

Georgia: Journey
towards inclusion
in partnership
with Norway



Case study

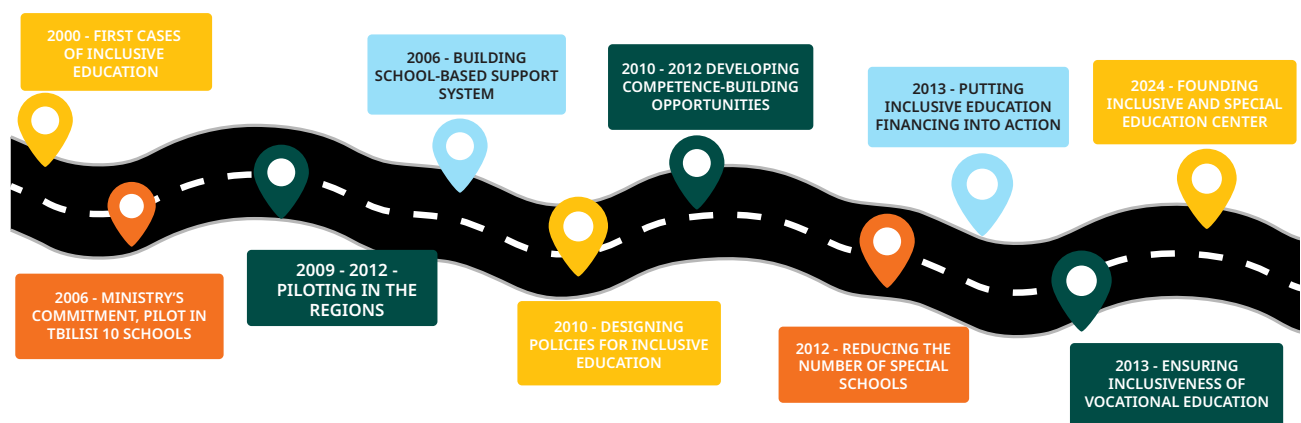
Georgia's journey shows the power of perseverance and partnership. A key insight from Georgia is that sustained international support combined with local activism can fast-track reform. Over nearly two decades, a partnership with Norway and the dedication of Georgian parents proved that even a deeply entrenched system can transform. The conversion of special schools into resource centers stands out as an innovative strategy – it respected the past while moving into the future. For other countries, Georgia offers this inspiring lesson: start small if you must but start. Each success, even in one school, can ripple outward and win over hearts, minds, and eventually, national policy.

Over the years, Georgia has built a robust support system to ensure children with disabilities and special educational needs can thrive in mainstream classrooms. Georgia's approach stands out for its comprehensive teacher training programmes, school support services and the new pilot Inclusive and Special Education Centres that provides consultation and guidance to schools. Close partnerships with international experts – such as a flagship initiative with Norway and UNICEF – have helped the country establish Child Rights Knowledge Hubs at universities and enact forward-looking legislation. Today, inclusive education is woven into Georgia's national education strategy, reflecting a commitment to leave no child behind. The country's vision is strategic and envisages all levels of education, from preschool inclusion to smooth transitions into vocational and higher education.

Home to 3.7 million people, Georgia is a multicultural, upper-middle-income country with a GDP per capita of roughly USD 8,210. In 2023 the government devoted about 3.1 percent of GDP to education and just 0.5 percent to disability programmes—of which only 0.12 percent directly supported children with disabilities. Cultural, religious, and social norms have long set low expectations for children with disabilities, prompting families, professionals, and institutions to view them as passive care recipients rather than independent individuals, which in turn fosters strong—often maternal—dependence and

social isolation driven by negative public attitudes and limited awareness of inclusion. These same beliefs shaped the education system for decades, channeling students with disabilities into separate special schools and making their presence in mainstream classrooms a rarity, so that even today—despite generally improving attitudes—significant stigma, especially toward children with intellectual disabilities, persists¹. In the early 2000s, determined parents in Tbilisi successfully challenged school-enrolment denial for their children with disabilities, securing the creation of a dedicated class in a public school.

Figure 1: Georgia's path towards inclusive education



¹ UNICEF Georgia (2016). Analytical Report. Study on Stigmatization of Children with Disabilities.

