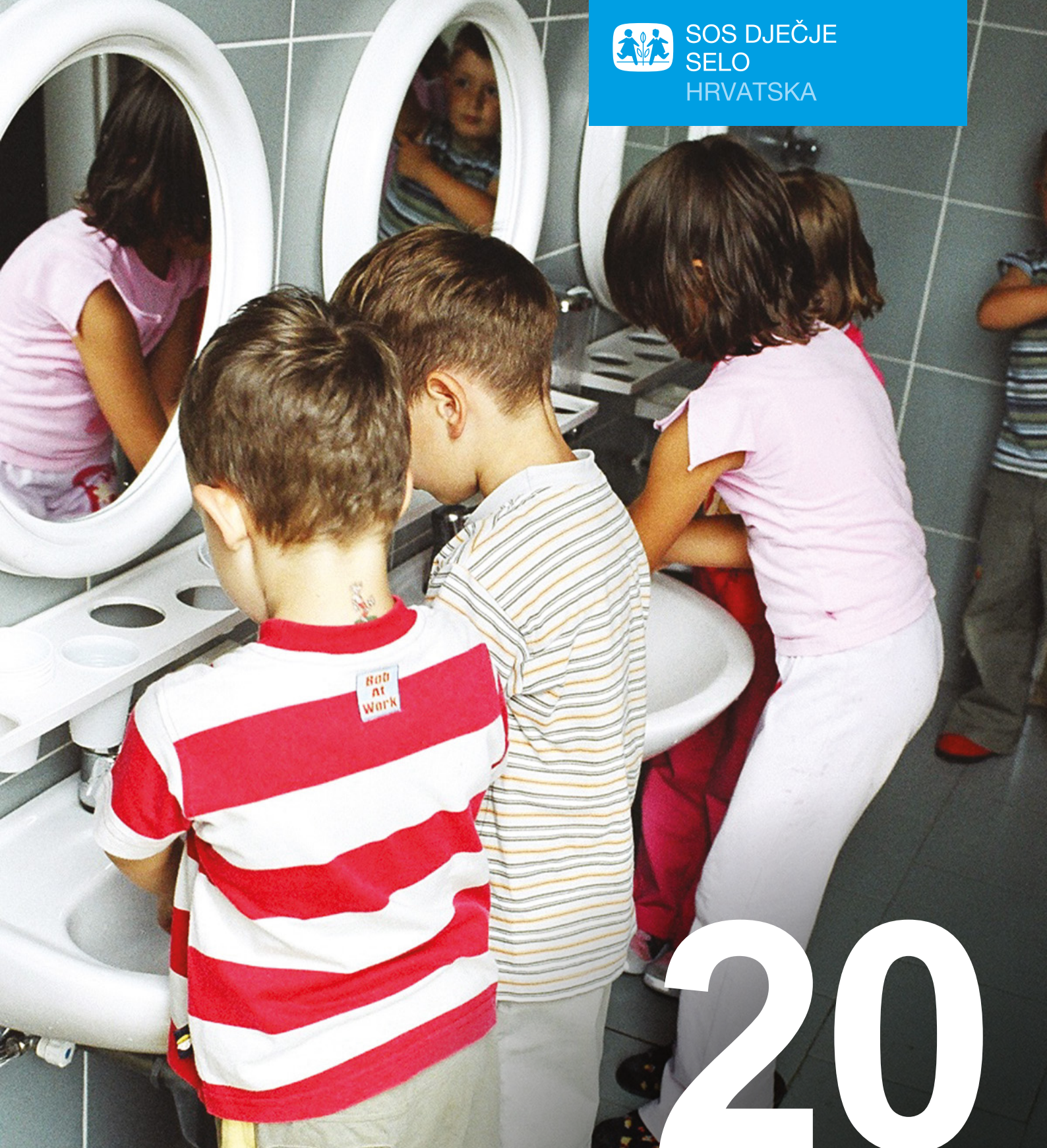




SOS DJEČJE
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NATIONAL ANNUAL REPORT

20

SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGE CROATIA

NATIONAL ANNUAL REPORT 2020

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National Director



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March 2021.

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SECTION ONE

ANNUAL REPORT

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1.1 SUMMARY OF SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGE CROATIA WORK IN 2020

Year 2020 was expected to be a good, prosperous year for our economy, and therefore it also promised prosperity in our daily lives. However, in reality 2020 will be remembered as an extremely difficult and painful year, not only here in Croatia, but also globally. In addition to the outbreak of COVID-19, with the first case recorded on 25 February in Zagreb, less than a month later Zagreb and the surrounding area were shaken by the strongest earthquake we had in the past 100 years. Much of the beauty of the historical part of Zagreb disappeared forever in just seconds, while many of Zagreb citizens lost their homes and it is debatable whether they will be able to return to their apartments. As if that wasn't enough, just as the year was about to end, on 29 December 2020 a devastating earthquake struck the Sisak-Moslavina County, simply erasing parts of Sisak, Petrinja and the surrounding area. Again the numerous residents of this poverty-stricken, long-suffering and mostly rural region lost their homes, property, belongings... it was a sad ending for 2020 and an even sadder beginning for the new 2021.

Although very close to the epicentre of this earthquake, SOS Children's Village Lekenik did not suffer damage to its buildings or anything else, but the traumatic experience has renewed the anxiety and fear of new earthquakes that permeates the daily lives of children and adults in SOS Children's Village Lekenik, SOS Youth Facilities and all of us living in this earthquake-prone region.

The lockdown caused by the pandemic that began in March 2020 has forced us to start working from home and to master new online means of communication overnight, regardless of age. Children and young people had all of their classes online, while we mostly used Teams and Zoom platforms for our meetings.

In order to always keep in touch and be up to date with all the developments and each other's work and wellbeing, we held online NMT meetings three times a week via the Teams platform. It was important to us to maintain the continuity of our joint work and our care for each other, so all the members of the national management team always kept abreast of all the developments. NMT included the National Director, the directors of FR, Director of finance and controlling department, Humans Resources, ICT as well as the directors of SOS Children's Villages Lekenik and Ladimirevci. We paid special attention and care to the maintenance of mental and physical wellbeing of all our children, young people and co-workers. Despite all the difficulties and challenges we experienced in 2020, we can be more than satisfied with what we achieved. Our loyal friends and donors remained with us during these difficult times, giving us their support and aid. We are immensely proud and happy that this has been the case.

For the first time ever, we held the Board sessions online, via the Teams platform, and we did the same with the elective Association assembly in June. We elected the new Board of Directors and held an online session.

The economic situation in the country remains rather unfavourable. The poverty index or AIC in 2020 indicates that we are one of the poorest countries in Europe. AIC (Actual Individual Consumption) is between 25%, and 35% below the EU average. The unemployment rate was 9.5%, with 159.845 unemployed people in December 2020.



The table below provides an overview of the most important economic trends in 2020 when compared to 2019:

The table below provides an overview of the most important economic trends in 2020 when compared to 2019:

Economic trends*	2020	2019
GDP	-10.0%	+3.1%
Exports	-32.3%	+6.8%
Imports	-14.1%	+5.8%
Food expenditures	+1.9%	+3.5%
Total inflation	-0.3%	+1.3%
Unemployment rate	9.5%	6.5%
Total number of unemployed in December	159.845	131.753
Average gross salary	+2.2%	+3.7%
Average net salary	+2.3%	+3.3%

* Source: *Računovodstvo, revizija i financije (Bookkeeping, Audit and Finances)*, Issue 2, 2021

Despite the above circumstances, SOS Children's Village Croatia managed to provide normal life for our children and youth and fulfil all our obligations towards our co-workers.

Expenses in 2020 decreased by 3.5% in comparison to 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which changed the conditions we worked in and rendered us unable to realize all our work plans. Budget expenditures in 2020 were 93.55%. Investments in 2020 were 200.68% due to additional targeted donations.

Local income in 2020 increased by 2.04% in 2020 in comparison to 2019. As for income structure, individual donations remained stable while corporate income stagnated in terms of financial funds, but increased in donations in kind. Income from calls for project proposals were on the rise, but some activities had to be postponed. Local FR income is 101% of the plan thanks to our timely response to the situation and introducing new channels of communication with the donors.

It is important to note that 2020 was the first year ever in which we did not receive co-financing from our founder SOS-Kinderdorf International, aside from sponsorships for our children and projects that have been transferred to us. In other words, SOS Children's Village Croatia became self-sustaining in 2020.

With our faith in a better tomorrow, we are bravely moving forward. There are still so many children and young people who need our help and care, both those who live in SOS Children's Villages Le-kenik and Ladimirevci and the attached Youth Facilities, and those still in their biological families who need help to stay together.



