



SOS DJEČJE  
SELO  
HRVATSKA



## *SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGE CROATIA*

### *NATIONAL ANNUAL REPORT*

*2010*



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## **SECTION ONE**

# ***ANNUAL REPORT***

## 1.1 Summary of SOS Children's Village Croatia work in 2010

Despite hopeful expectations that 2010 would bring about a significant recovery of Croatian economy, this, unfortunately, failed to happen. On the contrary, the current situation is even more uncertain and the indicators are worse than they were in 2009.

The number of the unemployed in December 2010 was 312.350. In January 2010, the number was 334.326, which represents an increase of 4% in only a month!

In the table below, we give the overview of the most important economic trends in 2010, in comparison to 2009.

<i>Economic trends*</i>	2009	2010
GDP	-5.6%	- 1.5 %
Exports	-15.5%	+ 5.8 %
Imports	-18.65%	- 0.8 %
Energy and transportation prices	+ 0.7 %	+ 5.3 %
Industrial products prices	-0.4%	+ 4.2%
Food expenditures	+ 1.9%	- 0.1 %
Total inflation	2.4%	1.4 %
Unemployment rate	16.7%	18.3 %
Total number of unemployed persons in December	263.174	312.350
Average monthly paid off gross earnings	+ 3%	- 1.0 %
Average monthly paid off net earnings	- 2%	0 %

\*Source: Journal *Računovodstvo, revizija i financije [Accounting, auditing and finances]*, Issue 1, 2011

This unfavorable economic situation has resulted in growing poverty of the population and spending cuts in all aspects of life, including nutrition. Inescapably, the situation also had a negative impact on relations in families that find themselves struggling against poverty and desperately trying to make ends meet each month. Family relations keep deteriorating, with violence, child neglect and alcohol abuse on the rise etc. Out of 1.3 million people currently employed in Croatia, 70.000 people do not receive salary for their work!

Despite these unfavorable conditions, SOS Children's Village Croatia has managed to ensure normal life for all our children and youth, while also fulfilling all of our obligations towards our co-workers without any terminations of employment.

The Board of Directors held five sessions, and we also held the 19<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Assembly at the end of the year. The sessions were mostly focused on finances, namely, how to increase our income from donations, which suffered an inevitable drop as a result of bad economic situation. At the end of the year, the percentage of blocked (insolvent) businesses in Croatia was 31.7% of the total number of businesses, which represents a 28% increase in comparison with 2009.

The international agencies assigned the long-term foreign currency rating of BBB- to Croatia. The low inflation in 2010, 1.4%, and our thrifty and rational approach to spending in response to recession have resulted in SOS Children's Village Croatia spending 92% of its approved budgeted

expenses. We realized income from the Ministry of Social Welfare in the planned amount, and we also realized investments.

According to the midpoint exchange rates, the average value of kuna against the euro was HRK 7.29, and value of kuna against the USD was HRK 5.48.

## ONE CHILD

Our pedagogical work in 2010 was very intensive, both in the SOS projects and in the broader context, on the community level.

All the activities and programs of child and youth care were planned, designed and carried out with great care.

We continued to methodically prepare our children for the transfer from the Villages to the Youth Facilities and we paid the same attention to preparing our young people for independence. Youngsters in all our YFs have achieved enviable results in school. Our youngsters' readiness and motivation to work and earn their own money remained undiminished. Unfortunately, due to an unfavorable economic situation in the country and fewer job opportunities, our young people had a lot of difficulties in finding new employment. Job searches take much longer now. To help lessen the problem of finding employment for our youngsters, we drafted a national action plan and defined activities designed to help them and strengthen them with additional training, in order to make them more competitive on the job market and enable them to find jobs and become financially independent as soon as possible.

Our 16 hardworking college students are committed to their studies. It is important to note that the interest in postgraduate studies is growing as well.

We will remember 2010 fondly for our Nensi, the first young person who met all the criteria and became eligible for financial support by SOS CVC in finding a permanent housing solution. Thanks to her persistence, efforts and funding she received, she is now happily living in her own apartment.

When it comes to the protection of children's rights, we can proudly say that the motto of zero tolerance for violence in any of our projects is something that everyone understands, accepts and integrates into their everyday actions. The children from SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci enthusiastically contributed to the child-friendly booklet "Protection of Children's Rights" with their lively and moving drawings. We further expanded our activities by holding a workshop "Security and Protection of Children in SOS Children's Village Croatia", designed for the child protection team members and persons of trust in all our projects. We were invited to share our experiences and good practices regarding the protection of children's rights at the workshop for the co-workers of Baltic SOS NAs held in Riga and at the meeting of program directors from our continent, held in Vienna.

Last year also saw us engage in many activities in the wider community, designed to showcase our work and promote quality out-of-home child care. In order to introduce the Quality Standards for Out-of-Home Child Care in Europe to a wider array of professionals, we held workshops for the employees of Social Welfare Centers, a working session with the social workers in SOS CV Lekenik, and in Osijek, a round table attended by the employees of the social welfare system, the office of the ombudsman for children's and family judges.

Our SOS mothers' work and the challenges and joys that they experience were presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> Conference of Foster Parents.

We were greatly honored to present our SOS organization, the importance of the role of SOS mothers and the distinctiveness of our family-based model of child and youth care to the distinguished attendees of the 6<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the International League of Humanists, held

in Zagreb and devoted to the special topic – “Protection of the world’s children with a wounded childhood”.

As a non-governmental organization, we participated in and made significant contributions to the drafting of the alternative report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Croatia.

