

## Initiative for Inclusion “VelikiMali”

Initiative for Inclusion “VelikiMali” started working in 1999 but was officially registered on April 12<sup>th</sup> 2000. Organisation has its office in the municipality of Pancevo (population about 120.000), which is located 15 kilometres from the Serbian capital Belgrade.

All VelikiMali activities are directed at **protection and promotion of rights of children with disabilities** in accordance with **United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child**. The aim of our programmes is forming strong local support services and setting conditions for complete inclusion of people with disabilities in the everyday life of the local communities, and thus realisation of their rights.

Our working methodology is based on *holistic approach* to the needs and rights of a family, *individualised approach* to every service user, *fieldwork* and principle of *complete inclusion* into the life of the local community.

Our methodology is based on **social support model**, contrary to prevalent medical model in our country, which means that we emphasise inclusion of people with disabilities in the every aspect of the community life and respecting their rights.

### **Values and principles of our work:**

- Peace culture and tolerance
- Respecting human rights
- Developing civil society
- Social approach in providing services to children with disabilities
- Non-institutional work
- Holistic approach to children

### **Goals of VelikiMali:**

- 1) Support to overcoming developmental problems and developing potentials of a child to a maximum
- 2) Setting conditions for quality inclusion of children with disabilities into regular educational system and life of the local community
- 3) Developing accepting public attitude towards children with disabilities and alleviating their isolation in the society
- 4) Advancing expertise and skills of members, associates and volunteers in NGO VelikiMali
- 5) Developing the practice of volunteering as important aspect in creating civil society and active dealing with the reality
- 6) Developing domestic and international cooperation and partnerships

Direct service users of NGO VelikiMali are children with various types and extent of disabilities (autism, cerebral palsy, intellectual disability, vision impairment etc), aged between 3 and 15. Secondary services users are young people, aged 15 to 18, as well as they families. Throughout our work, we also work with and influence children of wider population, general public, professionals working with children (pedagogues, psychologists, special educators, teachers, social workers etc), and public authorities.

## **Programmes**

### **Educational programmes for children with disabilities**

The main focus of organisation’s work is on education of children with disabilities. UN data says that about 85% of children with disabilities in Serbia (those that are within the family, not placed in residential institutions) do not attend any kind of educational institutions (pre-school and primary school, mainstream or “special” schools). Regarding the fact that there is no inclusion into the life of the local community and proper development without realisation of children’s rights to education, organisation “VelikiMali” has developed programmes that support inclusion of children with disabilities into the educational system. Since 2000, in

cooperation with the Pre-school Institution in our town, we have been conducting programme of including children with various developmental disabilities into the mainstream kindergartens with personal assistance and so far, more than 30 children passed through this programme and are now independently in mainstream kindergartens or are attending primary schools. In 2005, NGO VelikiMali started with realisation of first inclusive kindergarten in the municipality of Pancevo, which is now part of the Pre-school Institution strategy and is supported by the local authorities. We also provide support to children with disabilities attending mainstream schools, throughout regular consultations with teachers and school's expert team (pedagogue and psychologist), creation of individual educational plans for children, holding individual work with a child and family.

In the course of developing educational programmes for children with disabilities, every year we hold about six seminars for professionals working with children (teachers, pedagogues, psychologists, special educators etc) about characteristics of working with children with disabilities, about personal assistance, inclusive educational system etc.

### **De-institutionalisation**

Since the beginning of its work, organisation VelikiMali has been implementing programmes that prevent long term institutionalisation of children with disabilities, throughout developing programmes and services for children and their families within the local community. As a result of inadequate social support services, educational system and health and treatment services in Serbia and financial difficulties, majority of families are forced to place their child in social institutions for long-term residence (there are about 1.200 children with disabilities in institutions in Serbia). There, children's rights are hugely violated in every aspect of their life and they usually stay in such institutions for their whole life<sup>1</sup>. As a response to that, organisation VelikiMali started in 2007, after several visits in the previous years to such institutions and mapping the needs, programme "Foster families for children with disabilities", which includes de-institutionalisation of several children with disabilities, placing them in foster families and providing services within the local community (treatment for a child, inclusion into formal and informal peer groups etc). So far, the team working on this programme attended several trainings for this programme and visited several institutions where they met with children, who will be placed in the foster families. The following activities are finding foster families and providing proper education and training for them, starting public awareness campaign and meeting families with children, when we will make support plan for every family. We have met several families which already foster children with disabilities and try to provide them support by connecting them with service providers in the local community and including them in our activities.

In the same time, organisation VelikiMali is working on advocating for starting reforms of social policy in Serbia, throughout contacts and demands to the Government, building support (networking with organisations and partners) and participating in legislative activities.

### **Advocacy activities**

Organisation provides **free legal aid** to parents of children with disabilities with the aim of realisation of their rights and enforcing them for self-advocacy. Besides direct work with children with disabilities, their families and professional working in educational and social institutions, we are working on advocacy activities on the national level. One part of that programme is **capacity building** to small and under-developed organisations working with children and supporting them for developing community-based services within their towns (national network for promotion of children with disabilities in 10 towns in Serbia).