Višnja Tuškan-Krupić
National Director

ONE CHILD

PROGRAMMES

Several big events indelibly marked 2020, shaping it into what will notoriously be remembered as a “difficult and challenging year”: the global COVID-19 pandemic, a strong earthquake in Zagreb on 22 March and a catastrophic earthquake in Sisak-Moslavina County on 29 December. The ground in the Sisak-Moslavina County still shakes almost every day. Lost lives, vast material damage and thousands of families who lost their homes – all of this has been deeply traumatizing and it will leave its mark on us in many ways in the years to come.

There was no significant qualitative progress in the deinstitutionalization process: there are still more children in the institutions than planned, foster care campaigns are not getting the expected results, adoption procedures still take much too long, and adoptions haven’t increased in any significant way. The COVID-19 pandemic has redirected the attention and focus to ensuring preventive measures in the social welfare system, causing changes in the way the system functions (working in teams, Social Welfare Center staff worked in the field in extraordinary situations only, admissions to institutions have been put on hold). Lockdown and limiting social contacts, loss of jobs and income have contributed to the increase in number of reported cases of domestic violence, while realizing rights and services in the social system became impossible (especially removing the children from families and finding adequate placement for them). Our work during the year unfolded against the backdrop of a slow and chaotic official system, and unclear and inconsistent measures and guidelines for work in the context of the pandemic.

After the new parliamentary elections, the Ministry of Labour and Pension System has merged with the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy, which was the competent ministry for us, forming a new Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy. A well-known scenario repeated itself: changes in management, new work organization and new political guidelines and priorities in the social welfare system, which after many years lost its autonomy and once again became “attached” to another system – the Ministry of Labour. In such circumstances, the big earthquake in Sisak-Moslavina County put the competent bodies and social welfare system as a whole into a hugely challenging situation.

The words that best describe this year are: pandemic and health care, social distancing, mass trauma, devastation of cities and material property, increasingly bad economic situation, insecurity, living the “new normal” where nothing is actually normal.

We adapted our work methods and content of our work to the situation, we worked from home, in teams, occasionally in the office, and most frequently online. We had to learn to function in the conditions we never even imagined, find a way to face fears for our own safety and the safety of those in our care, we had to push past our limits, adapt and change our plans, learn new ways of working and communicating, maintain the quality of our professional work with children, young people and families, take care to remain health in body and spirit... and we succeeded!

Now that this year unlike any other is over, we can proudly conclude that we as an organization have demonstrated strength, togetherness and mutual care. We faced the difficulties with our heads held high, we “closed ranks” and looked after our children, young people and co-workers to the best of our abilities. We have no doubt that the work of all co-workers in the SOS CVC National Programme Development Department has also contributed to this.

The main areas of work that the NPDD focused on during 2020 were as follows:

- **achieving defined strategic goals**
- **ensuring conditions for high quality, comprehensive care for our children and young people, both in the family-based care and in the family strengthening programmes**
- **realization of advocacy projects and children’s rights advocacy activities**
- **following public calls for proposals and applying to them**

We tried to achieve our planned **strategic goals** to the greatest possible degree. Some of the plans had to be postponed, and we had to adapt our way of working to set parameters.

In spite of all the new circumstances, our work with our children, young people and families was carried out through professionally guided and planned activities on the level of SOS Children’s Village, in youth care programmes and in preventive family strengthening programmes. The goal was always the same: maintaining the high quality of services we provide for children, young people and families, to ensure their best interests, protection and secure childhood.

Due to epidemiological measures and guidelines from the competent Ministry, during this reporting period the Programme Department had to adjust the way it worked and communicated with the locations – SOS Children’s Villages, SOS Youth Facilities and Family Strengthening Programmes. We couldn’t hold some of our planned activities (Youth Day, annual meeting of YF co-workers, annual meeting of FSP co-workers, System Based Audit in CV Ladimirevci, Training of Trainers for certain courses), the visits to the Villages were put on hold and most of the communication was done on-line or over the phones. In spite of the altered and often challenging work circumstances, the entire Programme Department continued implementing planned activities and regular work tasks to the best of their abilities.

We hired a new member of the programme team, a project assistant, for the implementation of the international advocacy project under EU, Trauma-Informed Practices “Safe Places, Thriving Children. Embedding Trauma-Informed Practices into Alternative Care Settings“





In early April, after the lockdown began, we held the online meeting of the SOS CV Croatia programme development department. The goal was for the colleagues in various programmes to share experiences regarding the pandemic and the Zagreb earthquake. We also wanted to define needs for support from the Programme Department to the programmes itself, as well as available options.

Once the epidemiological measures were loosened, we were able to organize a programme department meeting in person, which we held in late September in Njivice on the island of Krk. Attending the meeting were both SOS Children's Village directors, leaders of child development teams, social workers, YF directors, FSP team coordinators, members of the NO Programme Department. During the three intensive workdays, we exchanged experiences, discussed the relevant topics, presented new global SOS documents and agreed on further steps in their implementation.



Lifelong learning and investing in the professional capacity building of our co-workers is an integral part of investing into the quality of our work. In 2020 we planned to organize and prepare a number of trainings, to maintain our currently high quality of work, acquire new knowledge and skills and remain up to date with innovative insights, methods and techniques. Unfortunately, we were unable to realize most of them, so we had to postpone them. Some trainings were held online, and a few were carried out in person, with a limited number of participants, following the measures instituted by the national pandemic response team.

However, this new situation in which in-person contacts were either limited or forbidden have resulted in a large number of virtual meetings, topical conferences and a significant increase in the written educational content. For example, we took part in online regional meetings of NFC Advisers, NPDD directors, FSP advisors, youth care experts, NAA advisors. We followed the presentation cycle for the new global document Youth Development User Guide, we took part in professional conferences on supporting children and service providers in the pandemic context, and on safety of children and protection of their rights in new circumstances. All of these became highly useful sources of information in our work with children and young people, in our efforts to provide mental health protection, in exchanges of good practices, in sharing experiences and learning new work methods and approaches.

We shared our knowledge and experience with students, colleagues from other SOS organizations, our collaborators in Croatia. We held a lecture on leaving care for the students from the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, and a lecture on the SOS system of care for the 5th year students majoring in social work. We presented our personal mentor programme and preparation process for leaving care at international online conferences. We also held a presentation on organizational structure and responsibilities of the PD and communication with programmes for the Middle Eastern MAs, and for our colleagues from SOS Morocco we presented our experience of working with SOS couples.

Support, monitoring and work evaluation in the area of **youth care** took place through phone calls and online meetings, monthly and annual reports, projections and statistics, defining our direction for the 2020. New challenges such as having to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic and disastrous earthquakes also had a huge impact. All of the above required a stronger focus on caring for mental health of co-workers and young people, and we also needed to pay special attention to youth employment. We intensified our joint efforts in job seeking and keeping existing jobs.



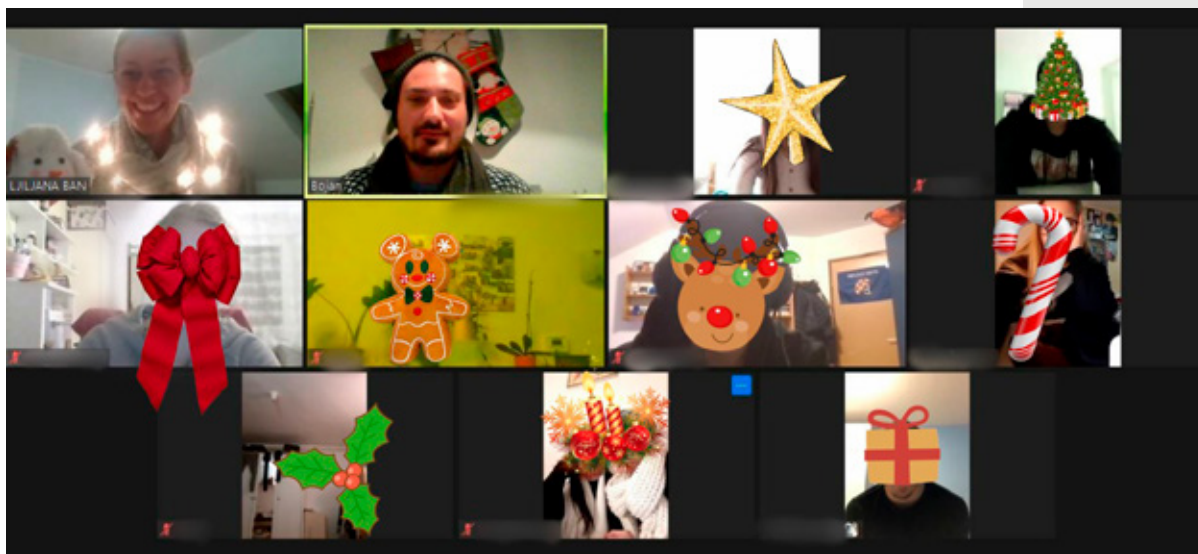
Another contribution to the issue of our young people learning to adapt to the job market was **innovative collaboration** of the FR and PD departments with the corporate sector, namely the Janssen company, which supported our young people through the project “YouthCan!” and even actively participated in our work with the young people. As part of the collaboration, so far 16 Janssen employees familiarized themselves with the work of SOS Children’s Villages, especially the Youth Care Programme, and 9 of their employees also completed an intensive 2-day training on working with young people from alternative care through mentorship, which was organized by the PD staff. This type of corporate social responsibility has many benefits for everyone involved. SOS Children’s Village experts shared their insights into the needs of our young people with the company employees, showing them how they could use their skills to support them, we got an insight into the needs of the job market and guidelines on how to improve our preparation of young people for the job market, and the young people themselves will gain real experience, which is irreplaceable in preparing to enter the job market. We couldn’t implement the further steps of introducing young people to Janssen employees and assigning mentors, or monitoring the mentors and young people, due to the situation with the pandemic, but we certainly plan to continue our collaboration in 2021. This is one of the ways in which we can prepare our young people for the job market. Our educators work intensively with our young people, and so does the leaving care support expert.

