



# TOWARDS INCLUSIVE MEDIA: RESPONSIBLE AND COMPETENT REPORTING ON CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES AND INCLUSION IN EDUCATION

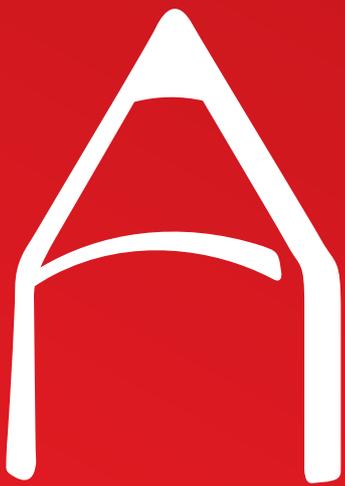


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Save the Children

A handbook for media professionals  
from Tuzla Canton





# **TOWARDS INCLUSIVE MEDIA: RESPONSIBLE AND COMPETENT REPORTING ON CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES AND INCLUSION IN EDUCATION**

**A handbook for media professionals from Tuzla Canton**

**Author: Vesna Andree Zaimović**

May – September 2020



**Save the Children**

Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. In North West Balkans and around the world, we work every day to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. When crisis strikes, and children are most vulnerable, we are always among the first to respond and the last to leave. We ensure children's unique needs are met and their voices are heard. We deliver lasting results for millions of children, including those hardest to reach. We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share.

**Title of the publication:**

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**A handbook for media professionals from Tuzla Canton**

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**Graphic design:** Jasmin Leventa

**Print:** Amos Graf d.o.o. Sarajevo

**Circulation:** 10 pieces



Project funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation.

The information contained in this document is the responsibility of the author for providing information on project activities. Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation do not assume responsibility for the opinions expressed in the text.

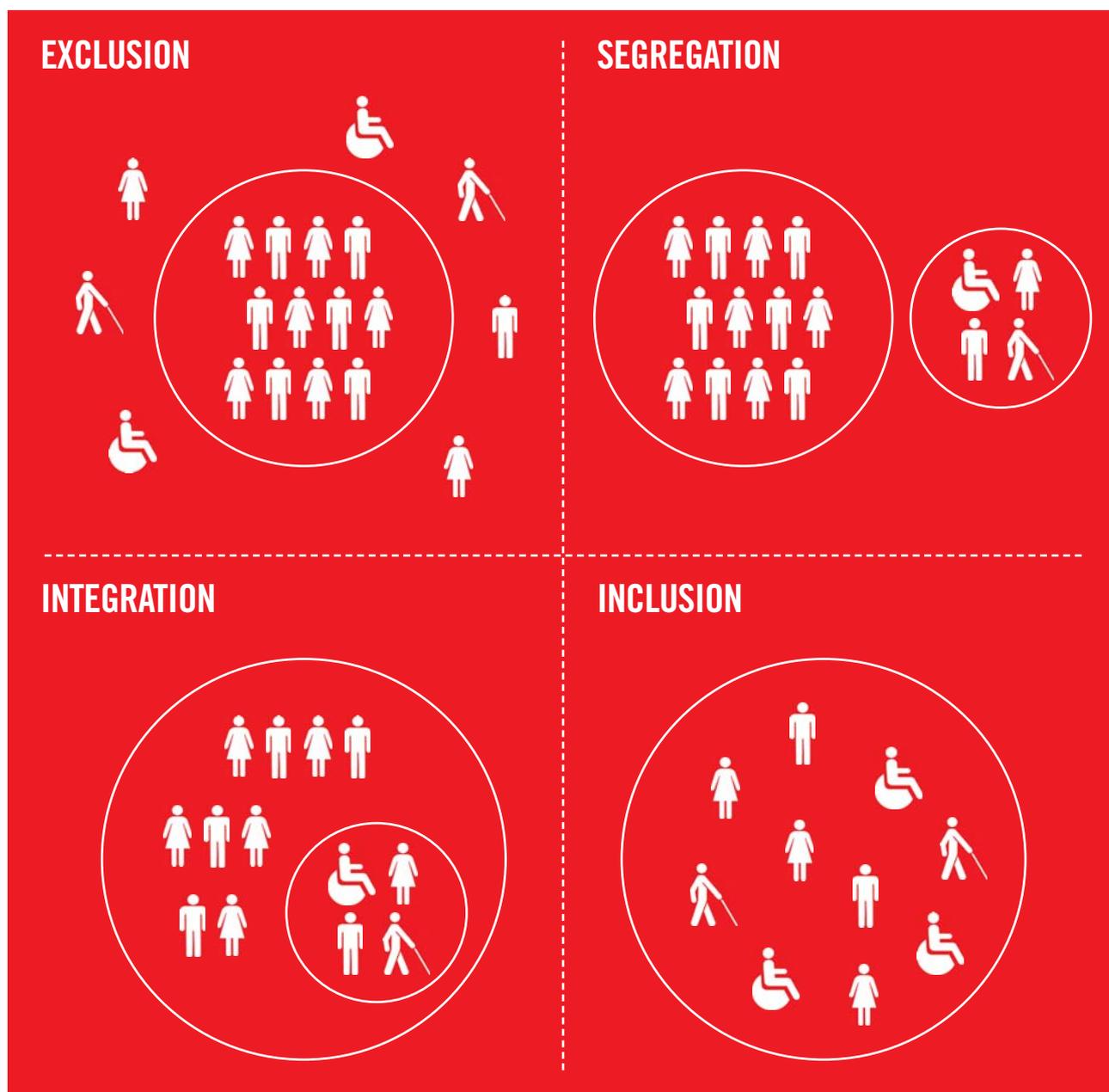
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## I. INTRODUCTION

