

Concept Paper on

Social Integration of the People with Disabilities

Executive Summary

This concept paper establishes a unified approach towards the social integration of the people with disabilities (the disabled), analysis existing problems and sets major priorities of the state in the disability field. This conceptual framework document establishes the guidelines and tasks that will establish background for the state national strategy and activities to be implemented.

The concept of the social integration of the people with disabilities (the disabled) is based on international acts and documents that Georgia has joined and/or that currently represent an inseparable part of the international law: Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (December 9, 1975). The following documents were considered while elaborating the concept paper: The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the disabled) adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 13, 2006; also, the Standard Rules for Providing Equal Opportunities to the Disabled, adopted at the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 20, 1993 (resolution 48/96);

Chapter 1. General Overview

‘A person with limited abilities (the disabled)’ is a conditional concept, and its interpretation depends on particular conditions of existence of the disabled and/or on the nature of activities to be implemented. Generally, it denotes a person who suffers from partial limitation of the abilities of everyday life or a vocational labor in the long-term perspectives that is due to diseases, trauma, inadequate conditions for existence or development, congenital or acquired mental, senso-motoric or physical disorders, and thus provision of his rights necessitates special attitude¹.

Correspondingly, disability is a unity of attitudes of the society, civil institutions and material environment, because of which the people with various physical, psycho emotional, mental or senso-motoric problems (the disabled) have no equal opportunities of personal development and self-realization.

The concepts, such as disorder, or (chronic) disease represent the concepts of medical nature and describes the objective condition of this person in reference to the biology

¹ For comparison: in accordance with the law of Georgia on Social Protection of Disabled Persons: ‘the concept ‘Disabled’ denotes a person whose body’s vital functions are disordered due to a disease, trauma, mental or physical defect because of some degree of health disorders, which results in full or partial loss of professional labor skills, or that substantially makes the life difficult. The commission of medical-social expertise defines relevant categories of disability according to the severity of limitation of the living functions of a human body’. On the other hand, according to the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: ‘Persons with disabilities are the people- with long-term physical, psychic, intellectual or sensor impairments that, together with interaction of various barriers might hinder their full, effective and equal participation in the civil life.’

or physiology norms. Disability is a social phenomenon emerged on the grounds of this disease/disorder, and its interpretation and boundaries are changing together with the change of a particular social environment. Also the interpretation of the concept of disability depends on a particular policy or activities that are implemented towards this group of people and correspondingly, as a rule, various agencies or organizations depend on various definition of disability or the identification criteria.

According to the explanation provided above, disability – as a social phenomenon and as a subject of civil policy – covers various aspects. Until now the disability – in the light of state policy, has mainly been regarded as a medical problem, the identification of which creates grounds for activating some mechanisms of social protection – namely, the disability pension and some financial allowances, also the possibility to get some type of medical services.

There are other important aspects of disability that are related on one hand to the rehabilitation of the disabled for enabling them to better adjust to the existing environment, and on the other hand – to the change of physical and social environment in the direction that would give more chances to the disabled to get involved in the civil life and fully enjoy all the opportunities or services that are accessible to other citizens of the country.

Thus, the issues related to disability should be discussed, first of all, from the viewpoint of the human rights and elimination of discrimination², social inclusion and equalization of opportunities, that requires not only the legal provision of the rights of the persons with disabilities, but also a coherent policy and if needed, activation of the principle of a ‘positive action’³.

Chapter II. Problems

Significant part of the population of Georgia – the disabled, are often being discriminated condition and suffer from the violation of their basic rights and personal dignity.

The majority of the disabled persons lack the opportunity of self realization and ability to live a normal life. Because of this the disabled persons do not consider themselves full, independent and needed member of the society, they suffer from syndrome of dependence on assistance, and they are characterized with pessimism and the lack of initiative. Practically, they are not involved in the civil and political life, they do not participate in the decision making process.

Such situation is unacceptable and is incompatible with the recognized norms of the civil co-habitation; - at the same time it has a direct and negative influence on the

² “‘Discrimination on the basis of disability’ means any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of disability which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. It includes all forms of discrimination, including denial of reasonable accommodation.” UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

³ This principle implies not the restoration of formal equality as a temporary means in the environment of strong discrimination, but granting some advantages as needed to the discriminated social groups for achieving actual equality of rights.

society. Namely: this results in the mutual alienation between the disabled persons and the rest of the society, dehumanization and fragmentation of the society.

The state also incurs the economic loss – the disabled are not included in labor force

and are not involved in economic life of the country, and the burden of providing income for them is fully transferred to the family, society and the state.