Among our advocacy activities, special mention must go to organizing the Youth Day, which gathered the youth representatives from all our five YFs, our youngsters from the semi-independent living program and youngsters from the foster families in the association Forum for Quality Foster Care. The central topic of the working part of this meeting of young people was the importance of education in the job market, with guest lecturers from the Croatian Employment Office, who informed youngsters about training options under the framework of the National Program of Youth Employment Incentives. In the second part of the meeting, the focus was on the initiative to establish the informal network Youth Club, started by our youngsters Zvijezdana and Daliborka, in cooperation with a youngster from the Forum for Quality Foster Care. The main goal of this informal network is empowering youth representatives so that they can empower others and thus facilitate the transfer from alternative care to independent life. With the help of our child rights advocate, we believe that the Youth Club will take root and result in a number of rich and useful activities for young people.

To maintain the quality and high level of professional expertise in our work with children, we carried out ongoing monitoring of quality and results of the pedagogical work in all projects through monthly and annual reports and statistical indicators, as well as through monitoring the implementation of individual development planning and quality standards for SOS mother care. We also carried out internal research to evaluate supervisory work, evaluations of our youth success rates and statistical monitoring of students.

The audit of national documents relevant to operative work was also carried out.

We held a pedagogical section in which SOS aunt representatives took part for the first time, to the delight of all attendees. Their constructive participation contributed to the successful outcome of the joint work in the section.

We tried to maintain the high quality of expert pedagogical work through acquiring new insights, attending conferences and training courses, writing papers and cooperating with the relevant institutions of higher learning.

## ONE FRIEND

The year 2010 was a particularly difficult period for FR in Croatia. The heavy presence of the economic crisis that broke out at the end of 2008 was felt throughout the year, impairing the donating potential of private citizens and companies in Croatia. Decision to repeal tax relief for donations made by private citizens and companies made the fundraising even more difficult.

There was a significant decrease in individual donations, despite our heightened efforts to motivate private citizens to donate. We used our new drives and campaigns, "Club of Friends", "Home Filled with a Smile" and telemarketing as a new recruitment method, to raise our income during 2010. We launched a new media campaign, "The Club of Friends", which included a specially made video clip, a radio ad, and billboards and city lights in Zagreb, Split, Rijeka and Osijek. We have 564 regular donors in "The Club of Friends", some newly recruited in 2010, and others long-term members who donate sporadically or on a monthly basis.

SOS Children's Village Croatia won 3<sup>rd</sup> place for its visual campaigns in the global competition of FR campaigns from all KDI continents.

The online campaign "Home Filled with a Smile" began as a 12-month pilot project. The goal of the campaign was to raise HRK 35.000 to cover the utility bills of SOS families exclusively through online donations. The campaign was endorsed by 49 web pages and portals. We designed a special online visual identity. As a result of this online campaign, private citizens donated more than HRK 20.000. Several companies also joined in, so we managed to raise the amount to cover the utility bills for 3 SOS families.

We successfully cooperated with two companies on co-brand mailing and we printed 240.000 inserts that were mailed to clients of these two companies together with their bills. The results were very good, and this drive garnered a lot of attention around Croatia. Private citizens contacted us and offered their financial donations or donations in kind, doing what they could despite the difficult situation in Croatia, lowered salaries, job terminations and growing poverty.

We finalized our corporate fundraising strategy in the first part of 2010. Although the year was very difficult for companies, many of our faithful donors who have been with us for many years have helped us and supported our work. During the Christmas campaign, we felt a slight increase in company donations in comparison with 2009.

We signed a total of 9 contracts to sponsor utility bills in 11 SOS houses. In addition to sponsoring SOS families, we expanded our cooperation with certain companies through additional activities, such as: donations in kind, courses for children and youth, company competitions for funding projects, sales of greeting cards and e-cards and company donations of media space.

Out of 10 applications for public funding projects offered by various companies and foundations, we received 4 positive responses. In addition to financial donations, Croatian Post Office donated 6000 envelopes with prepaid postage costs to be used for our activities in 2011.

At the initiative of the SOS Children's Village Lekenik, this year we once again held our traditional "Millennium Fairy Tale Readathon". All SOS CVC co-workers and guests from outside the Village (private citizens, donors, friends) were invited to the 24-hour fairy tale reading marathon. More than 400 people accepted the invitation. In addition, the readathon was broadcast live over Internet. Our colleagues from SOS Children's Villages in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Austria, Macedonia, Romania, Germany, Slovakia, Albania, Bulgaria and Japan also joined in our fairy tale readathon.

In the course of the year, we published more than 200 announcements in print and online media. Our Facebook group has more than 5800 friends, and our Twitter more than 370 members. The number of people who want to receive our electronic newsletter and e-mails with information about us and our campaigns grows daily.

Our Christmas campaign has been endorsed and picked up by app. 20 national and regional radio stations, 5 national and regional TV stations and numerous web portals. We shot a new video clip for the Christmas campaign.

Given that the economic crisis has continued in 2010, we are hoping for financial donations and donations in kind to generate the same level of income as in 2009.

## ONE MOVEMENT

2010 was marked by a great deal of effort and work, demonstrated through a high level of cooperation between the co-workers of NO and SOS Children's Villages. This reveals high motivation of all co-workers in the Association SOS Children's Village Croatia in these challenging times of financial crisis. Co-workers were particularly focused on the development of professional and personal potential, which is an enduring standard of human resources in SOS organization in general.

Through our commitment and dedication, and clear vision and strategy of human resources development (as defined in the ONE Movement strategy), we succeeded in achieving extraordinary accomplishments in our chosen field, again with the emphasis on care for each individual co-worker. The Association SOS CVC repeated the process of strategic planning co-facilitated by the Continental Office on the basis of the ONE strategy. The strategic ONE Movement guideline, which relates to the development of human resources, has been clearly defined for 2011. ONE Movement strategic initiative puts emphasis on preparing the implementation of the "Job Families" and "Compensation" systems, implementation of the HR database, active development of the Board and ongoing strengthening of SOS CVC through the activities of employer branding.