Aside from the employment issues, years of work have helped us crystalize certain other areas of work that need to be reviewed through documents that already exist on youth care. New SOS international policy entitled “Youth Development Guide” will serve as the basis for this. The youth care programme staff is already familiar with it and they will use it for their work in these areas in the next period as well.



A total of 45 young people participated in the leaving care preparation programme during 2020. Some of them completed the programme and transferred to SIL, while several young people from the programme decided to start living on their own.

Due to specific circumstances caused by the global pandemic and strong earthquakes in Croatia, the work of the leaving care support expert had to be adapted to the new situation: **we introduced online educational workshop into the system of support and services, and we also increased a number of phone counselling sessions.**



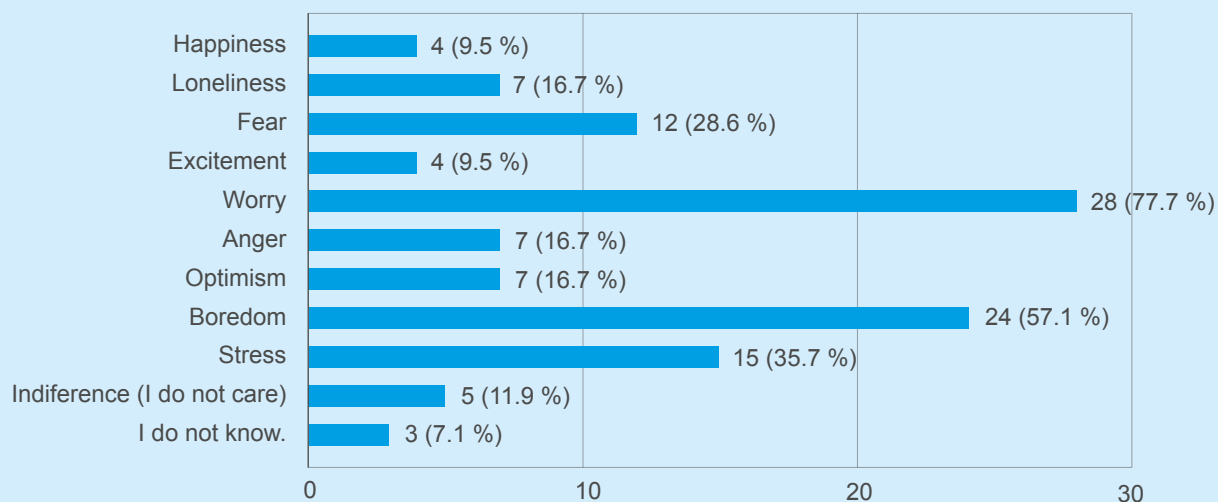
Key topics and competences we worked on included: mental health, prevention and protection in terms of the COVID-19 pandemic, earthquake protocol, working through traumatic experiences, job seeking, finances, housing, education, health care, practical skills, social network and support system, and personal development.

As an important part of the programme, we visited the young people in their living spaces in agreement with the young person in question; we felt it was important to instruct youngsters on what to do in case of earthquake and how to find the safest spots in their living spaces, and to provide support in finding relevant information that they need in their daily lives (social welfare services, scholarships).

In light of the new service we introduced – online educational workshops – to offset the fact that we couldn't work and contact young people in person, we carried out the **evaluation questionnaire "How young people view the COVID-19 challenges"**, with the participation of 42 young people from 4 SOS Youth Facilities and the SIL programme, aged 14 to 25.

Young people stated that they were well-informed about all the events tied to COVID-19 and earthquakes, and that they trusted the information from their educators and support expert the most (85.7%). The support from adults remained same or better, the relationships between youngsters did not change and in some cases it even improved, and as for their obligations (school or job), they said they preferred how they went about doing them before March 2020.

Which feelings do you feel the most when you think about your life since the COVID-19 epidemic has started?



When they consider their life since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, young people point out that they feel worry, boredom, stress and fear.

When it comes to their cooperation with the leaving care support expert, they acknowledge that phone consultations are the most appropriate now, but if they could choose, they would prefer to meet in person. As for the quality and content of work, they haven't noticed any differences.

What did you like the most about the online workshops?

- Everything
- I don't have to go out and it's safer that way during the coronavirus pandemic
- It was interesting and useful
- I liked the presentations
- Filling out questionnaires

What did you miss in online workshops?

- Nothing
- Talking in person



We are proud of having participated in the first international conference of young people with care experience “International Care Leavers Convention 2020”, where we won 3rd prize for our poster (this is awarded by young people from around the world) that presents SOS Children’s Village Croatia and the role of the leaving care support expert. The poster shows how we help young care leavers by preparing them for the leaving care process, but also by providing support as they embark on independent life.

PROJECTS

To ensure the continuation of our existing programmes and implement new activities, we continued intensive work on submitting Association activities to various calls for proposals in the EU, Croatia and the local community. The above led to the creation and submission of **seven projects proposals**. Five of those were approved for funding – we are project bearers on three of them, and on two projects we are attached as partners to other organizations from Croatia and Italy. Additionally, in 2020 we successfully completed several projects, while some are still ongoing.

During 2020 we successfully **completed** three projects. On two of them we acted as project bearers (*A Loving Home for Every Child – SOS Mobile Team and Counselling Centre for Children, Youth and Family* for the period 2017-2020, funded by the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy; *POP-SOS Children's Village Croatia*, funded by the Ministry of Science and Education), and on 1 we were partners to another organization (*ROMA SUPPORT- Mobile Family Support Team*, project bearer was Čakovec Red Cross City Society, funded by MDFYSP).

In 2020, we had eight **ongoing** projects. We were project bearers on three (*A Loving Home for Every Child – SOS Mobile Team and Counselling Centre for Children, Youth and Family* for the period 2020-2023, funded by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Policy; *I'll Step Into Your Shoes – Prevention of Violence Among Children*, funded by MLFSP; *SOS Mobile Team – Comprehensive Support for Single-Parent Families*, funded by MLFSP), and on 5 we partnered with other organizations (*A Loving Home for Every Child – Family Strengthening Programmes in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia*, with project bearer SOS CV Italy, financed by Intesa Sanpaolo Bank; *Trauma-Informed Care*, with project bearer SOS KDI, funded by the European Commission; *Strong and Healthy*, with project bearer SOS CV Romania, funded by Johnson & Johnson; *YouthCan!*, with project bearer SOS KDI, funded by Janssen; *Mobile Family Support Team for Međimurje County*, with project bearer Čakovec RCCS, funded by MLFSP).

All projects that we implement encompass a range of preventive psychosocial and educational activities and occupational therapy activities with the children, parents, childcare professionals and they are all supported by our partners from the social welfare system, local community, educational system and the NGO sector. This is further bolstered by the fact that in all the listed projects we collaborate with and have **partnership agreements with 11** different institutions and civil society organizations.

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

In the area of advocacy activities, in 2020 we continued our intensive efforts based on advocacy priorities and projects launched last year, and new projects that we launched successfully despite the COVID-19 pandemic and earthquakes that hit the Croatian capitol and the nearby Sisak-Moslavina County.

