

EVALUATION REPORT

I Evaluation submitted (by name of Member State or INGO) Republic of Moldova

II Number and title of request: *“Autistic lives matter! (Strengthening Access to and Participation in Education of Moldovan and Ukrainian Children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities)”*. Request number 3240114071 PPE.

Place of implementation: **Republic of Moldova, Ceadir-Lunga**

Commencement date: **03/02/2025**

Completion date: **30/06/2025**

Contribution received from UNESCO: **20 000 \$US**

III Evaluation of the project or activity implemented:

a) Purpose and objectives indicating the original goals or expected outcomes as defined from the outset in the original project;

The project addressed the immediate needs of refugee children with SEN and children with disabilities, including children with autistic spectrum disorder and Moldovan vulnerable children, to ensure that all children were integrated and benefited from connectivity and access to quality education and inclusive development education systems.

The project aimed to provide tailored and gender-responsive access to both formal and non-formal education services for young refugees and other vulnerable children, including children with autism.

The project provided children with much-needed opportunities to learn, play, and integrate, and teachers, support staff, and parents/caregivers with support to enhance their professional and parenting skills, mental health, and well-being, and to integrate into Moldovan society.

b) Benefits, major results obtained and impact of the project:

Were the expected results fulfilled?

Outcome 1. Education personnel, parents/caregivers, and professionals have enhanced capacities and skills in inclusive education practices to enable inclusion and fast integration of Ukrainian and Moldovan children with SEN and children with disabilities, including children with ASD, and other vulnerable children in education.

Output 1. Programmes in inclusive education to mainstream best inclusive practices are available for education personnel, parents/caregivers and professionals.

The *Output 1*. was fully achieved through the following activities:

Provision of educational and training services for teachers, educators, and ASD specialists, both Moldovan and Ukrainian, on the modern techniques for interventions in autism and other associated disabilities

The training module/guide “Formation of professional competencies of teachers of general education institutions in the field of assistance to children with autism spectrum disorders” was published with the financial support of UNESCO Headquarters Paris within the framework of the UNESCO Participation Programmes 2024-2025 (Request number 3240114071 PPE). The project was implemented by the National Commission of the Republic of Moldova for UNESCO jointly with the NGO “Speranța’87 Moldova” and in close partnership with the NGO “Tineri în Afaceri”.

The training module/guide was developed by experts of the Republican Center for Psycho-pedagogical Assistance: Rusnac Virginia, PhD in Psychology, Director, Republican Center for Psycho-pedagogical Assistance; Lungu Tatiana, psychologist, Deputy Director of the Republican Center for Psycho-pedagogical Assistance; Grosu Inga, psycho-pedagogue, deputy director of the Republican Center for Psycho-pedagogical Assistance; Elena Nastas, psychologist, head of department, Republican Center for Psycho-pedagogical Assistance within the framework of the UNICEF project, which was financed by the governments of Italy and Norway and implemented by the NGO "Speranta'87 Moldova" in partnership with the NGO "Tineri în Afaceri".

This module/guide is unique in its kind, as it summarises the many years of experience of experts across various fields (pedagogy, medicine, social activities, parents' personal experience, etc.). (ANNEX 1. Training module. Hard copy and electronic version.) Electronic versions will be posted on the website of UNICEF, the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova and the National Commission of the Republic of Moldova for UNESCO.

Contents of the Module/Guide

Abbreviations.
Introduction

Module 1. General information about children with autism spectrum disorders.
1.1. Developmental characteristics of children with autism spectrum disorders (TSA).
1.2. Characteristic signs/indicators.
1.3. Practical lesson "Myths about autism".

Module 2. Inclusion of education of children with autism spectrum disorders.
2.1. Creating an inclusive environment is the most important condition for ensuring the educational inclusion of children with autism spectrum disorders.
2.2. Assessment of child development.
2.3. Services and forms of support for the educational inclusion of children with autism spectrum disorders at the level of educational institutions.

Module 3. Methods and techniques for working with children with autism spectrum disorders.

- 3.1. Didactic strategies for inclusion in the education of children with autism spectrum disorders.
- 3.2. Methods and techniques of work.
- 3.3. Program models.

Module 4. Strategies for working with the family of a child with autism spectrum disorders and family involvement in the educational process.

- 4.1. Recommendations for teachers to achieve an effective partnership with parents.
- 4.2. Counselling parents of children with autism spectrum disorders.
- 4.3. The importance of parental self-care in creating and maintaining the well-being of children with autism spectrum disorders.