According to EMIS data for the school year 2024/2025, 14,080 learners with special educational needs and disabilities are now enrolled in 1,524 public schools—about 1.9–2 percent of all students—underscoring both Georgia’s rapid progress and the remaining gap to full inclusion. Several interlocking factors explain Georgia’s swift transition from a small pilot in ten Tbilisi schools to a nationwide inclusive-education system: unwavering political commitment galvanized by early 2000s parent advocacy; rapid legal codification that made inclusion a statutory right; long-term partnership with Norway, which provided stable technical know-how and funding; UNICEF’s continuous capacity-building and attitude-change efforts, including the #SeeEveryColor campaign; and a ring-fenced financing formula introduced in 2013 that allocates additional resources for every student with special educational needs. These elements created a legal, financial, professional and cultural ecosystem in which inclusiveness is now treated as standard practice rather than an experimental add-on.

Laying the legal and institutional foundations for inclusive education

In the early 2000s, when parents began to demand their children’s right to education, Georgia was at a crucial stage in its development and modernisation. Ongoing reforms in many directions extended to the Georgian education system. Exposure to international best practice significantly raised the awareness of the Georgian Ministry of Education and Science and Youth about inclusive education and motivated them to take responsibility and initiate the systematic implementation of inclusive education. The launch of large-scale international projects required the Ministry to form a specialised team with expertise in inclusive education and programme management. This initiative laid the foundation for the Ministry’s Inclusive Education Team, which was expanded in 2009 and soon formally established as the Inclusive Education Development Division.

The Georgian education system took a proactive approach by establishing sustainable support mechanisms, primarily through a strong legislative framework, including the National Curriculum which catalysed the replication of these changes across the country. The success of pilot projects in 10 schools led to a significant increase in the enrolment and identification of students with special educational needs beyond the target schools, both in Tbilisi and in the regions. This has created a demand for the Ministry to extend its interventions - such as student assessments, SEN status determination, teacher training and consultations - to additional schools. While expanding the implementation of inclusive education in schools and coordinating this process, the Ministry team also focused on developing sustainable building blocks for inclusive education.

In 2008, the Ministry developed its first Inclusive Education Development Strategic Plan for 2009-2011. The plan details a comprehensive approach to reforming inclusive education by establishing regulations, guidelines, and funding mechanisms, and setting minimum standards for school infrastructure and accessibility. It includes the development of procedures and protocols for identifying and assessing the needs of students with special educational needs (SEN), utilizing assessment tools and teams, and establishing protocols for creating and implementing individual education plans and evaluating SEN students’ academic performance. Additionally, the plan aims to increase the competence of teachers and special educators through enriched initial teacher training programs and professional development. It also seeks to expand educational opportunities for SEN children at the preschool level and to develop vocational training opportunities in schools and colleges. Since then, the Ministry has revised the strategic document twice to reflect progress and address emerging challenges. The most recent strategic plan 2022-2030 Unified National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia was launched in 2022, prioritizing the improvement of the quality of education and its inclusiveness through the use of innovative teaching approaches.

Naturally, all parties involved in the development of inclusive education agreed that establishing a strong legal basis was essential for moving from pilot processes to sustainable and systematic implementation, especially since Georgia already had anti-discrimination legislation, adhered to international conventions and had a constitution that guaranteed the right to education for all. In addition, Georgia's modernisation efforts since the early 2000s included the updating of many pieces of legislation, or developing new legislation, including the Law on General Education and the National Curriculum. As a result, by 2006, the law already recognised the term 'inclusive education' but considered the provision of inclusive education to be a voluntary initiative of educational institutions rather than a mandatory obligation. In 2010, important amendments were made to the General Education Law. These amendments allowed students with special educational needs who had never been enrolled in school to be enrolled in age-appropriate classes. They also required the development of individual education plans based on the national curriculum and promoted the use of sign language for deaf students. In addition, key terms such as 'inclusive education' and 'pupils with special educational needs' were redefined in the law. The concept was broadened to include the equal participation of all students in the educational process, including gifted children, ethnic minorities, students with different abilities and needs, and those from socially vulnerable groups, thus going beyond the initial focus on students with disabilities. The recognition that not all students with disabilities face learning difficulties, while some students without disabilities do, also led to the introduction of the concept of students with special educational needs (SEN) in 2008, which

was officially defined by law in 2010. According to this definition, SEN status is granted to students who have educational needs due to sensory, cognitive, behavioural, emotional or physical difficulties, as well as to those with learning disabilities.