It is estimated that there are around 70,000 children in Bosnia and Herzegovina who have some kind of disability (2). This is a very vulnerable group in Bosnian-Herzegovinian society which is faced with prejudice, exclusion and neglect by decision makers. Children with disabilities and their parents continue to face obstacles when it comes to the right to education, despite the fact that it is guaranteed by international documents to which our country is a signatory, primarily the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Children with disabilities are included in the education system to different degrees and in different ways: from **inclusion** in the regular school system, through inclusion in regular schooling, where they do not have adapted conditions and/or learning programmes or are separated into special classes (**integration**), to attending schools for special education (**segregation**) or not attending any form of education (**exclusion**).



**Inclusion is more than integration.** In the context of education, for example, integration may be an attempt to enrol children with disabilities in regular schools. However, inclusion is only possible if schools are designed and administered so that all children can learn and play together. This would mean e.g. providing adaptations such as access to Braille, sign language and customised curricula (19).

Although the systematic process of inclusion of children with disabilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been carried out since 2012, the situation on the field is diverse. The degree of inclusion largely depends on the territory in which the child lives, as local regulations vary.

Numerous prejudices about children with disabilities (and person with disabilities in general) stem from ingrained models of approaching them, namely medical and charity models. The medical model focuses on the disability a person has, looking at a person with a disability through the prism of medical care, rehabilitation and special treatments they need, while the charity model primarily emphasises the help (usually financial) needed by persons with disabilities, combined with pity, and it develops pity by society and puts this population in a “subordinate“ position. The modern approach leading to inclusion in the full sense is the application of a biopsychosocial model according to which it is necessary to remove barriers, both architectural and in the minds of people, so that persons with disabilities can express their full potential and participate equally in society.

The notion of inclusion is most often encountered in educational discourse, but inclusion is a much broader social reform process that extends into all social pores. Inclusion in educational and social processes is a fundamental human right, and this process brings benefits to society as a whole. Under the basic idea of the richness of diversity (because it is normal to be different), inclusion is a two-way process that encompasses the wider community, and involves the development of awareness, removal of barriers and building of capacities.

**When it is implemented well and in a quality manner, inclusion contributes to the development of society.** Quality implementation of inclusion does not require large financial resources, but it is necessary to change the awareness of the general public. In this regard, it is of great importance how the media will treat this topic.

In Tuzla Canton, it is estimated that there are around 7,500 children with disabilities who are involved in various ways in the schooling process (2). Since the middle of 2018, the project “Inclusion4All - Inclusive education for all children in BiH” has been implemented in this Canton, funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), and implemented by Save the Children. As part of the project, Centers for the Development of Inclusive Practices (CDIP) were established in **Banovići and Gradačac**, which operate according to modern principles of inclusion and provide support to children with disabilities, their families, professionals and entire communities (except Banovići and Gradačac; centers through their mobile teams also provide services in the municipalities of Kladanj, Živinice, Srebrenik).

In order to support the development of inclusion and the application of the biopsychosocial model *at the local level in the Tuzla Canton area*, Save the Children has prepared this handbook for reporting on children with disabilities and inclusion in educational and social processes.

On the following pages, users of the handbook will get a more complete insight into the concept of inclusion of children with disabilities and good practices in BiH and other countries, more information on challenges and ways of media presentation of this topic influences this progress, and will be introduced to the terminology, journalistic techniques and tools for a better reporting on children with disabilities on the path to creating more inclusive media.

## 2. CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR RIGHTS

### 2.a. *A child is a child, not the disability it has*

#### Who are children with disabilities and where is their place in BiH society?

When defining the term “child with disabilities”, we start from the definition of a person with a disability expressed in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which has been ratified by Bosnia and Herzegovina ([http://www.mhrr.gov.ba/pdf/konvencija\\_bos.pdf](http://www.mhrr.gov.ba/pdf/konvencija_bos.pdf)):

“Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

When talking about children with I disabilities, the important fact is that children with disabilities do not have to become persons with disabilities. “Namely, it is necessary to understand that with adequate, timely and comprehensive work with children in a certain part can lead to the prevention of permanent disability. Therefore, the term ‘disability’ is often used, **most often because children have the possibility that, with rehabilitation and intervention, permanent disability does not occur**, or that the consequences of disability are mitigated, in accordance with the child’s development and developmental opportunities” (14).

The breadth of the term “child with a disability” can be also seen through an insight into the type of modern support provided to children in centers for the development of inclusive practices: Speech therapy (therapy of speech and language difficulties, specific learning difficulties, hearing and speech rehabilitation, etc.), Physiotherapy (therapy for children with motor disabilities and disabilities caused by changes in locomotor system function), Sensory therapy (stimulation of sensory perceptions, raising self-awareness, improvement of cognitive functions), Occupational therapy (training children for independence: adoption of feeding and dressing skills, hygiene habits, social skills, etc.), psycho-social support, observation of the child in a class or group, monitoring and evaluation of child support in cooperation with schools/kindergartens, support for the inclusion of children in regular educational institutions, and other (10).

