



SOS DJEČJE  
SELO  
HRVATSKA

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# Annual Report

## 2009

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# SECTION ONE

## *ANNUAL REPORT*

### **1.1 Summary of SOS Children's Village work in Croatia during 2009**

By the end of 2008, there was no denying that recession has arrived in Croatia so we anticipated 2009 with quite a lot of trepidation. Our fears were justified: before the first quarter had passed, we already saw a decrease in donations and assistance. However, our commitment to fulfilling our mission and vision remains unchanged, and we are ready to face any challenges that lie ahead.

Like the majority of Croatian population, we were unpleasantly surprised by the measures Croatian government took in August 2009, namely increasing the VAT from 22 to 23%, introducing the crisis tax that slashes off 3% of all net personal incomes, repealing the decision to provide free-of-charge textbooks for elementary and high school students, and revoking the provision of free-of-charge transportation for school children.

<i>Economic changes*</i>	2008	2009
GDP	+ 2%	- 5.6%
Exports	+ 5.5%	-15.5%
Imports	+ 9.9%	- 18.65%
Producers' prices of industrial products	+ 8.4%	- 0.4 %
Expenditures for food	+ 7.2%	+ 1.9%
Total inflation	6.1%	2.4%
Unemployment rate	13.7%	11.2%
Total number of unemployed persons in December	240.455	263.174
Average monthly paid off gross earnings	+ 1.4%	+ 3%
Average monthly paid off net earnings	+ 2%	- 2%

Insufficient number of children in our Village, which are currently at 60% of their full capacity, is a big problem for us. Croatia is going through the same process of deinstitutionalization as the rest of Europe, so although there are 24 children's homes that currently provide out-of-home care for children without adequate parental care, their average occupancy rate is at 65% (they could accommodate a total of 1655 children, but 587 places remain unoccupied). App. 1900 children are in foster families. The trend is to continue placing children in foster families, instead of homes, which is a problem for us because SOS Children's Villages Lekenik and Ladimirevci were legally required to register as children's homes in 2000. We are still in negotiations with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare to recognize SOS Children's Villages as a provider of family-based care that would be completely appropriate for the placement of infants, small children and large families of siblings.

In addition to a reduced number of children in the Villages and the inflation rate not being as high as originally predicted, we were very aware of the recession and therefore extremely rational in our spending: we spent 89% of our approved budget. In 2009, 93% of all legal entities in Croatia were deemed to be insolvent, with only 7% showing solvency!

According to the midpoint exchange rates, the average value of kuna against the euro was 7.34 HRK, and value of kuna against the USD was 5.26 HRK.

\*Source: Journal *Računovodstvo, revizija i financije [Accounting, auditing and finances]*, Issue 2, 2010

The survey conducted by the GFK agency in January 2010 has shown that 92% of Croatian population did not make a single donation in 2009. This is why we consider it a success that our planned income from fundraising was at 80% in 2009. Without the help of our faithful donors and friends, we would not be able to achieve such great results. We are grateful to our regular donors: 2769 private citizens and 2124 companies, as well as many other companies that we have been collaborating with for a number of years. Our public relations work was as intense as ever, because we are committed to making our work transparent and open to scrutiny. We have updated and redesigned our website at [www.sos-dsh.hr](http://www.sos-dsh.hr) and we opened a Face book

account, where we now have 3053 friends. We also have a Twitter account with 80 followers, and the number of people who receive our newsletter via e-mail is growing daily. To celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of SOS-Kinderdorf International, we organized a radio marathon, which strengthened our cooperation with the Croatian Public Radio.

Our strategic plan outlines the objectives we want to realize by 2016, which are as follows:

- providing high quality care for 478 children and youth
- local income covers 100% of total expenditures
- strong, committed, expert co-workers looking after 478 children and youth
- Family Law changed to benefit children and youth

In order to achieve these objectives, we will need continued help of our Board of Directors, which met in 5 regular sessions during 2009 and also held the Association Assembly, now counting 38 members.

Our pedagogical work in 2009 was very intensive, both in the SOS projects, and in the broader context, in the community. All the planned activities and programs of child and youth care have been realized.

Transfers of our children from the Village to the Youth Facilities were systematically planned and carried out. Youngsters in all our Youth Facilities are doing very well in school. They spent most of their summer vacations working part time and proving once again their readiness and motivation to work and make their own money. We are very proud of our young adults Josip and Sanela, who successfully completed their college education, and especially Gordana, the first person ever in our care to earn B.A. in Economy. In addition to working in her chosen profession, Gordana will soon be completing her postgraduate studies as well. Our youngsters are still very interested in continuing their education at the college level, and their interest in postgraduate studies is growing as well – this year, another one of our youngsters has enrolled in a postgraduate program.

Our Daliborka continues to promote and advance youth care for youngsters on their path to independence through her participation in international conferences. She is joined in her efforts by other youngsters, and not just her peers from the SOS system. We are equally proud of our other youngsters who are pursuing their goal of independence by working diligently, starting their own families and becoming parents.

We will remember 2009 by our intensive and ultimately successful work on developing new long-term strategic objectives and guidelines. Following the ONE Child strategy, we defined the priorities in future pedagogical activities and programs leading up to 2016.

Our collaboration with the Open University continued throughout the year. We conducted the School for our SOS mothers, all of whom successfully completed the course and earned the title “SOS mother – child care giver – nanny”. A group of our new SOS mother trainees spent the entire year acquiring new experiences and practical skills by living and working in SOS families. Their practical training and handling of daily chores was monitored and supported by SOS mother mentors. SOS mothers from both Villages learned more about mentorship while attending a course on good communication and leadership styles that also served as a way to introduce a new SOS document on SOS mother mentors. Applying the current criteria, each Village has elected its SOS mother mentors. We take this opportunity to congratulate them and extend our thanks for their efforts and valuable contributions to monitoring and mentoring of SOS mother trainees. In keeping with the SOS standards, SOS mothers received ongoing support and assistance for the improvement of their professional competences, the protection of their physical and mental health and the care that they provide for the children. Family advisors are now the integral part of SOS operations, and their work is running smoothly; we also provided programs of psychophysical recovery for SOS mothers and we organized various training courses. We are happy to report that the expert co-workers in all of our projects continue to be highly interested in adult learning and advanced training programs. We responded to this high level of interest in continued professional development by providing well-structured ongoing support to all of our child development co-workers, especially through the following:

Supervision (individual, group and team supervision). In addition to SOS mothers and Village and YF expert teams, this year, for the first time ever, we carried out supervision for SOS aunts from Lekenik, including new candidates for SOS mothers.

