

**From de-institutionalization towards an
inclusive society for all:**

**Outcomes and challenges regarding
the rights of children with intellectual
disabilities**

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The “Institutionalization” Mind-set

Dominant belief system:

- Institutions can replace families
- The needs of children with disabilities are best met in an institutional environment



A shift towards a family-based mind-set

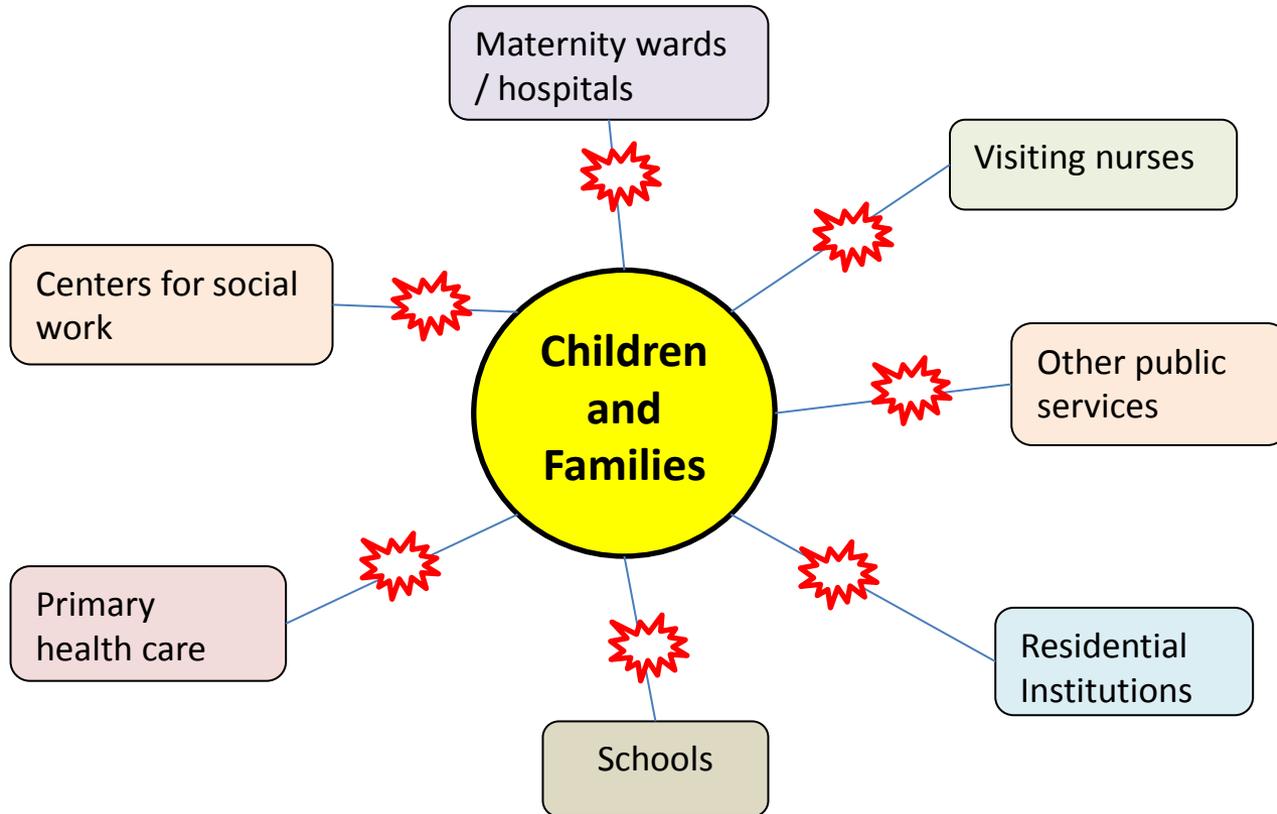
- Loving and caring families are where children reach their full potential; All children have the right to grow up in family environment
- Institutional care has detrimental impacts on a child's cognitive development and physical and emotional wellbeing



New mind-set reflected in revised legislative frameworks and new mechanisms

- Legislation (e.g. Social welfare, Education)
- Newly established and fully functioning independent bodies (Ombudsman office and Commissioner for Equality)
- Independent monitoring mechanisms (National Preventive Mechanism)

Mapping of Discrimination in Practice:



Changing mind-sets of professionals in the health system

The challenge: Health professionals advising parents to place their children with disability in institutional care

The response: Developing guidelines and training for maternity hospital staff and home visiting nurses

Changing the mindsets of professionals in social welfare system

The challenge: A belief that children with disability are better off in institutional settings

The response: Participatory planning processes at strategic and operational levels; intensive capacity building; Providing on-going support throughout the de-institutionalization process

Changing the mindsets of professionals in education system

The challenge: The belief held by education professionals and practitioners that children with disability will get a better education in segregated environments (specials schools)

The response: Capacity building of teachers in regular schools to work in inclusive classrooms;
Semi-voluntary support network – operating throughout the country

What worked: Lessons learnt in changing mind-sets of practitioners

- Give people a chance to change and do not be judgmental
- Give people a chance to voice their concerns and fears; Take these seriously – and integrate them into plans, policies, activities
- Allow for staff to benefit from being engaged in the process (trainings, study visits, access to networks)
- Show respect, but also admiration for staff leading and embracing the changes
- Make it clear when the ‘change phase’ ends and when the “no tolerance to discrimination” begins

The remaining challenge: Building capacities of practitioners to address discrimination in their communities

- How to respond to discriminatory behavior in informal settings
- Raising issues of discrimination with parents of children who are discriminating
- Raising issues with managers of services whose staff have acted in discriminatory manner
- Filing Complaints with Commissioner for Equality or addressing an issue with the Ombudsman office
- Initiating court proceedings

The remaining challenge: cross-sectoral cooperation

- Lack of coordination between education, health and social welfare on inclusion related policies at national and local level



“There can be no better measure of our governance than the way we treat
our children”
(Jessica Lange)