Today, the law makes the provision of inclusive education an obligation rather than a discretion for schools, requires the allocation of additional state funding to schools for inclusive education and the provision of support services for pupils. The adoption of a regulatory document specific to inclusive education in 2018 - Rules for the introduction, development and monitoring of inclusive education and the identification of students with special educational needs - provided a clear path for the implementation of inclusive education. In addition, the introduction of accessibility standards among the requirements for the authorisation of educational institutions ensured (to some extent) the improvement of the infrastructure of preschools, schools, vocational schools and universities built during the Soviet era.

As inclusive education expanded, there was a need to delegate some responsibilities from the Ministry to its subordinate agencies and to strengthen these agencies with staff with the necessary expertise. As a result, from 2010, inclusive education components were divided among the National Curriculum and Assessment Center, the National Centre for Teacher Professional Development and the Agency for Educational and Scientific Infrastructure Development. This delegation of responsibilities marked a fundamental step in the systemic development of inclusive education.

Figure 2: Subordinate agencies within the Ministry supporting inclusive education, 2024



Today, all agencies under the Ministry support inclusive education. The National Centre for Teacher Professional Development leads capacity building for educators across all levels and is responsible for training sign language interpreters and mobility and orientation specialists. The Agency for Educational and Scientific Infrastructure ensures physical accessibility and provides Braille and audio textbooks and assistive technologies. The National Centre for Education Quality Enhancement oversees compliance with inclusive education standards during accreditation. Education Management Information System collects and maintains data on SEN students and support personnel, informing school funding allocations. The National Assessment and Examination Centre evaluates teacher qualifications in inclusive education, which affect their remuneration. The Professional Skills Agency enhances vocational education inclusiveness and coordinates support services

for SEN learners. Finally, the Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions (Mandaturi Office) established the Inclusive and Special Education Support Center in 2024 to support the implementation of inclusive education processes.

Once inclusive schooling gained traction in Georgia's primary and secondary system, reform energy has moved *downward* to preschool, where early pilot projects (launched by parents in 2009) and the 2016 Law on Early and Preschool Education—developed with UNICEF—set national standards that require every kindergarten to admit children with special needs, run a school-readiness programme, and employ qualified staff; enrolment of young children with disabilities has since risen, four universities now teach inclusive-early-years modules, and many kindergartens have begun hiring special-needs educators, psychologists and speech therapists. Yet implementation remains uneven because of the lack of a comprehensive

approach to early inclusive education, while the Ministry is responsible for educational standards and curricula, the implementation is the responsibility of the municipality: inspections still prioritise hygiene over pedagogy, data on disability are patchy, specialist services (especially for hearing and vision) are scarce, budgets and trained staff are limited, and families often delay enrolment for fear of stigma—leaving inclusive practice strong in some kindergartens and minimal in others; closing these gaps through consistent monitoring, stable funding for support staff and materials, and better transition planning into primary school is the next priority.

Further up the system, vocational education has become a relative bright spot: reforms launched in 2013 with Norwegian support now see roughly 270 learners with special needs enter VET each year, aided by flexible admissions, targeted funding for VET schools and on-campus support services—though career guidance and employer incentives still lag. In higher education, enrolment of students with disabilities in the last five years has climbed to about 400 per year thanks to exam accommodation, mandatory (if minimal) accessibility standards and automatic state scholarships, but universities implement support unevenly and often rely on students to request their own adjustments; developing campus-wide disability services and strengthening links to the labour market remain key challenges.

Capacity building and support for inclusive schools

Teachers' widespread attitudes were shaped by several factors embedded in the Soviet education system: Traditionally, higher education programmes did not equip teachers with the skills needed to teach SEN students, and the rare inclusion of SEN students in schools made it difficult to develop alternative perspectives to defectologists (in the Soviet era, this qualification was generally obtained through well-developed undergraduate training programmes for teachers assigned to students with SEN, which focused primarily on 'treating' the dysfunction, often within a specialised or therapeutic setting). Although they had already been renamed special education teachers (by law), their competences differed

significantly from those required of special education teachers.