Group counseling

Training programs and participation in conferences and seminars covering our professional field.

Experts from the NO pedagogical department prepared and conducted the following in-service training courses for the Village and YF co-workers: “Planning and Setting Objectives”, “Mentorship and Communication”, “Prevention of Stress and Professional Burnout Syndrome”.

In the year that marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of SOS – Kinderdorf International, and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of theatre *Mala scena*, SOS Children's Village Croatia and *Mala scena* decided to organize a conference entitled “Bullying – It Happens To Me Too” and thus contribute to efforts to curb the problem of peer violence among children and remind the general public of the importance of constantly investing in children and youngsters, who are, after all, our most precious resource. The conference on bullying among children was held on October 6, 2009, and it began with the performance of “Rosemarie the Cow”, an artistic depiction of the problem of bullying. Experts from SOS Children's Village Lekenik and Ladimirevci, who have been working with children for a number of years in the spirit of commitment and dedication, also shared their experiences. The conference is just one in the series of activities that arose from the collaboration of SOS CVC and *Mala scena*, which has been conceived as socially relevant project aimed at raising the level of social sensitivity to children's rights and raising public awareness of the omnipresent problem of violence. All the information about the project can be found at the websites of both SOS Children's Village and *Mala scena*. For the purposes of the theatrical project, we devised a brief guide on bullying and a questionnaire for the audience. All of the above activities were widely reported in the media and we made a DVD documenting the conference.

When it comes to the implementation of the child protection policy, we can conclude that the global document SOS Child Protection Policy has been fully implemented in all our projects. The CP teams have been appointed, as have the persons of trust that children can go to at any time for advice and help in the case their child rights are being violated. We also completed the final draft of the child-friendly version of the document. It is currently being prepared for printing. We held a presentation on Croatian experiences with CP implementation in Sarajevo, to help train other national SOS associations from our continent.

Our pedagogical advisor actively participated in and supported the preparations for our advocacy activities in SOS Children's Village Croatia, and she was equally active in the establishment of the partnership network and planning of joint activities for the implementation of the Q4C Standards with both the government bodies (Ministry, Social Welfare Centers and the Office of the Ombudsman for Children) and civil society organizations. Our PA also presented the Q4C Standards to app. 40 employees of the Zagreb Social Welfare Center during the two 1-day courses that were delivered as a result of cooperation between SOS CVC, the Forum for Quality Foster Care and the Zagreb Social Welfare Center. During her presentation, she put a special emphasis on the need for high-quality, systematic development planning.

Year 2009 will also be remembered as a year of hard work of the highly motivated co-workers of the Association SOS Children's Village Croatia. Our co-workers were focused on developing their professional and personal potential, and their efforts helped maintain the high level of HR quality throughout the organization.

Thanks to our commitment and hard work, coupled with clear vision and strategy for HR development, we achieved extraordinary results in this area, paying particular attention to the importance of care for each individual co-worker in the Association. Association SOS CVC was involved in the process of strategic planning, co-facilitated by the Continental Office on the basis of the ONE Strategy. ONE Movement, a strategy focused on HR development as one of three basic strategic initiatives, has been clearly agreed upon for the strategic period leading to 2016.

We are proud to have been awarded, for the third year in a row, with the Employer Partner Certificate by the Selectio Group (a leading human resources management company in Croatia). The Employer Partner Certificate is awarded to those companies that have demonstrated excellence in human resources management and development, and shown the greatest attention and dedication to their employees, as we have to ours in this humanitarian work that we do. SOS Children's Village Croatia remains the only NGO who has been honored in this way. This award means that SOS belongs to the small number of elite companies (such as Vipnet, Coca Cola, Microsoft etc.) that are also highly sought-after employers.

In relation to this, an independent survey on employee satisfaction was conducted in June 2009 across Croatia. The results have shown that out of 400 companies that participated in the survey, SOS Children's Village Croatia was ranked fifth on the list of the most sought-after employers, as an organization with clear processes and protocols regarding its HR development. In the same survey, but looking at separate organizational units within surveyed companies, SOS CV Ladimirevci was ranked as the third best employer overall.

Most of our attention and special care was dedicated to our SOS mothers, and the candidates who chose to pursue this humanitarian calling. After successfully completing the theoretical training in the School for SOS mothers, our candidates began their practical training in SOS Children's Villages. At the same time, we made sure that our children are always, without exception, in the care of the people who are best suited to the noble profession and life of SOS mother.

As a further proof of our commitment, all the current SOS mothers attended the special, accelerated School for SOS mothers training (their program was tailored to their needs, taking into account their vast work and life experience in dealing with children and youth). The school program has been verified and upon completion it can be entered into their labor permits as "child care giver – nanny – SOS mother". Due to its scope and responsibilities, this profession has been listed under "elite" jobs (requiring high level of expertise) in the area of child and youth care.

In addition to all of the above, the current SOS mothers received care in the form of training programs and modules that the experts from the NO – namely, PA and the HR specialist – helped organize for them despite the recession.

Besides working diligently during this challenging period, our co-workers also spent time together at numerous conferences, workshops and training courses. Our Association keeps investing in both the professional and personal development of each individual co-worker. To strengthen its efforts towards this goal, NA has begun a collaboration with the company called "Točka promjene" ("The Point of Change") and the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, while also continuing and strengthening its cooperation with the Selectio Group. Doing everything it can for all of its co-workers remains the priority in the HR strategy of the Association.

