

## Case Studies: UNICEF and Children with Disabilities

### Case Study #1: Ethiopia

UNICEF estimates that 98% of children with disabilities in Ethiopia have no way to get to school or job training. UNICEF Ethiopia and the Mobility Without Barriers Foundation have set up a project to enable children and youth with disabilities that make movement difficult to have greater mobility.

Typical wheelchairs are difficult to use on the rough roads found throughout much of Ethiopia. A new type of mobility cycle has been developed that can handle these conditions. Young people with disabilities and their parents are involved in manufacturing and repairing the mobility cycles. This income is greatly needed by the families of children with disabilities, because poverty keeps many children from getting education and training. And as young people with disabilities show that they can do useful work, negative attitudes about disabilities will slowly begin to change.

UNICEF is also involved in activities to prevent disabilities. It vaccinates children against measles, which can cause brain damage and blindness, and polio, which can cause physical disabilities. Programs to provide vitamin A help to reduce the risk of blindness. Adding iodine to salt is helping to reduce preventable forms of mental retardation. Landmine risk education programs aim to teach children to avoid contact with land mines, which can kill and disable children.

What (if anything) is UNICEF doing to help support the rights of children with disabilities in Ethiopia?	What (if anything) is UNICEF doing to help prevent disabilities in Ethiopia?

Source: adapted from, and more information at [http://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/ET\\_Disability\\_fact\\_sheet\\_Nov\\_06.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/ET_Disability_fact_sheet_Nov_06.pdf) and [http://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/ET\\_Feature\\_Joy\\_Nov\\_06.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/ET_Feature_Joy_Nov_06.pdf)

## Case Studies: UNICEF and Children with Disabilities

### Case Study #2: Georgia

In the former Soviet Republic of Georgia, most children with disabilities had no choice but to be sent to live in an institution. Children with disabilities were kept away from the rest of society, with few opportunities to develop their abilities and talents.

A UNICEF-supported project called “Inclusive Education” is changing this mindset. The project brings children with disabilities into preschools and elementary schools in Georgia, where they can learn alongside their peers without disabilities.

In the morning, children with disabilities meet in small groups with special education teachers. A special teachers’ manual shows teachers of first-to-third-grade children how to teach mathematics and language to children with disabilities. Speech therapists, physical therapists, and psychologists work with children on a one-to-one basis. Children are also helped to develop basic life skills such as dressing themselves.

In the afternoons, they join children without disabilities in classrooms where they are able to learn and make friends. Children without disabilities are helped to overcome their negative attitudes and stereotypes about children with disabilities by working and playing together.

The schools also provide training for parents of children with disabilities to help them understand and care for their children.

In a sign that attitudes toward children with disabilities are changing in Georgia, educational law in Georgia was changed in 2005 to state that children with disabilities must be provided with free education and that schools cannot discriminate on the basis of disability. UNICEF is helping the government of Georgia to find practical ways of respecting the rights of children with disabilities in education.

What (if anything) is UNICEF doing to help support the rights of children with disabilities in Georgia?	What (if anything) is UNICEF doing to help prevent disabilities in Georgia?

Source: adapted from, and more information at [http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/reallives\\_3238.html](http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/reallives_3238.html) and [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/georgia\\_1817.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/georgia_1817.html)

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### Case Study #3: Sri Lanka

One afternoon, 14-year-old Thinesh was idly digging in the dirt with a bottle when his hand scraped the rubber corner of a landmine. Thinesh could have been killed or lost his arm. Instead, realizing that he had accidentally found a landmine, he stayed calm and called on adults to alert the police and have it safely removed.

Today, Thinesh is a child educator in a Mine Risk Education program funded by UNICEF. The program uses a range of imaginative methods to reach young people with messages about how to keep themselves safe from landmines.

For example, the program developed a board game to teach about the dangers of landmines. An animated game involves children playing the role of a landmine, and other children have to demonstrate how to avoid it. Children are taught songs that carry safety messages, and posters are placed in school hallways that illustrate the dangers of landmines. Billboards, lectures, and house-to-house visits help to educate parents about the risks as well.

The program is increasing awareness of mine risks, knowledge of warning signs for landmines, and understanding of how to avoid danger which is decreasing deaths and injuries. It is also making local communities more sympathetic and positive toward people who became disabled by landmines. This is in part because the program uses landmine survivors as teachers who can talk personally about their experiences.

What (if anything) is UNICEF doing to help support the rights of children with disabilities in Sri Lanka?	What (if anything) is UNICEF doing to help prevent disabilities in Sri Lanka?

Source: adapted from, and more information at [http://www.unicef.org/srilanka/reallives\\_1712.htm](http://www.unicef.org/srilanka/reallives_1712.htm), [http://www.unicef.org/srilanka/media\\_1719.htm](http://www.unicef.org/srilanka/media_1719.htm) and [http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index\\_29565.html](http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_29565.html)

## Case Studies: UNICEF and Children with Disabilities

### Case Study #4: Macedonia

Every child has the right to grow up in a nurturing family. Yet many children with disabilities in Macedonia are placed in institutions that are often understaffed and lacking in resources. Without adequate care that promotes their fullest possible development, many of these children live out their lives in diapers, bottle fed, and physically confined to their beds. They have no contact with their families and communities or opportunities to socialize with other children.

UNICEF Macedonia is supporting a project to eliminate the need for children's institutions by finding them alternative care options. Wherever possible, children are returned to their biological families, and given special assistance to help them cope with the child's special needs. Where no biological family members can care for the child, foster families are being found that can care for children in a home environment. The foster families receive special training and support to be able to meet the needs of children with disabilities.

One foster mother describes her child's progress: "When he first came to the family, he wasn't able to walk, he wasn't able to eat, and he wasn't able to go to the bathroom by himself. Little by little, I taught him how to eat. He can now go to the bathroom by himself at night and he's just greatly improved overall."

UNICEF is also identifying and renovating buildings that can be used as day care centers. It is training staff to make individual education plans for each child, and to locate resources—such as physical therapy and psychological services—that the children need. The centers provide both specialized education and support for foster families that take on the challenges of raising a child with disabilities.

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Source: adapted from, and more information at [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/TFYRMacedonia\\_28532.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/TFYRMacedonia_28532.html), [http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/reallives\\_3047.html](http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/reallives_3047.html) and <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/TFYRMacedonia.html>