO 'Self-help' conducts special fundraising for people with disabilities, and the local government provides the formal permission for it." (Parent of child with disabilities, Bilyaiv district, Odesa oblast).

Teachers at Bilyaiv School #2 appreciated the support their school director provides which encouraged them to participate in an international project implemented by Odesa oblast In-service Teacher Training Institute:

> "Thanks to that project we participated in on-line version: saw inclusive schools in Moldova and Belarus, received methodological materials."
>
> "Our school director provided a lot of support."
>
> "I often use information provided at Odesa oblast ITTI [In-service Teacher Training Institute]."
>
> "We communicated with [three] other schools in Odesa oblast. We can see they have ramps and other equipment, which we do not have. So, we can see where to move."
>
> "It's good we have methodological support, but we need more to exchange the practical methods of working with children with disabilities… co-operation with similar school." (Teachers of Bilyaiv School #2, Odesa oblast).

The big need for methodological support of teachers working in the inclusive classrooms was highlighted. Although Odesa oblast In-service Teacher Training Institute provides training, not all teachers can attend. They also need to see practical examples and exchange their experiences.

Representatives of local education authorities in Odesa oblast did not see intersectoral cooperation as one of the resources for local support:

> "Intersectoral cooperation? I think it is mainly at the level of school and local educational authority".

They also mentioned cooperating with NGOs as one of their future plans to provide more support for inclusion at the local level.

Rights issues

Teachers reported that they regularly inform children about children's rights – in particular during 'health protection' and 'me and the environment' lesson, during extracurricular activities, and in individual meetings with children and parents. Teachers also discuss UN documents about human rights:

> "…discussed UN Convention on Human Rights and UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in particular Article 24". (Teacher of Bilyaiv School #2, Odesa oblast).

Parents of children with and without disabilities knew the rights of their children, including the right to education and to health protection, as well as the main documents where these rights are declared (Law on Education, Constitution of Ukraine, UN Conventions). Although they had not experienced situations in which their children's rights had been violated, they said they knew what to do if it happens:

> "If the rights of my grandson are violated, I would go to the school director, then to the local educational authority, then to prosecutor authority and to mass-media." (Grandfather of a boy with cerebral palsy, Bilyaiv School #2, Odesa oblast).

NGO representatives in Odesa noted that they have experience of surveying children regarding the implementation of their rights, although this is mainly among older children in special boarding schools. The representatives complained that other regular schools would not always let them do these activities in the schools. They also mentioned that they know the voices of their own children [with disabilities] and those of other children with disabilities through their parents. However, the surveys of parents mostly focus on social issues: provision of medicine, health services, etc.

NGO representatives in Odesa were well aware of the UNCRPD, including Article 24, but they did not have experience of participating in Alternative Report development. They also described many situations when the right to education is violated for children with disabilities, especially in rural areas:

> "The Convention is not implemented. The schools suggest only 'individual education' for children with disabilities. Rural schools are not adjusted to have such children – they do not have teacher assistants, there is no toilet…" (NGO representative, Odesa).

However, there were some positive examples of promoting UNCRPD implementation:

> "We organised the Committee of Accessibility in the oblast… made the list of inaccessible schools. The Committee provides consultative support to the schools on architectural accessibility." (NGO representative, Odesa).

NGO representatives in Odesa were also aware of the main legislative documents, and they work actively on promoting inclusive education in the city. For example: NGOs 'The Life for You' and 'Special Children' work with parents

and teachers informing them about inclusive education; NGO 'Alliance on Children`s Rights Protection' cooperates with Odesa city education authority to start a project on inclusion of children with autism; other NGOs participate in the work of Coordinative Board, created by the city mayor.

Although for many children 'individual education' reportedly works, NGO representatives in Odesa complained that this kind of education does not often meets the needs of children. Teachers visit children when they have time (mostly in the afternoon) and this is not always suitable for children (they can be tired by then). They also mentioned the unwillingness of schools to enrol their children as the main barrier to upholding rights to inclusion.

The representatives of local educational authorities stated that if parents of children with disabilities do not want to put their child into a special school, they have the right to put him/her in regular school. They also added that they have tried to provide additional support in those schools, but not always managed it due to the lack of funding.