This broad spectrum of services indicates the diversity and differentiation of disabilities that a child may have, and the **inability to draw clear boundaries between the terms child with disabilities and a child of typical development.**

Every child has potential, talents and capabilities that can be developed with adequate approach and support. “Given opportunities to flourish as others might, children with disabilities have the potential to lead fulfilling lives and to contribute to the social, cultural and economic vitality of their communities,” is stated in UNICEF’s “The State of the World’s Children 2013”, where there is a warning that subsistence and progress can be particularly difficult for children with disabilities, and that globally they have a higher risk of poverty than their peers without disabilities. Unfortunately, in many countries, the response to the situation of children with disabilities remains largely limited to institutionalisation, abandonment or neglect. Children with disabilities face different forms of exclusion, which affect them to different degrees, depending on factors such as: the type of disability they have, the place where they live and the culture or class they belong to. Gender is also a key factor: Girls with disabilities are also less likely to get an education, receive vocational training or find employment than are boys with disabilities or girls without disabilities.” Children with disabilities are often considered inferior, and this makes them even more vulnerable: Discrimination based on disability has manifested itself in marginalization from resources and decision-making, and even in infanticide. Exclusion is often the result of invisibility. Exclusion is often the consequence of invisibility. Few countries have reliable

information on how many of their citizens are children with disabilities, what disabilities they have or how these disabilities affect their lives (19).

### PERSON-FIRST LANGUAGE

In the modern approach to persons with disabilities, the phrase “**person-first language**” has been imposed as opposed to the phrase “Identity-first” (8). This would mean that in representation and self-determination, preference is given to the person, and only then to the characteristic he or she has (a person with a disability instead of a disabled person, a person who is blind instead of a blind person, a person with cerebral palsy instead of cerebral person, etc.). Consequently, it is always important to keep in mind that a child is primarily a child - a human being of a certain age category, and only after that the representative of a certain category.

“When talking about the approach from the point of view of the phrase “with disabilities”, it means a certain characteristic that is not essential for the child we are talking about. This characteristic is just one and something that a child has, along with all the other characteristics. In contrast, for a long time there were terms such as “disabled, handicapped, damaged children”, which meant that the child was nothing and could not be anything but this disability, or signalled to the average consumer of the term that this was the predominant trait of the child” (14. ).

From the above, it is clear how important it is to use adequate terminology and a modern approach. **By understanding and presenting children with disabilities through the prism of potentials and inclusion in the community**, we strengthen the comprehensive processes of inclusion and building an open society of diversity.

There are numerous examples of famous persons with disabilities who, thanks to inclusion, education and capacity building, have achieved full social engagement. Let us mention, for example, Hellen Keller, an authoress with a hearing and visual impairment who, thanks to her support and involvement in education, has become one of America’s most influential authoress and human rights activists.

### QUESTIONS AND TASKS FOR FURTHER WORK:

*Let’s start from your own experience - do you know a child with disabilities in your immediate environment? How would you describe that child (potentials, affinities)? How does this child exercise his or her right to education?*

## 2.b. **Inclusion is not a gesture, it is a fundamental human right**

The concept and significance of inclusion and the legislative framework in which it is implemented

What is inclusive education? Here are some of the definitions that best describe this concept:

“Inclusive education is when all students, regardless of any challenges they may have, are placed in age-appropriate general education classes that are in their own neighbourhood schools to receive high-quality instruction, interventions, and supports that enable them to meet success in the core curriculum”(4)<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Bui, X., Quirk, C. Almazan, S., & Valenti, M. - Inclusive education, research and practice: Inclusion works. Cited in: Save the Children: Transforming the Special Education System into Centres for the Development of Inclusive Practices (document), Project Inclusion4All 2019.

The process of inclusion is a priority change in thinking. Successful inclusive education happens primarily through accepting, understanding, and attending to student differences and diversity, which can include *physical, cognitive, academic, social, and emotional*. This is not to say that students never need to spend time out of regular education classes, because sometimes they do for a very particular purpose — for instance, for speech or occupational therapy. But the goal is this should be the exception”(4)<sup>2</sup>. Class schedules and rehabilitation activities should be individually tailored to each child, so that the time in school can be used in the most efficient and effective way.

“Inclusion is seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all students by increasing participation in learning, culture and community, and reducing exclusion from the education process. This implies changes and adaptations in content, approach, structure and strategy, through a vision that includes all children of the appropriate age and the belief that the regular school system should be responsible for the education of all children”- reads the UNESCO definition from 2006 (13)

The inclusion of all students in regular schooling is a process that is carried out in different ways around the world, but is also defined by legal frameworks. Many international agreements, which are binding in the signatory states, emphasise that every child has the right to education. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a signatory to several important documents, primarily the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which oblige institutions and society to act towards this right for all children, including marginalised groups among which there are children with disabilities. Implementing inclusion is not just a gesture of goodwill, but a fundamental right based on the official documents we discuss below.

As early as 1966, the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognised the right to education for all. Article 28 of the **1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child** states that: “States Parties recognise the right of every child to education and shall, for this purpose a) provide compulsory and free primary education for all; b) encourage the development of various forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, and make them available and accessible to every child (...)”. Article 29 of the same Convention states that “States Parties agree that the education of the child should be directed towards: a) the full development of the child’s personality, talents, mental and physical abilities; b) the promotion of respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms and the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations (...)”