Appendices
Bibliography

Training and regular mentoring of Moldovan/Ukrainian educators, teachers and managers on child-centred methodology, playful learning, inclusive education, mental health and psychosocial support, prevention of violence and bullying, social cohesion, and positive parenting. Provision of mental health and psychosocial support to parents, training in positive parenting

Training of professionals, teachers, and caregivers, both Ukrainian and Moldovan and follow-up support for implementation through mentoring.

To achieve the stated goals of the project, 4 seminars/round tables were held with project beneficiaries: teachers, educators, social workers, and parents (total 47 persons). (ANNEX 2. List of beneficiaries).

Seminars were held in Ceadir-Lunga, ATU Gagauzia from 05/20/2025 – 05/30/2025:

Date	Educational institution	Number of participants
20.05.2025	Gymnasium/kindergarten named after G.Syrtmach, mun. Ceadir - Lunga	23 people (teaching staff : early education institution teachers, primary school and gymnasium teachers)
23.05.2025	TL named after V. Moshkova, mun. Ceadir - Lunga Early education institution No. 1 "Cornflower", mun. Ceadir - Lunga	24 people (teaching staff : early education institution teachers, primary school and gymnasium teachers)
27.05.2025	TL named after V. Moshkova, mun. Ceadir - Lunga	18 people (teaching staff : gymnasium and lyceum)

30.05.2025	Institutions of early education of mun. Chadir – Lunga : №4 - "Berezka", №5 - "Kolokolchik", №6 - "Golden Key", №7 - "Ivushka", №8 - "Adriyesh" Mun. Chadir - Lunga, Center "Giving Hope"	22 people (teaching staff : teachers of the early education institution, employees and parents of the beneficiaries of the Center "Giving Hope")

During the above-mentioned meetings, the participants were presented with a Module/Guide, which consists of 4 modules:

- Module 1. General information about children with autism spectrum disorders,
- Module 2. Inclusion of the education of children with autism spectrum disorders,
- Module 3. Methods and techniques for working with children with autism spectrum disorders.
- Module 4. Strategies for working with the family of a child with autism spectrum disorders and involving the family in the educational process.

To improve the quality of information perception, a PowerPoint presentation was prepared and used, consisting of 102 slides, based on the translation of this module (Russian version is attached).

During the seminar, the participants had the opportunity to:

- develop/expand their knowledge in the field of ASD,
- analyse the degree and quality of inclusiveness of the institutions where they work,
- get acquainted with didactic strategies for the inclusion of children with autism spectrum disorders in education, with methods and techniques of work, as well as with models of programs for organizing the education of children with ASD,
- receive recommendations for achieving effective partnership and consulting parents of children with ASD.

As a result of the meetings, at the reflection stage, the participants expressed oral feedback and comments to the developers regarding the quality of the content of the material and the form of presentation of information, in which they expressed gratitude for the relevance, meaningfulness, systematization and language accessibility of this Guide/Module.

Each participant had the opportunity to share with the audience and the organizers of the round table their achievements and failures in the field of implementing inclusive education during a live conversation.

The participants' unanimous opinion about the meetings can be expressed in the following phrase:

- such training seminars expand people's understanding of the true needs of children with special educational needs and ASD;
- providing special methodological assistance to expand the professional competencies of teaching staff in the field of interaction with children with special educational needs and ASD can improve the quality of educational services that meet the true needs of children.

Outcome 2. Ukrainian and Moldovan children with SEN and children with disabilities, including children with ASD, and other vulnerable children have equitable access to inclusive and quality formal learning opportunities in host communities

Output 2: Ukrainian and Moldovan children with SEN and children with disabilities, including children with ASD, and other vulnerable children benefit from improved and more inclusive formal education services, as well as adapted didactical and learning materials.

The Output 2. was fully achieved through the following activities:

Activities:

Procurement of the necessary specialized equipment, including toys and teaching/learning materials for children with ASD and other associated disabilities

Procurement of stationery and learning kits to both children and teachers to decrease financial barriers faced by Ukrainian refugees and the most vulnerable of the host communities' parents to enroll their children in formal schools

In agreement with the experts of the CRAP, directors and teachers of educational institutions of the municipality of Ceadir-Lunga, the director of the center "Giving Hope" for children with autism disorder of the center, educational games, different types of boccia and equipment were purchased within the framework of the project. All equipment and games were transferred to the balance of local partners, NGOs, which distributed it to preschool institutions of the municipality of Ceadir-Lunga: No. 4 - "Birch", No. 5 - "Bell", No. 6 - "Golden Key", No. 7 - "Ivushka", No. 8 - "Adriyesh" (ANNEX 3. Acceptance Certificate.)