During 2009, we conducted two major studies regarding the status of children and youth without adequate parental care in Croatia: the Children's Right Situation Analysis and the Leaving Care Situation Analysis.

The results of the studies were presented to all the stakeholders who took part in them and to the relevant institutions at the presentation we held on December 8, 2009. Both studies are valuable documents that can be used to plan activities aimed at the protection and promotion of the rights of children and youth without parents or adequate parental care.

We used the recommendations from the Leaving Care Situation Analysis as a starting point for the preparation of project proposal aimed at improving the situation of youngsters who are about to depart or who have already departed from the out-of-home care. The project itself will be carried out in the period from 2010 to 2012, in partnership with the Forum for Quality Foster Care, the competent ministries and NGOs carrying out similar activities.

In addition to our cooperation on the Leaving Care project, we are also working with the Forum for Quality Foster Care on publishing the Croatian translation of the Quality4Children Standards for Out-of-home Child Care in Europe. SOS CVC provided the translation, and the printing costs will be shared equally between us and our partners from the Forum. We have also started work on intensive networking of youngsters who are about to depart from the out-of-home system of care – this includes both the foster families and SOS Children's Villages. Two youngsters from Croatia (one from each type of care) have been nominated for the membership in the International Youth Committee, which will be taking part in advocating the rights of youth.

## **1.2 TIME SCHEDULE OF MAJOR EVENTS FOR 2010**

JANUARY	National Annual Report 2009 to RO Evaluation of NA Plan 2009 to RO Preparation for Audit 2009
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FEBRUARY	PR & FR Annual Report to Fund Development & Communication February 25 <sup>th</sup> 2010 - 18 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of SOS CV Croatia
MARCH	8 <sup>th</sup> Board Meeting Audit 2009 1 <sup>st</sup> NMT Meeting
APRIL	Audit Report for the year 2009 9 <sup>th</sup> Board Meeting
MAY	Preparation of a smooth moving of village children to YF's 19 <sup>th</sup> General Assembly May 25 <sup>th</sup> 2010 SOS CV Ladimirevci Day Audit report 2009 to RO Review of Strategic and Annual Plan
JUNE	2 <sup>nd</sup> NMT Meeting 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 2010 Final FR & PR Business Plan 2011
OCTOBER	10 <sup>th</sup> Board Meeting October 3 <sup>rd</sup> SOS Kindergarten Lekenik Day October 8 <sup>th</sup> SOS CV Lekenik Day Strategic and Annual planning WS 3 <sup>rd</sup> PR & FR Report to Fund Development and Communication
NOVEMBER	Final Budget Proposal + final FR ration sheet 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 11 <sup>th</sup> Board Meeting

## ***SECTION TWO***

# **FACILITY REPORTS**

### **2.1. SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGE LEKENIK**

SOS Children's Village Lekenik provides home for 62 children: 30 girls and 32 boys. During 2009, 14 new residents joined us in the Village, while 16 children departed to pursue their path elsewhere (5 children went to the Youth Facilities, 3 are in foster care, 3 are in children's homes, and 4 have returned to their biological families).

As in the previous years, most children placed in our Village have their biological parents and thus belong to the category of “social orphans”. Their families usually have lower educational and socioeconomic standing, parents are mostly unemployed and the financial situation of the primary family is in most cases bad or very bad. The most frequent reasons for the removal of the child from the family include disrupted relationships in the family, material poverty, child neglect, child abandonment and psychological and physical abuse. Therefore most of the children have experienced multiple traumas, and require a great deal of support during the adjustment period in the Village. They also need continued help later on. This is why SOS, in addition to its own expert team, also relies on numerous external collaborators, such as pedagogues, social pedagogues, speech therapists, special education teachers, psychologists, psychotherapists and psychiatrists.

To respond to individual needs, to help children and co-workers and to ensure and promote safe and healthy development of our children, we have undertaken the following activities in the Village in the course of 2009:

- We ensured the continuation of the School for SOS mothers through training in the Village and we provided in-service training for all the co-workers;
- We provided the special education teacher and help in the form of additional lessons and tuition;
- We established the appropriate cooperation with the NO, and organized visits, lectures and training by NO co-workers in the Village;
- We worked on developing tolerance and appropriate communication and we held regular meetings with the Village co-workers;
- We worked on strengthening our cooperation with the sponsors, including their visits to the Village.

In the school year 2008/09 most children successfully completed their grades: 14.55% of all our school-age children completed the school year with top marks, 30.91% had very good marks 45.45% had solid marks, 3.64% had passing grades, and one child, or 1.82%, failed the grade. The grade average among our children was 3.42 %.

In the previous year we provided numerous programs through which we learned, developed our skills and expressed ourselves creatively. We also held a number of events where children and co-workers had the opportunity to show what their life in the Village is like and how much they accomplished during the year. Here are some of the highlights of our year:

- In January 2009, a chess tournament was held in the elementary school “Lekenik”. Our SOS Social Center held a competition for the best snowman in the Village;
- In February, we celebrated the Shrove Tuesday in Lekenik, and our Valentine’s Day celebration, held in the auditorium filled to capacity, was also a showcase for the young writers of the SOS Village, as well as a platform for the youngest members of the drama club, the violin school and our reciting section.
- Throughout the year, two Lekenik rock bands, Nameless and Hypnotic Poison, entertained us at various celebrations;
- In June, photographer Šime Strikoman shot a millennium picture in SOS Children's Village Lekenik; all the Lekenik children formed the logo of SOS Children's Village;
- During the celebration of Mother’s Day in SOS Children's Village Lekenik, many of our most creative children had the opportunity to showcase their skills: majorettes, actors, photographers etc. We also performed the fairy tale “Wolf from Sisak, Red Riding Hood from Lekenik”. The role of the Forest in the play was performed by the then vice-president of Croatia, Ms. Jadranka Kosor;
- SOS Children's Village Lekenik junior football team won the 2<sup>nd</sup> place at the 2009 children’s homes competition;
- The flying kite photo safari was held on April 18 in SOS Children's Village Lekenik – children from the SOS Village and pupils from the Zagreb school SUVAG made the kites in their model-making workshops;
- It is already a tradition to go on several bicycle runs in the spring, and we took our family vacation for mothers and children in Veli Lošinj;
- We threw a special party for eight top students of 2008/2009, presenting them with many gifts and commendations;
- We proclaimed 2009 the year of reading fairy tales, and we organized the Millennium Fairy Tale Read – we spent 24 hours reading non-stop: during that time, we read 40 fairy tales, 30 stories and 2 novels. A total of 320 readers took part in this exercise!