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a signatory to the document entitled **Standard Rules for the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities** adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1993, according to which: the competent authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Entities and the Brčko District should aim to gradually integrate the activities of special schools into regular education.

An important document is the 1994 UNESCO **Salamanca Statement** and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, which states that “inclusive schools are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all”.

In 2006, the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** was adopted, which defines in more detail the framework for implementing inclusion. Under Article 24, States Parties recognise the right of persons with disabilities to education:

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2 Lilla Dale McManis - Inclusive Education: What It Means, Proven Strategies, and a Case Study. Cited in: Save the Children: Transforming the Special Education System into Centres for the Development of Inclusive Practices (document), Project Inclusion4All 2019.

“With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning directed to:

- (a) The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;
- (b) The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;
- (c) Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.

In realizing this right, States Parties shall ensure that:

- (a) Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education! or from secondary education, on the basis of disability;
- (b) Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;
- (c) Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided;
- (d) Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;
- (e) Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

**Goal 4 Sustainable Education Development and Education 2030** - The action framework emphasises inclusion and equality as laying the foundations for quality education.

All documents listed above imply that children with disabilities should exercise their full right to education, upbringing, belonging and contribution to the community. Every individual has the right to their own intellectual, cultural, ideological, social, political and religious heritage, and the school is the most important place for social inclusion and integration.

The whole society participates in this process, and it implies the removal of barriers - both material and in the minds of people.

#### **QUESTIONS AND TASKS FOR FURTHER WORK:**

*Determine when Bosnia and Herzegovina has ratified mentioned agreements and download them to your archives.*

### **2.c. Inclusion is not an illusion**

#### **Implementation of inclusion in Tuzla Canton**

The first example of organised educational work with children with disabilities was recorded in 1959 with the opening of the first 'special class' at the II Primary School in Tuzla. This was followed by a few more examples of the opening of special classes at schools until 1970, when, by the decision of the Tuzla Municipal Assembly, the decision on the establishment of a "Special Primary School" in Tuzla was adopted. From the beginning, this institution had a regional character because it educated students from the municipalities of the Tuzla region. Since 1999, the special school has grown into the Institute for the Education of Persons with Mental and Physical Disabilities, and a boarding school has been opened within the school. Since 1980, the Public Institution Center for Education and Hearing and Speech Rehabilitation Tuzla has also been operating.

It is estimated that about 70,000 children with some kind of disability live in BiH, of which about 7,500 live in Tuzla Canton. According to data from 2008, only about three hundred were included in regular schooling, which represented about 0.7% of all students in primary schools (2).

Since May 2018, Save the Children has been implementing the project *Inclusive4All - Inclusive Education for All Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, funded by the Italian Agency for Cooperation and Development (AICS). As partners, the project includes: The Ministry of Education and Science of Tuzla Canton, the Vesta Association, the Profectus Knowledge Center and the Department of Educational Studies "Giovanni Maria Bertin", University of Bologna.

The long-term objective of the project is to enable children with disabilities to exercise their rights, develop their full potential and achieve social inclusion. The results to be achieved by the **Inclusive4All** project **include**:

1. Provide children with disabilities and their families access to various support services in Tuzla Canton;
2. Strengthen and support the Tuzla Canton authorities in revising and adopting a strategy for the inclusion of children with disabilities in the regular education system;
3. That the residents and civil society organisations of Tuzla Canton understand and adopt the biopsychosocial model of inclusion of children with disabilities in educational and social processes.

**Adoption of the Strategy and the Action Plan:** At the beginning of 2018, the Tuzla Canton Assembly adopted the Strategy for Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Education in Tuzla Canton with a seven-year Implementation Action Plan. The document was prepared in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Tuzla Canton, and in consultation with more than 60 organisations and institutions, and over 400 individuals from inclusive practice. This is the most important document in the implementation of inclusion so far, and with the adoption of the Strategy, Tuzla Canton has become one of the most advanced territories in BiH in terms of inclusion (1.). However, the Tuzla Canton Assembly in its new composition repealed this document in December 2019, and, accordingly, the budget that was provided for the implementation of the Strategy and general training of the regular school system for inclusion was redistributed.

The basic values of the Strategy are that it is participatory, inclusive, concrete and measurable, and its quality is that it introduces significant progress and improvements in the inclusive education system, with very little investment. The Strategy does not emphasise the type of disability the child has, but highlights his or her potential. It implies adapting the environment to the child's needs, abilities and potentials. One of the most important processes involved in the strategy is deinstitutionalisation - the reorganisation of existing special schools into centers of inclusive practice which will provide the necessary service to children with disabilities as a supplement to education in regular schools. Such a system has already come to life in a way in Una-Sana Canton.