We are proud to have been awarded, for the fourth year in a row, the prestigious Employer Partner Certificate by the Selectio Group, for excellence demonstrated in human resources management and development, and for dedicating the greatest attention and care to all the co-workers in this humanitarian endeavor of ours.

SOS Children's Village Croatia also won third place in the category "Best HR practices in 2010" and was voted sixth best employer overall, by the employees.

We pay special attention and care to our SOS mothers, who chose to pursue this humanitarian calling, and we are equally committed to our SOS aunts. SOS mothers completed the training modules organized by our external collaborators, Točka promjene, entitled "From Stress to Balance". The participation of SOS aunts in the modules had a beneficial effect on the cooperation between these two categories of co-workers and the overall quality of our youth and child care.

In addition to the above modules, SOS aunts received care through other educational processes and modules that evolved from the needs of our co-workers (PAT). School for SOS aunts is clearly needed. We agreed on the school for our own co-workers. It will consist of 5 modules, in compliance with the international SOS KDI guidelines. SOS aunts were also included in the work of the pedagogical section for the first time, where they actively participated and contributed to the quality of pedagogical development and development of human resources in the organization in the context of working and living in SOS Children's Villages.

In addition to working diligently in these challenging times, our co-workers spent time together, acquiring new insights and skills at numerous conferences, seminars and training courses. Our Association constantly invests in both the professional and the personal development of each individual co-worker.

Development of co-workers, i.e. development of their professional and personal potential, is still a priority under the ONE Movement strategic initiative of our Association.

It is important to highlight the activities that SOS CVC undertakes in relation to other SOS Associations, primarily the SOS CV Bosnia and Herzegovina. Association SOS CVC successfully shares its experiences and knowledge of human resources, working tirelessly on strengthening the bond between the two associations. In addition, SOS CVC successfully organized its first orientation HR program for a colleague from SOS CV Kazakhstan. SOS CVC also shares its know-how and experiences with the business sector in the region through ongoing participation in the regional HR conferences, thus contributing to the strengthening of the SOS brand in the regional HR community. We make huge, decisive and unceasing efforts to promote SOS CVC as a desirable, high quality, successful employer (Employer Branding) that provides high quality care for children, youth and its own employees.

Good professional cooperation between the HR, pedagogical and FR/PR departments has contributed to the successful work of the pedagogical section, joint cooperation and fundraising activities and stronger bonding of SOS organization with companies and agencies with highly developed social responsibility (defined as business strategy). The example of this good cooperation can be found in the visit of employees of the company MojPosao to SOS CV Lekenik and their participation in activities with children, which has resulted in continued cooperation and the development of joint ideas and projects.

Highly motivated to plan, implement and improve the ONE Movement strategic initiative, we await new challenges, ceaselessly investing our efforts, knowledge, skills and resources into the well-being of each co-worker in the Association and our determination to maintain the high level of excellence in our human resources work.

## 1.2 TIME SCHEDULE OF MAJOR EVENTS FOR 2011

JANUARY	National Annual Report 2010 to RO Preparation for Audit 2010
FEBRUARY	Evaluation of NA Plan 2010 to RO PR & FR Annual Report to Fund Development & Communication February 25 <sup>th</sup> 2010 - 19 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of SOS CV Croatia
MARCH	13 <sup>th</sup> Board Meeting Audit 2010 1 <sup>st</sup> NMT Meeting
APRIL	Audit Report for the year 2010 14 <sup>th</sup> Board Meeting
MAY	Preparation of a smooth moving of village children to YF's May 25 <sup>th</sup> 2011 SOS CV Ladimirevci Day Audit report 2010 to RO Review of Strategic and Annual Plan
JUNE	2 <sup>nd</sup> NMT Meeting 20 <sup>th</sup> General Assembly June 23 <sup>rd</sup> SOS Children's Village Day 1 <sup>st</sup> PR & FR Report to Fund Development & Communication
JULY	Children summer holidays at the seaside
AUGUST	Children summer jobs and organized free-time activities
SEPTEMBER	3 <sup>rd</sup> NMT Meeting Review of Strategic and Annual Plan MBF Proposal 2012 Final FR & PR Business Plan 2012
OCTOBER	15 <sup>th</sup> Board Meeting October 8 <sup>th</sup> SOS CV Lekenik Day Strategic and Annual planning WKS 3 <sup>rd</sup> PR & FR Report to Fund Development and Communication
NOVEMBER	Final Budget Proposal + final FR ration sheet 2012 Audit progress report Christmas Cards campaign Organization of a round table within the Social Welfare Sector
DECEMBER	Christmas celebration in facilities Year end 4 <sup>th</sup> NMT Meeting 16 <sup>th</sup> Board Meeting



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## **SECTION TWO**

### ***BOARD MEMBERS LIST***

## 2.1. List of Board Members

- |                               |               |
|-------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Mrs. Mariza Katavić        | President     |
| 2. Mr. Branimir Vlajo         | Vicepresident |
| 3. Mrs. Lada Sambunjak Rajčić | Treasurer     |
| 4. Mrs. Lea Sokolić           | Member        |
| 5. Mrs. Wendy Zečić           | Member        |
| 6. Mr. Michael Poeltl         | Member        |
| 7. Mr. Gerhard Zwettler       | Member        |



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# **SECTION THREE**

## ***FACILITY REPORTS***

### 3.1 SOS Children's Village Lekenik

In 2010, Children's Village Lekenik celebrated its 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This year we put a special emphasis on admitting more children to the Village, and now we have 70 children living in Children's Village Lekenik. Out of this number, 48 are elementary school students, 2 attend high school and 20 are of preschool age. During 2010, 27 new residents joined us in the Village, while 16 children departed to continue on their path outside the Village (9 children are in Youth Facilities and SIL, 3 are in children's homes, and 4 have returned to their biological families.)