- At the end of August and the beginning of September, the members of SOS Children's Village Lekenik Children's Theater, Josipa, Diana, Petra, Marina, Leona, Kristina and Ana, went to Osijek to take part in the International Earth Festival with their play "Little Dwarves";
- In October we celebrated the 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary of SOS Children's Village Lekenik – during the celebration we played football matches, tug-of-war, volleyball and dodge ball. Together with our guests we danced and enjoyed the noisy performance by our little rock musicians, the band called Nameless from Lekenik;
- To mark the month of fighting against substance abuse, we organized a special program in SOS Children's Village called "Everyone Knows – Drugs Are No Good!" The police dog exercise to show how they sniff out drugs amazed everyone present;
- At a celebration to mark the arrival of St. Nicholas, all children have shown something new that they learned in the previous year: Leona learned a wonderful text for her drama club, Mandi mastered a new dance, Emanuel demonstrated how a true football fan should behave during matches, Diana won three medals at various taekwondo tournaments...

Throughout the year, we did our best to demonstrate our welcome, friendship and spirit of cooperation to all our visitors and partners from the local community and beyond. We believe these events that we worked on jointly in 2009 deserve a special mention:

- In 2009, we begin shooting a documentary in cooperation with the Lekenik Tourist Board, the Lekenik carnival parade started from SOS Children's Village, and we also took part in the wine exhibition and the Lekenik Day celebration;
- The premises of our Social Center were used to hold the assemblies of the hunting society "Šljuka", taekwondo club "Lekenik", the association of retirees, folk ensemble "Kolovrat", the kindergarten celebration. We also hosted the meetings of the Civil Initiative Center;
- We took part in the celebration when FC Lekenik won the championship; we also presented the Lekenik mayor and the FC with the contracts wherein we cede to them the use of the auxiliary football field;
- 42 children prepared for their First Communion on the premises of SOS CV. Our director took part in the mass held on the occasion of cardinal Bozanić visiting the Pešćenica Parish, and he also attended a small get-together after the mass;
- Regular aerobics classes for SOS mothers, aunts and women from the local community are held on our premises. We also participated in the organization of the Art Colony (focusing on the raku pottery technique), in the opening of the Lekenik library and several book presentations and other art presentations in the Municipality;
- In the course of the year, we had the opportunity to cooperate with the foster parents association "Life" from the Sisak-Moslavina County, a theater from Sisak and the national Office for the Prevention of Substance Abuse. The Village director actively participates in the work of the Municipal Prevention Council and the school board.

In order to ensure smooth running of life and activities in the Village, we paid a great deal of attention to the maintenance of the Village throughout 2009. Thanks to our own efforts and with minimal investments, we established the hydrant network and repaired the main lighting in the Village. We also set up a parking lot and an archive. All the houses and other spaces in the Village are on the same cable network, which means that they now get a steady internet signal. TV antennas have been repaired, all indoor spaces in CV have been painted and we set up one room as a computer workshop.

## **2.2 SOS YOUTH FACILITIES ZAGREB, VELIKA GORICA & VELIKA GORICA I**

SOS Children's Village Lekenik has 3 Youth Facilities. Currently there are 32 youngsters there: 5 boys and 27 girls. Out of this number, 32 still attend high school, 3 have graduated and are looking for jobs, one youngster is employed and one is in college.

We have another 20 youngsters in the semi-independent living program. Right now 5 of our youngsters are living in apartments provided by the City Hall (starting with 1 January 2010, there will be 6 of them).

In this year marked by recession, our youngsters were faced with many challenges to their process of gaining independence, i.e., finding employment. As a form of support, we gave one youngster financial assistance to go work on a ship.

Some youngsters (app. a third of them) are in regular contact with their SOS families in the Village. During the year, everyone has the opportunity to meet at birthday parties, visits to the YFs, get-togethers organized by the YFs (especially Christmas and New Year parties), joint Village Day celebrations, carnival and other events organized by the Village.

Many youngsters spent their vacation in Zaoštrog and Rogoznica. Others decided to work part time, and they found jobs in Savudrija, Sukošan and Brač. Everyone went on a joint two-day trip with their educators to see the rivers of Mrežnica and Korana.

Other activities in the YFs that deserve a mention: youngsters often work out at the gym, go to swimming pools, ice-skate, take part in various fitness programs; they also go to sporting events, watch movies, attend foreign language classes, dance classes, driving schools, college preparation courses and Internet workshops.

### **Stories of success:**

#### ***Nikola (M)***

Nikola came to SOS Children's Village Lekenik as a two-year-old. Living in his biological family had put him at considerable risk. It was obvious at first glance how neglected he was, both pedagogically and educationally; we observed lower cognitive functioning than in other children his age. His speech was underdeveloped and unarticulated. He was afraid of other people, of unfamiliar places and he had frequent bouts of crying.

Slowly but surely, as the time went by, his attitude towards the world around him changed. He turned out to be a quick learner, he absorbed new information like a sponge, and most importantly, he was able to apply everything he learned in daily life, quickly and appropriately.

His basic confidence in his SOS family grew on a daily basis. Love he received from his SOS mother and the understanding of his SOS siblings encouraged his positive development. Storybooks, fairy tales and building blocks strengthened his imagination and improved his motor skills.

Later on, when he started attending kindergarten to acquire social skills, it turned out he was an outgoing boy whose creativity in daily games with his peers grew by leaps and bounds. The same thing was happening in his SOS family. Love, attention and affection from his SOS mother had a therapeutic impact on his personal development. His self-confidence continued to grow.