Acknowledging the need for significant investment in capacity building, it was decided that the Teachers' Professional Development Centre, would lead this effort. The Centre recruited staff with expertise in inclusive education who develop a comprehensive training cycle for both general and special education teachers. A particularly noteworthy initiative was the intensive 120-hour in-service training programme for special education teachers. The training covered key topics such as understanding inclusive education, developmental milestones and disorders, assessment and evaluation of students, writing individual education plans, universal design for learning, differentiated instruction, behaviour management, classroom management, etc. At the same time, the Centre set up a team of 10 consultants, responsible for coaching teachers and special education teachers after their training, focusing on the planning and implementation of educational processes for SEN students. Soon schools were requesting help almost exclusively for challenging-behaviour cases, signalling that teachers felt least prepared in this area; the consultants quickly became known as "behaviour specialists," and behaviour-management expertise was henceforth treated as the top hiring criterion for new staff.

in 2012 the Ministry began to develop and strengthen university programmes to train future teachers and special educators, ensuring a steady flow of well-prepared professionals into the field. In 2013, with support from the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, Ilia State University established a master's programme in special education. Later, with the support of international donors, two state universities - Tbilisi Ivane Javakhishvili State University and Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University - developed special teacher training and certification programmes (one year), with their first intake in 2024. Another important milestone is the integration of courses/topics on inclusive education (covering topics such as curriculum modification, differentiated instruction, universal design for learning and classroom management) into the teacher training programmes at five state universities. UNICEF played a key role in this initiative.

The establishment of internal support systems within schools involved expanding and diversifying the school staff by hiring specialists with more experience in teaching students with special needs (mostly defectologists, renamed special teachers) or redirecting the duties of existing school psychologists to support inclusive education. As the inclusive education programme expanded, special teachers and psychologists, initially introduced in pilot schools, became increasingly common in schools with SEN pupils. In addition, many regular teachers expressed interest in moving into the role of special educators, enhancing their skills through the 120-hour special educator training programme.

To assist teachers in writing IEPs, the Ministry developed several manuals and training programmes implemented through the National Centre for Teacher Professional Development. However, it soon became clear that teachers were struggling to adapt the National Curriculum for SEN pupils with severe and profound disabilities; it was also difficult for teachers to plan the training programme for those who had dropped out of school for various reasons and needed to meet the key requirements of the curriculum in an accelerated manner; and it was also evident that the National Curriculum could not fully cover the subjects that were additionally required for pupils with visual and hearing impairments. In response, the Ministry decided to develop an extended curriculum for students with visual and hearing impairments, including subjects such as Georgian sign language and orientation and mobility training, an alternative curriculum focusing on the development of functional skills for students with severe intellectual disabilities (this curriculum was developed entirely on the basis of the National Curriculum, with an emphasis on the transformation and use of skills in everyday activities) as well as a catch-up and accelerated curriculum for students re-entering the education system (with UNICEF support and funding by the Bulgarian Government).

To reduce existing misconceptions, negative attitudes and stigma towards children with disabilities, and to change cultural and social norms, UNICEF implemented a national communication campaign called #seeeverycolor.

The #SeeEveryColor campaign, aimed at addressing stigmas against children with disabilities in Georgia, was officially launched on February 23, 2017. With the support of the European Union and USAID. This campaign significantly increased knowledge (reaching 94%) and reduced negative perceptions and attitudes towards children and adolescents with disabilities by 13%.

Transforming special schools into resource schools

The closure and repurposing of Georgia's special-school network marked a watershed in the country's education and child-protection reforms, but its success has so far been only partial and leaves a complex set of challenges to resolve. Before 2010 the Ministry ran twelve special schools - eleven of them residential - serving roughly 850 pupils, many of whom had been placed there not because of disability alone but because their families lived in poverty or wanted Georgian-language schooling unavailable locally. Conditions were poor: pupils were separated from home communities, buildings were in poor conditions, and pedagogy was still rooted in Soviet-era "defectology," which sought to correct impairment rather than foster inclusive learning or independent living. The 2010–2012 deinstitutionalisation drive with focus on special schools, coordinated with UNICEF and associated with the wider child-welfare reform, carried out individual assessments of every pupil, shuttered five of the schools outright and transferred most children either back to their biological families, to foster care or to nearby mainstream schools that had just begun practising inclusion. A new gate-keeping procedure—managed by regional psycho-educational assessment teams—was introduced to ensure that no child could henceforth be enrolled in a special school without a multidisciplinary review of educational and social needs, effectively ending the former "open-door" admissions policy.