The most frequent reasons for removing children from their families are disturbed relationships in the family, child neglect, child abandonment, physical and psychological abuse. Consequently, most of the children have been exposed to multiple traumas, so they need a great deal of support to adjust to living in the Village, as well as continued help in the future. This is why the Village makes use not only of its own child development team, but relies on numerous external experts as well – speech therapists, special education teachers, psychologists, psychotherapists and psychiatrists.

To respond to individual needs, provide help for the children and co-workers and ensure and encourage safe and healthy development of our children, the following activities took place in the Village during 2010:

- Continuation of practical training for SOS mothers, in the form of living and working in the Village;
- Training for all co-workers on child protection rights;
- 3 in-service training courses for all co-workers;
- 4 training courses led by external experts for all co-workers;
- Relaxation program with additional advanced training for the members of SOS mother and aunt teams and the CV psycho-pedagogical team;
- Tuition and study help programs;
- NCO co-workers regularly visited, gave lectures and carried out training courses in the Village;
- Development of cooperation with donors, including their visits to the Village.

Our Social Center is still in charge of organizing children's free time.

- In February, we celebrated Valentine's Day and held a masked ball in our Village, boasting performances by our bands and drama group. Members of our drama and dance groups traditionally took part in the Samobor Carnival.
- In March, we celebrated Woman's Day with lectures on fashion and beauty, with complimentary hair styling. We also celebrated the arrival of spring and return of storks to Turopolje. To mark the occasion, our literary, drama and art groups performed with the local folk ensemble Kolovrat.
- We celebrated Easter by putting together a special show. Our art, drama and literary group members were active participants once again. At the end of the month, on the Day of Lekenik Municipality, we took part in the festivities of lighting the St. George's Day Bonfire.
- At the beginning of May we organized a big bicycle festival to mark Mother's Day. In addition to our children and co-workers, the representatives of the local government, SOS friends and donors also took part. In addition to a 20 km bicycle ride, the festival program also offered many games and dexterity tests. Guests were entertained by tambouritza players from the local folk ensemble. The last weekend in May was

reserved for the biggest celebration in the region, the Trinity Sunday. We had the honor of being hosts for the opening ceremony.

- In June, we organized an event to mark the beginning of the Football World Cup, called Let's Cheer Nicely, where we combined sport and entertainment to deliver a strong educational message to the adults, who sometimes forget the true meaning of sport and fair play. During this month we also undertook various activities at the Sava River Levee to contribute to the project of tourist-oriented Sundays called Harking Back to Old Days on the Sava River. During this same period we were very focused on the end of the school year. School results of our students were quite successful (very good grade averages), heralding the start of a carefree, relaxing summer.
- Just like last year, our family vacations took place in the period between July 1 – 10 in Rogoznica, at the Županja Red Cross resort. Four families vacationed at the island of Ugljan, in Sutomišćica, where we were given a month-long use of a house belonging to a generous SOS friend. During summer holidays, we also organized the stay of children with respiratory problems in Crikvenica, visits to biological relations and trips to swimming pools in Sisak and Zagreb. Among our sporting activities, special mention must go to many tournaments in which our boy and girl judo wrestlers took part and won numerous medals. Our little chess players are attracting more and more attention with their results, and we also have a number of accomplished football players. An increasing number of our boys play for the local football club. At the most recent children's homes tournament, we played against teams from Zagreb, Varaždin, Osijek, Zadar and other cities, all of which had players older than our boys, and we won third place overall.
- We celebrated the transition of children from SOS Children's Village to high school with our traditional Corn Festival. In the atmosphere of celebration, we said our farewells to our dear youngsters departing for Velika Gorica and Zagreb, expressing our wishes both in words and in presents we gave them. We told them we hoped they would come back to the Village on weekends as often as their new obligations would allow it.
- In October, we celebrated the 17<sup>th</sup> birthday of Children's Village Lekenik in the company of our dear friends. We had a lot fun and enjoyed a number of cultural and sporting activities, ate homemade goulash and hot dogs, and capped it all off with a huge birthday cake.
- In November, we read and listened to many great fairy tales, especially on November 13 and 14, when we held a Millennium Fairy Tale Reading in our Village, a marathon reading that went on for 24 hours non-stop. Many people took turns reading: children, SOS mothers, SOS aunts, co-workers, actors and singers, politicians, teachers, educators, neighbors, friends, book lovers and fans of beautiful stories, all people who enjoy feeling like children and all people who love and respect children and children's literature.
- This year, we paid a lot of attention to maintenance and upkeep of our Village. We installed new pergolas in front of the houses, repainted the facade of the Social Center, planted new trees. Thanks to the support from the German embassy in Croatia, this spring children received a new playground, with slides, see-saws, swings, merry-go-rounds...

### **3.2 SOS Youth Facility Zagreb, Velika Gorica & Velika Gorica I**

SOS Children's Village Lekenik has 3 Youth Facilities. At the end of December 2010, a total of 30 youngsters live there: 7 boys and 23 girls. Out of this number, 25 are high school students, 4 have graduated from high school and are now looking for a job, and one young person is employed.

We also have 20 youngsters in the semi-independent living program. At the moment, 5 people live in the apartments provided and owned by the city hall. A sixth youngster will be joining them during January 2011.

In this year heavily marked by recession, our youngsters had to face many challenges in their quest for independence. It was therefore necessary to support them with regular financial assistance, and in several cases, with extraordinary financial funds.

An increasing number of youngsters maintain regular contact with their SOS families in the Village. Youngsters also like to join in the activities taking place in the Village, so we had ample opportunity to meet them at organized birthday celebrations, the joint celebration of Village Day, masked ball, bicycle festival, fairy tale reading and other events organized by the Village.