To start from the top, we began the implementation of the EU project "Trauma-Informed Care" on 16 March 2020, with our partners: our umbrella organization SOS Kinderdorf International, CELCIS from Scotland, an organization that specializes in training of care professionals, and 6 national

associations from Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Belgium, Serbia and Croatia. The project is slated to run until March 2022.

The goal of the project is to strengthen the system of support and help for children and young people with trauma experience by building the capacities of professionals working in the social welfare system. Among the benefits we expect from this project is providing children and young people with safer environment and support as they recover and develop their full potential, but also strengthening of professional capacities of care professionals by teaching them specifically about trauma and how to support children and young people who have experienced trauma.

SOS Children's Village Croatia has the role of implementing all the project activities in Croatia, which we plan to do in cooperation with the Office of Ombudsman for Children, Social Work Study Centre at the Zagreb Law School and other relevant stakeholders, such as institutions that provide alternative care for children, foster parents associations and NGOs that provide social services to children and young people in alternative care.

In light of the traumatic events we all experienced in 2020, we are convinced that the implementation of this project is extremely important not only for the children and young people in alternative care, but also for professionals that work with them, a fact that we also noticed at the public presentation of our projects on 22 September in Zagreb.



Our project “Personal Mentor for Young Care Leavers” continued its work in 2020, as carried out by our 8 hard-working mentors. Some of the mentors are from our association, while others are members of other NGOs, such as NGO Igra, NGO Most, Foster Parents Association Zipka and Čakovec Red Cross City Society. Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences is currently conducting the evaluation of the mentors’ work.

In spite of all the challenges posed by the pandemic and earthquakes, our personal mentors never wavered from their commitment to young people whom they support. Instead, they adapted to the new circumstances and switched to the virtual sphere for their work, using their creativity, know-how and experience, because young people needed support and help during this period even more than before.

As in previous years, we were very active in sharing knowledge and experiences nationally and internationally. These activities also took place virtually.

Here we would like to highlight our participation in the international convention “International Care Leavers Convention”. Originally scheduled to take place in New Delhi in India, it was held online in the period between 23 and 25 November. An impressive number of renowned experts and young people with care experience took part. The convention was organized by Udayan Care, SOS Children’s Villages India, NGO Kinderperspektief from the Netherlands and Hildesheim University from Germany.

Keeping in mind our mission and vision of protecting children and their rights, in 2020 we actively worked on additional training of our employees in areas of child and youth safeguarding in our programmes.

FAMILY STRENGTHENING PROGRAMME

“A Loving Home for Every Child” in the Sisak-Moslavina County

Although we were faced with already familiar challenges of COVID-19 in 2020, the Family Strengthening Team rallied, and after making big adjustments and reorganizing its work, provided even more services than before to children and families in the Sisak-Moslavina County. Following the devastating earthquake on 29 December 2020, the team intensified its efforts further, both for its service recipients and for the other residents of the SMC.

In spite of everything, FSP team continued to develop new services and projects in 2020. All in all, we had 5 programmes/projects running:

- **“A Loving Home for Every Child – SOS Mobile Team and Counselling Centre for Children, Youth and Family”** (This programme is co-funded through the call for proposals by MLFSP “Development and Expansion of the Network of Social Services Provided by the Civil Society Organizations”
 - until June 2020, which was the third year of implementation for the period 2017-2020; new 3-year support was approved in June 2020 which will cover the period that starts from June 2021)

- in 2020 we also received funding from the Intesa Bank
- partners: SWCs in Sisak, Glina, Petrinja and Hrvatska Kostajnica
- **POP-SOS Children's Village Croatia** (project concluded in August 2020; it was funded by the MSE; Glina Primary School as a partner)
- **"I'll Step into Your Shoes – Prevention of Violence Among Children"** (started on 1 June 2020, co-funded by the MLFSP, partner: Mladost Primary School in Lekenik)
- **SOS Mobile Team – Comprehensive Support for Single-Parent Families** (started on 1 June 2020, co-funded by the MLFSP, partners: SWC Sisak, SWC Glina)
- Project **"Roma Support"**, from 1 September 2020 renamed as **Mobile Family Support Team for the Međimurje County**, which we implement as a partner organization for mentoring and educational support in the process of implementing mobile teams for the project bearer Čakovec Red Cross City Society

All our projects remain focused on providing support and help for children and families in the Sisak-Moslavina County and preventing the separation of children from their families, improving the quality of life for children and families and improving their mental health. We achieve these goals through the provision of diverse, individually tailored, available, high quality services (e.g., providing psychosocial support in families' homes, providing individual/group counselling and therapy for children at risk, building parental capacity, knowledge and skills through individual or group counselling and School for Parents, and we also help them with hygiene products and groceries, clothes, shoes and making it easier for them to access school).

During 2020, we adapted our work organization and services to epidemiological measures, we reorganized ourselves, developed new services and we were always there for the children and families, and for our co-workers.

To adapt the work of the mobile team to new circumstances, we introduced A and B teams, we obtained the passes we needed to move between the counties, we used online platforms and kept in touch with our service recipients over the phone. We put the group activities with children on hold and we reduced family visitations to the greatest possible degree. Part of our team was redirected to support SOS mothers and children in the SOS Children's Village Lekenik.

Our FSP experts wrote an article with useful advice on what to do and how to help children in the coronavirus pandemic, how to efficiently follow the educational material from home and how to use several simple, but entertaining activities to engage children.

As part of the programme "A Loving Home for Every Child – SOS Mobile Team and Counselling Centre for Children, Youth and Family", the SOS

Mobile Team experts created an educational game SMAZALICA, inspired by examples from trainings, social networks, personal and professional experiences. Encouraged by how well it was received in their work with the children, they decided to create a board game for everyone – for kids and adults, for children and parents, for those who like to play and those who are always serious...



During the year we provided services for more than 300 recipients and almost 100 families.

At the very end of the year, a devastating earthquake destroyed the homes of many families we work with. A few found temporary homes outside the county, but most remained in their home county. Several days after the earthquake, SOS CVC FSP experts went to the site of the disaster and started providing help and support for the families in the affected area that were already involved in the programme activities. In addition to much needed psychosocial support, we began collecting everything they needed for their basic living needs. The conditions we work in at the moment are made more difficult due to the fact that we lost our office in Glina and the fact that our families are currently living in trailer homes or containers, where there is no place for counselling and psychosocial work. In spite of that, we will continue to adapt and work on ensuring adequate living and working conditions. We are hoping and wishing for an easier 2021 for all of us.



This Programme Department Report has been compiled and prepared by:

Gordana Daniel

National Programme Development Director

ONE FRIEND

FUND DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNICATION

2020 was marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, but we have maintained the stability of our income. We owe this to years of effort invested in our loyalty programme, which has had great results in this year in particular. We tested the digital fundraising which has proven to have great potential for the future. We finished the year by redesigning our Association's website.

Private donations

In 2020, income from monthly givers in the [Friends Club](#) continued to be the largest part of the overall income from donations that SOS Children's Village Croatia receives. Teams of SOS representatives worked actively in Zagreb, Split and Osijek.



The biggest challenge in 2020 was organizing the work of SOS representatives as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded. During the lockdown which lasted from March to June, SOS representatives did not work directly with the people. Instead, we organized regular online trainings and workshops for them.

We soon realized that we had to improve the online application process for the Friends Club and redesign the Association website as soon as possible.

The redesigned website was launched in mid-October with online application form for the Friends Club.

At the end of 2020, we had **31.497 regular monthly givers**. During the year we recruited **4.216 new committed givers**. The average monthly number of SOS representatives was 17 and total number of SOS representatives we had in Zagreb, Osijek and Split during the entire year was 41.

Most of the donations are still paid predominantly through standing orders to banks, but SEPA Direct Debit is used more and more, as are recurring payments through credit and debit cards (Visa, Mastercard, Diners).

In addition to recruiting new donors, we continued intensive work on developing the loyalty programme with our existing committed givers in the Friends Club. The main tools in our loyalty programme are our own call centre, text messages and e-newsletters.

The call centre was staffed with 2 SOS representatives during 2020. They communicated daily with new and existing donors of the SOS Children's Village Croatia. The success of the loyalty programme is further reflected in steady decrease of the attrition rate when it comes to regular givers. The attrition rate is now at **13.5%** annually. The main result of the reduced attrition rate is the **7% increase in income** from existing givers, more than was planned for 2020. We consider this our biggest success in the past year.