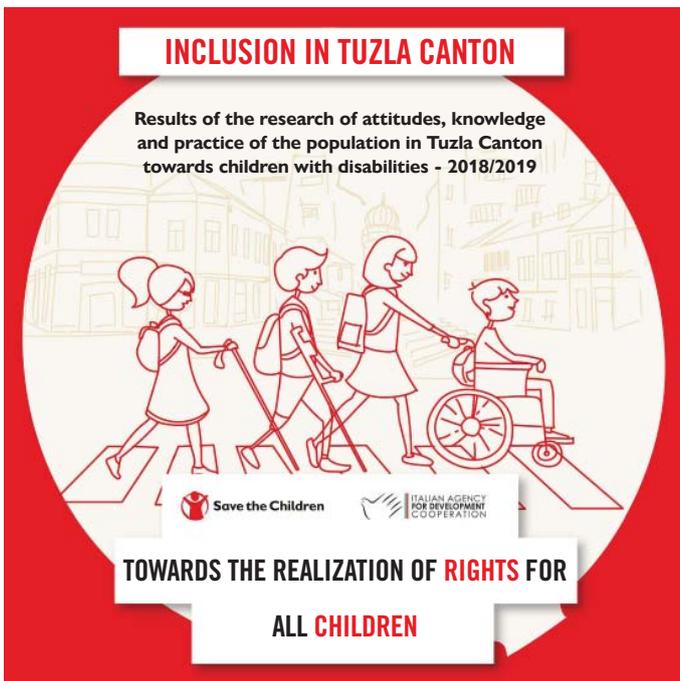
**Centers for the Development of Inclusive Practices:** As part of the process of implementing the Action Plan, modern Centers for the Development of Inclusive Practices (CDIP) have been opened in two cities of Tuzla Canton. Through an innovative and comprehensive approach to inclusion and the way the work of these institutions is organised, support is provided to children with disabilities, members of their families, educational professionals, as well as the wider community. CDIP also expresses its openness to the community through the work of mobile teams: CDIP Banovići also operates in the municipalities of Kladanj and Živinice, while CDIP Gradačac also covers users from Gračanica, Lukavac and Srebrenik. The Centers offer rehabilitation services, psycho-social support services, services of mobile professional teams and services of the Knowledge Center. Their activities differ significantly from institutions for special education because they represent a supplement to regular educational institutions, and not a replacement for them (10.).

**KAP Survey:** In 2018, Save the Children conducted a survey of knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) towards persons and children with disabilities on a representative sample of Tuzla Canton residents. There was a low level of awareness about children with disabilities, insufficient knowledge about various forms of disabilities, as well as a high level of social distance towards children with disabilities. Almost half of the respondents support some form of segregation of children with disabilities, in terms of attending special schools or special classes.

One of the conclusions of the KAP Survey is that among the respondents there is a willingness to be involved in the campaign for the promotion of the rights of children with disabilities and a desire to help responsible institutions in promoting programmes for persons with disabilities. This means that there is good intention and readiness in the general public, but due to insufficient information, it is prone to prejudices against children and persons with disabilities (2).

### QUESTIONS AND TASKS FOR FURTHER WORK:

Follow whether the Government of Tuzla Canton will develop a new strategic document that would replace the previously adopted "Strategy" (you can find the document "Strategy ..." at this link. Follow the work of CDIPs on Facebook and plan them as reporting resource.



### KNOWLEDGE, AWARENESS AND LEVEL OF AWARENES REGARDING THE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Although 58% of respondents know a child with a disability, there is a low level of awareness and insufficient knowledge about various forms of disability



Knowledge, awareness and level of information about children with disabilities are at a higher level among respondents who live in urban settlements, have a higher level of education and belong to younger age categories. A very small number of respondents stated that they knew a public figure who was a person with a disability.

Knowledge, awareness and level of information about children with disabilities were rated as: **LOW**

## 3. HOW YOU ADDRESS ME IS HOW YOU PERCEIVE ME: MEDIA AND CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

### 3.a. *From social case to superhero*

#### Media stereotypes about children with disabilities and persons with disabilities

How many times have we seen media content approaching children with disabilities (as well as persons with disabilities in general) through one of the following stereotypes:

- The main protagonists of the story – persons with disabilities - are portrayed as incompetent, vulnerable and worthy of pity and social support.
- In a sensationalist way, a person with disabilities is portrayed as a “superhero” because he or she managed to achieve something typical, such as regular school attendance.
- A child with disabilities is surrounded by many friends of typical development who “accept” him or her as equal to themselves
- Children with disabilities are portrayed through a sentimental prism of “sympathy” which is in contrast to the disability that accompanies them.

At the same time, very rarely or never in reporting on any other topic do we see a child with disabilities or a person with disabilities, regardless of the degree of their integration.

This introduces us to another of the very present stereotypes in reporting on persons with disabilities, and that is the tendency to generalise, i.e. understanding this population as homogeneous, sharing the same or similar needs, interests, and attitudes. Applying such general approach, we unconsciously deepen the stereotype that the identity of a person with a disability is largely determined by that disability. In reality, it is different - almost 10% of the world's population of persons with disabilities are people of different occupations, interests, needs, life philosophies, cultures, political views, religious affiliations, gender and sexual identities, economic status, level of education, etc. Persons with disabilities are consumers, voters, audiences, citizens with their rights and needs, and disability may or may not be a feature of their identity. Ultimately, for many people the wider environment does not know they have a disability (9.).

It is not uncommon for media narratives about persons with disabilities to be created outside the context in question. The media approach often “takes away” the voice of persons with disabilities, giving the microphone to those who speak on their behalf. Thus, medical and social workers, parents and educators will speak on this topic instead of children with disabilities, which establishes prejudices that persons with disabilities are not able to take care of themselves and exercise their rights.