These measures reduced the number of boarding institutions to seven "resource schools" and cut enrolment to 417 pupils by 2024, demonstrating clear progress toward meeting UN CRPD obligations and freeing many children from institutional life. At the same time, the reform

exposed difficult trade-offs. Teachers feared job losses, principals worried about shrinking budgets, and some parents—especially those of children with severe or multiple disabilities—questioned whether mainstream schools could provide adequate support. Although most receiving schools were backed by the new Regional Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs), they often lacked specialist staff and accessible infrastructure, so several pupils moved again, into integrated classes established in 2014 (currently twelve classes—eleven for autism, one for hearing impairment—serving about one hundred learners) or into home-based tuition. The resource schools themselves, while renamed, were left with the same per-capita funding formula as ordinary schools even though they now served only high-need students, making it difficult to finance low student-to-teacher ratios or modernise facilities. As a result, schools for students with hearing impairments still await Frequency Modulation (FM) and acoustic upgrades, and blind-student programmes need additional Brailers, tactile graphics and Georgian-language screen-reader software.

Recognising that expertise built up over decades should not be lost, the Ministry amended the General Education Law in 2016 to redefine special schools as resource schools and, in 2023, gave them a formal mandate to deliver outreach and training to neighbouring mainstream schools. With UNICEF's support and Norway Government funding, administrators, special teachers and therapists from those schools have since been retrained to provide consultative services on sign-language use, orientation-and-mobility skills, curriculum adaptation and assistive-technology deployment. Early results show promise: mainstream teachers value on-site coaching, and a small lending scheme now circulates specialised devices regionally. Yet funding is still insufficient for full regional coverage, and many resource-school staff need continued mentoring from the Inclusive and Special Education Support Center to shift fully from a custodial to an advisory role.

Georgia's special-school reform therefore stands as a significant, though incomplete, achievement: it broke a long tradition of segregation, aligned education policy with the broader deinstitutionalisation agenda, and pushed inclusive

practices into the mainstream system far faster than would otherwise have happened. But the transition also revealed how fragile inclusion remains when resources, training and parental confidence lag behind legal change. Completing the journey will require sustained capital investment to modernise the seven remaining resource schools, a funding formula that reflects the higher costs of intensive support, tighter links between resource-school outreach teams and the Inclusive and Special Education Support Centre, and stronger monitoring to ensure that integrated classes and home tuition remain exceptional, not default, pathways. Only through that continued effort can Georgia turn a partial success into a fully realised rights-based model in which every child—regardless of disability severity—has meaningful, well-supported access to learning in the least restrictive environment.

System-building through long-term collaboration with Norway

As mentioned earlier, Georgia's journey toward system-wide inclusion began in the early 2000s, when a group of parents in Tbilisi persuaded the Ministry to pilot inclusive classes in ten motivated public schools—demonstrating that children with disabilities could succeed alongside their peers. Norway joined in 2006, refining the model, underwriting teacher-training cycles and helping formalise regional MDTs. With this local-international partnership in place, the Ministry quickly embedded inclusive principles in the legislation and expanded them nationwide. Rapid legislative action followed: amendments to the Law on General Education embedded the right to inclusive education, while Norway continued to underwrite teacher-training cycles, itinerant resource teachers and MDTs. As inclusion took root in general education, attention shifted to other levels. The 2016 Law on Early and Preschool Education, drafted with UNICEF's support, obliged every municipal kindergarten to admit children with disabilities, run a school-readiness programme and hire specialist staff; enrolment has risen, but quality remains uneven because municipal budgets, data systems and trained personnel differ widely. In vocational education, a

2013 reform—again backed by Norway—introduced flexible admissions and targeted grants, allowing about 270 learners with special needs to enter each intake, though career guidance and employer demand still lag. Higher-education inclusion has likewise advanced: automatic study grants and entrance-exam accommodations now bring roughly 80 students with disabilities into universities annually, yet campus support is inconsistent and often triggered only when students self-advocate.