Implementation of support programs for children with SEN covering also children with ASD in pilot areas with highest concentration of Ukrainian children and follow up support for implementation through mentoring

Facilitate the integration of refugee children with SEN and disabilities, including children with ASD in the education process

In order to fulfill the tasks set within the framework of the project, the NC RM for UNESCO with national and regional partners conducted drawing lessons for the children of beneficiaries, using and distributing free of charge the coloring book "You are believed", which was developed and published in Romanian, Ukrainian and Russian languages: Funded by the European Union, Regional Refugee Response for

Ukraine Situation, UN Migration. The coloring book was distributed throughout the republic (ANNEX 4. Coloring book).

The main message of the coloring book is "You should be safe always and everywhere". The coloring book consists of the following chapters:

I have the right to the services I need!

I have the right to be treated with respect!

I have the right to receive humanitarian services for free!

I have the right to be protected from harm and exploitation!

I have the right to be safe and close to those who will support me!

I have the right not to do or see things that are not appropriate for my age!

Were there modifications made to the initial objectives(s) and the factors that made such modifications necessary? NO

What difficulties were encountered, and how were solutions found?

The team did not encounter any difficulties in implementing the project, as it was in great demand by the Ministry of Education, RM, CRAP, beneficiaries, and local authorities of Ceadir-Lunga. The project was extremely necessary. It received comprehensive support from experts, teachers, parents, NGO "Speranța'87 Moldova" in close partnership with the NGO "Tineri în Afaceri".

As a result of the project, what was UNESCO's visibility in the Member State?

Depending upon the nature of the project, did the Member State publicize the activity by means of announcements in the media/radio/television and/or posters?

Information about the role of UNESCO in the implementation of this project was widely advertised through communication with local authorities, announcements on social networks, free distribution of a published guide/module "Formation of professional competencies of teachers of general education institutions in the field of assistance to children with autism spectrum disorders", posting of an electronic version of the guide/module on social networks, on web sites of the Ministry of Education of RM, CRAP, National Commission of the Republic of Moldova for UNESCO, UNICEF, information about the project provided to the National Committee for UNESCO Affairs and Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Moldova.

The official presentation of the project, its results and publications took place at the UN Moldova (03.06.2025) and UNICEF (04.06.2025). At the end of August 2025, the project and its results will be officially presented at the board of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova.

The importance of UNESCO in this project and in its results was essential. All actions done in the framework of the project were presented in mass – media.

Was the public at large invited to participate or be present?

In addition to 47 direct beneficiaries of the project, i.e. those who attended the seminars held within the framework of the project, there were about five thousand indirect beneficiaries: parents, teachers, educators, social workers - about 2,500

people, those who received books or familiarized themselves with materials on websites and social networks; children who received coloring books in Ceadir-Lunga, Pohrebya, Kosnitsa, Stari Dubbossary, Sofia, Briceni - 3,000 people.

Were local non-governmental organizations implicated?

The national partner of the project was NGO “Speranta’87 Moldova”. NGO “Speranta 87 Moldova” is a partner of HOPE 87 (Austria) in the implementation of all its projects in the Republic of Moldova and represents HOPE 87’s interests in the country. (ANNEX 5. Presentation activity “Speranta’ 87 Moldova”).

HOPE'87 is an Austrian initiative based in Vienna. The organization works closely with the Federal Chancellery in the field of youth training and employment and in the promotion of humanitarian projects in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe. This international initiative is based on UN Decision 40/16 "Opportunities for Youth", adopted by the General Assembly on the occasion of the UN International Youth Year (1985).

The local partner of the project was NGO «Tineri in afaceri», which provided important assistance in the development, preparation for printing and distribution of the Guide/module “Formation of professional competencies of teachers of general education institutions in the field of assistance to children with autism spectrum disorders” free of charge.

Was the UNESCO field office consulted? Did it assist in the implementation of the project?

The project was implemented NGO « Speranta’87 Moldova» in close cooperation with the UNESCO NCRM, which provided advisory assistance to the team and whose representatives actively participated in all activities within the project (ANNEX 6. Photos).

Were there or will be any follow-ups? Are there long-term plans resulting from the project?

Did this event reflect on what is needed in the Member State in the coming years in the fields of: education, culture, communication, science and the social and human sciences?

At the beginning of 2022, about 186.5 thousand people with disabilities lived in Moldova, which is 7% of the total population. The majority of people with disabilities (53%) have been disabled since childhood.

As of January 1, 2022, the number of children aged 0–17 in the Republic of Moldova was 559.4 thousand, or 21.5% of the total population, of whom 2.1% had disabilities.