With the popularity of social networks, the use of which is primarily based on following headlines and photos, the risk of a sensationalist approach also grows. Theorists point to a completely new trend of showing the interaction of persons with and without disabilities through the prism of “inspiration”. These are usually depictions of situations that are at first glance positive, affirmative, even cathartic, but in which a person with a disability is portrayed as an object to which a person without a disability shows special attention, even as a victim, and this gesture is glorified. This trend is called “inspiration porn (9.)” by American theorists and can be recognized in the contents of the following type: the teacher designed a special dance for the whole class in which he or she included a child with disabilities; the most beautiful high school graduate invited a friend in a wheelchair to the prom; a fast food restaurant employee helps a person with a disability by feeding them, etc.

The main finding of the 2006 Survey on Media Representation of Persons with Disabilities says that media coverage of disability in Southeast Europe is largely burdened by discriminatory stereotypes, as it portrays disability as a medical or social protection issue and there is serious underrepresentation of persons with disabilities in reporting (11.).

We can also characterise this problem as follows: in the media, persons with disabilities are most often written about from the perspective of the persons without disabilities.

Modern trends in journalism are in line with the recommendations and guidelines on the accessibility of information for all. This means abandoning the perception of disability through the medical or charity aspect or the issue of social protection, but in a way that initiates changes in order to achieve a more inclusive society.

The basic principle that journalists should follow when reporting is **“Nothing about us - without us”**, which means that the involvement of community representatives should be unavoidable in working on any media content that concerns children with disabilities or persons with disabilities. An authentic voice is irreplaceable in any media report with this topic.

On the other hand, responsible journalism also means raising the visibility of marginalised groups in topics that do not concern only themselves. Seeing and hearing a child with disabilities or a person with a disability in a feature on any topic (e.g. in a survey) will not only add value to reporting, but will help increase the visibility of the participation of persons with disabilities in everyday life, i.e. promoting inclusion.

#### **QUESTIONS AND TASKS FOR FURTHER WORK:**

*Analyse examples from the media and notice the stereotypical portrayal of children with disabilities. How does stereotypical portrayal meet the expectations of the audience?*

### **3.b. Inclusion is a two-way street: The more you give - the more you get.**

#### **How and why reporting on inclusion contributes to creating a better society**

A society that enables everyone, regardless of gender, race, social affiliation or capabilities, to be included, exercise their rights and develop their full potential is an inclusive society. Every modern democratic society is associated with respect for diversity. Responsibility towards the community and oneself, critical thinking, tolerance, acceptance of diversity are some of the values on which progressive democratic societies are based. All of these values are recognized and developed from an early age in inclusive settings.

Many institutions that implement inclusive education point out that this concept has a positive effect on the community as a whole. KAP Survey in Tuzla Canton confirms this: 67% of respondents believe that “attending regular school for children with disabilities is good for children without disabilities, because it teaches them social skills, tolerance and respect for diversity (2.)”.

That is why it can be said that inclusion is a “two-way street” where the more you give, the more you get.

Media coverage of the benefits of inclusion for society as a whole promotes this idea to the widest audience and is perceived as “good news”.

Recognizing good inclusive practices in local communities and presenting them to the audience gives a different tone and **instils confidence that positive changes in society are possible and realistic.**

Everyone benefits from inclusion. For example - ramps and wide doors can improve access and safety for all children, teachers, parents and school visitors, not just those using wheelchairs (19.)

The mother of a child with autism explains this as follows: “Every child who went in my house and socialized with my son became a better person! Socializing with our children is an opportunity for their children without disabilities **to learn to share, to be more patient and sensitive**“ (7.).

### QUESTIONS AND TASKS FOR FURTHER WORK:

*Write a list of human values that develop in inclusive settings and the way those values are applied to society as a whole. Identify good examples of inclusion in your environment.*

## PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO AGREE WITH THE GIVEN STATEMENTS REGARDING THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES



31%

If children with disabilities attended a class in a regular school, teachers would have to pay a lot of attention to them, and then the other children would be deprived.



49%

Schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not have trained staff (teachers and special educators) to work with children with disabilities.



67%

Attending regular school has a positive impact on the development of children with disabilities.



67%

Attending a regular school for children with disabilities is also good for children without disabilities because they learn social skills, tolerance and respect for diversity.

**More than 82% of respondents think that children with disabilities do not have equal opportunities and chances for development of potentials as other children.**

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESPONSIBLE AND COMPETENT REPORTING IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD

### 4.a. Understanding and approaching the children with disabilities through a bio / psycho / social model

In different parts of the world and in different societies, several models of observation and approach to persons with disabilities are practiced, and thus to children with disabilities. These models are developing and evolving in line with progress in exercising human rights and the implementation of inclusion. These are the medical model, the social model and the combination of the best characteristics of both with the concept of human rights, which we call the bio-psycho-social model.

In our country, the medical model still prevails, according to which disability is explained and treated within the medical field. According to this model, disability is seen as a disease that is diagnosed with a strong awareness that persons are affected by the condition and do not have much influence on it. Persons with disabilities primarily need medical care, aids, therapy, assistance. Consequently, persons with disabilities are approached as patients and they are excluded from many social flows and responsibilities. Perceiving disability as a disease, it is easier for employers to reject a person with a disability, without facing social responsibility, but transferring it to the field of medicine (17.)

Similarly, regular schools do not encourage inclusion, believing that children with disabilities need medical care and special treatment.