Education transition

Because of the lack of pre-schools, some children do not attend. Some parents think their children would be more successful in the school if they received support from specialists in pre-school:

> "When my daughter was born I registered to put her in the pre-school – I was 365th in a queue…we needed a speech therapist. When she entered school she spoke not well and… she was directed to the special school." (Father of a child with language difficulties, Bilyaiv district, Odesa oblast).

Lack of an effective transition period before joining primary school was expressed by the NGO representatives in Odesa, and the lack of pre-school places was seen as a problem in helping children prepare for going to school:

> "The problem is to be enrolled in the pre-school, so we do not talk about transitional period. Many children feel difficulties if they did not attend the pre-school. They feel difficulties to follow school rules (sitting quietly, etc.), sometimes children do not understand the rules (hyperactive children, children with autism, children with hearing impairments).

Teachers at Bilyaiv School #2 (Odesa oblast) mentioned they usually start preparation work with pre-schoolers in March – children visit the school together with their parents, meet with the teachers. However, because of the lack of pre-schools, not all the children are involved in these activities.

At the level of transition from primary to basic school and from basic to high school, teachers reportedly inform parents about the transitional period during the parents meetings and seminars. Teachers also prepare to work with children with disabilities who move from the primary school and noted they needed methodological support with this:

> "I work in the secondary school and children with disabilities will come to my classroom soon. I started to prepare already. I need methodological support".

The majority of responses from the representatives of the local educational authorities testified that transition was “a big stress for children” but they expressed their confidence that “it was mainly [due to the] unreadiness of parents themselves”.

3.5. Findings from Vinnytsia

Presence of children with disabilities in schools

There was a mixed response from parents of children with disabilities. Some parents in Vinnytsia stated that their children attend either pre-school or primary school, and are included in regular classes. One mother described how initially teachers from the local school had advised her to opt for ‘individual education’ (home schooling) rather than enrolling her child into the mainstream school, but the local PMPC team convinced her that her child’s communication skills would develop better in the mainstream inclusive education system.

However, other parents described how their children with disabilities were turned away by their local pre-school and school settings and prevented from attending. They argued that “the management of educational institutions often tries to argue parents out of regular schools [for their children] and direct them to special institutions”. Thus, excluding them from local schooling.

Parents observed that it is common for children with disabilities to not attend school in villages and small towns. They commented that “parents do not know where to go” for advice and help, especially in the countryside, where focus group participants feel that “the rights of children with disabilities in rural areas are not upheld” (Vinnytsia NGO representatives).

Students of Primary-Secondary School Number 10, Vinnytsia also mentioned that they are aware of some children who do not attend school because they have disabilities.

Attitudes towards education and inclusion

Parents and teachers from Vinnytsia complained that society had negative attitudes towards children with disabilities. Teachers argued that people are unaware of the needs of children with disabilities:

> “society is not prepared to accept special children”.

One father stated that he would not like children with disabilities learning together with his son, especially if his son “is distracted or, even worse, if such children had constituted more than half of the class”.

Vinnytsia’s local government and NGO representatives stated that they felt that there was

> “lack of will among the teachers”

> "indifference of [education] officials – head teachers, pre-school directors, etc – to ensure that inclusion became a reality".

Parents and teachers also noted that some parents of children with disabilities show "indifference" towards their own children's needs or "hide their children because they can't bear the stress". However, government representatives suggested that this may be because "parents of children with disabilities prefer home schooling to protect their children from bullying" at school.

Other parents presented positive examples of interaction between their children without disabilities and children with disabilities whom they met in the street or at sports clubs. Parents of children with disabilities were unanimous in their positive attitude towards all children learning together.

Access issues

Accessing school facilities

Vinnytsia parents noted that many educational premises and toilets are not accessible to their children with disabilities. There are no handrails, ramps, etc.

Assistive devices

Parents also observed that often assistive devices are unavailable or not designed for an individual child's needs, such as wheelchairs being too heavy to manoeuvre.

Practice issues

Inclusive practice

Students from Vinnytsia mentioned that their teachers ask them to help and to play with their peers who have disabilities. They observed that the children with disabilities need help and that the students sometimes help them in classroom activities and homework, and by carrying things for them.