A large number of youngsters remained in the Youth Facility during summer, because they had to attend practical training. Some youngsters spent their summer with their biological relations, and all took trips with their educators, to Baške Oštarije, Rizvan City, Karlobag, Senj and Kupa (Radenci) and Mrežnica rivers.

Other activities by youngsters in Youth Facility that deserve a special mention: youngsters' occasional visits to the gym, swimming, ice-skating, fitness, attending sporting events, going to the movies, guitar, foreign languages and dance courses, preparatory programs for college entrance exams, internet workshops.

We paid a lot of attention to the upkeep and maintenance of buildings belonging to Youth Facilities. We thoroughly renovated the attic, bedrooms on the top floor of the house, bathrooms and staircases in the Youth Facility Zagreb, located in Vidovčica. At the end of December, we also started a complete overhaul of electrical installations in the Youth Facility Velika Gorica.

We are grateful to the co-workers from the National Office and the SOS Children's Village Croatia for helping us accomplish our goals, and for their excellent cooperation and understanding. Credit and gratitude for our successes also go to the friends of the SOS Children's Village, whose support is deeply felt in all our daily efforts and challenges.

### 3.3 SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci

The number of children in 2010 ranged from 52 children in 13 SOS houses in January to 80 children in 16 SOS houses at the end of the year. Although 7 children left Children's Village in 2010 (6 returned to their biological families, and 1 child changed placement due to a behavioral disorder), while 6 more transferred to two Youth Facilities in Osijek, we had an increase of 42 children thanks both to intensified communication and cooperation between the members of the Children's Village child development team and the representatives of the social welfare centers and to a number of targeted activities we carried out in conjunction with the National Office to promote the SOS model of child care. One of those was a round table we organized in Osijek in March to discuss the topic of preparing children for the separation from the biological families, with the participation of the representatives from social welfare centers and family judges from Municipal Courts in 4 Slavonian counties.

One of the consequences of the economic crisis was an increased unemployment rate in our county. This changed the dynamics in families with one or two non-working parents, in the sense that the parental at-risk behaviors have got more pronounced, resulting in an increased number of social welfare centers' interventions and court decisions on the suspension of parental rights. Unfortunately, the interventions came too late for many children who have already developed behavioral patterns that could be classified as disorders.

Most of the newly arrived children come from the social and cultural environment that differs from the prevalent mores of the local community. Their life habits and lack of education and skills required intensified work with children in SOS families, and the additional assistance of the experts (special education teachers and speech therapists), because admitted children of Roma origin had poor or no knowledge of Croatian. Two girls aged 9 and 10 never attended elementary school before arriving in Children's Village. Several children came to the Children's Village with severe and multiple traumas, to which we responded with intense psychotherapy. Each newly arrived child brought new dynamics to their SOS family and their peer group in Children's Village and school. Given the high number of newly placed children, this also required intensified efforts from the members of the Children's Village child development team in terms of providing help and support to SOS mothers and SOS aunts and in resolving conflicts and misunderstandings between children. We also put in a special effort to cooperate with the biological parents in order to make the adjustment of children to the separation and living in Children's Village as short and successful as possible, and we try to maintain a quality relationship with the biological parents by providing understanding, support and counseling on their relationship to their children.

To encourage the development of skills required for socialization and the ability to fit into society, we encouraged children to take part in the activities on offer in the local community (male and female football teams, folk dancing and singing, church choir, weekly rides to the nearby town of Valpovo to attend workshops on computers, robotics, model making and photography). Also, children took part in the local events (masquerade, the kite festival, children's sit-together), in which they could further work on their socialization skills with their peers from the village of Ladimirevci. In 2010, we would like to stress our continued collaboration with the Osijek Center for Peace, Non-violence and Human Rights, and the continuation of work on the Mediation Club project. Some of our new children have gotten involved in it too. Youngsters who transferred from Children's Village to Youth Facilities remain to be active in the Mediation Club in Osijek, under the auspices of the Center for Peace in Osijek. At the end of the year, one youngster took part in the Croatian Youth Network conference on mediation in the education system, which took place in Opatija. Throughout the year, we did our best to mark interesting and important dates. One of them was the Children's Week during which we organized many workshops (Prevention of Human Trafficking, Magic of Science, Color of Music, Traffic Safety, Little School of Life etc.) aimed at