**The medical approach is often manifested in combination with charity, according to which persons with disabilities are a social problem that requires compassion and financial assistance - humanitarian aid, alms, charity. Through this approach, persons with disabilities are particularly discriminated against, misjudged, their dignity devalued and inclusion processes discouraged.**

In the 1980s, the social model of approach to disability was mentioned for the first time. According to this model, the negative approach of society and exclusion are the main elements that marginalize persons with disabilities. The social model implies the interaction of a person with a disability with the environment, and the fewer obstacles, the less the disability manifests itself. "Thus, any environment that has obstacles emphasizes disability as such and is actually the essence of interaction, because disability is not noticeable in environments that are adapted to the type of disability (if there is a ramp at the entrance to the institution, the right to wheelchair access is not deprived, if a child has learning disabilities, application of various techniques and support in the teaching process removes the barrier, if a sign language interpreter is employed in the health center, a person with a hearing impairment can communicate equally in a manner adapted to himself/herself)"(14).

**The targeted approach should be based on a bio-psycho-social model, which incorporates and respects the best characteristics of the medical and social model, taking into account factors such as discrimination, negative social attitudes, barriers, but also disabilities that persons with disabilities have. Not everyone experiences disability equally and therefore every person with a disability is an individual for himself/herself, with his/her own possibilities and goals. Equally important, the bio-psycho-social model is focused on the possibility of developing potentials,**

exercising human rights and achieving inclusion as a comprehensive social process. The goal is to remove barriers, both architectural and systemic, as well as in the minds of people, and to maximize equal inclusion in society for children disabilities and persons with disabilities.

#### QUESTIONS AND TASKS FOR FURTHER WORK:

*Follow certain persons with disabilities who are influential on social networks or talk to persons with disabilities in your environment, and try to identify what approaches and attitudes they encounter in their daily lives. Identify different approaches to children with disabilities when reporting on them.*

### 4.b. Techniques, terminology and tools: Practical tips for reporting on children with disabilities

Responsible and competent reporting on children with disabilities combines respect for double ethical principles: Reporting on children and reporting on persons with disabilities.

**Media content should not emphasize the disability a child has.** This does not mean that it is necessary to deliberately avoid showing the disability through text, photo or video, but it is necessary to focus on the potential, activity or process, instead of the disability.



For example, in a conversation with a person using a wheelchair, the focus of the frame should be that person, not the wheelchair. When portraying that person's life, it's important to portray him/her in active situations - let's say when he/she goes to college or trains. Or during media coverage of a blind athlete, it is necessary to focus on the sporting aspects of the story, the training process that led to success, rather than the story being based on a person's disability.

“The essence is in the following - the story should show the whole process of dealing with and living with a disability, and not to put us in the position of a point in the time in which we are stuck. Likewise, as someone did not remained paralyzed, but became a wheelchair user, so he/she did not stop being a complete person, but found himself/herself in a new situation and adjusted”, explained Ana Kotur, journalist, lawyer and authoress of several articles on the manner of media presentation of persons with disabilities<sup>3</sup>.

*The principle that should be followed during media presentation is that it is in the best interest of the subject being reported on - in this case a child with disabilities. It is in the best interest of the child to be involved and, according to their abilities, to participate in all activities in accordance with their affinities, commitments and talents. Labelling of the child should be avoided when reporting (14).*

Codes that set the framework for ethical and competent reporting are available to journalists, and below we will highlight a few provisions that specifically address this topic.

<sup>3</sup> An interview with Ana Kotur was conducted on the occasion of this Handbook in June 2020.

**The Press and Online Media Code of BiH** (Press Council) states, inter alia, the following:

*Article 4 - Discrimination*

Journalists must avoid prejudiced and offensive allusions to one's ethnic group, nationality, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical disability, or mental condition. Allusions to one's ethnic group, nationality, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical disability, or mental condition will only be made when they are directly related to the case being reported.

*Article 11 - Protection of children and minors*

In dealing with children and minors, journalists are obliged to act with extreme caution, respecting good customs and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, based on the interests of the child. (...) Journalists may not interview or photograph children under the age of 18, with questions relating to the child's family, without the presence of a parent or without the permission of a parent or guardian.

**The ethical principles and guidelines for reporting on children**, published by UNICEF, state, inter alia, the following (20):

**Principles**

- The dignity and rights of the child must be respected in all circumstances
- In interviewing and reporting on children, special attention should be paid to the right of every child to privacy and confidentiality, in order to hear their views, to enable them to participate in everything that concerns them, to protect them from harm and revenge, including possible harm and revenge.
- The best interest of every child to be protected is above all, including advocating for children's rights and the promotion of children's rights.
- When deciding on the best interests of the child, the child's right to have their views taken into account will be in accordance with the child's age and maturity.
- The child's close family members should be consulted about the possible political, social and cultural consequences when preparing a story.
- Do not publish a story or picture that could endanger a child, siblings or peers even when the child's identity is unknown.