> "Children with disabilities "are special, [we] should listen to them and not insult them … we should help them". (Student from Primary-Secondary School Number 10, Vinnytsia)

One parent noted that although her son attends kindergarten and likes computers:

> "I suspect that he is playing with the tablet PC all the time at the kindergarten, and not doing what other kids do".

It was noted that teachers from Primary-Secondary School Number 10, Vinnytsia did not fully understand the concept of inclusive education. Although some of the teachers stated that they were "already prepared to work with children with special needs" and had attended various workshops and meetings, they thought that their school "maybe" or "most probably" was inclusive because five autistic children are present.

However, when asked if they taught inclusively, some teachers stated that they:

> "don't know what to do"
>
> "have insufficient experience of working with children with special needs".

Others mentioned changing teaching and learning by using more practical activities such as play, team and movement activities to ensure that children with disabilities are included in lessons. The teachers acknowledged that they find it difficult to include children with disabilities in their classes, stating that:

> "too many children in the class does not allow them to pay proper attention to every child".

They use teaching assistants "to ensure an individual approach". They mentioned that there is a 'resource class' in which the children with disabilities also learn.

Parents felt that teachers lack knowledge and understanding about the needs of their children with disabilities and also that they have "no desire to obtain [this] knowledge". Vinnytsia parents also argued that teachers are "afraid" to work with their children.

> "Teachers cannot work with our children anyway; they do not pay enough attention to them". (Vinnytsia parent)

Support staff

Parents of children with disabilities in Vinnytsia complained of a lack of specialists/therapists in schools who can identify their children's needs, assist the children and offer guidance to teachers and school support staff. However, the Vinnytsia local government representatives stated that they had provided five speech therapists to work in pre-schools, seven teaching assistants and a number of 'defectologists'. Vinnytsia NGOs noted that:

> "positions of teacher assistants have been introduced and work successfully in inclusive classes together with the teachers".

Vinnytsia government representatives accepted that there is insufficient funding for specialists, therapists and teaching assistants: even though regional council members promised to assist before the local elections, "but now the elections are over they keep silent". Thus, additional help for children with disabilities, such as the provision of therapists and teaching assistants has started, but I felt to not yet adequately provide for all children's needs.

In Vinnytsia, Bez Baryeriv NGO has stepped in and organised professional development training for teaching assistants.

Teaching and learning materials

Teachers from Primary-Secondary School Number 10, Vinnytsia, noted that there is insufficient state financial support to achieve inclusion. They noted that

they have inadequate teaching and learning materials, e.g. no books with large type face or Braille books.

Local support for inclusion

Vinnytsia local government representatives did not express a clear understanding of the concept of inclusive education, and the difference between integration and inclusion, though knew that inclusive education "involved children with disabilities". They stated that they have attended seminars (by the National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities) and workshops run by the Step-by-Step Foundation, but there is no training organised by the Department of Education. They also said they pursue self-education opportunities and visit websites for more information.

In Vinnytsia, inter-agency agreements have been signed; for example, between the Departments of Social Services, Education, Labour and Sports, to ensure that there is an integrated approach to supporting children with disabilities. A joint action plan for inclusive education (Departments of Education and Sports) has also been created, which involves:

- building new inclusive classrooms
- making existing buildings accessible
- community awareness-raising
- creating teaching assistant positions
- surveying parents of children with disabilities who have completed pre-school education about their inclusive education needs for primary school.

Unfortunately, the action plan has not been implemented due to a funding shortage.

The Vinnytsia NGOs observed that:

> "there is a good legislative framework in Ukraine … and the laws are good but they are not observed … [thus] the Convention does not work in practice".

They noted that support in terms of finance, staffing, accessible buildings, appropriate teaching and learning materials, assistive devices, etc, are not available. They observed that often parents with children with disabilities are

> "fighting all the time, when they and their children have the right to the support from the state" (Vinnytsia NGO).

Some Vinnytsia parents stated that they were unaware of what local support is available in their communities and in larger towns and cities. However other parents did know, for example, they were aware of the PMPC, the Inclusive Resource Centre, local NGOs and the rehabilitation centres.

Rights issues

Students from Primary-Secondary School Number 10, Vinnytsia, mentioned that they know that they have rights, for example, the right to communicate, life, leisure, education and to live with their own family. In lessons they have learned

about the Ukrainian Constitution and the UNCRC. Their teachers stated that they teach about children's rights and also about the rights of children and persons with disabilities.