Corporate partnerships

This was a year in which we had to change a lot of things on the go. Thanks to our ability to adjust quickly, listening to our donors and following the situation and trends in the work of our partners, we managed to keep a large number of our partners. The epidemiological measures necessitated a transition to digital and virtual platforms. Instead of our usual loyalty visits in person, we switched to the digital option: we strengthened our communication over the phone and through our digital newsletter, and we organized virtual meetings and meetings in open spaces whenever possible. We already had relatively new income channels through the mobile app KEKS Pay by Erste Bank and the option of donating cryptocurrency in cooperation with Electrocoin, but we also added a new channel. Thanks to the Trilix company, we are now able to receive **donations by text** from two telecom providers – HT and Tele2.

Donation to **cover the annual utility costs** for one or more SOS families remains one of the preferred forms of collaboration for our longstanding partners such as Erste & Steiermärkische Bank, Dr. Oetker, Medtronic, Merkur Insurance, Wollsdorf and Opereta Real Estate, as well as new partners, among them Luxima, MC2, Ano, Grand Centar, Hrvatska poštanska banka and Tece. We still

offer different **corporate packages** with specific project activities to our partners, as they are very interesting to those companies that prefer to link the donation with the activities that fit the company operations or their CSR goals. The trust we enjoy with all of our partners, which we definitely see as the vote of confidence in our work and our responsible management of donated funds, is maybe best exemplified by those of our longstanding partners who chose the option of general donation, including INA, Fortenova Grupa, Medical Intertrade, Croatian Insurance Office, Strabag, Kamgrad, Microteam, Controlmatik, Nexus, Kaercher, Dionaea Landscaping and many others. We also have a valuable collaboration with our new partner **Profil-Klett**. They donated a “learning corner” (computer, desk, office chair and a complete set of textbooks that they offer for each student) for each of 15 SOS families in Lekenik. In addition to this donation, this campaign also included joint work on developing a new civil education curriculum that Profil-Klett now offers on their Izzi portal to all teachers, enabling them to familiarize their students with the SOS Children’s Village Croatia, our history and our work, all for the purpose of raising the sensitivity of school children toward the children who cannot live in their biological families. Through this channel we managed to make an impact on the educational system, at least through those teachers who use Profil-Klett textbooks in their work, and we are using our model of care to contribute to the development of social sensitivity among school children from the earliest age.



We also managed to bring our biggest partnership, the one with Johnson & Johnson on the [project “Strong and Healthy”](#), in line with the new circumstances. In 2019, the first year of the project, we held a series of trainings on the prevention of aggressive behaviour and better coping strategies for dealing with trauma, “Protective Behaviours” and “United Conflict Management” in particular. Thanks to refreshing and amending their knowledge of physical health and hygiene during their previous project “Health is for Everyone”, both our children and our colleagues who look after them were prepared for these new times, when they all had to significantly change their daily life and way of working due to epidemiological measures. These trainings undoubtedly contributed a lot to raising the competence level of all our colleagues and it is worth noting that we also fund the regular cost of health and hygiene needs of our children and co-workers through this project.

Recruiting donors through [telemarketing](#) activities aimed at companies is a well established process by now and it shows not only stability, but also further improvement. We exceeded our planned annual income in this area, but maybe the best gauge of how well we did here is the number of 47 new small and medium-sized companies recruited through this channel.

We continued our [networking efforts through membership in business associations](#) such as the German-Croatian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Bisnode Business Database and the American Chamber of Commerce, this time through virtual platforms, but in hopes that we will be able to return to in-person meetings at various events during the next year, which has always been a great way to establish many useful contacts.

In 2020, we again cooperated with Zagrebačka banka to send co-branded direct mail to 100.000 of their clients. We combined our donation requests with the monthly bank statements they receive from their bank. This has traditionally been a very successful approach.

Using [cause-related marketing](#), we continued collaborations with our long-standing partners – Rekord-tim and Katapult – but we also struck several new partnerships, all of them with local companies (Agristar, Sapunoteka, Saponia). Most collaborations took place in December, and we would like to highlight our collaboration with Sapunoteka, which will run for an entire year! This small business, which makes natural cosmetics, designed a gift package called “The Best Mom”, which promotes both the high-quality organic products but also our concept of care, especially the irreplaceable role of the SOS mother. What strikes us here is that two of these collaborations are tied to online commerce, which is becoming more present among our local partners, who have adjusted to the negative impact of the epidemiological measures in this way. In addition to financial support, these collaborations have also resulted in a valuable donation from Saponia. They made sure that SOS Children’s Village Ladimirevci and its SOS Youth Facilities received several months worth of their hygiene products.



This year we had more **donations in kind** than ever before, especially those that meant that we could make savings in our family budgets. Soon after the introduction of the first measures against the spread of COVID-19, we made targeted calls to the donors, asking them to donate food products, and we raised a lot of high quality donations that way (Lonia, Gavrilović, Intersnack Adria, Meggle, Alca) as well as specialized products such as contactless thermometers donated by Medical Direct. In addition to receiving donations of personal hygiene products directly from their manufacturers (Colgate-Palmolive, Johnson & Johnson, Lush), we are increasingly getting important contributions from small, private donors who organize around their companies, schools and other types of organized communities to help, while respecting our request for products that we need on an ongoing basis (such as hygiene and school supplies) or seasonally (Christmas gifts for children). Thanks to private donors, all the children and young people in our care were able to vacation at the Adriatic Coast during the summer holidays. The end of the year was once again elevated by the donations from our partners: Kaufland donated a generous budget for the purchase of everything required for the Christmas lunch and children's gifts, which could be spent in their stores. Children got Christmas gifts from the Bagatin Clinic, Transcom employees and our biggest, most organized partner INA: in co-operation with the INA HR Department, their employees, acting as private citizens, made sure that every child and young person in our care received a present in keeping with their wishes. This trend of increased donations in kind to our SOS Children's Village Lekenik grew even more pronounced in the last days of the year, after a disastrous earthquake hit that region.



Report on notable PR events in 2020

Many people would say that they want to forget and leave 2020 behind them as soon as possible. Despite all the challenges, we will nevertheless remember it fondly. Thanks to the support of our SOS mothers, expert team and other co-workers, we were here for each other and we stayed the course in regard to our mission of ensuring happy childhood for children and young people growing up in our care.

Generously helping us with our mission were also our friends, long-standing partners and donors, who continued to support us even in the most challenging of times.

The #readathome campaign

Many celebrities united forces and showed their generosity by joining the online campaign #readathome. The goal of the campaign was to brighten the mood of all children in Croatia who had to remain at home during the lockdown, by reading them stories. At the same time, the campaign invited everyone to donate 10 HRK by text and thus contribute to creating a safe home for every child. For five weeks in April and May, more than 25 famous actors, singers, radio and TV personalities shared videos of them reading a story on social networks. The main platforms were Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Thanks to the help of celebrities, we were highly visible and had a lot of interaction on social networks, especially on Instagram.





Dr. Grgić sails across the Atlantic twice, all for the children

On 15 June 2020, we welcomed back to the Šibenik harbour a man with a generous heart, ophthalmologist Dr. Grgić, who had embarked on the greatest adventure of his life six months earlier. He and a long-time friend of the SOS Children's Village Croatia Mr. Branimir Vlajo went on a sailing expedition. Using the motto "Clean Seas, Clean Heart" and a charity help-line for SOS Children's Villages, these two enthusiasts planned to cross the Atlantic and sail from Šibenik to Brazil in just three months. Unfortunately, the global coronavirus pandemic spoiled their plan, so the trip lasted a little longer than planned.

Children in SOS Children's Village Lekenik and Ladimirevci followed their journey and learned about environmental protection, importance of clean seas and about countries that their sailing boat "St. Michael" visited on the way. This brave man's exciting trip ended on 15 June, when he sailed back to the Šibenik harbour.

Our Kika wins the Hermann Gmeiner Award

For more than 30 years, SOS Children's Villages have awarded the Hermann Gmeiner Award to young heroes, people who excel despite personal hardship and serve as role models to young people around the world. In 2020, Kristina Ivanuš was recognized among 60 of her nominated peers, women and men both, as an outstanding young woman whose personal example contributes to the wellbeing of others and society in general.

We all need a role model to guide us on our way to independence. Kristina couldn't really find one as a small child. She grew up in the SOS Children's Village Lekenik and when she was six years old, she found out she suffered from a rare muscular illness. Thanks to her SOS mother, SOS aunt and other SOS Children's Village Croatia co-workers, she managed to beat her illness. One of the things that helped her get better was sea diving.



Kika has fascinated the public with her life story, attracting the attention of many media outlets that wanted to tell her story. Between June and the end of the year, Kristina appeared in many TV shows, and she gave many interviews and participated in various campaigns. This also brought many new opportunities to work as a diving model, which is something that Kika wants to pursue as a career. In all her media appearances, Kristina emphasized the important role of the SOS Children's Village in her life, thus promoting the work, mission and vision of our Association.