developing a positive value system in children in our care. Joint trips and vacations also helped to strengthen our sense of togetherness and nurture our SOS model of family-based child and youth care. We ensured additional support for children who turned out to have special needs, either because they were exposed to trauma before coming to the Children's Village or because they had trouble fitting in the Village. For this reason, 8 of our children attended sessions with the child psychiatrist, 5 worked with the psychotherapist, and 15 children were treated by the CV psychologist. 20 children received additional pedagogical help from the special education teacher, and the speech therapist regularly worked with 15 children. Our Roma children have shown the greatest progress. Within a year, all of them have started speaking, reading and writing in Croatian. Our biggest difficulty in 2010 was the impossibility of providing adequate help to children with mental and behavioral disorders, although we did our utmost to ensure the safety of all the children and adults involved until a new solution in the best interests of individual children could be found. Inefficiency and inadequacy of the social welfare system is our biggest problem and detriment in situations when urgent action is required, but mutual help and support of all co-workers in the Children's Village has enabled us to withstand even the most difficult situations. As a special accomplishment in 2010, we would like to highlight eight of our children who spent four days in October at the drama and art convention of Croatian children's homes in Vinkovci, where they performed their plays "Cinderella" and "Mediation Fairy" to great acclaim. They rehearsed the latter play during the meetings of the Mediation Club, where it was also performed regularly, but some of the actors have moved to the Youth Facilities in the meantime. Those who remained accepted the proposal to reform their drama group and rehearse the show for theatre events. Four girls helped by our pedagogical assistant organized the audition, chose the new little actors and helped them rehearse their roles. By rehearsing on a daily basis, they managed to quickly prepare and successfully represent our Children's Village at the highly respectable gathering of drama groups from children's homes, mostly made up of high school children and led by experienced theatre experts. Children returned full of joy and enthusiasm, with a great new experience and many new friends, and adults are proud and happy that children have shown such involvement, initiative and motivation, and that they presented our Children's Village in such a great light. We would also like to mention one of our boys, Damir, who was admitted to our Children's Village 10 years ago in a state of deep neglect. His intellectual capacity was greatly reduced, but now that he successfully completed the eighth grade of elementary school, we can safely say that he has adjusted completely, and he has weathered many storms in the meantime: his brother being adopted; an incident with his SOS mother that almost resulted in a new separation; fear of the new beginning before transferring to the Youth Facility, when his school work was suffering. Despite his limited abilities and speech impediments, Damir is now a well socialized, persistent and hard-working boy, which has brought good results in the first grade of high school and in his practical training as well. Damir never causes conflicts, and for that reason he has been chosen to represent other youngsters in the Mediation Club in Osijek as their spokesperson at the mediation conference. At the end of the year, during a gathering of all co-workers from Children's Village and Youth Facilities, we gave awards to 7 SOS mothers, 1 SOS aunt, 1 Village handyman and 1 CV housekeeper for 15 years of work and loyalty to Children's Village. We also gave out thank-you notes and awards to the YF director, two YF educators and CV accountant for 10 years of work and loyalty to the Children's Village. Thanks to the financial funds that our organization ensured through donations, we installed new carpentry on all our buildings (22 of them) in the Village, and we also repainted all the facades. After 15 years of operation, our Children's Village suddenly looks brand new. All of us in the Children's Village are very proud of how it looks and thankful for every single donation that contributed to the renovation. This has ensured the safety of our children in terms of their health, and reduced energy expenditures that will lead to further savings.

### **3.4 SOS Youth Facility Osijek & Osijek I**

At the beginning of 2010, we provided care for 28 youngsters in our two Youth Facilities in Osijek and for 17 youngsters in the semi-independent living program. In the autumn, 6 young people moved from Children's Village to the Youth Facilities, while several youngsters transferred to the semi-independent living program, and some departed from our system. This means that at the end of 2010, we cared for 25 youngsters in the Youth Facilities in Osijek, and for 21 youngsters in the semi-independent living program.

Our YF youngsters received support and help with their schoolwork throughout the year. All of them successfully completed their respective grades. Youngsters who graduated from 3-year high school courses were given a chance to enroll in the additional, fourth grade or continue their education in other ways. This enabled them to acquire additional qualifications and made them eligible for more employment opportunities. We also began looking for part time summer jobs in early spring. There were fewer summer jobs to be found this year, so the number of youngsters working during summer was also smaller in comparison to last year. However, youngsters from the YFs (12 of them) took part in the volunteer campaign in Osijek called "Be The Change", and they helped repaint two children's playgrounds in Osijek, showing by example how to be good members of the community. Throughout this year, the youngsters have been active in volunteer work organized in the local community by the Osijek chapter of Red Cross. In this way, our youngsters have the opportunity to give their free time and skills to those who need them the most, in the same way that they themselves receive knowledge and skills from volunteers who come to YFs to give them lessons in various school subjects during the school year. We are particularly proud of our three college students who are working hard on their studies, following in the footsteps of our four college graduates who already have steady employment. As for the youngsters who graduated from high school and are now in the SIL program, we assist them in their job search, but we also help them to enroll in additional re-training or upgrading courses offered by the Employment Office. For the majority of our youngsters with limited cognitive abilities, the employment opportunities mostly center on jobs like assistant mason, florist or cook. Right now, the demand for these professions is very low, and given the high unemployment rate, the competition is far more fierce than it used to be, so we have to teach our youngsters how to work on their presentation skills and be more competitive in the labor market. Youngsters from the YFs and SIL program, as well as youngsters who have left our system are all still in regular contact with their SOS mothers and they visit their SOS families often. This gives them additional security and underlines the message that we are always here for them. One of our youngsters got married in 2010, and gave birth to a healthy baby boy at the end of the year. We believe that the money we raised for her through sponsorships will be used to buy necessary baby supplies and equipment. We are looking forward to their first visit to the SOS family and Children's Village.

### 3.5 SOS Kindergarten Lekenik

In January 2010, 69 children were enrolled in the SOS Kindergarten: 50 children in the primary, 10-hour program and 19 in the preschool program. 43 children in the primary program came from the local community, while 7 children lived in the SOS Children's Village. Total number of co-workers in 2010 was 8.5.

During the previous period, the kindergarten met all the requirements for the successful growth and development of children between the ages of 3 and mandatory age for starting school. All the activities and programs were planned according to the tasks we set beforehand, and carried out in compliance with the regulations and Elementary Standards of Social Care for Preschool Children.

The kindergarten implemented its activities in compliance with the nationally prescribed preschool curriculum. General objectives of preschool children care and education were defined by the concept of co-constructing (by children and adults) in specific educational contents and areas, subject to change and improvements to fit the needs of individual children. The work was child-oriented, with the assumption that individual development has priority. Co-constructing the curriculum implies a shared process open to change, collaborative relationships in open discourse and equal participation of everyone involved in the implementation of the educational and child care practices.

Throughout 2010, we worked intensively on providing proper nutrition in compliance with the HACCP standards. We continued to plan menus in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the Republic of Croatia's Nutrition Standards for the Diet of Children in Kindergartens and the Croatian Food Act. The Public Health Institute from Sisak supervised the implementation. The activity flowchart was implemented on a daily, weekly and monthly basis throughout the year, with consistent success. We pinpointed possible risks of critical control points, critical limits and were fully prepared for potential monitoring of corrective measures. Monitoring and record keeping was carried out on a daily basis.

