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## **Report of the active rehabilitation camp “Durrësi 2013”**

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## INTRODUCTION

When they asked a wise man what is the most important thing in life, he replied:

“The most important thing in life, is to be HAPPY.”

We started this report of the active rehabilitation camp “Durrësi 2013” with this wise sentence just because of the happiness that the participants felt during this camp. This year HandiKOS tried to organize a great summer camp as the past 12 years. There are always improvements just like every year we tried to do the best, but that doesn’t mean there’s not a place for improvements in the future. The most important thing is that we had such positive opinions from people with disability, companions, journalists and the state institution who visited us during the summer camp. Our conclusions for this camp was a positive one, because the active rehabilitation camp “ Durrësi 2013” brought together a lot of young people with disabilities who were recently injured.



The purposes of this camp were rehabilitation, socialization and re-socialization of people with spinal cord injuries and children with disabilities.

This year our camp consisted of two groups. The first group gathered people with spinal cord injuries and children with disabilities and their mothers that were financed by the well-known organization Roberto Bazzoni Onlus. The second group gathered people with other disabilities that were financed by Kosovo municipalities. Both camps were held at “Xixa Resort” in Albania.

The first camp took place from 21.08.2013 until 28.08.2013, and was attended by 90 participants from all around Kosovo, twenty paraplegics and their companions, two tetraplegics and their companions too, thirteen children with their mothers and seven staff members.

The activities that were done in this summer camp were: introduction of the participants and activities, morning gymnastics, transfers (evacuation of the body), overcoming barriers, sport activities (chess, darts, swimming), car driving, and the party where all the participants had fun till the dawn. All the activities improved participants’ health/medical situation, emotional and social wellbeing, too.

*Children’s activities:* Primary physical rehabilitation, the psycho-social rehabilitation, swimming at sea and pool, recreational activities and different fun games for children. This camp also had in program to raise the awareness of families with regards to children with disabilities, their needs and rights, motivation for rising their children’s capacity, the possibilities for communication, giving advices and sharing the experiences between the parents and referring children for further needed medical treatments.

## INTRODUCTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS AND CAMP ACTIVITIES

It is a tradition that on the first day of the camp, all the participants introduce themselves. Everyone talks about their spinal injury, how this injury affected their lives and they highlight the best moments they had before they came to the summer camp. Following the introduction by the participants, the director of HandiKOS, Mr. Afrim Maliqi gave an introduction to the camp activities, and informed the participants about the improvements that people with disabilities can expect to achieve through these activities.

## MORNING ACTIVITIES

### First group - People with spinal cord injuries

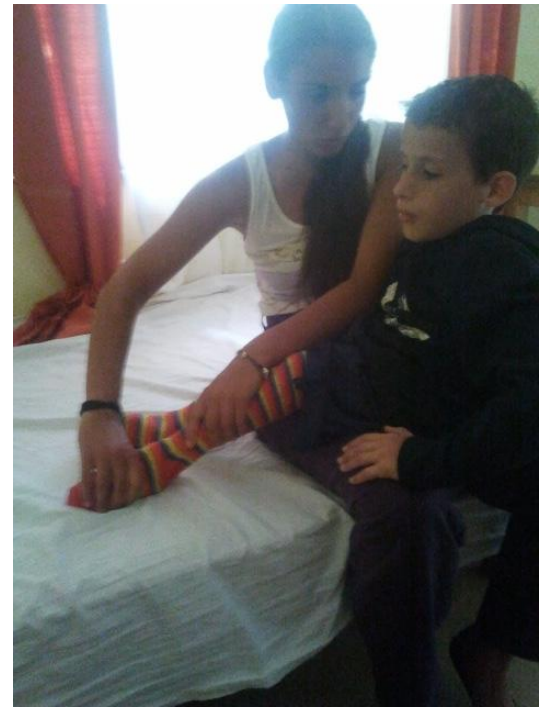
During the camp, after the breakfast the participants did their morning exercises, to improve their physical condition, to prevent the deformities in their bodies and to gain a better stability in their wheelchairs. During the gymnastic activities, the participants did some stretching of their muscles and movements targeting muscles that are rarely used by the wheelchair users.