He learned to ride a bike and roller skate. He joined a football club with several of his friends. Becoming involved in sports has helped him learn the importance of being a team player. He realized that the success of his team is as important as his own personal accomplishments, and that effort invested in achieving a common goal brings many rewards, mainly the sense of belonging and mutual respect.

Today Nikola attends the fourth grade of elementary school. He is an outstanding student. He does all of his chores and school work on time, meticulously and with great care. He is popular with other children because he is very funny and always ready to help others. He is very inquisitive and often asks questions that require a good deal of thinking before answering. He is eloquent and he likes to read. He mostly reads before bedtime, and he often falls asleep with a book in his hand. He always has a lot of friends at his birthday parties, and he is often invited to other children's parties.

He participates in many activities taking place in the Village and the local community. He is an excellent singer and an accomplished chess player who takes part in chess tournaments. He is a member of the drama club, where he is an expressive actor who memorizes his lines very quickly. He is developing his musical potential through violin and keyboard practice.

He is very affectionate with his SOS mother. He loves to cuddle and he is gentle with other children, especially the small ones. He is very protective of them. He is an enthusiastic participant in many games and welcome in every company thanks to his cheerful nature.

Today we clearly see what great strides he has made, developing from an emotionally deprived child into a self-confident, assertive, emotional boy whose talents and abilities are unquestionable.

#### ***Karlo (M)***

Karlo came to SOS Children's Village Lekenik when he was barely three years old, together with his brother. He was very restless and irritable at first, largely due to being exposed to a series of stressful and traumatizing situations in his early infancy. Since he could not thrive in his biological family, he was placed in a children's home and later transferred to SOS Children's Village.

Due to his traumas, he communicated in one-syllable words and gestures, and he would burst into tears if others could not understand his meaning right away. He was afraid of touch and avoided any touching if he could help it; he saw SOS siblings as competition. He used to hoard the food he could not eat, hiding it in his pockets and under his pillow.

His SOS mother worked patiently and cautiously with him, and little by little she found a way into his heart. It was a difficult road, but not an insurmountable one. With time Karlo realized that others in his SOS family are not a threat to him. On the contrary, he started to feel increasingly safe and relaxed.

A whole new world was revealed to him, one without harsh words and rough touch; by being affectionate and gentle, Karlo's SOS mother has shown him that he is a valuable, loved member of their community. Soon his fears disappeared, and he opened up to the world around him.

He changed from a frightened boy wary of almost everyone into a playful boy whose full potential is only now coming to light. He gets all the help he needs in SOS Children's Village, but more importantly, he gets love and understanding, both from his SOS mother and from other members of his SOS family. Now that they both live in the Village, he has grown more attached to his biological brother as well; prior to coming to the Village, they barely had a bond – they were more like acquaintances than brothers.

Today Karlo attends the fourth grade of elementary school. He is an excellent student. He does all of his chores on time, he is outgoing and polite, and he never imposes himself on others. He is always ready to help his SOS mother or aunts. He keeps his room tidy and clean. His self-esteem and self-confidence are growing thanks to the positive approach of his SOS mother and other co-workers who work with Karlo.

His immune system has improved greatly as well; he is stronger now and not as prone to inflammatory diseases as he used to be. He is involved in many activities, and particularly successful in football and drama club.

Recently he has developed an interest in computers. He spends some of his free time on Face book and playing computer games. He is a frequent visitor to our local library. He has made a great progress and his accomplishments so far have been impressive.

### **Ana (F)**

Ana is a twelve-year old girl who came to SOS Children's Village three years ago with her four younger brothers and a sister. Their father died and their mother was too sick to look after her children. When Ana first came here, the impact of the educational neglect she was exposed to has already been reduced somewhat, because she spent some time in another children's home before coming to the Village. Still, she has made great progress since her arrival. She is always full of energy and she never rests. From the very start, she has been highly motivated to learn. She is a quick study and an excellent student. Her joyous laughter and loud talking can often be heard around the Village – they have become her trademark. She loves music and she attends all events where there might be singing and dancing. She also joined a band working from our Social Center and she is studying violin. Her motor skills are well developed, so she plays easily and smoothly.

She is an accomplished member of the drama club, where she is one of their most prominent and enthusiastic actors.

Ana is also a successful athlete. She trains taekwondo regularly and takes part in competitions. She has already won several medals. Her favorite sporting activity is playing football. She even gets a little bruised sometimes, but she wears her bruises as if they were trophies and she always jokes about them with her SOS siblings.

She is very popular in her SOS family. She often helps her SOS mother and others living in the house. She loves her brothers very much, especially her youngest brother. She is very attached to her SOS mother. Since arriving to the Village, Ana has made a lot of friends in school. Ana recently became a bona fide star, because one TV station has made a documentary on her and her brothers that will be shown in several festivals around the world. Ana likes living in SOS Children's Village and she appreciates all the opportunities for development that are available to her.