CEWE's autumnal photo workshop

Our long-time partner CEWE put together a [photo workshop](#) in early October. The creativity displayed during the workshop was truly impressive. Our [little photographers from SOS Children's Village Lekenik](#) got the opportunity to showcase their photography skills in the ranch setting. Beautiful landscapes and nature, horses and a plethora of lovely details all inspired our young photographers to take lots of wonderful photos. After a brief lecture on theoretical pointers, held by the professional photographer from CEWE, our boys embarked on the practical part of the workshop. This was a lovely continuation of our long-standing partnership with CEWE and another addition to the education of our young photographers.

Christmas with Shooster

We marked the beginning of December by starting a collaboration with Shooster. This leading shoe store chain opened the doors of its stores to our SOS representatives, who worked there throughout December, offering memberships in the Friends Club to all Shooster customers. Many of them joined and became committed givers whose monthly donations will go towards supporting the childhood of children in SOS Children's Villages. Additionally, Shooster customers can donate right there in Shooster stores by using a 2D code. We announced this collaboration over social networks to great acclaim and support from our followers.



Let's paint the world with Profil Klett

Another important collaboration taking place in December was the one with Profil Klett. Our new partners designed a very special [Christmas magic spell](#) to bring colours into the holiday season for all the children in the SOS Children's Villages. Profil Klett decided that their 2021 calendar would feature illustrations from the daily life of teachers, showing all those very human, warm and sometimes demanding situations that teachers encounter every day. Profil Klett invited teachers to join this project and help by colouring in the pictures. Through the Izzi module, the Profile Klett partners designed an educational module that describes the work and activities of Association SOS Children's Village Croatia, and all teachers taking part in the campaign are free to use this module to educate their students about children who live in alternative care. For every teacher who contributed to the project creatively, Profil Klett donated digital equipment, foreign language course materials, textbooks and digital educational content to SOS Children's Village Croatia, to equip the learning corners in all 15 houses in the SOS Children's Village Lekenik. This wonderful collaboration was promoted over Facebook and Instagram and we compiled the material we posted with the help of our young people, SOS mothers, and children from the SOS Children's Village Lekenik. Thanks to their wholehearted help, we managed to reach the teachers and show them the mission and vision of our Association and to awaken the beauty of helping in them. We are immensely grateful to Profil Klett, without whose initiative none of this would have happened. We are extremely happy to have gained such a wonderful new long-term partner.

Marinka Šenjug

Director of Fundraising and
Communications Department

ONE MOVEMENT

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

This year was very challenging for all our established HR practices, which is why most of our standard processes had to be adjusted. The biggest challenges certainly arose from having to organize work in new epidemiological circumstances, while implementing measures for disease prevention and protecting the mental health of all our employees.

We began the year with preparations for the national campaign “A Job with a Heart”, aimed at finding and attracting new SOS mother candidates, but the outbreak of COVID-19 and unexpected lockdown completely changed our focus. To protect the children and employees, we dedicated all of our efforts to reorganizing work in compliance with the epidemiological restrictions while relying on our existing resources.



One of long-term HR goals is strengthening the support for SOS mothers (in SOS houses). By opening a new work position of SOS family assistant and by aligning the number of SOS aunts and SOS mothers, we created conditions for the work organization we implemented in early March, just before the lockdown. The new work organization reduced the turnover of SOS aunts (SOS mother replacements) in the houses, which became paramount from mid-March and onwards, due to having to implement and observe epidemiological measures.

We carefully monitored the coronavirus situation from the very beginning, and we set the responsible behaviour for oneself and others as a standard in all our considerations and actions. We managed to reorganize our work in a very short amount of time by transitioning to digital work and collaboration wherever possible. As for the work of employees who work directly with children, we organized it in compliance with directives issued by competent institutions and all the epidemiological guidelines.

Thanks to our investment in the development of computer technology in previous years, we were fully prepared for the new model of virtual work and collaboration, but it was still very challenging in terms of maintaining the quality of collaboration and development activities, and preserving the organizational culture in this new context. Organizing work in shifts in Children's Villages was a particular challenge, and we are proud of the togetherness, professionalism and responsibility that our employees displayed on a daily basis during this very trying period.

As for all our standard HR activities, which are based on the SOS HR Cycle, we adapted them to the specific demands of our current work, with special emphasis on protecting the mental health and supporting our employees in these extraordinary times. We built the capacity of our employees through numerous trainings, and we also shared our knowledge nationally and internationally



as part of SOS Kinderdorf International. We took special care and planned responsibly in order to ensure ongoing development and support for employees working directly with children. In keeping with identified needs, we strengthened the competences that they use to lovingly ensure the development of children and young people in the SOS programmes on a daily basis.

For example, we implemented this year's retreat for SOS mothers and SOS aunts in a different way than usual, but as successfully as ever. Instead of joint workshops and get-togethers during which SOS mothers exchange experiences and build their capacities, like we originally planned, we made it possible for SOS mothers and SOS aunts to maintain social distance in keeping with epidemiological measures. Our partners Agristar, Kandit and Sapunoteka helped us create a pleasant learning environment by donating special gift packages.

Ensuring an adequate number of SOS mothers and SOS aunts, key co-workers with whom children create strong emotional bonds, still remains our biggest challenge due to the high level of quality we expect from the candidates. Our partners Posao.hr and Croatian Employment Service still provide a great deal of support in these efforts. This year we also paid special attention to planned development of the SOS representative work position. SOS mothers, SOS aunts and SOS representatives will remain the focus of the recruitment and selection activities of the HR department in the next year as well.

As in previous years, our volunteers significantly contributed to the success of our organization. In 2020, they worked 2.888 hours for free in various volunteer activities (tutoring, sports, music and art workshops, help with repairs and maintenance...).

As we do every year, we implemented the strategic planning process for 2021. The strategic goals in the area of human resources management are focused on ensuring ongoing support for the development of our co-workers, with a special emphasis on SOS mothers and SOS aunts.

Professionalism, expertise and motivation of our co-workers on all levels remain as key objectives of human resources management.

Josip Marinković
Director of Human Resources

1.2 TIME SCHEDULE OF MAJOR EVENTS FOR 2021

JANUARY	National Annual Report 2020 sent to IOR EUCB Preparation for Audit 2020 NMT Meetings held regular weekly since COVID-19 Pandemic
FEBRUARY	NA Plan 2020 - 2 nd Review to RO FDC Annual Report 2020 to FDC EUCB February 25 th 2021 – 29 th SOS CV Croatia Day
MARCH	Audit 2021
APRIL	Audit Report for the year 2020 2 nd Board Meeting - online
MAY	3 rd Board Meeting - online May 25 th 2021 SOS CV Ladimirevci Day
JUNE	30 th General Assembly SOS CV Croatia online Audit report 2020 to IOR June 23 rd SOS Children's Village Day
JULY	Children summer holidays at the seaside 1 st FDC Report to FDC EUCB
AUGUST	Children summer jobs and organized free-time activities NA Plan 2021 – 1 st Review to IOR by August 8 th
SEPTEMBER	MBF Proposal 2022 Final FDC Business Plan target for 2022
OCTOBER	4 th Board Meeting October 8 th 2021 - 28 th Anniversary SOS CV Lekenik Strategic and Annual Plan for 2022
NOVEMBER	Final Budget Proposal + final FR ratios sheet 2022 Christmas campaign
DECEMBER	NMT Meeting & 5 th Board Meeting together Christmas celebration in facilities

SECTION TWO

BOARD

MEMBERS

LIST



SOS DJEČJE
SELO
HRVATSKA

2.1 LIST OF BOARD MEMBERS

1.	Mrs. Mariza Katavić	President
2.	Mr. Dubravko Jurišić	Vicepresident
3.	Mrs. Dubravka Vlajo	Member
4.	Mrs. Tatjana Josipović	Member
5.	Mrs. Wendy Zečić	Member
6.	Mrs. Caroline Taylor	Member
7.	Mr. Alo Tammsalu	Member

SECTION THREE

FACILITY REPORTS



SOS DJEČJE
SELO
HRVATSKA



3.1 SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGE LEKENIK

Today there are 62 children living in the SOS Children's Village Lekenik. Of that number, 42 are primary school students and 20 are pre-schoolers. 2020 was the year of the coronavirus pandemic, which necessitated a number of safety measures that had to be observed, but thanks to highly responsible practices, we managed to keep the number of people who contracted the virus to a minimum. In 10 months of the pandemic, not one child in our care tested positive and only one SOS mother and two SOS aunts had the disease. In addition to combating a global pandemic, our region was struck by two strong earthquakes this year, with the latter one on 29 December being especially disastrous. The epicentre was 20 km away from the SOS Children's Village Lekenik. None of our children or co-workers suffered any injuries, and none of the buildings in the Village were damaged. Family homes of some of our employees were damaged, so we gave them and their families temporary shelter and support. Also, in agreement with the competent Ministry, we took in eight children from the Children's Home Vrbina in Sisak, as well as their educators, because their building was destroyed in the earthquake.