As part of **the Coalition against Discrimination** (made of eight NGOs working in various field of human rights protection), we work on informing public about the discriminatory

---

<sup>1</sup> See report "Torment as Treatment – Segregation and Abuse of children and adults with disabilities in Serbia" by Mental Disabilities Rights International, published in 2007;

practice in Serbia and advocate for bringing *Equal Treatment Act* in Serbian legislation. One of the important results of our work is adoption of *Act against discrimination of people with disabilities*, which was passed in March 2006.

In addition, we participated in creation of *draft of Act on volunteering*, and changes of *Act on basics of educational system*, as well as many strategies and local action plans.

We constantly have been organising **public awareness campaigns** and **advocacy activities**, with the aim of promoting rights of children with disabilities and making them more “visible” in the local community. The most important public awareness campaigns are “Different – so what?!” aimed at alleviating prejudices and forming approving public attitude towards children with disabilities, as well as “Quality Education for Everyone”.

In order to have the complete insight into the needs and problems of children with disabilities and their families, and in order to promote their rights more effectively, NGO VelikiMali constantly works on **researching and publishing activities**<sup>2</sup>. Currently, we are preparing Policy Paper on education of children with disabilities in Serbia.

In 2005, organisation VelikiMali received by the Handicap International **special award for good practice of community-based services for people with disabilities in South East Europe**<sup>3</sup>.

## VelikiMali team

Initiative for Inclusion VelikiMali, consists of women and men from different generations and of different social status, education, ethnic and religious background and capabilities. There are 16 full-time and part-time people engaged in organization’s work (15 women and one man), and 28 volunteers (23 women and five men).

Organisation VelikiMali has five full-time employees.

People responsible:

Valentina Zavisic, President of the Board

Natasa Milojevic, Programme Coordinator

Biljana Janjic, Executive Coordinator

Marijana Jovic, Administrative-technical Coordinator and Coordinator of Volunteer programme

Emina Tanev, Financial Coordinator

## Financing

Majority of our programmes are financed throughout projects approved by the foundations. Programme of including children with disabilities into mainstream kindergartens in financed by the local authorities. One small portion of financing comes from individuals and business (about 5%). The annual budget of the organisation is about 75.000 EUR, which is 2/3 of the organisational needs. Our donors are Swedish Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Fund for Open Society, Open Society Institute, the city of Konstanz in Germany, Embassy of USA in

---

<sup>2</sup> All researches and publication of VelikiMali are available on our website [www.velikimali.org](http://www.velikimali.org) but only in Serbian language

<sup>3</sup> The jury wished to highlight one innovative initiative of an organization that is promoting a professional change among the traditional scope of practice of ‘defectology’ in the region. This encouragement and special prize was given to **VelikiMali – initiative for professional assistance to children with disabilities in Pancevo** in Serbia and Montenegro. VelikiMali is working in the active implementation of inclusive education for children with disabilities in the municipality of Pancevo. The jury’s motivation was:

“Veliki Mali, through the team of young and motivated professionals, are challenging the traditional approach of special and institutionalized education by promoting the inclusive education and being active directly in the mainstream schools and paving the way of a new role of ‘defectologist’ and special education teachers as support and advisors to the mainstream education system in order that they are open to all children regardless of their differences”

Serbia, Australian Embassy in Serbia, Urgent Action Fund for Women, local authorities, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

**If you would like to make a donation from abroad to contribute to our mission, here are the instructions for donating via bank:**

**INSTRUCTION FOR CUSTOMER TRANSFERS IN USD**

56: Intermediary:

BCITUS33

INTESA SANPAOLO SPA (FORMERLY BANCA INTESA SPA NEW YORK)  
NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES

57: Account with institution:

DBDBRSBG

BANCA INTESA AD, BEOGRAD

MILENTIJA POPOVIĆA 7B

BEOGRAD, REPUBLIKA SRBIJA

59: Beneficiary:

/RS35160005080001120269

VELIKI MALI IN.STR.ZA.POM.OMET.DECI

**INSTRUCTION FOR CUSTOMER TRANSFERS IN EUR**

56: Intermediary:

BCITITMM

INTESA SANPAOLO SPA

MILANO, ITALY

57: Account with institution:

DBDBRSBG

BANCA INTESA AD, BEOGRAD

MILENTIJA POPOVIĆA 7B

BEOGRAD, REPUBLIKA SRBIJA

59: Beneficiary:

/RS35160005080001120269

VELIKI MALI IN.STR.ZA.POM.OMET.DECI

## **Contacts**

### **Initiative for Inclusion VelikiMali**

Address: Maskima Gorkog 8, 26000 Pancevo, Serbia

Phone: +381 13 303 922

Phone/fax: +381 13 303 922, +381 13 344 681

Email: [office@velikimali.org](mailto:office@velikimali.org)

Website: [www.velikimali.org](http://www.velikimali.org)