Vinnytsia parents suggested that

> "children without disabilities should be taught to understand different kids' [needs]".

Some parents seemed unaware of the rights of their children with disabilities. Others noted that their children's right to education was guaranteed by the Constitution. One father from Vinnytsia added that it was:

> "provided for in Resolution No. 872 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on the organisation of inclusive education in general educational institutions".

Representatives of established NGOs in Vinnytsia, for example Bez Baryeriv, Obriy and Harmonica NGOs, were familiar with the UNCRPD. However, participants from newly formed NGOs – parents of children with disabilities who have acted independently to do something about their children's exclusion from school – had not heard about the Convention. The established Vinnytsia NGOs use the UNCRPD to advise parents of children with disabilities but have not been involved in monitoring the Convention. They suggested that if they receive information about the monitoring process then they would take part.

A representative from Harmonia NGO mentioned that they developed printed materials and a pocket calendar about the UNCRPD which they distributed among various public institutions of Vinnytsia. They have also organised awareness-raising events for educators.

Local Vinnytsia government representatives said they had knowledge of the UNCRPD and the UNCRC and the rights of children with disabilities to education. They also mentioned knowledge of Ukraine's education laws and the 'Concept for the Development of Inclusive Education' (2010), which provide for the education of children with disabilities.

Vinnytsia NGOs and local government representatives mentioned that they have sought children's views using questionnaires. Harmonica NGO ensured that no teachers were present when the children filled in the forms, but in the case of the local government, the school form tutors administered the activity. However, Vinnytsia NGOs argued that they thought that throughout Ukraine children's voices are not heard and this was because people do not understand how to use children's ideas.

3. Conclusion

The participatory research in Ukraine was small-scale. It focused on generating qualitative data of a good quality from a small sample of locations. The research heard the views of a wide selection of education stakeholders, from children with and without disabilities and their parents, from teachers, other education staff/officials and NGO representatives.

The research questions focused on issues relating to Articles 7, 8, and 24 of the UNCRPD. The focus of questioning was therefore on children's rights, awareness of rights (especially education rights), and educational provision for children with disabilities, looking particularly at progress towards inclusive education.

The research yielded a lot of information and first hand quotations from stakeholders that Step by Step and its partners will be able to use for advocacy and awareness-raising purposes and to feed into alternative reports on the UNCRPD.

The research indicated that many children with disabilities are not yet accessing regular schools, but instead are in special schools or being provided with home schooling (note: this research did not go into details of documenting and analysing the nature and quality of home schooling). However, there are positive examples of children with disabilities learning in their local schools and these provide potential for use in advocacy to show positive stories and highlight potential.

Attitudes towards children with disabilities and their rights to inclusive education remain mixed: some support the principle enthusiastically, some teachers agree with the principle but feel they lack the skills to act on the theory, and some education personnel appear to be openly against the idea of children with disabilities learning in mainstream schools/classes. There is often a lack of understanding about what inclusive education means, particularly in practice – something that is common globally, not just in Ukraine. The research indicated that negative views towards inclusive education may be more common in rural schools. On the whole inclusive education appeared to be understood as an issue about placement of children with disabilities and not as a whole-system improvement approach for all learners.

Research respondents mostly indicated that schools lack accessibility and assistive devices, though pockets of improvements exist that again could be used as good examples to inspire/inform bigger and more widespread changes.

Evidence of inclusive, learner-centred teaching and learning practices was provided by some respondents who spoke about differentiating learning, peer learning, individual education plans, etc. Overall, however, there was a sense that even if teachers want to use such approaches, they feel they lack the training/skills to do so. Specialist support is nominally available in some places, but the common view was that there was too little such support from specialists. Teaching assistants who can help learners who need more support within a

regular class also exist, but again too few and not necessarily suitably trained. Respondents did not all feel the education or social services were ‘doing enough’ to support inclusive approaches to education and while some gaps seem to be filled by NGOs, not everyone is aware of what support may be available locally from other sources.

Overall there was a good awareness of children’s rights and rights laid out in the UNCRPD, and within Ukraine’s own legislation. Children seem to be given opportunities to learn about rights as part of their education. Parents/teachers sometimes know what actions to take if rights are being violated, but not always. Local NGOs on the whole were not aware of UNCRPD alternative reporting, but interested to learn more and engage in the process in future.