## **2.3 SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGE LADIMIREVCI**

Number of children in 2009 ranged from 59 children in January and February, when 12 out of 16 SOS houses were operational, to 52 children at the end of 2009, also living in 12 SOS houses. Five children were admitted and 4 children transferred from Children's Village to the Youth Facilities. Eight children departed: 4 were adopted, 2 returned to their biological families and 2 were transferred to a different type of placement due to behavioral disturbances. The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare stepped up its deinstitutionalization efforts in the previous year. Consequently, the number of requests for placement of children in children's homes – and SOS belongs to this legal category – has decreased. At the same time, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare requires Social Welfare Centers to expand their expert work in biological families under a risk of neglect and/or child abuse, with the goal of preventing the removal of children from such families. However, even in those cases where the SWC expert workers do propose a removal of the child from the biological family to the competent court, the legal proceedings themselves take an extremely long time, and a big percentage of Social Center Welfare requests for the removal of children from their biological families are denied. The result of such social policy is a growing number of children with behavioral disturbances who were not removed from the threat in their biological families in time, while quality expert work in the said biological families could not be carried out because biological parents refuse to cooperate and SWCs simply do not have enough expert workers to undertake this type of preventative effort. Due to the above reasons, in the previous year we had to turn down 7 requests for placement of 15 children who had obvious symptoms of behavioral disturbances and psychological disorders cited in the admission documentation. At the same time, existing SOS families already look after a large number of children suffering from the said disturbances/disorders. We provide those children with additional help and support as specified in their individual development plans through auxiliary activities depending on the specific problems and capacities of each individual child, such as psychotherapy for 20 children and special education and speech therapy for 25 children. Our psychopedagogical work plan is focused on the growth and development of all SOS families, children and co-workers. One of the major goals that we successfully accomplished in the previous year was the development and strengthening of togetherness. Our efforts on achieving this goal included the joint vacation for all SOS families, as well as ongoing training we provided for children and co-workers in the previous year as a continuation of our cooperation with the NGO called Center for Peace and Human Rights. Working closely with the Center, we ensured a two-year training program for SOS mothers and SOS aunts, as well as workshops for children on the subject of peer-to-peer mediation. In the course of the previous year, twelve children took part in the work of the drama club led by external collaborators. The funding for this project came from the Dutch NGO called Protestants Christelijke Vereniging voor Jeugd-en Kinderzorg. They showcased their work in the Christmas show entitled *Whitebeard Brings Gifts*, performed for other children, SOS mothers and our long-time donors and friends from “Jadransko osiguranje Osijek”, who took this opportunity to bring season-appropriate gifts for all SOS families. Many of our children were active in the art workshop where they could express themselves creatively throughout the year. We had the pleasure of giving out many of the greeting cards, drawings and jewelry produced in our art workshop to the friends of our Children's Village who followed and supported our work during the previous year. Our child Martina Horvatić, who regularly attended the photography workshop organized by the Croatian Photography Association at the Valpovo Technological Culture Society throughout 2009, received international accolades for her photograph entitled “Grandma Bakes”. Her photograph won the 8<sup>th</sup> place in the cultural heritage category at the national competition, and it was later published in the international magazine published by International Heritage Photographic Experience (IPHE), along with more than 1000 photos from all parts of the world. To celebrate her success, little Martina was rewarded with a 7-day vacation organized by the Croatian Photography Association in Pula, where she had the opportunity to learn new photographic skills with other young photographers. Children's Village Mediation Club was equally successful. With the help of adults, this club is the place where children can resolve their conflicts non-violently by using peer-to-peer mediation method. Although the 2-year training has come to an end, our partners from the Center for Peace, Human Rights and Non-violence from Osijek decided to continue their work in 2010 on a voluntary basis, to make sure that CV Mediation Club, or rather, the children taking part in it, will gain more confidence in applying their knowledge and skills in non-violent resolution of conflicts. Children were conscientious and hard-working in school as well. They get all the help they need from SOS mothers, pedagogical assistants and family assistants, who all contribute their own expert help. Here we would like to highlight the accomplishments of our child Stiven Đurđević. He came to Children's Village at the end of 2008. He came from a Roma family living in very harsh conditions, where his needs could not be met. He suffered a great deal of educational neglect; although in the second grade of elementary school, the boy only recognized block letters, he read with difficulty and very little understanding, and he could barely add and subtract. In an impressive demonstration of persistence and motivation Stiven worked very hard with his special education teachers and as a result, he managed to completely catch up with his classmates. He earned a very high grade average in the first term of the

2009/2010 school year, which delighted both him personally and all of us adults who supported him in his efforts. We are also proud of the Children's Village Ladimirevci contributions to the local community. After years of lobbying for it, traffic lights were finally installed in 2009 at the main thoroughfare in the village of Ladimirevci, thus ensuring the safety of all children and adults in traffic. We celebrated the end of the year with a big get-together of all co-workers. Three co-workers received rewards for 5 years of service. We are expending a lot of effort to promote our organization and Children's Village in order to put the currently closed SOS houses in operation, thus making sure that all children who need help can really get it.

## **2.4 SOS YOUTH FACILITIES OSIJEK & OSIJEK I**

At the end of 2009 there were 28 youngsters living in our two SOS Youth Facilities in Osijek: 15 (10 girls and 5 boys) in SOS Youth Facility Osijek and 13 (7 girls and 6 boys) in SOS Youth Facility Osijek 1. During 2009, 14 youngsters were in the semi-independent living program. Out of those, 6 attend college, while the rest are doing all they can to find jobs, an increasingly difficult prospect in our recession ravaged region. According to the statistical report of the Employment Bureau, when compared to 2008, the unemployment rate has gone up by 21.2% in 2009 in the Osijek-Baranja County, where we are located. We have 24 youngsters in the follow-up program. Most of them have their own families. We talk to them regularly on the phone, and we see the majority, who live in the vicinity, during the holiday season at the end of the year. For example, last year they came to our get-together in the Youth Facilities, and during the Christmas holidays they also visited their SOS families in the Children's Village. Youngsters from both Youth Facilities successfully completed their school obligations in 2009. Some went to work part time at the seaside as soon as the school year ended, because they had good experiences with their employers in previous years. However, most youngsters did not manage to work part time in 2009 due to high unemployment rate throughout the country. Some, however, found temporary employment in the salt factory Ston, where they were compensated for their work with paid accommodations and food. In other words, they paid for their vacations by working, which was a new and interesting experience for them. Our youngsters are well integrated into the local community, both through school and through various leisure activities. Boys are mostly involved in sports such as football and martial arts, while girls are more interested in volleyball, swimming and Pilates. All youngsters dedicate a portion of their free time to volunteering in the Osijek Red Cross and selling our Christmas cards, thus contributing to successful fund-raising of our national association. We are proud of the fact that our youngsters regularly visit their SOS families in the Children's Village, and very happy with how the program of preparing children for their transfer from Children's Village to Youth Facilities is being implemented. In 2009, 4 youngsters from Children's Village moved to two Youth Facilities in Osijek. Our youth leaders and educators take part in the preparation program in cooperation with SOS mothers, laying the solid foundation for good cooperation in the future in a timely, well prepared manner. We have had a number of clear and well established procedures in place for a number of years: present and future persons of importance for the youngsters all take part in the process, from getting to know one another in the introductory workshops, through multiple joint meetings during the year and the signing of the contracts, to the farewell ceremony in the Village and the admission ceremony in the Youth Facility, which were held in previous years as well. The progress is visible in the increased readiness for transfer of each successive generation. This is later reflected in their readiness to move from Youth Facilities to the semi-independent living program.