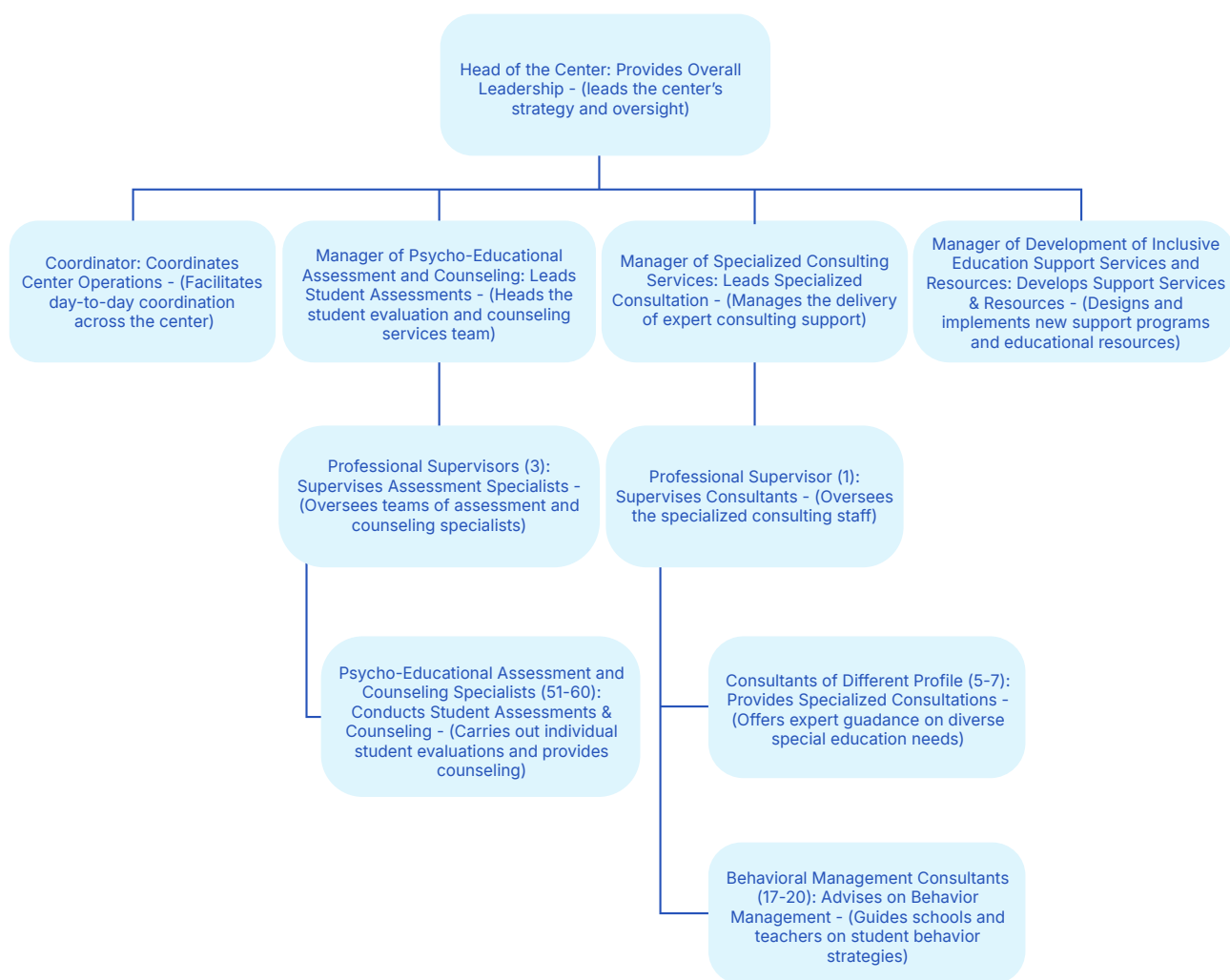
By 2019 the Ministry recognized that it could no longer manage policy, training and direct school support from one department. Seeking to modernise how schools are supported, Georgia's Ministry of Education renewed its partnership with Norway and looked to Norway's STATPED agency as an example of a single, coordinated structure for inclusive-education services. With the Norwegian Ministry of Education and UNICEF, it launched the three-year Leave No Child Out initiative (2021-23). The project began by analysing every layer of Georgia's inclusive-education landscape—governance arrangements, inter-agency coordination, staffing patterns, school needs and the strengths and gaps in the seven remaining resource schools—while Norwegian experts provided technical advice.

A renewed tripartite partnership - Ministry, Norway and UNICEF - launched the three-year Leave No Child Out programme (2021-23) to map fragmentation and design an integrated support system. The assessment showed that frontline help for schools was fragmented across several sub-agencies, resulting in patchy coverage and duplication of effort. Reviewers recommended gathering all external support functions under one roof, and the Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions -already responsible for school safety, psychologists and social workers - was judged the best host. MDTs, integrated-class supervisors and behaviour consultants were therefore moved into the Office. Throughout 2022-23 Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions' structure and mandate was amended, a new staffing table approved and two intensive development tracks introduced: a 44-hour leadership programme (mission design, change management, user participation) and a 70-hour counsellor programme (universal design, AAC,

hearing- and vision-support strategies, behaviour management). Budgets previously funding MDTs and TPDC-housed behaviour specialists were consolidated. Additional speech-and-language therapists, psychologists and special educators were recruited, and draft legislation clarified lines of authority and funding streams.