Following particular problems are related to the disability:

- 2.1. State management of the issues related to the disabled persons and the existing legislation are ineffective. There is no common long-term strategy, the inter-agency coordination is weak. Involvement of the local self-governance and the community is low and their resources are scarce. There is a deficit of expert human resources within the management structures.
- 2.2. The information related to the disabled persons and disability is scarce and/or inadequate. There is no stable system for collecting /elaborating the statistics.
- 2.3. The state-private partnership and cooperation related to the disability issues is underdeveloped. The existing mechanism of state financing of service-providing organizations is ineffective.
- 2.4. The system of evaluation (status assignment) of disability is inadequate.
- 2.5. Practically, there are no records about the quality of state and civil monitoring and the evaluation of the programs related to disabled persons, and/or it is low.
- 2.6. Implementation of international conventions and norms is ineffective. In general the degree of international cooperation is low.
- 2.7. There are stereotypes, indifference and unawareness about disability within the society. The society is underprepared for the social inclusion of the disabled, it does not perceive the problem of disability as a priority issue for the society.
- 2.8. The labor market is discriminative. Poverty and unemployment are especially widespread among the disabled persons.
- 2.9. There is no economic mechanism to support the provision of equal opportunities for the disabled persons.
- 2.10. Access to adequate preventive, rehabilitation and medical services, artificial limbs and other special devices is low.
- 2.11. Access to and quality of alternative, home care, community-based and institutional services are low.
- 2.12. There is a deficit of Specialized workers in the disability area (social workers, occupational therapists, special teachers, psychotherapists, etc.) there is no special training for teachers, medical and other personnel.

- 2.13. The inclusive (pre-school, secondary, higher and vocational) education, also vocational training and continuous education are generally inaccessible.
- 2.14. The possibility of creative self-realization and access to other elements of a normal life (sports, culture, and entertainment) are limited; the paraolympic movement is not developed.
- 2.15. Practically there is no physical inclusive environment: relevant construction norms are not taken into consideration - there is no possibility for the disabled to use other technical infrastructure (transport and other communication facilities). Correspondingly, the mobility of the disabled persons and possibility of their social communication is limited.

Chapter III. Goals and Objectives

The paramount goal of the state policy in the disability sphere is to ensure equal rights and opportunities for the disabled persons that imply creation of better living conditions for them so that they are provided with the opportunity of full involvement in the socio-economic development, political and cultural life by observing the principle of equality. The public benefit such as supportive and friendly physical or cultural environment, living conditions and transport, social and healthcare services, education and employment, social relationships, politics, sports, recreational opportunities - should be equally accessible for everybody.

To achieve all these, the state policy shall consider the following issues as three major objectives:

1. Provide conditions for dignified life for the persons with disabilities; eliminate actual discrimination through providing inclusive environment⁴.
2. Provide conditions for the rehabilitation and empowerment of the disabled through the necessary treatment, care, provision with assisting facilities and education;
3. Raise awareness of the society and the decision makers - central and local authorities, representatives of the media and the business sector - regarding the disability issues, making them interested and mobilized.

Chapter IV. Modus Operandi.

- 4.1. Substantial improvement is needed regarding management, coordination and information exchange among governmental agencies, organizations representing the interests of the disabled persons and other interested parties.

⁴ Inclusive environment is interpreted as a unity of physical, institutional and social conditions that provide equal opportunity to the persons with disabilities to enjoy all the public benefits that implies access to all the public places, also equal opportunities for participation in all the civil activities and events (cultural, sports, political, etc.), and also equal opportunities for enjoy all types of information and communication channels.

- 4.2. An open dialogue with the disabled persons (and/or their guardians) is needed and their co-participation is necessary in decision making; self-organization of the disabled persons, representation of their own interests should be promoted;
- 4.3. Civil monitoring should be introduced in the relevant sphere with an immediate involvement of the people with disabilities; awareness should be raised regarding the possibility to protect their interests and rights;
- 4.4. State policy should be focused on the achieving sustainable results, if needed, on the grounds of long-term activities;
- 4.5. It is necessary to plan activities based on the facts, evidences, reliable information and research results; to obtain Comprehensive and reliable information and organize the analysis;
- 4.6. The programs that are focused on the disabled persons should be integrated in the unified state programs;
- 4.7. Programs should be elaborated on the grounds of defined criteria of categorization, considering the particular policy, individual needs and provision with resources;
- 4.8. In the process of providing equal opportunities to the disabled persons it is necessary to observe civil justice considering the interests of other population;
- 4.9. All the activities for ensuring equal opportunities for the disabled persons should necessarily be supported by effective (market or non-market) economic mechanisms.
- 4.10. It is necessary to follow and observe gender equality, rights of the children, and recognized human rights while implementing all the actions.