School year 2019/2020 was extremely challenging, primarily due to long periods of online schooling. SOS mothers, SOS aunts, child development co-workers and external collaborators all provided support, and we worked with our ICT department to improve the existing infrastructure. Our children ended the school year with good grades. At the beginning of the year, some of our children spent the winter holidays with their biological relatives, and a large number of children participated in educational workshops in the Social Centre, such as dance, drama, and computer workshops. All of those activities moved to online platforms for a while.

During the summer holidays, we implemented our vacation programme. Our children spent time in Rovanjaska and Zaoštrog and we also organized a number of summer activities under a joint name of “Summer in Lekenik” and an excursion “River Peace Odyssey”. In October we celebrated the anniversary of our Children’s Village, this time without guests and friends. Later in the year we held our online event Millennium Fairy Tale Read-A-Thon, where we read fairy tales, fables, poems and other texts for children. We closed the year with a Christmas celebration. Our children and their workshop instructors presented their work and prepared a rich programme for us, this year using the Teams platform.



The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on the normal course of our work and our activities throughout the year, requiring many adjustments to our work organization. Despite that, we consider this year a success, because we managed to make our children and young people feel safe, we maintained their health and made sure they could stay on top of their school obligations. We carried out all of the planned investments, we received many donations, and we overcame this trying period. The earthquake at the end of the year was an additional shock, but we remain optimistic. We hope and believe that 2021 will be less challenging, but even more successful!

3.2 SOS YOUTH FACILITY ZAGREB AND VELIKA GORICA

SOS Youth Facility Zagreb

During 2020, we looked after a total of 11 young people in the Youth Facility Zagreb. We had two young people in the after-care programme. They completed the programme at the end of the year, and now they are independent young people with steady jobs.

All of our high school students successfully completed their respective grades, with good grade average. Part of their classes were held in person, but they also had months of online schooling. This school year we have five young people in the final grade of high school. Young people received support and help from their educators on a regular basis, from learning strategies and tutoring to supporting and motivating them to remain focused on their studies, and our young people shared their knowledge and studied together whenever necessary.

Almost all of our young people worked during summer in various fields, from hospitality trades and tourism to commercial and service-based businesses and practical training. We make plans for their part-time work and employment and we regularly achieve our goals.



During the year, our young people and we had to contend not only with the coronavirus pandemic, but also with two earthquakes. We observed all the recommendations and measures, and we made sure to always provide our young people with support and encouragement. We cooperate on finding new ways for our young people to pursue creative and recreational activities: singing, dancing, working out and creating video content.

We planned our pedagogical project “Blue World II” for a long time, and we are happy we were able to carry it out in June on the islands of Cres and Lošinj, where our youngsters could experience the beauty and joy of the Adriatic Sea.

In the local community we are recognized as good neighbours who are always ready to support and help. We continue to form collaborations and partnerships to contribute to our work of providing care for young people.

SOS Youth Facility Velika Gorica

During 2020, Youth Facility Velika Gorica provided care for 19 young people, 7 girls and 12 boys. We also had 15 young people in our SIL programme. To care for those young people in particular, our child development team was joined by a leaving care support expert. Of our 7 college students, 2 have earned their BA degrees and now they are pursuing their MA studies. One student has graduated with MA in Agronomy. One of our college students moved to Australia to study there while training Australian football.



Young people in Semi-Independent Living (SIL) who are not in college are all employed. The total number of young people in the YF fluctuated from month to month depending on when individual youngsters completed their schooling, but also on the transfer of young people from Lekenik who just completed their primary school education. All SIL youngsters have a high school diploma, 2 completed additional training as car riveters and passed their driving exams.

Six young people from Lekenik transferred to Velika Gorica in September, after a farewell

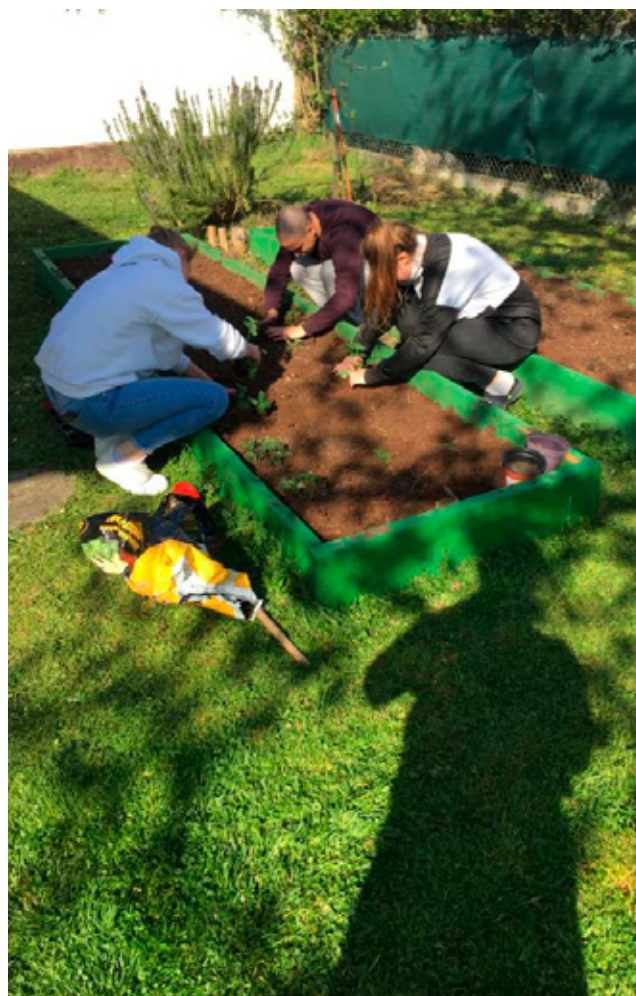
ceremony in the Children's Village called the Corn Festival – it's a traditional way for SOS mothers to entrust their children to the care of the YF educators. While living in the YF, they will also develop their life skills and learn how to be self-reliant in their daily chores, they will continue their education in high schools, and take part in extracurricular activities to an extent permitted by epidemiological measures. One of our young people is a marathon runner and a member of the marathon runners' club in Velika Gorica. Another has enrolled in the drama section of the Velika Gorica Community College. Two youngsters continue to train in FC Lekenik and play in competitive games.

Our eighth-graders vacationed in Zaostrog with the YF director and the child development team leader from Lekenik. This was a great opportunity for them to get to know each other and prepare children for moving to the YF. We would certainly call this a good practice.

We are extremely proud of the young person from our YF who won the international SOS Hermann Gmeiner Award, which is given to a young person who grew up in the Children's Village and became role model for other children and young people in SOS.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a huge impact on the normal work and the dynamic in the YF, especially in December, with many PCR and antigen testing, self-isolations, and constant disinfecting. Six young people had very mild symptoms of COVID-19, and one educator also fell ill, but she recovered successfully.

We renovated and repurposed the garage into a "Happy Corner", which will be used to work with young people who are preparing to leave care, and for workshops, study sessions, meetings and visitations from youngsters' family and friends. We believe that by doing this we create the best possible conditions for the positive growth and development of our young people. Without strong collaboration with SOS Children's Village and SOS CV Croatia and their steadfast support, none of this would be possible.



Mario Čović

SOS Children's Village Lekenik Director

3.3 SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGE LADIMIREVCI

In the course of 2020, we looked after 83 children in 16 SOS families. Six children moved to SOS Youth Facilities after completing primary school and one boy was transferred to an institution for children with special needs. During the year we admitted five children and we are waiting to admit four more children whose admissions have been approved.

Large number of admission requests is indicative of how insufficient the admission capacity of the social welfare system is. In 2020, we received 44 admission requests for 148 children, which we had to turn down due to being filled to capacity.

Of the five children we admitted, four came from other children's homes, where they were placed by the emergency order from the Social Welfare Centre due to severe parental neglect, and one child is the youngest of the total of 10 children, all of whom were placed in SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci.

Fifty-five children completed the school year 2019/2020 with a grade average of 3.99. Fourteen students completed their grades with top marks, and 28 had a very good grade average. Of the 75 children we had in our care at the end of the year, 46 attend the Ladimirevci Primary School – 14 are in 1st through 4th grades, 27 are in 5th through 8th grades. One girl attends the Ivan Štark Educational Centre in Osijek and one boy is the student at the Centre of Autism in Osijek.