### Second group - Children with disabilities

Based on the diagnosis of the children, we made an exercise plan to improve their health condition, relax their muscles and to prepare them for the hydrotherapy.



In addition, psycho-social activities were provided too, like: didactic work, playing with sand, the application of the method for working groups and the method with children talking to each other.



## HOW TO USE A WHEELCHAIR

### First group - People with spinal cord injuring

If a person suffers an injury in our country, unfortunately the state institutions can't support him with assistive devices or equipment. HandiKOS is the only non-governmental organization that offers people with spinal cord injury wheelchairs, but it also educates them how to use it and how to maintain it. We applied wheelchair training during this summer camp, to facilitate for the participants who face difficulties when using wheelchairs.

The exercises that were given at this summer camp were: balancing the wheelchair and overcoming different barriers. Only after a few days, we witnessed tremendous changes in the participants, they could overcome all the barriers that they were challenged by, and now they were getting more independent than ever.



## SPORT AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

During our camp at the Resort, the environment was not so accessible and it was lacking sport fields to hold our activities. But some of the activities that we had were beach volleyball, chess, wheelchair slaloms and pulling wheelchairs.





## BEACH/SWIMMING POOL

### First group - People with spinal cord injuring

Every day, starting from 10 o'clock, it was beach time during which every participant could use this time for enjoying the beach or swimming pool. The most amazing thing was swimming by people with disabilities and how others could learn from them.

There is no doubt that swimming was the activity that people with disabilities had so much fun learning it.





During the beach time the participants had time to talk with each other about their lives and about their future too.



### Second group - Children with disability

During the beach time, there were a lot of activities like playing with sand, swimming, stretching ropes, parachute, etc. Except the activities that were on the agenda, there were other playing games like water ball, exercises in the water, and also with the help from their mothers and the staff, children were searching for shells in the water and in the beach, too.





The happiest people in this summer camp were the children, when the organization staff made a surprise for them. And the happiest of all children was a girl, because she had her birthday, and all the participants got together and made her a beautiful cake, celebrated with her and other children.



## **GROUP SESSIONS**

### **First group - People with spinal cord injury**

Every evening the participants got together and created a group, where they could talk and

share their stories with each other and with the staff of HandiKOS. These group sessions helped the participants, because they could feel free to tell their problems, how they reached solutions, and how could they overcome the barriers established by the society. The group sessions also served as a forum for the participants to discuss about the rights of people with disabilities and to share the information about the existing laws that refer to people with disabilities. Some of the themes that raised lots of interest were the approval of the law for para- and tetraplegics and the establishment of the spinal cord injury unit.



#### Second group - Children with disabilities

Every night the staff held group sessions with the mothers of children with disabilities, who told their stories, difficulties and problems that they face daily. During the group sessions the staff noticed that some of the mothers have prejudices about their children, because they were calling their child a “sick child,” and they didn’t even stop or feel that it was wrong. The staff tried very hard to explain them that the disability is not a disease, but it’s a challenge that can be dealt with easily, only if you understand it properly.





The group sessions taught the mothers not to have prejudices against their own child or other children with disabilities, and their behavior had really changed compared to before they came at the camp.

## **MEDICAL SERVICES**

Like in every other HandiKOS camp, the professional medical staff was attending the camp and activities. Fortunately, at this summer camp there weren't any serious cases of injury, except for some light cases that were treated easily. When it comes to people with spinal cord injury, the medical staff had to intervene with regards to some minor bodily injuries, emptying the bladder and emptying their bowels, too. In addition, medical staff had to intervene in children, who were experiencing health difficulties due to the climate change and the different food they had there. Fortunately, the medical technician was prepared to deal with all these circumstances and needs.



## THE PARTY

Every good ending like this camp, deserves a modest little party to celebrate the big steps forward. Never ending drinks, and above all a kind company, made those hours pass fast. This party, not only gathered the participants, but it was also an opportunity for them enjoy and have fun together. It was very emotional, to watch everyone dancing and smiling, and perhaps some of them were dancing for the first time after their injury. The dancing didn't end until the sweet morning touched the sea. The end of the party announced the end of this summer camp. Some tired, some still smiling from the impressions from the party, took the road back home.

