



ACTIVATE Talk

UNICEF

“UNICEF Georgia Activate Talk: It Is About Ability”

Location & Date

TBILISI, Georgia

June 23, 2014

Context:

How do you change the environment and make the interests of the most disadvantaged children prevalent for the majority? How do I change myself in an inclusive society? What toys are available for the development of children with severe disabilities? How do we make social responsibility for children with disabilities contagious? Work and art – a way to break stereotypes, how to teach an independent life to a child with disability – these are the main topics of the seven innovative talks that have been organized in Georgia within the UNICEF global initiative ‘Activate Talks’.

The ‘Activate Talks’ in Georgia focus on children with disabilities and aim at mobilizing the public’s attention towards those pressing issues that affect the lives of these vulnerable children. There are around 9,000 registered children with disabilities, but this figure is likely higher in reality as many disabled children living with their families are invisible and left behind. After eight years of Georgia’s Child Care System Reform, there has been real progress in ensuring a family environment for every child. Still, children with disabilities account for most of the children who live in the remaining state-run large institutions. 40 per cent of the Georgian public stigmatizes children with disabilities.

“Children with disabilities in Georgia are among the most vulnerable groups in Georgian society and they have the right to be protected and to develop”, says Sascha Graumann, UNICEF Representative in Georgia. “We welcome the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities by the Parliament of Georgia and trust it will lead to specific policy changes that would improve the lives of children with disabilities. We closely work with the Government of Georgia to support them in these endeavors. We call for the closure of the remaining three large-scale institutions for children with disabilities, including the Infants’ House and for the development of an alternative care system capable to provide quality care of children with severe disabilities. All children in need and their families should have access to necessary services. It is crucial to address the stigma towards disability so that children with disabilities live in a society free from discrimination.”



Speakers:

Anna Arganashvili is a human rights activist working in the fields of disability rights, children's rights, and gender equality. She worked at the National Human Rights Institution for 5 years and currently represents the NGO Partnership for Human Rights. Her major activities concern combating discrimination and segregation of persons with disabilities, early marriage in Georgia, and supporting the implementation of the UN CRC, UN CEDAW, and UN CRPD in the country.

Giorgi Demetrashvili is a psychologist and holds an MA in Education Administration. He works for First Step Georgia since 2003. The NGO works to improve the lives of children and youth with mental and physical disabilities. Currently he is also the head of the educational programs of a daycare centre for children with severe intellectual and physical disabilities. He is responsible for elaborating special developmental education programs for children with severe intellectual and physical disabilities, developing a difficult behavior management system, and supporting inclusive education.

Lali Khandolishvili is a musician and teaches choral and conductor classes. She previously worked as a music teacher and chorus conductor in the Signaghi music school. Since 1999 she heads the Qedeli Community for persons with disabilities, which was founded on her initiative.

Maia Shishniashvili is a doctor and holds an MA in Health Education. Presently she works at the National Centre for Disease Control, heading the Department of Health Promotion. In 2010, Maia founded the organization Hand in Hand to support inclusion. The NGO provides family-type residential services for adults with disabilities. Currently 13 beneficiaries coming from large institutions live in three houses run by the organization. Hand in Hand advocates for providing dignified living conditions and ensuring the right to a family environment for people with disabilities in Georgia. Maia became involved in working for those with disabilities after her child was diagnosed with angelman syndrome.

Mariam Mikiashvili graduated from a school for children with visual impairments in 2004, and studied one year in the United States at a high school in South Carolina. After returning to Georgia in 2005, she enrolled at Tbilisi State University in the Department of Social and Political Sciences. In 2009 she began studies at Oslo University where she was awarded a Master's degree in Special Pedagogics. In 2012, Mariam founded the NGO Mariani, which focuses on providing education and social integration for visually impaired people as well as adapting the larger environment with the aim of their integration.

Lia Tabatadze is an art critic and holds an MA. Since 2003 she works as an Art Manager for various organizations, is involved in touristic activities, teaches Art at secondary schools, and gives trainings to art teachers at the Teacher's House. Since 2013 she is working as the Project Manager for "Our Children," the Association of Professionals and Parents of Children with Down Syndrome.



Tornike Guruli has been implementing social projects for 14 years. He was educated in Social Projects Management within the Theodor-Heuss-Kolleg program of the Robert Bosch Foundation. Tornike heads the Bank of Georgia Future Foundation and is running the first Georgian initiative with a million Lari budget, “Tree of Life,” that implements sustainable projects for children with disabilities in Georgia. Tornike is also a professor at the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs and works on various social projects with the students.

Agenda:

15:00 – 15:10 Introduction

Sascha Graumann, UNICEF Representative in Georgia

15:10 – 15:15 Presentation of the agenda and introduction of the first speaker

Akaki Gogichaishvili, moderator

15:15 – 15:25 Speaker #1 presents – Toys for development of children with sever disabilities

Giorgi Demetrashvili, organization “First Step”

15:25 – 15:30 Moderator introduces Speaker #2

15:30 – 15:40 Speaker #2 presents – I cannot change health conditions of my child but I can change the environment

Maia Shishniashvili, organization “Hand in Hand”

15:40 – 15:45 Moderator introduces Speaker #3

15:45 – 15:55 Speaker #3 presents – How to represent the smallest groups of the society and make their interests prevalent for the majority

Anna Arganashvili, NGO “Partnership for Human Rights”

15:55 – 16:00 Moderator introduces Speaker #4

16:00 – 16:10 Speaker #4 presents – Work and art – a way to break stereotypes

Lali Khandolishvili, organization “Qedeli”

16:10 – 16:15 Moderator introduces Speaker #5

16:15 – 16:25 Speaker #5 presents – How to make social responsibility for children with



disabilities contagious

Tornike Guruli, Bank of Georgia

16:25 – 16:30 Moderator introduces Speaker #6

16:30 – 16:40 Speaker #6 presents - How to teach an independent life to a child with

disability

Lia Tabatadze, organization “Our Children”

16:40 – 16:45 Moderator introduces Speaker #7

16:45 – 16:55 Speaker #7 presents - How do I change myself in an inclusive society

Mariam Mikiashvili, organization “Mariani”

16:55 – 17:15 Moderator introduces Q&A session

17: 15 – 17:20 Closing remarks

17:20 – 18:0 Reception