These reforms culminated in the 2024 launch of Georgia's Inclusive and Special Education Support System, now housed within the Office. Through this state-funded structure, teams deliver psycho-educational assessments, specialized consultations, on-site coaching for teachers and system-wide data monitoring - providing schools with an integrated, nationally coordinated source of expertise that mirrors, in Georgian form, the design principles that proved effective in Norway. The Support Centre's mandate now includes several key areas: to provide psycho-educational assessment and counselling at both individual and systemic (school) levels based on referrals; to provide specialised counselling services for students with hearing, visual, communication and behavioural disorders; to develop services and resources to support inclusive education; to develop existing professional resources/ competencies in the system; to contribute to the development and dissemination of knowledge in inclusive and special education; to generate and analyse statistics, monitor progress and prepare reports. The Centre operates with a four-tier organisational structure. The table below outlines the structure of the Support Centre for Inclusive and Special Education and the number of staff employed by the Centre.

The centre has a director and employs coordinators and managers who are responsible for supervising and promoting different directions, such as general and specialised psycho-educational assessment, counselling and resource development. In addition, the Centre has operational teams (of 60 professionals) for psycho-educational assessment and counselling (formerly known as multidisciplinary teams), organised both regionally and by specialisation. These professionals work directly with children and schools and are managed by professional supervisors who ensure their effective operation. The Centre actively works with resource schools to support their transformation into inclusive



educational support services. In partnership with the Centre, teachers and specialists from resource schools advise other schools and develop their expertise in areas such as hearing, vision and multiple disabilities.

In order to ensure that the Centre operates effectively, legislative changes were first enacted and the Centre's operating rules and regulations were established. In addition, job descriptions and work protocols for the staff were developed and agreed upon for the efficient management of the Centre's services. The Inclusive and Special Education Support Center is currently in an active development phase. UNICEF continues to support the Center by developing documents and protocols, and by organising workshops for its staff to ensure its effective functioning under its new mandate.

Funding

The Ministry's key decision in 2013 to provide additional funding to schools for inclusive education was seen as an important turning point in strengthening the school-based support system. The amount of funding received by educational institutions depends on the number of students with special educational needs enrolled or identified by the educational institution, e.g. in the case of 1 to 5 SEN students, the educational institution receives 2840 euros per year. In the case of 6 to 10 SEN pupils, the amount is 5680 euros, and this amount increases according to the number of pupils. The minimum funding for a school in 2024 is 2,840 euros per year for 1 to 5 pupils, and the maximum is 28,465 euros per year for 46 to 50 pupils. These funds will be used to pay for additional specialists employed by the school

to support the provision of inclusive education (specialist teachers, personal assistants for SEN pupils), teaching resources, assistive technology and transport. The school can decide how to use this amount according to the needs of the student. In the initial phase of the introduction of inclusive education, the Ministry took an important decision and refused to introduce the practice of additional remuneration for those teachers who teach SEN pupils in mainstream classes. The Ministry of Education has gradually increased funding for inclusive education in schools.

In recent years (since 2017), the Ministry, with the support of NGOs, has started to develop a support service/programme for transitions within schools and from school to the next level of education. This initiative is based on evidence of the specific vulnerability of individuals with special educational needs during transitions, which highlights the need for comprehensive support during the adaptation phase in a new educational setting. Guidance documents have been developed, and several pilot initiatives have been implemented to support transition activities. One such project, supported by UNICEF and the Government of Norway in 2022, was Strengthening Inclusive Education in 10 Public Schools through Innovative Approaches. The Centre for Supporting Inclusive and Special Education was identified as responsible for the systemic implementation of transition support practices.