We celebrated Valentine's Day and the Shrove Tuesday, and organized activities to mark the Easter, arrival of spring, departure of our children for school, First Day of Autumn, the Kindergarten Day, St. Nicholas Day and New Year. For each of these events, we decorated the Kindergarten with our children's works of art. We took our kindergarten and preschool children on a day trip to the Sisak Bakery. We also took them to the Trešnja Theatre in Zagreb to see a play "Children's Miracle Play".

We held workshops for parents and get-togethers for children and parents on the subject of "Joy of Creation for Children and Adults". Joint activities of children and parents were realized this year as well, to the delight of all attendees.

For our expert co-workers, we organized lectures on the topic "Contacts and Resistances". For parents, we organized a lecture on child-to-child violence.

In September, a new pedagogical year began. In compliance with the number of children who left the kindergarten to start school, a total of 15 children were admitted in the new pedagogical year.

In December 2010, we had all together 55 children enrolled in the KG programs: 39 children in the primary program and 16 children in the preschool program. Out of the children in the primary program, 14 children were from SOS Children's Village Lekenik.

### 3.6 Success Stories

#### **Nikola**

Nikola came to SOS Children's Village Lekenik when he was two years old. The conditions in his biological family were detrimental to his development. It was immediately apparent that he was neglected pedagogically and educationally, and that his cognitive skills were below average in comparison with other children of the same age. His speech was underdeveloped and inarticulate. He was afraid of other people and unfamiliar places, and he cried frequently.

Slowly, but surely, as the time went on, his attitude towards the world around him changed. He gained new insights quickly, he absorbed new information like a sponge, and, most importantly, he successfully and quickly applied everything he learned in his daily life.

His basic confidence in the SOS family kept growing on a daily basis. Love from his SOS mother and the understanding of his SOS siblings encouraged the development of positive traits in him. Picture books, stories and building blocks developed his imagination and improved his motor skills. Later, when he started attending kindergarten to learn social skills, he turned out to be an outgoing child with a creative approach to playtime. The same thing happened in his SOS family as well. The love he received, the attention and affection of his SOS mother had a therapeutic impact on the development of his personality, and his self-confidence kept growing.

He learned to ride a bike, roller-skate and he enrolled in the football club with several other boys his age. Becoming active in sports meant the development of his team skills, where he realized that the success of the team equals personal success, and that the effort invested in accomplishing a common goal has many rewards, starting with the sense of belonging and mutual respect.

Today, Nikola attends the fifth grade of elementary school. He is an excellent student. He is very conscientious, punctual and precise in fulfilling his obligations. He is popular with other children as a very witty and generous person who likes to help others. He is very inquisitive and often asks questions that require a great deal of thought. He expresses himself in full, meaningful sentences, and he likes to read, especially before bedtime. He sometimes falls asleep with a book still in his hand. His birthday parties are always crowded and he gets many invitations to other children's birthdays.

Nikola is involved in many activities taking place in the Village and the local community. He is an excellent singer and a strong chess player, who participates in chess tournaments. He is working on expanding his musical potential by learning to play the violin and keyboards.

He is very affectionate with his SOS mother. He likes to cuddle and he is affectionate with other children, especially the younger ones. He is always protective of them. He takes part in many games, and thanks to his cheerful nature, other children enjoy his company.

When we look at Nikola, his progress from the emotionally deprived child to the self-aware, assertive and very sensitive boy he is today has been astounding. There is no question that he is a very talented and capable boy.

## **Karlo**

When Karlo came to SOS Children's Village Lekenik with his brother, he was barely three years old, and he was a very disturbed and irritable child. During his infancy, he was exposed to a number of stressful and traumatic situations that left their mark on him. Since successful development in his biological family was impossible, first he was placed in a children's home, and later in SOS Children's Village Lekenik.

We determined early on that he was so traumatized he communicated in single-syllable words and by using gestures. If the person he was talking to did not understand him right away, he would burst into tears. He was afraid of human touch and he kept avoiding it; he saw SOS siblings as competition. He used to hoard food he could not eat, hiding it in his pockets and under his pillow.

Step by step, using a slow and steady approach, his SOS mother managed to reach his heart. The path was difficult, but not impossible. With time, Karlo realized that no one in the SOS family was a threat to him; as a result, he started to feel safer and relaxed more and more.

A new world opened for him, free of harsh words and rough handling; with her gentle and warm approach, his SOS mother kept showing Karlo that he is a valued and loved member of their community. His fears soon disappeared and he opened to the world around him.

From a scared child who was afraid of almost everyone, he turned into a playful boy whose potential is becoming more evident every day. He receives all the necessary help in the SOS Children's Village, but even more importantly, he gets love and understanding, not only from his SOS mother, but also from the other members of his SOS family. During his stay in the Village, he also grew close to his biological brother, in stark contrast to their relationship before they were placed in the Village, when they were acquaintances more than brothers.

Today, Karlo attends the fifth grade of elementary school. He is an excellent student. He does all of his household chores conscientiously. He is an outgoing, well-mannered child. He is not aggressive. He is always ready to help his SOS mother and SOS aunts. He keeps his room tidy. His self-esteem and self-confidence keep getting stronger, thanks to the positive approach of his SOS mother and other co-workers who work with Karlo closely.

His health has also gotten better; his immunity has improved considerably, so he is no longer as susceptible to infections as he used to be. He participates in many extracurricular activities; in particular, he is an accomplished football player and an enthusiastic member of our drama group.

Lately he has developed an interest in computers. He spends part of his free time on Facebook or playing computer games. He often borrows books in our local library. His progress and success are self-evident.