The year began as it always does, with a New Year's celebration for children and adults, sharing firecrackers and well wishes. Winter holidays were filled with various activities for children: playrooms and storytelling time for the preschool children, workshops on art and environmental protection, movie screenings, quizzes, dance nights, board games, comic book workshop, sports workshop, bracelet making workshop. Technology enthusiasts attended the Technical Winter workshop organized by the Valpovo-Belišće Society of Technology, and more than 30 children went on two hiking trips with the Zanatlija Hiking Society from Osijek. They also attended the workshops on hiking organized by the society. The drama club held weekly workshops for younger and older children. This is the third year that the drama club has been active. The director is a drama pedagogue. The outbreak of COVID-19 in March and the ensuing lockdown that started on 16 March 2020 changed everything. We had to put group work with children on hold, limit the social contacts, and the individual work with children took the form of phone conversations or videocalls over phones or tablets. We also used them as a learning aid because school classes moved online.



We used all the available platforms to communicate with teachers and parents and we provided help to SOS families to make sure they could communicate with the outside world in a regular and purposeful manner. SOS mothers and SOS aunts carried out various entertainment, creative and educational activities with the children, some on their own and others by following the guidelines provided by the child development team: they drew, made collages, sang and danced, solved quizzes, played board games, cooked, gardened and we also had a special schedule made so that everyone could use the children's playground safely.



The summer was more relaxed, and 9 SOS families vacationed in the donated accommodations in Vodice, each family spending at least a week there. In addition to seaside vacations, children from the Children's Village splashed around in the inflatable pools in their yards, they went on swimming and sunbathing at the nearby bank of the Karašica River and they particularly enjoyed a water balloon fight after the traditional Village Tournament. We also organized a number of group activities while observing all the required epidemiological measures: watching old movies together, sports activities, quizzes, literary and art workshops, drama and dance workshops, environmental workshops, chess club, Glagolitic course and computer playroom. Children also had the opportunity to participate in the workshops on progressive muscular relaxation and rest while listening to meditative music, which we organized to lessen the negative impact of the



pandemic. We gave children individual counselling, we had family counselling and meetings of the Children's Council and Children's Parliament. Coping with stress was one of the main subjects we explored in the Little School Programme, in which all school children took part.

Against the backdrop of these new circumstances, we celebrated the World Letter Writing Day, Mother's Day, International Family Day, Cultural Diversity Day. We also celebrated International Children's Day by organizing a Zoom meeting between more than 20 children, Ombudswoman for Children and her advisor, where they discussed children's rights and how to observe them. During Children's Week, we held 7 workshops on children's rights and non-violent communication.

As we were unable to go to events outside of the Children's Village, we created our own extended event, called "Summer in the Village". It began with the celebration of our Village Day on 25 May, when we were finally able to gather outdoors because the lockdown measures were relaxed. On that occasion, 55 of our children received Superhero diplomas, commending them for their conduct in the time of COVID-19, and 23 pre-schoolers received special commendations reminding them of their time as superheroes as well. We handed 32 special thank-you letters to SOS mothers and aunts and 20 thank-you notes to other co-workers for their contributions in extraordinary circumstances. "Summer in the Village" continued with the celebration of the SOS Children's Village International Day and afterwards we had monthly activities until the beginning of the school year. We are especially proud of the involvement and sense of togetherness that our children have shown while this event ran. Receiving only minimal help from the adults, they prepared dancing, singing and theatrical performances and they decorated the spaces for get-togethers with their own works of art.

Due to the pandemic and epidemiological measures that lasted for almost a year, we didn't have a lot of opportunities for accomplishments in activities outside Children's Village, except for the beginning of the year. That was when 28 of our children completed a cycle of 6 workshops in the Little



Hiking School, and two of our boys won 2nd and 3rd place for photography at the 12th Winter of Technology organized by the Valpovo-Belišće Centre of Technology. Also, a drawing by one of our boys won the competition to be used as illustration on SOS Children's Village Croatia T-shirts.

Members of the child development team took part in 15 webinars and they had presentations in 3 webinars. Early in the year, SOS mothers, SOS aunts and members of the child development team completed a 2-day training "United Management Conflict". We also organized this training for the pedagogical team from the Ladimirevci Primary School.

Children's Village Mobile Team also had to make adjustments, carrying out its activities with families from the local community on online platforms. The work of the speech therapist was ongoing with both the children from the Children's Village and local community, and all epidemiological measures were observed. Speech therapy was only put on hold for three months of the lockdown. SOS CV Ladimirevci Family Strengthening Programme provided 368 services of counselling and support to children and families in the local community during 2020. Eleven families were involved in the programme and 6 of them became self-sustaining. Despite all the challenges – the teachers' strike, online schooling, coronavirus pandemic and other difficulties – children in the programme all completed the school year successfully with an average grade of 3.07, and they enrolled in the high schools of their choice. Sixteen parents, 37 children from the local community, app. 65 children from the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci and 70 experts all took part in the group work with children, parents and experts, through educational and creative workshops and lectures. FSP was evaluated by the partner Social Welfare Centres in Valpovo, Našice and Donji Miholjac, as well as by its beneficiaries. Both groups expressed their satisfaction with the involvement and approach of the mobile team, with the average grade of 4.87 (on a scale from 1 to 5). Our priority was preserving the physical and mental health of our beneficiaries, and for this reason we adapted all our activities to the new circumstances, instead of cancelling them.

3.4 SOS YOUTH FACILITY OSIJEK AND OSIJEK 1

During 2020, we looked after 31 young persons in our two SOS Youth Facilities in Osijek – 16 girls and 15 boys. There were 21 young people in the semi-independent living programme. At the moment, there are 25 young people living in Youth Facilities Osijek and Osijek 1, 12 girls and 13 boys. At the beginning of September, after completing their primary school education and earning a diploma of the Little School of Life, a four year program preparing the children for transfer from Children's Village to the Youth Facilities, six young people moved in. Additionally, two young people were also admitted to YFs, directly from their foster families.

Successful completion of their high school education remained one of the primary goals even in this very challenging and difficult year, marked so heavily by the COVID-19 pandemic. Young people and educators invested a lot of effort in adapting to a new form of schooling – online classes. We are proud that all of our young people successfully completed the school year in these wholly new and strange circumstances. Although we had to adapt many of our activities to epidemiological measures, not only did we successfully implement a new educational process, but also the activities aimed at developing life and social skills. We did all of that while fully observing the epidemiological measures to prevent the entry of virus into our Youth Facilities. We can proudly say that thanks to good work organization and wonderful cooperation with our young persons, we succeeded in preserving the health of our young people and educators, and we consider that the biggest joint accomplishment of 2020.

This year was completely different from anything that we have experienced before, so all the activities, workshops and planned in-person trainings were cancelled or postponed for next year. However, we did manage to organize a series of online workshops on leaving care for our young people, which was ran by our colleague, the leaving care support expert on behalf of the Association SOS Children's Village Croatia. We value greatly the role of our young people in decision-making processes, so all of our youngsters were involved in decisions regarding the development and implementation of epidemiological measures, which helped during the time we had to adapt to the official national epidemiological measures. Both YFs still maintain their eco-gardens, which teach our young people how to grow fruit and vegetables for their own table. We planted trees in the Youth Facility Osijek 1. All youngsters and educators took part. We encouraged all forms of creativity and care for one's personal and living space in keeping with the seasons, popular events and holidays. When the epidemiological situation permitted it, we continued to implement our project "Knowledge and Skills – Our Safest and

Most Valuable Possession”, which allowed ten of our young persons to take driver’s exams and thus become more competitive in the job market.

Throughout the year we made sure our young people could volunteer in the Osijek Shelter for Abandoned Animals, ran by the NGO Pobjeda. The NGO coordinators were full of praise for our young people and their dedication and contribution to providing care for the dogs and their living space. Young people availed themselves of all the allowed physical activities to relieve stress caused by the pandemic. We are particularly proud that we managed to find summer jobs for 11 of our youngsters even in a year as trying as this one. They worked in Vrboska on the island of Hvar, in the Senses Resort Labranda. Not only have all of our 11 young people successfully completed their jobs – 2 of them also received special bonuses for dedication and professionalism they exhibited throughout the tourist season.

The cooperation between the SOS Youth Facilities, SOS Children’s Village Ladimirevci child development team and SOS mothers was ongoing, consistent and high-quality throughout the year. SOS mothers kept in constant touch with the young people and educators on online platforms, which helped us weather the lockdown and maintain our close bonds.

Zoran Relić,
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NATIONAL ANNUAL REPORT 2020

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