### **Stories of success:**

#### ***Stiven (M)***

Stiven was placed in SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci at the end of 2008. Stiven comes from a Roma family that lives in very difficult circumstances. Mother is illiterate; father is constantly in and out of prison. Stiven has five brothers and one sister. Two younger brothers and sisters were placed in the SOS Children's Village with him. The process of removing them from the biological family was extremely stressful, because it required a court order and police intervention. In short, for a child of Stiven's age, it was a hugely traumatic event.

Many Roma live in harsh conditions, characterized by severe poverty, uncertain future, living from day to day, high unemployment rate, alcohol abuse and numerous other problems. This is the only life Steven knew before coming to SOS Children's Village. Educationally speaking, he was almost completely neglected:

although in the second grade of elementary school, he could only recognize block letters, he barely read or understood written texts and he had almost no knowledge of adding and subtracting. Despite all this, Stiven very quickly demonstrated a great ability to adapt to new environment. Thanks to the persistence and methodical approach of his SOS mother and expert workers of SOS Children's Village he learned all the rules of the SOS Hazelnut House and SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci, revealing himself as a highly intelligent and affectionate boy. He has forged a solid, supportive relationship with all his housemates, becoming a favorite with his SOS siblings. His relationship with his SOS mother is built on trust, respect and affection that make him feel safe. Once the successful adaptation process was completed, we began a new, and a much more demanding phase: furthering his education. This meant we had to start almost from the scratch. His special education teachers chose a very intensive approach, doubling their usual efforts. Stiven was so motivated and persistent that not only has he caught up with his peers and all the lessons he missed in the past, but he also ended the first term of 2009/2010 school year with a very high grade average, better than some of his classmates from SOS Children's Village. His favorite subjects are physical education and Croatian. He loves reading books and writing book reports. He is at his happiest when his teacher praises him or when he gets a top grade. When that happens, Stiven lets everyone in his SOS house know about it as soon as he comes home.

Adults and other children could learn a lot from Stiven. He has shown courage when he needed it the most, he gathered his strength and overcame all the bad things that happened to him despite being traumatized, and now he is living up to his potential. Right now Stiven is planning on completing his second grade with the highest marks and he wants to be a policeman when he grows up. Knowing how far he has come already, we have no doubt that Stiven will make a great policeman one day.

### ***Ivan (M)***

Even before he came to the Youth Facility in September 2008, Ivan has proven himself to be a very capable boy. Before transferring to the YF from SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci, he used to visit us on weekends with other children from the Children's Village to learn more about living and working in the Youth Facility. Thanks to his inquisitive and quick mind, he soon learned the ropes and adjusted to requirements of living in the Youth Facility, which, realistically speaking, are not too difficult or demanding. Ivan attends the School of Electrical Engineering and Traffic, where he is studying to be an electrical technician. Ivan has adapted really well to his new environment, and his behavior in school and in the Youth Facility is exemplary. He is responsible about his obligations and he never needs prompting to do his schoolwork and chores. One of the main reasons he transferred to our YF is his sister Marija, who moved here two years earlier. The two of them are a great example of how different siblings can be in temperament. Namely, Marija, who also has the potential to be a top student, usually chooses other priorities, so for the last four years we have been struggling to keep her on the right path. Ivan, on the other hand, has no such problems. He is very popular with his peers and he often helps them with their schoolwork. He is very keen on computers and everything to do with computer technology. He is particularly fond of strategy games he regularly plays on the Internet. He often plays basketball on the nearby court with other youngsters from the YF. His homeroom teacher is full of praise for his attitude to his classmates and his school obligations. As a reward for his good behavior and school results, two years ago Ivan spent a vacation on the island of Korčula. After seeing his outstanding skills in the PACT camp, the hosts invited him to participate in their youth program a year later as well, this time as a volunteer. He accepted their invitation eagerly. Ivan returned from Korčula deeply in love, so we had serious preparations and talks with him regarding his wish to continue his schooling abroad, namely on Hawaii. We already established contact with other teenagers who spent a portion of their high school education abroad, made inquiries about the available options, and actually started to believe that the transfer might really take place, especially because we had a similar conversation with his sister a few years earlier, when we offered her a possibility of attending SOS Academy in Venezuela as a top student. However, the first blush of summer love has faded a bit in the meantime, time and daily chores also had their effect and it seems that Ivan has given up the idea, at least for the time being. Despite the storm in his heart and mind, Ivan completed the first grade of high school with very good marks, and he has been equally successful in the first term of the second grade. In addition to above, Ivan regularly attends the foreign language school AD-HOC, where he has already completed the first 6 levels of English. He regularly attends basketball practice four times a week in the basketball club "Hrvatski sokol". Despite his many obligations, he still finds time for skateboarding, his favorite hobby. Ivan regularly visits SOS Children's Village and maintains regular contact with his other sister Danijela. He spends most of his holidays with her. In the future, Ivan sees himself as a student of electrical engineering. He can count on our full support in this endeavor. We already have a sizable college student population in

our YF, and we hope that Ivan will be one of our SOS youngsters who will soon be leaving the vicious circle of social welfare forever.