**GUIDELINES FOR INTERVIEWING CHILDREN**

- Do no harm to any child; avoid insulting questions, attitudes, or comments that offend cultural values, and endanger children, or expose children to humiliation, which will trigger the child's pain and grief over traumatic events.
- Do not discriminate in the selection of children for interview because of their gender, race, age, religion, status, education or physical abilities.
- No acting - do not ask children to say something or to participate in a story that is not part of their personal experience.
- Inform the child or guardian that they are talking to a reporter. - Explain the purpose and intended function of the interview.
- Obtain approval from the child or guardian for all interviews, filming and, where possible, for documentary photographs. Where possible and appropriate, this approval should be in writing. Approval must be obtained in circumstances that ensure that the child and guardian are not coerced in any way and that they understand that they are part of a story that could be published locally and globally. This is usually only possible when the approval is written in the child's first language and if the decision is made in agreement with an adult whom the child trusts.
- Pay attention to where and how the child was interviewed. - Limit the number of journalists and photographers. Provide a comfortable environment for children so that they are able to tell their story without pressure, including pressure from journalists. In film, radio and video, and interviews consider what background and background sound choices may hint about the child and his / her story. Ensure that the child is not endangered or otherwise endangered if their home, community or location in general is shown.

The document (available at the link: <https://uni.cf/2TT9pMJ>), among other things, states that the child should not be stigmatized during media coverage, and that it is important to avoid categorization or description that exposes the child to possible negative reactions - including additional physical or mental injury, or lifelong abuse, discrimination or rejection by their local communities.

### Adults do not always speak in the best interests of the child

One of the possible problems in the process of reporting about children with disabilities can be the attitude of adults who accompany the child, whether they are parents or school counsellors. In this case, there is a risk of manipulation or unrealistic portrayal of reality.

Whether they are school counsellor in inclusive education or in special education institutions, not everyone is equally ready to defend the rights of the child. Sometimes it happens that, either due to inadequate organization or professional unpreparedness, the school counsellor does not really know how to deal with the child.

At the same time, a number of educators in segregated institutions think that inclusive education cannot equally replace the education and upbringing that a child with disabilities can receive in special institutions.

Journalists should also exercise caution when it comes to parents' attitudes. "It often happens that in the general economic crisis, parents resort to pointing out their child's illness or disability in order to provoke false solidarity through the media. Contrary to this, the sad truth is that parents of children disabilities are ashamed of media appearances, although their appearance, especially if they are respectable persons, would be of great benefit in breaking down prejudices. In a country with the prevailing patriarchal understanding of family roles, having a member with disabilities is still subject to a very harsh and unfavourable public court, a compassionate tone in addressing the family and thus, it is even more important to create a clear delineation of children's rights" Kotur and Bajić warn in "Media for Every Child" publication (14).

Journalists must use their skills to get a clear picture and show the interest of the child in the best and most ethical way.

### Use of language

Well-chosen words are crucial in media coverage of marginalized groups. "How you address me is how you perceive me" is a motto and message that imposes a special responsibility on journalists to choose the terminology to present the topic ethically correct and in accordance with high professional standards.

This motto is the title of the Code on the Manner of Presenting Persons with Disabilities in the Media (12.), which was published in 2012 and today represents an important journalistic resource. This document (available at: <https://bit.ly/2TRMG3D>) sublimates the rules, advice and norms of adequate reporting, and as such is a necessary literature for every professional. Here we can also find a terminology table that is in line with the previously mentioned "person-first language" principle:

	
Invalid, handicapped	<b>Person with disabilities</b>
(the) Deaf; (the) hard-of-hearing	<b>Person with hearing loss; Person with hearing impairment</b>
(the) Blind	<b>Person with vision impairment or low vision</b>
(the) Cerebral person	<b>Person with cerebral paralysis</b>
(the) Paraplegic	<b>Person with paraplegia; Person with polio; Person with muscular disease; Person with severe chronic disease; Person with physical disability</b>

✘	✔
(the) Autist	Person with autism; person in the autism spectrum
(the) Amputee	Person with physical disability; Persons whose body part has been amputated; Person without a leg, person without an arm;
Person suffering from Down syndrome	Person with Down syndrome; Child with Down syndrome
(the) Mentally retarded	Person with intellectual disabilities
Child with disturbed development	Child with disabilities
Normal school	Regular school

Etiquette of treating persons with disabilities (available at <https://bit.ly/3gEV1S7>) can be applied to all situations, including those related to media coverage (15). Some of the most important tips:

- Be patient and listen carefully.
- Address the person with a disability directly, not the accompanying person, especially not in the third person.
- Do not emphasize your words, use the tone in which you normally speak or conduct interviews.
- Do not speak or end a sentence on behalf of the person you are talking to.
- Don't ask "what happened to you". If necessary, ask: How can we introduce you.
- Don't assume what the person you're talking to can and can't do. If necessary, ask if you can help.

There is no need for excessive gentleness, condescension, euphoria, or any unnatural or acted mood that is different from your standard professional approach.

Avoid using language that suggests that persons with disabilities are always weak or dependent on others, or that would present them as objects of pity, such as "suffering from ...", "tied to ...", "dependent on ...", "protégé ... "or" victim ... ".

Finally, we want to emphasize once again the fact that children with disabilities do not have to become disabled persons, or that with timely intervention, professional work and an inclusive environment, the consequences of disabilities can be mitigated and the person can reach their full potential and actively participate in society.

That is why it is important what kind of image the media will create about children with disabilities. Whether the media content will be just another stereotypical article about "otherness" and marginalization, or whether it will be an argumentative incentive to exercise rights and actively participate in social flows, largely depends on the professionalism and skills of journalists.



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Project funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation.  
The information contained in this document is the responsibility of the author for providing information on project activities. Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation do not assume responsibility for the opinions expressed in the text.

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