## **Ana**

Ana is a twelve-year-old girl who came to the SOS Children's Village three years ago, with four younger brothers and a sister. Their father died, and their mother could not look after them due to poor health. Ana started recovering from pedagogical neglect even before she came to us, because she already spent some time in another children's home. Nevertheless, she has shown a marked progress since arriving here. She is always full of energy and very active. From the very beginning, she was highly motivated in her studies. She learns easily and she is an excellent student. She is instantly recognizable for her cheerful laughter and loud speaking voice that can often be heard around the Village. She loves music. She attends all the events that feature singing and dancing. She also joined a band in our Social Center and she takes violin lessons.

Her motor skills are highly developed, so she plays easily and smoothly.

She is also an accomplished member of our drama group. She enjoys performing and already has a number of well received roles behind her.

She is successful in her athletic endeavors as well. She regularly practices taekwondo and takes part in competitions. She has already won several gold medals. Her favorite sporting activity is playing football. Whenever she comes back from football practices with a bruise, she shows it off proudly to her SOS siblings, as if she won a trophy, and she cracks jokes about it.

She is very popular in the SOS family. She likes to help her SOS mother and other housemates. She loves her brothers very much, especially her youngest brother. She is attached to her SOS mother.

Since her arrival, she has made many friends in school. Ana is happy with her life in the SOS Children's Village and she uses all the opportunities available to her to the best of her ability.

## **Stjepan**

Stjepan was placed in SOS Children's Village in 1997, when he was 7. He came from Bebrina with three sisters and a brother. They lived in the house of SOS mother Dragica from the very beginning and remained there until it was time to transfer to the Youth Facility and start high school.

Stjepan has been extraordinarily serious and responsible person from early childhood, and his SOS mother used to say that he could always be relied on to take his obligations seriously. Soon after starting elementary school, Stjepan began training judo, and in the eighth grade he also began playing football. He was successful and won many medals at competitions. He was also a very good student for all eight years of his elementary education. Stjepan wanted to enroll in the School of Civil Engineering to train as a geodesist. He accomplished his goal and four years later he successfully graduated from high school. As a reward for his school results and the fact that he always respected the Youth Facility rules, we granted another big wish of his and provided him with driving lessons. During his stay in the Youth Facility, we often enjoyed his cooking. He really loves preparing food and he is an excellent cook. The only thing we did not manage to do is convince Stjepan to continue his education in college, but he can always change his mind on that. Nevertheless, we are proud of the fact that he succeeded in securing a job as soon as he graduated from high school, and he has been excelling at it for the past year. We hope that his employment will soon become permanent. Stjepan lives in a rented apartment with his older sister Marta, to whom he is very close. We are very proud of him and we are looking forward to a day he gets married and starts his own family.

## **Ana**

Ana was placed in SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci as a small girl, together with her brother and three sisters. Their mother died when they were small, and their father worked in Germany, so children lacked adequate parental care.

That is how Ana came to her new SOS family, where she got a replacement mother, SOS mother Đurđa. Given the loss of her biological mother, Ana accepted her SOS mother Đurđa as a new mother, and they developed a lovely mother-daughter relationship. Ana was always a very lively, cheerful and independent girl. She was a student of judo, and very athletic and proactive in general. After completing her elementary education, Ana enrolled in the School of Traffic

Engineering, to train as a traffic technician. She moved to the Youth Facility and embraced living there quickly. Ana had a goal, motivation, our support and all of this contributed to Ana's successes in all areas: her school work, YF obligations, cooperation with educators and becoming a role model for youngsters who came to the YF after her.

Even as a high school student, Ana knew she wanted to enroll in the Police Academy in Zagreb. As soon as she graduated from high school, she applied for the entrance to the Academy. She took both the practical and the theoretical entrance exam, and then we had several tense months of waiting for the results to come in.

Finally we learned that Ana was accepted to the Academy.

As we write this, Ana is a member of the Croatian Border Patrol. At 22 years of age, she is an independent young woman. She lives in Bilje near Osijek, she maintains regular contact with all of us in the Youth Facility, and she regularly visits her SOS mother Đurđa in the Children's Village. We are all very happy that Ana has accomplished her biggest goal.

## **Sabrina**

Sabrina was placed in the Children's Village twelve years ago, when she was twelve years old, together with her younger biological sister. She originally came from Split, and had a cheerful, lively temperament typical of the people from that region. At the same time, she was very self-confident and assertive in all her development areas.

After completing elementary school, she enrolled in the School of Economy and graduated with top marks. She adjusted to living in the Youth Facility quickly. Even then she used to say that one day she wanted to settle in Osijek for good. Sabrina planned on enrolling in the Faculty of Kinesiology in Zagreb after her high school graduation. She was highly motivated and, as an accomplished judo wrestler and an athletic person in general, she was also in peak physical condition, an important criteria for enrollment in this faculty. However, the turnout at the entrance exam was huge, because people from all over Croatia applied, and Sabrina failed to pass her exam. Instead, she enrolled in the Osijek Faculty of Economics and after completing a 3-year undergraduate program, she earned a B.A. in Economy. As soon as she graduated, she enrolled in the 2-year graduate program to continue working on her Masters in Economy. She is three exams away from her goal, and she is currently considering continuing her studies for an additional 2 years of postgraduate studies leading to a PhD in Economy. During her studies, she actively worked part time through a student employment agency, to cover her living expenses and augment the scholarship was receiving.

Thanks to her exemplary conduct, Sabrina is a role model for other youngsters, a walking example of how strong will and hard work can take you far in life despite the difficult childhood and past that can never go away completely. Sabrina is in regular contact with her younger sister, who still lives in the Youth Facility, and she still likes to visit us as well, to spend time with us and ask for our advice. For us, this is the ultimate proof that we have established a strong mutual bond that will withstand the test of time.