Chapter V. Priorities of the policy and action

With the purpose of achieving the state policy goals and objectives in the disability sphere it is necessary to plan and implement specific activities coherently, and utilize resources effectively. For this it is necessary to identify main priorities.

It is possible to identify four main spheres that the state will pay special attention to, and towards which the state will direct the most part of material and human resources, which are available or are provided by the assistance of donors.

These four priorities are:

- Education
- Employment
- Creation of the inclusive environment

- Creation of opportunities for self-realization of the disabled persons (creativity, sports)

Within the frameworks of this four main directions, and partially beyond them, it is possible to define whole series of secondary priorities. Some of these state priorities are of general nature and despite tight links with disability, goes beyond of this concept (e.g. early, among them prenatal, diagnostics and intervention; genetic examination of high-risk parents; monitoring of the status of pregnant women; raising the awareness of pregnant mothers and the society in general regarding the medical risks and their avoidance; introduction of health lifestyle among the society; medical-preventive measures - vaccination, sanitation surveillance, epidemiology service; enhancement of transportation safety, introduction and maintenance of labor safety, etc.); and the rest are specific directly for disability and thus represents the subject of discussion of this document:

Elaboration and implementation of state policy and special programs

- 5.1. It is necessary to elaborate and introduce strategic documents, legislation and sublegislative acts and norms; activate the state coordination-consultation structure; ensure the coordination, mutual-referral and cooperation among agencies; introduce the social model and the approach aiming at the provision of human rights in reference to disability; introduce relevant categorization of the disabled persons considering the programs to be implemented and the available resources. For planning and implementing all these it is necessary that the government has comprehensive and quality information on disability, substantial perfection of the system is also needed for collecting and analyzing this information; it is necessary to promote social partnership, elaborate and introduce new mechanisms for financing the sphere by considering the experience, opportunities and needs of service providers acting in the country, also through studying and sharing the experience of foreign models.

Development and training of professional human resources;

- 5.2. It is necessary to develop and train the professionals working in the disability field - social workers, designers, social, occupational and arts therapists, homecare specialist, special teachers, etc.; feasibility of introducing new professions should be evaluated on the grounds of the needs assessment of the disabled persons and they should be introduced if needed; it is necessary to create the mechanisms for licensing of all these professions, their regulation and professional surveillance (and respective normative acts as well);

Activate and support to the local government, community, civil sector and private initiatives

- 5.3. State-private partnership should be widely promoted; the private, non-governmental sector and local government should be involved in the implementation of state programs. It is also necessary to clarify the

principles of the state policy regarding disability to all the abovementioned structures, and inform them about cooperation opportunities.

Employment, economic activities and vocational training

- 5.4. It is necessary to eliminate discrimination regarding employment, reward/compensation for the disabled persons; create the system for vocational education/training and employment for the disabled persons; promote and support self-employment of the disabled persons and their participation in small business.

Improvement of living conditions and social protection

- 5.5. Disability as a subject should be adequately presented while implementing state programs, and especially - national program of social assistance; specialized target programs are to be elaborated for the disabled persons (until the unified-national program meets these needs) on the grounds of preliminary assessment of their needs. This will be oriented for improving their living conditions and the quality of life, for providing the subsistence minimum for them and this should also imply that the expenses resulted from their specific needs are covered.

Treatment and rehabilitation

- 5.6. Medical and psychosocial rehabilitation of the disabled persons undoubtedly represents one of the major state priorities in the sphere of healthcare. This goes beyond the disability and this should be reflected in the relevant healthcare strategy. Within the frameworks of such priority it is needed to increase access and opportunities for the disabled persons to the qualified diagnostics and treatment (including those in geographically remote areas); activate the special programs that are intended for the disabled persons, among them - the effective medical insurance and vouchers, strengthening of the existing system, review of the list of treatment that is funded by the government (all these represents a natural part of the State Healthcare Program and ultimately this should be accessible for the disabled persons); provision the disabled persons with artificial limbs, various aids, training or rehabilitation facilities and instruments.

Services and Service-Providers

- 5.7. It is necessary to assess the needs of the disabled persons in various services; it is needed to support and stimulate the key service providers and new services, regulate and oversight the activities of service providers, first of all, by including the professional associations, organizations of the disabled persons and civil society.