### ***Maja (F)***

Right now it is difficult to single out just one accomplished youngster in the Youth Facility, because almost everyone is successful at something. At the end of the last school year, just one youngster in our YF had a failing grade, while the rest excelled at their studies. However, we will use this occasion to highlight the accomplishments of Maja, who came to SOS Children's Village as a very young child. She has gradually developed into a very ambitious, serious and responsible girl who is currently on the verge of graduating from the School of Catering with very good grades. After her high school graduation, Maja plans on enrolling in college. She is very attached to her SOS family and SOS mother Snježana, and she talks to them all the time. Her other source of strength in life is her sister Gordana, who lives, works and attends college in Zagreb. Maja is hoping to enroll in the Zagreb University so that she can be with her sister. In addition to her school obligations, Maja has spent the last four years studying three additional languages: French, Italian and German. Despite being one of the most demanding languages in the world, French has become Maja's great passion. In addition to advancing her French studies, she participated in national competitions and took international certification exams to prove her command of the French language. Maja used to play volleyball, but in the past year she has been taking Pilates classes to improve her posture, which has started to suffer from her sedentary lifestyle devoted mostly to studying. Maja is very conscientious about her school obligations and chores in the YF. She is always ready to help others. She is particularly helpful to new arrivals in our YF: she monitors them, gives them advice and corrects their occasional mistakes in demeanor or chores around the house. In addition to her numerous and demanding interests and hobbies, Maja also loves to cook. Other youngsters and educators particularly love her pasta dishes and sauces.

When it comes to her approach to household tasks, Maja sets a high standard for both cleanliness and visual sense, and she is a role model for other youngsters. Maja loves traveling and art and she hopes that one day she will have the opportunity to fully enjoy both. She is a joy to have around, because she is a warm, affectionate young person who knows how to express her feelings without overburdening others. She is reliable and responsible, outgoing although occasionally a bit self-deprecating. Maja will be starting college in the autumn and transferring to semi-independent living program. She is already fully prepared for this change.

## **2.5 SOS KINDERGARTEN LEKENIK**

In the course of 2009, in total 81 children attended the primary, 10-hour program in SOS Kindergarten, while 39 children attended the preschool program. Out of these 81 children, 69 were from the local community, and 12 came from the SOS Children's Village. The total number of co-workers in 2009 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 7. All the activities and programs were planned according to the tasks we set beforehand, and they were implemented in compliance with regulations and legislation. This year we intensified the work on proper nutrition to comply with HACCP standards. We planned menus in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the Republic of Croatia Nutrition Standards for the Diet of Children in Kindergartens and the Croatian Food Act. The kindergarten worked on implementing HACCP system for the entire year. The Public Health Institute from Sisak took on the responsibility for the entire training of the co-workers. We made a flowchart of activities to be undertaken throughout the year which we realized in full. We analyzed the current status of premises and equipment and took measures to remove technical, hygienic, sanitary and organizational deficiencies. We identified the possible risks, critical control points, critical boundaries and we defined the monitoring of corrective measures.

The Public Health Institute developed necessary instructions and standard procedures. Required documentation for system verification was also developed. We agreed on procedures for all stages of the process, from obtaining groceries through the preparation and processing of each grocery item to the distribution of food to children. Monitoring and record keeping are carried out on a daily basis.

We celebrated Valentine's Day, the Shrove Tuesday, the Easter, the arrival of spring, our preschoolers leaving for school, the first day of autumn, the Kindergarten Day, St. Nicholas Day and New Year. For each of these events, we decorated the kindergarten with works of art made by our children. Children attended

theatre performances in the Velika Gorica Open University, where they saw “Stribor’s Forest” and “Hedgehog’s Little House”, while the puppet theatre KVAK performed their show called “The Courtyard Window” in our kindergarten. Our kindergarten teachers performed a Christmas show for children called “Five Snowflakes, Five Little Sisters”. Our preschool children also saw all of these performances. The older kindergarten group visited the Zagreb Airport.

In February we held a conference for all the kindergarten teachers from the Sisak-Moslavina County. We held workshops for parents and get-togethers of children and parents on the subject of “Joy of Creation for Children and Adults”. The goal of the workshop – educating parents on creative activities that children and adults can undertake together – was fully accomplished, to the delight of all attendees.

In September a new pedagogical year began. Given the number of children who departed from the kindergarten to start school (21), we admitted 22 new children in the new pedagogical year.

The appearance of the new H1N1 influenza virus and the outbreak of the common seasonal flu led to the increase of precautionary and anti-epidemic measures in the kindergarten. We held a series of meetings to discuss best ways of protecting children. There were no diseases or risky cases in the course of the year. During the Christmas and New Year holidays, the number of children attending kindergarten was reduced.

## ***SECTION THREE***

# **FACILITY STATISTICS**

### **3.1. BOARD MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION**

NAME OF NATIONAL ASSOCIATION:	<b>SOS CHILDREN VILLAGE CROATIA</b>
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No.	Name of Board Member	Position
1	Ms. Mariza Katavic	Chairman
2	Mr. Branimir Vlajo	Vice-Chairman
3	Ms. Lada Sambunjak Rajčić	Treasurer
4	Ms. Lea Sokolić	Member
5	Ms. Wendy Zečić	Member
6	Mr. Gerhard Zwettler	Member SOS KDI Representative
7	Mr. Tom Malvet  Mr. Michael Poeltl	SOS KDI Representative, as of June 29 <sup>th</sup> 2009 not Member any more  Since June 29 <sup>th</sup> 2009 Board Member instead of Mr. Malvet
8	Ms. Višnja Tuškan-Krupić	Non-voting Member National Director

<b>Chairman of the Board</b>	Prof. Mariza Katavic, Ph.D.Econ.
<b>Address</b>	SOS-Djecje selo Hrvatska, Zavrtnica 5/III, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia
<b>Phone.</b>	+ 385 1 4610067
<b>Fax.</b>	+ 385 1 4618208

**Board Sessions:**

3 <sup>rd</sup> March	12 <sup>th</sup> , 2009
4 <sup>th</sup> April	27 <sup>th</sup> , 2009
5 <sup>th</sup> September	25 <sup>th</sup> , 2009
6 <sup>th</sup> October	29 <sup>th</sup> , 2009
7 <sup>th</sup> December	03 <sup>rd</sup> , 2009

**18<sup>th</sup> GA:**                      **June**                      **29<sup>th</sup>, 2009**