As of January 1, 2022, the number of declared children diagnosed with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) and other genetic abnormalities is 496. The real statistics of children diagnosed with ASD and psycho-cognitive disabilities significantly exceed the official data, according to the statement of the Ministry of Health of Moldova.

This project is fully consistent with the priority of the Republic of Moldova in the field of education, especially with regard to the education of children with special educational needs and children from low-income families:

- Education Code, Law 152/2014, article 2 lists the UNESCO Convention against discrimination in education as one of the international treaties that regulates the field of education.
- National Development Strategy European Moldova 2030 (GD 114/2023) set by Objective 3 Ensuring relevant and quality education for all throughout life the following:
 - Holistic development of children in early education for learning and well-being throughout life.
 - Formation of transformative skills and future skills in the educational system.
 - Developing an accessible, flexible and relevant system of continuing education of adults.
 - By 2030, the necessary conditions will be ensured for all children to complete primary education and free, fair and quality secondary education.
 - Gradual increase of funds allocated for research and development by 0.1% of GDP each year.
- National Development Strategy Education 2030 covers General objective Ensuring access to quality lifelong education for all (SDG-4) aiming ensuring access to all levels of the education system and vocational training of vulnerable people
- The instruction on the organization of distance education for children with disabilities approved by MECR Order No. 1934/2018.

The domestic law prohibits discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in employment, education, access to public facilities, health services, or the provision of other government services. Moldovan Parliament ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2010.

In accordance with art. 32 and 33 of the Education Code of the Republic of Moldova No. 152/2014, education for children with special educational needs is an integral part of the education system.

A minimum package of inclusive education services has been developed to accommodate all pupils in mainstream educational settings: municipal/district psycho-pedagogical support service and support services at the institution level (support teacher and resource center for inclusive education). In order to create conditions and educational support services, financial resources are allocated annually from the district education component up to 2%.

In order to ensure didactic-methodical support with reference to the inclusion of children and young people with disabilities, have been developed provisions for the realization of the individualized educational plan; methodological guide on curricular adaptations, and evaluation of school progress in the context of inclusive education;

final evaluation and certification of students with special educational needs included in compulsory education.

Comprehensive assessment of the development of children with disabilities is carried out in the presence of parents or legal representatives by the district/municipal psycho-pedagogical assistance services, whose work is monitored and assisted by the Republican Centre for Psycho-pedagogical Assistance. The existing 35 district/municipal psycho-pedagogical assistance services develop recommendations on the educational inclusion of children, provide psycho-pedagogical assistance services to children and provide methodological assistance to specialists in education and related fields in achieving educational inclusion.

Specialized assistance to children with disabilities in general education institutions is carried out by organizing multidisciplinary in-school committees, setting up teams to draw up and implement individualized educational plans, employing support teachers, and setting up and equipping resource centers for inclusive education at the level of educational institutions.

This project fits into such projects as «Qualitative Assessment for Education Needs of Children with Special Education Needs and Refugees in the Transnistrian Region» (UNICEF/ HOPE'87/Speranta'87 Moldova), "Children of the World: Psychological support and leisure for Refugees from Ukraine and children from low-income families" (UNESCO/ HOPE'87/Speranta'87 Moldova), « Qualitative Assessment for Education Needs of Children with Special Education Needs and Refugees in the Transnistrian Region » (UNICEF/ HOPE'87/Speranta'87 Moldova), etc.

Was the project also financed through other funding sources? Kindly explain.

1. UNICEF

UNICEF provided financial and consulting assistance for the development of the Guide/Module "Formation of professional competencies of teachers of general education institutions in the field of assistance to children with autism spectrum disorders".

2. European Union, Regional Refugee Response for Ukraine Situation, UN Migration provided the project with the "They Believe You" Coloring Books (5 000 copies).

VI. Any other observations

Taking into account the priorities of the Republic of Moldova in the field of promoting and improving the quality of education for children with special educational needs, expressed in documents such as Education Code, Law 152/2014, National Development Strategy European Moldova 2030 (GD 114/2023), as well as UNICEF's interest in partnering with UNESCO in developing the Module/Guide "Training Program for Teachers of General Education Institutions on Individualization of the Educational Process for Children with Intellectual Disabilities", the NCRM for UNESCO plans to continue the project within the framework of UNESCO Participation Programs for 2026-2027.

VII. STAMP, SIGNATURE AND DATE.

Chişinău, 30.01.2026



Prof. Sergiu Musteață, Secretary-General of the National Commission of the Republic of Moldova for UNESCO