The challenges that children (and parents and teachers) face when learners transition to a new school were acknowledged. Some respondents mentioned actions to support children at this time, but many felt that more needs to be done. This includes finding ways to help children transition from home to school, not just from one (pre)school to the next. Children generally voiced concerns and rears in relation to transition, while some education personnel felt it was probably only an issue for children with disabilities, not for all learners.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Focus group research plan

Stage 1: Focus group discussion training and trialling, January – February 2016

During this stage, we will develop a project schedule, agreed timescales and clarification of the key activities for the work.

We will plan a participatory capacity-strengthening workshop on focus group discussion (FGD) skills, practices and approaches, which researchers will use to collect information about the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in Ukraine.

The FGD training will be undertaken with researchers in Kyiv, and trialling of the FGD methodology by the researchers will take place with stakeholders (children. teachers, parents, local education officers and NGOs) in Vinnytsia Oblast.

Stage 2: FDGs with stakeholders to gather information on the UNCRPD, March 2016

The teams of researchers will conduct FGDs with stakeholders in Kyiv, Lviv (west Ukraine), Odessa (south Ukraine) and Severodonetsk (east Ukraine) during March. This information will be collated in Kyiv.

Stage 3: Drafting report of findings April-May 2016

An intial draft of the FGD findings from Kyiv, Lviv, Odessa, Severodonetsk and Vinnytsia will be produced during April, which will be edited during May.

Stage 4: Presentation of report, June 2016

In June findings of the report will be presented and discussed in Kyiv.

Appendix 2: Visit schedule

Vinnytsia

Tuesday 1st March 2016, Vinnytsia

Location: Primary-Secondary School Number 10, Vinnytsia
- Students
- Teachers

Location: Optima Hotel
- Parents

Wednesday 2nd March 2016, Vinnytsia

Location: Open Hearts NGO
- NGO representatives
- Local government officials

Lviv and Lviv oblast

Monday 28th March 2016, Lviv

Location: Lviv In-service Teacher Training Institute
- Teachers
- School administrators

Tuesday 29th March 2016, Lviv

Location: Primary-Secondary School Number 95, Lviv
- Students
- Teachers
- Parents

Wednesday 30th March 2016, Lviv

Location: Dnister Hotel
- Local government officials
- NGO representatives

Luhansk and Luhansk oblast

Thursday 7th April 2016, Lysychansk (Luhansk oblast)

Location: Primary-Secondary School Number 14, Lysychansk (Luhansk oblast)
- Students
- Teachers
- Parents

Friday 8th April 2016, Severodonetsk (Luhansk oblast)

Location: Department of Education of Luhansk oblast, Severodonetsk

- Local government officials

Odesa and Odesa oblast

Thursday 7th April 2016

Location: Primary-Secondary School Number 2, Bilyaivka (Odesa oblast)

- Students
- Teachers
- Parents

Friday 8th April 2016

Location: Odesa In-service Teacher Training Institute

- Teachers
- School administrations

Friday 8th April 2016

Location: Department of Education of Odesa oblast

- NGO representatives
- Local government officials

Kyiv

Monday 11th April 2016, Kyiv

Location: Borys Grinchenko In-Service Teacher Training Institute, Kyiv

- Teachers

Tuesday 12th April 2016, Kyiv

Location: Primary-Secondary School Number 41, Kyiv

- Local government officials

Wednesday 13th April 2016, Kyiv

Location: Primary-Secondary School Number 233, Kyiv

- Students with and without disabilities
- Teachers
- Parents

Thursday 14th April 2016, Kyiv

Location: Primary-Secondary School Number 233, Kyiv

- Parents of children with disabilities

Appendix 3: Focus group training participants

Name	Position	Contacts
Larysa BAYDA	Head of Department on Legislation and Advocacy, National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities, Kyiv	tel. +38 044 279-61-82 bayda@naiu.org.ua
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Appendix 4: Guiding questions for focus group discussions

