

DevInfo in Action

SERBIA: Using DevInfo to Advocate for Children at the Local Level

Recent progress in realizing the fulfillment of child rights in Serbia – particularly for the more vulnerable groups – can be credited in part to the introduction of DevInfo use at the municipal level, through monitoring the Local Plans of Action for children.

In 2004 the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the National Plan of Action (NPA) for Children – a blueprint calling for the government to ensure the rights of every child in the country. Realizing that the NPA also needed to be implemented at the local level for its goals to be achieved, municipal parliaments in 21 out of Serbia's 167 municipalities eventually elected to develop and adopt a Local Plan of Action (LPA) for Children.

Once the LPAs were in place, it was clear to stakeholders that a systematic method of measuring progress towards achieving the LPA goals would be critical to ensuring their success. As DevInfo was already being used at the central level to monitor the National Plan of Action, it seemed logical to also introduce DevInfo at the municipal level to monitor the LPAs.

This rollout of DevInfo at the local level was undertaken jointly by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and UNICEF Serbia. Selected staff from each of the 21 municipalities were trained in the DevInfo software, taught how to create a database containing all the relevant child welfare indicators, and shown how to monitor these indicators over time to assess progress. This marked the first time in the country's history that child rights would be monitored in such a comprehensive, systematic fashion.

Has DevInfo truly made a difference at the local level in monitoring child rights? Absolutely, according to Vladica Jankovic, DevInfo consultant at the Statistical Office. Explains Mr. Jankovic, "For



DevInfo use at the local level helped identify children with disabilities like Slavica, who now attends weekly classes after 12 years of living in isolation.



A young girl with cerebral palsy in Bela Palanka goes back to school after staying at home for four years, also a product of the LPA initiative.

example, data from all municipal DevInfo databases have consistently revealed big discrepancies between the status of Roma children who live in Roma settlements and the general population. This data is used to support policy-making decisions at the local level to improve, for example, the education status and social welfare of Roma children.”

LPA municipalities are using DevInfo databases, among other data sources, to generate tables, graphs and maps for their annual LPA reports. These reports are submitted to the local parliament, which in turn use the data to formulate new child welfare policies, modify existing ones, and create municipal budgets to meet identified priorities. The data are also shared with local and international partners, donors and UN agencies.

With a view towards building on these initial successes, the Statistical Office with UNICEF support has developed a standard LPA model which can be adopted and further customized by any municipality in the future. The model comes with a pre-defined list of indicators, a survey designed to collect missing data at the local level, and various data processing and report tools – including a model DevInfo LPA database.

With DevInfo now firmly entrenched as the key LPA monitoring tool in Serbia, the government stands in a much better position to fulfill its stated commitments to the nation’s children.

Data making a difference.

For more information, please contact Vladica Jankovic, DevInfo consultant, at vladica.jankovic@stat.gov.rs.



Young Roma children at the newest Development Education Centre in Gitane Potok. DevInfo has been instrumental in identifying educational disparities between Roma and non-Roma children.