Inclusive and Specialized Education

- 5.8. It is necessary to develop the system of inclusive education and enlarge gradually the categories of the disabled children involved in it; it is also

necessary to train the personnel working in the educational field in the direction of inclusive education; equip educational institutions with relevant appliances so they meet the needs of the disabled persons; this should be accompanied by the introduction / perfection of the system for categorization of the disabled persons (children and adults) from the viewpoint of the opportunities of their inclusive education, by using the opportunities of tailored (e.g. education at home or distance learning) programs;

Residential Institutions and Deinstitutionalization

- 5.9. It is necessary to activate a long-term plan of deinstitutionalization of the disabled persons in the condition of freedom of choice and maximum usage of alternative models (community based, family-type, etc.), in each case a long-term monitoring should be provided (the major principle - do no harm); effective social support to the parents and caregivers, also the foster families, their training and thorough examination; study of the condition and the needs of residential institutions and radical improvement of living conditions of the persons at functioning institutions;

Inclusive Physical Environment

- 5.10. Other existing legislation and norms that are related to the creation of construction and inclusive physical environment should urgently be activated and monitored (special path, elevator, etc.); if needed new construction, transportation or other norms are to be adopted; it is necessary to support, stimulate and initiate the creation of inclusive environment towards the disabled persons in the places of public gatherings;

Inclusion in the civil life

- 5.11. It is necessary to overcome the information isolation of the disabled persons by ensuring the optimal usage of technologies and communication facilities; usage of visual/sign language in the electronic mass-media and public places for the people with hearing impairments; wide introduction of Braille and its analogous systems (printing of magazines and newspapers, etc.) for the blind; provision of the people with limited mobility with transportation means (wheelchairs, etc.) and communication facilities (telephone, internet); inclusion of the disabled persons in the civil life, support to their participation in civil activities; also, organization of special activities (sports competition); support to paraolympic movement.

Raising of the awareness of the society and enhancement of sensitivity towards the problem

- 5.12. Adequate coverage of the disability issue by the journalists and media should be promoted; attention should be paid to the proper usage of the terminology related to disability in the media, also, to other important aspects such as the style of presenting the material or the general context; it is needed to organize the public and professional discussions, seminars and

conferences on the disability issues and highlight them in the media; active involvement of media representatives in public discussions; disability topic should be widely discussed at public discussions, training programs and facilities; special importance is given to the success stories about integration, or to highlight the achievements of the disabled and the success of the involved organizations as well.

Chapter VI. Implementation of the Strategy and Monitoring

1. With the purpose of solving the tasks stipulated in the state strategy, the government of Georgia – the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Economic Development, the Ministry of Finance, also other governmental institutions – will elaborate programs and implement them with the participation of the international donor organizations and non-governmental sector. The ministries represent main bodies who orders the programs stipulated in the strategy. Various international, governmental and non-governmental organizations will be widely involved in the financial and technical support and immediate implementation of these programs.
2. Implementation of the strategy will be coordinated by the coordinating Body (working on disability issues) that exists on the highest level of the executive power. Main functions of this body will be to develop governmental documents of strategic nature, consult the government of Georgia on the disability issues, ensure interagency coordination in the field of disability, and monitor and evaluate relevant processes. The secretariat within the Coordination Body will carry out daily activities and perform other tasks of the Coordination Body.
3. The main condition for a successful implementation of state programs is to elaborate a well-planned, detailed and realistic action plan (strategy) that reflects not only the needed budgetary and non-budgetary financial resources, but also the institutional and other resources – in the short-term and medium-term perspective. Functions and responsibilities should be divided clearly among the agencies within the frameworks of the action plan, the schedule and sequence of activities should be defined and the procedures for measuring the indicators of effectiveness of program implementation are to be described.
4. Implementation of the state strategy is supervised by the government of Georgia. The ministries and donor organizations are acting in a coordinated way with the purpose of achieving the identified goals. The Coordination Body and the ministries identify the legislative gaps and if necessary implement legislative initiatives. The leading role, responsibility and the coordination function in the program elaboration and monitoring of its implementation results retains with the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs that will tightly cooperate with the working group at the Coordination Body through the secretariat of the governmental commission. During the monitoring of the strategy implementation, much importance is assigned to the involvement of

the disabled (and their guardians) and civil society, and especially to the transparency of the process as well.

5. As the result of the monitoring of strategy implementation the impact of the activities will be evaluated annually and the strategy will be reviewed - updated considering new circumstances.