Nowadays, support specialists working in schools are expected to work as multidisciplinary teams,

supporting teachers and pupils throughout the learning process and ensuring a prompt response to pupils' identified needs. The composition of support teams in schools varies according to the specific needs of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities. As schools began to include students with significant intellectual, behavioural and physical disabilities, the Ministry took a crucial step by formally authorising the position of personal assistant for SEN students in 2021. This policy move was significant in ensuring the safety and independence of students with high support needs within the school environment. The National Centre for Teacher Professional Development also created a training programme for assistants, further strengthening their role. The Ministry is also committed to sustaining the funded components after project completion and has fully met this commitment by providing funding for the Support Center, multidisciplinary teams, teacher training, support resources and school accessibility.

While significant progress has been made in developing these programmes, further systemic implementation and refinement is needed. This includes developing the Georgian Sign Language curriculum and improving Georgian language teaching methodology for both linguistic minorities and deaf students, as the literacy rate of deaf people remains significantly lower than that of their peers and there are currently no deaf students in higher education.

Addressing remaining challenges



Georgia's inclusive-education reforms have laid a solid legal and institutional foundation, yet several gaps still keep many children from learning—and thriving—alongside their peers. One pressing issue is the rapid proliferation of day-care centres run by the social-protection sector. These centres, valued by families for transport, meals and therapies, often operate during school hours and, lacking a clear mandate for education, inadvertently draw children away from classrooms. Without national guidelines that define their role as complementary—not alternative—to schooling, day-care schedules continue to clash with the school day, leaving children with disabilities academically behind and socially isolated. Clear standards that coordinate individual education plans, therapy timetables and transport across schools and day-care providers are therefore essential.



Reliable, early data are another missing link. Fewer than two percent of Georgia's pupils are formally identified as having special educational needs, largely because no SEN status is assigned in preschool and the education ministry has limited information before Grade 1. Introducing

systematic screening and a preschool SEN registry tied to the Education Management Information System would allow authorities to plan budgets, staff and transitions more effectively while helping schools track attendance rather than mere enrolment. Regular monitoring could reveal when pupils skip lessons to attend rehabilitation sessions or stay home because transport is unavailable- problems that remain hidden when only registration figures are reported.



Funding and accessibility also demand attention. Although new buildings meet basic access standards, half of public schools and most kindergartens still lack ramps, lifts or adapted toilets, while resource schools operate on mainstream per-capita budgets that do not cover

low student-staff ratios or specialised equipment such as FM systems or Braille embossers. Revising school-funding formulas to reflect severity of need-and earmarking capital grants for retrofitting-would let mainstream and resource schools purchase assistive devices, renovate infrastructure and pay competitive salaries that stem turnover among aides and specialist teachers.



The creation of the Inclusive and Special Education Support Centre has unified external services, yet its regional teams are still calibrating caseloads and protocols. Schools require faster on-site coaching, especially when confronting challenging behaviour, so that pupils can remain in class for a full timetable instead of being sent home early. Municipalities, for their

part, need standard job profiles and career ladders, as well as adequate training and pay for personal assistants to stabilise the workforce and build expertise over time.



Smooth transitions are equally critical. Preschool children move into first grade, school-leavers enter vocational colleges, and trainees graduate into the labour market, but only pilot guidelines support these handovers. Each transition should be planned jointly by families, schools, the Support Centre and, where relevant, day-care staff, yet coordination across

ministries remains ad hoc. In vocational education, flexible admissions and targeted grants now attract about 270 learners with special needs per intake, but employer awareness and incentives lag, limiting graduates' job prospects. University enrolment of students with disabilities has reached roughly 80 a year thanks to exam accommodations and state scholarships, but campuses still deliver support inconsistently and often only when students request it, underscoring the need for a minimum national standard for higher-education accessibility.



Changing attitudes remains a cross-cutting task. The #SeeEveryColor campaign demonstrated how strategic messaging can reshape public perceptions; a follow-up initiative co-branded by the education, health and social-protection ministries could promote the idea that therapies and schooling complement each other and that inclusive classrooms, not segregated services,

should be the norm. Establishing a permanent inter-ministerial committee to track joint indicators - enrolment, attendance, therapy hours, day-care use - and report quarterly to Parliament would help officials identify bottlenecks and respond in real time.



Georgia's next phase is therefore less about new legislation and more about implementation and expansion: capacitating resource centers, expansion of inclusive education to preschool and higher education levels, clarifying the supportive - not substitutive - role of day-care centres, aligning funding with actual needs, embedding robust data loops from preschool

onward, and ensuring that every child spends the bulk of the day in an accessible, well-supported learning environment. Only then will the country's impressive legal framework translate into the everyday reality of inclusive, high-quality education for all.

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for every child

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