Teachers

1. Do you think your school is inclusive? (yes, no) Why?
2. What are the advantages to your school following the introduction of inclusive education?
3. Do you discuss the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with the children? How?
4. How is inclusion of all children ensured? How are their individual needs met?
5. What barriers are there to the implementation of inclusive education (attitude, environment, policy, resources, practice)
6. Did you get any support for the implementation of inclusive education? Where? What kind?
7. What did you do yourselves to improve your inclusive teaching practice?
8. What other support (assistance) do you need?
9. What would be your three steps to implementing inclusive education in your school?
10. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Students

1. What do (don't) you like about your school?
2. What do you like most about the lessons?
3. Do you like your teacher? Yes/No. Why?
4. Do you have friends?
5. Do you know any children who require help/your help?
6. How do you help them?
7. Who else helps them?
8. Do you spend time together? How? What do you do?
9. Do you know any children who don't go to school? Why don't they go to school?
10. Do all children have equal rights?
11. Are any children bullied/offended in your school? Mainly by whom?
12. When someone offends you, whom would you tell about it?
13. Have you anything else you would like to share with us?
14. What would you like to change in your school?

Parents

1. Does your child go to school?
2. Do you know any children who don't go to school? Why?
3. What do you think about all children learning together (those with and without disabilities)?
4. Do you know about the rights of your children to education? What legislation protects these rights?
5. Have your children's rights to education ever been violated? What authorities did you consult if this happened?

6. What institutions in the local community provide support (help) to families with children with disabilities?
7. In your opinion, what are the barriers to implementing inclusive education in your school and the local community?
8. What would be your three steps to implementing inclusive education in your child's school?
9. Would you like to add anything else?

NGO representatives

1. Do you know the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities? Do you use it? How?
2. Do you know that the UN Committee monitors the Convention in Ukraine? How is it monitored?
3. Did you take part in the preparation of the alternative report to the UN?
4. Do you know about the rights of children to education? What legislation protects such rights?
5. Do you work towards implementing inclusive education? How?
6. Do you ask children their opinions about education and disability issues?
7. Do you consult children with disabilities?
8. Are children's voices heard in Ukraine? (E.g. concerning education, society, etc.) How?
1. What can you do to make it happen?
9. In your opinion, what are the barriers to implementing inclusive education in your school and the local community?
10. What would your three steps for the implementation of inclusive education in the local community be?
11. Would you like to add anything else?

Local government representatives

1. What is inclusive education and who are children with special educational needs?
2. Are you familiar with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities? And with Articles 7, 8 and 24 of the Convention? How do you implement the Convention?
3. What do you know about the rights of children to education? What legal acts protect these rights? How do you implement these laws?
4. Do you implement inclusive education? How? (additional questions about identifying the five barriers to education)
5. Were you trained on inclusive education? If yes, where?
6. Has the implementation of inclusive education taken into account in regional development strategies (programmes, plans)?
7. How has inclusive education been financed locally?
8. Is an inter-agency approach applied when implementing inclusive education? How?
9. Are children's voices heard in Ukraine? (e.g. in education, in society) What can you do to make this happen?
10. In your opinion, what are the barriers to implementing inclusive education in your school and the local community?

11. What would your three steps for the implementation of inclusive education in the local community be?
12. Would you like to add anything else?

Appendix 5: The EENET consultant

The consultant who carried out the focus group discussion training and initial mentoring in Vinnytsia for Step-by-Step Foundation is Duncan Little. He is a Director of EENET CIC.

Duncan Little - duncanlittle@eenet.org.uk

Duncan is a qualified teacher who still teaches in inclusive settings in London, UK. He specialises in teaching learners with behavioural problems and other complex needs, as well as children from refugee and linguistic minority groups, and has taught in Africa as well as in the UK. Duncan has previously worked for international organisations like Save the Children, and is now an international inclusive education consultant and co-director with EENET working on projects with organisations such as Diakonia, Fambul Tok, Handicap International, Norwegian Association for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (NFU), Norwegian Association of Disabled (NAD), OSF, Save the Children, Sightsavers and UNICEF. He has extensive field experiences covering more than 28 years and has carried out research and evaluation projects in countries including Hungary, Liberia, Libya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, the UK and Zimbabwe. He has run inclusive education training workshops in countries such as Cambodia, Indonesia, Kenya, Liberia, Libya, Macedonia, Palestine, Sierra Leone, Ukraine, Zanzibar and Zambia.

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