

Emergency Assistance to the Disabled Population in Kosovo, Albania, and Bosnia-Herzegovina

In partnership with Handicap International and the Association of Disabled Persons of Kosovo (HANDIKOS).

Dates:	July 1999 to June 2000
Primary sites:	Kosovo, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Budget:	\$800,000 CAD
Donor:	Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

Overview

As detailed on pages 17, 23, 24, 26, 39, 48, 63, and 67 the ICACBR has worked extensively in the Balkans to support the development of their healthcare system, particularly in the development of community based rehabilitation (CBR). In the Balkans, the institutional approach to the care of people with disabilities was not economically sustainable or effective in addressing the needs of people with disabilities. At the time of the project's onset there was a refugee crisis in the Balkans due to conflict in the region. This presented an opportunity to develop a regional system to address the rehabilitation needs of people with disabilities and their families.



Much like the projects and initiatives that succeeded the Emergency Assistance to the Disabled Population in Kosovo, Albania, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, this project sought to improve CBR programs, institute peer-counselling programs, improve education of rehabilitation professionals and increase awareness of disability issues. These goals were achieved by the following actions:

- The ICACBR created three 5-week educational programs for 50 HANDIKOS rehabilitation professionals, including a two-week clinical education program. Dozens of other educational programs for rehabilitation workers and people with disabilities were created by the project.
- The project delivered sixteen 40-minute classes about care of war and landmine victims that were taught to 100 students in the physiotherapy program at the Pristina Medical Secondary School.
- Through a CBR education program, rehabilitation professional students worked on projects that integrated children with disabilities into schools, aided inclusion of disabled teens in their communities, and raised awareness of accessibility issues for people with disabilities.
- The project developed a 1-year specialization program to prepare physicians to practice as physiotherapists in Albania.
- Seven peer-counselling sites were integrated in existing CBR sites in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Background

The challenges the healthcare and social systems of Balkans faced as a result of the Bosnian War, Kosovo War, Bosnian Genocide and the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have been detailed in the other project reports on pages 17, 23, 24, 26, 39, 48, 63, and 67. As with many of the other projects in the Balkans, CBR development and peer-counselling program development were identified as priorities for people with disabilities, particularly land mine victims.

Rationale

The rationale for this project was similar to the other ICACBR projects in the Balkans – institutional healthcare was not meeting the needs of people with disabilities and there was a very high prevalence of disabilities in the region due to war and landmines. The educational structure for healthcare professionals also needed support as there was very little existing infrastructure as a result of the wars and the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Actions and Outcomes

Project actions in Albania and Kosova occurred from July 1999 to April 2000. Project actions in Bosnia and Herzegovina occurred from September 1999 to June 2000.

The project's work in Kosova included the following:

- The project facilitated the creation of an **agreement for 10 CBR centres in Kosovo to be staffed by professional physical therapists and CBR workers.**
- **ICACBR staff members created and delivered three 5-week educational programs to 50 HANDIKOS members.** These programs included three weeks of theoretical teaching and two weeks of supervised clinical practice. The project worked to translate learning resource manuals that could be used as a reference in CBR centres and distributed them to participants. Individuals who completed the courses testified to the importance of the skills that they learned during them - they believed that the courses had enabled them to provide care for people with disabilities more effectively.
- The project organized three 4-hour seminars with presenters including physicians, physical therapists, and nurses. 50 participants attended these sessions. The seminars were designed to enhance the clinical competency for healthcare professionals.
- **The project ran sixteen 40-minute classes about how to effectively care for war and landmine victims.** These classes were **attended by 100 students** in the physiotherapy program at the Pristina Medical Secondary School.
- The ICACBR worked with Handicap International to examine the "Health Care policy" that was being drafted by the World Health Organization at the time. The project identified the need to include a continuum of rehabilitation services in this policy document.
- The project worked to support the HANDIKOS CBR education program. Through this program **rehabilitation students worked on projects that integrated children with disabilities into schools, aided inclusion of teens with disabilities in their communities, and raised awareness of accessibility issues for people with disabilities.**
- **The project increased the profile of disability related issues, community care development and primary healthcare in Kosova,** particularly among international non-governmental organizations involved in policy development.

The project's work in Albania included the following:

- The project worked to provide education and develop curriculum for physicians to enhance their ability to provide rehabilitation services.
 - **A two day seminar series on CBR principles and clinical physiotherapy techniques was organized for staff at the University Centre Hospital.**
 - **The project developed a 1-year specialization curriculum to enable physicians to practice as physiotherapists in Albania.**

The project's work in Bosnia and Herzegovina included the following:

- **The project presented four seminars to CBR staff** in each of the four CBR sites in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to the staff in Republika Srpska. **These seminars had a total attendance of 353 healthcare professionals, rehabilitation professionals, and peer counsellors.**
- **The project worked to integrate seven peer counselling programs within existing CBR sites** in Sarajevo, Tuzla, West and East Mostar, Grazde, Prnjavor, and Prijedor. The project selected and trained seven local peer counsellors, six of which were landmine survivors.
- **The project worked to increase collaboration between CBR centres and the peer counselling groups.** The project held two 5-day workshops and four 1-day seminars for peer counsellors and CBR centre employees to learn about each others' work. **94 people attended these events.**
- The project helped local CBR and peer counselling programs increase their outreach to landmine survivors and other people with disabilities.
- **The project organized 34 site visits with peer counsellors and CBR staff to review the progress of the peer counselling programs.** In doing so, the project was able to review the initiatives and challenges of each group and help them solve problems unique to their situations. These site visits also helped the project demonstrate the value of peer-counselling to stakeholders.
- **The project worked to develop public awareness about the need for integration of landmine victims and other people with disabilities into their communities.** This was accomplished by the organization of four television interviews, seven radio talk shows, and three newspaper articles about peer counselling. These public awareness campaigns **reached approximately 5000 people.**

Conclusion

The Emergency Assistance to the Disabled Population in Kosovo, Albania, and Bosnia-Herzegovina worked to educate healthcare providers, rehabilitation professionals and peer counsellors in an effort to improve the support offered to people with disabilities. There was high demand for such initiatives in the Balkans due to the high prevalence of disability and the institutional nature of healthcare.

Partners

Implementing partners: Handicap International, the Association of Disabled Persons of Kosovo (HANDIKOS).

Community collaborators: Peer counsellors, people with disabilities, various CBR staff, the governments of Kosovo, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Pristina Hospital and community clinic, Pristina Medical Secondary School, University Centre Hospital in Tirana, National Coordinating Centre in Bosnia and Herzegovina, National Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

International collaborators: World Health Organization.

Sources and Project Resources

1. Emergency Assistance to the Disabled Population in Kosovo, Albania, and Bosnia-Herzegovina full project details*
2. Emergency Assistance to the Disabled Population in Kosovo, Albania, and Bosnia-Herzegovina website archive

*used to generate this report