

## SOS CHILDREN'S FRIENDLY COMMUNITY HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

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### *Abstract*

SOS Children's Village Croatia is categorized as a children's home whose primary goal is taking care of children without an adequate parental care or parents themselves. Moreover, it aims at providing children, regardless of their racial, national or religious affiliation, with affection and love in a safe family environment. In addition, SOS Children's Village is a non-governmental organization founded and provided for by the international organization SOS Kinderdorf International with the headquarters in Innsbruck, Austria. SOS Children's Village itself dates back to 1949 when Hermann Gmeiner opened the first such institution in Imst, Austria. Furthermore, SOS Children's Village Croatia has been active since February 25, 1992. It consists of two SOS Children's Villages, namely SOS Children's Village Lekenik and Ladimirevci, four SOS Youth Facilities and one SOS Kindergarten. SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci was built in 1995 and has been active since 1997. It is composed of sixteen SOS Houses providing for more than eighty children. Equally important, two SOS Youth Facilities have been actively working in Osijek. This paper aims at providing historical overview of the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci, analyzing its organization, work methodology as well as its educational policies. For the purposes of this paper, SOS Children's Village pedagogical documentation and annual reports have been analyzed. Additionally, qualitative analyses of documents contents and quantitative analysis regarding children's and educational activities' fluctuation have been used. The purpose of providing the historical overview of pedagogical documentation is to study the fluctuation of children regarding time dimension together with the methods used for educational purposes. SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci has been widely known for looking after children without an adequate parental care or parents per se, creating safe family environment and giving affection and love to the aforementioned; hence, it undoubtedly deserves the attribute of the children's friendly community.

**Key words:** historical overview, pedagogical documentation analysis, SOS Children's Village, welfare

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Nowadays, economic inequality continuously rises resulting in people losing their jobs and homes having no vision of the future. These situations result in poverty increase, modern societies' breakup together with families, as the foundation of the society, disintegration. Consequently, many children are forced to spend their childhood separated from their families. In those cases, children are taken care by the state, more specifically, by the specialized institutions for juvenile welfare. This paper aims to present the SOS Children's Village – a nongovernmental institution taking care of juveniles.

Furthermore, the paper aims at providing the historical overview of the SOS Children's Village in terms of it being a children's friendly community. Therefore, the theoretical part provides the historical development of the SOS Children's Villages on the global level; its organization, purpose, working principles and the beginning of the institution's development in Croatia. In the analysis and discussion section, the pedagogical principles applied in the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci will be elaborated on. Furthermore, for the purposes of the historical analysis, both the SOS Children's Villages Croatia annual reports and the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci annual reports are used. The purpose of this paper, with respect to the pedagogical principles, is to elaborate on the purpose and working principles of the SOS Children's Village, thus justifying its attribute of the children's friendly community.

Personal preferences for the popularization of the development and positive results the institutions specialized in juvenile welfare achieve are the grounding for dealing with this issue.

## **2. REFERRING CHILDREN TO SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS**

An SOS Children's Village is the contemporary example of a children's home aiming at taking care of abandoned and orphaned children (Vukasović, 1995). In addition, children's homes are institutions for upbringing youth; children are raised and educated there and it provides them with basic living conditions in terms of shelter, school supply, personal and legal protection, food and clothes, etc. (Vukasović, 1995). In comparison, another type of a children's home is an organization where children live while schooling structured to facilitate their studying and life in general. Those institutions can be boarding schools and dormitories (Rosić, 1986).

Children's homes have numerous purposes, thus being categorized according to different criteria, e.g. purpose, children's age, sex, capacity, duration of stay and an openness level. The mentioned can be applied to categorize the SOS Children's Village, which undoubtedly is a children's home. Children's homes can be further categorized as homes for children of preschool and school age (Rosić, 1986). According to the capacity, the SOS Children's Village belongs to the category of small children's homes able to accept up to 100 children. Furthermore, in terms of duration, the SOS Children's Village is a permanent residence children's home. It provides its residents the contact with a local community and accommodates both boys and girls.

Every children's home has its curriculum containing both educational and pedagogical activities which consist of the study time organization, leisure activities, cultural and public activities, pedagogical committee activities, health service, specialized development service activities and children's organization. Pedagogical activities to be realized in children's

homes are related to the following areas: 1 Health, recreation and ecology; 2 Intelligence; 3 Moral and social values; 4 Working habits; 5 Spare time activities and leisure; 6 Culture and amusement activities; 7 Home and social community correlation (Vukasović, 1995).

Children without an adequate parental care, orphaned, neglected or otherwise in need children are referred to children's homes (Pravilnik o vrsti doma za djecu, 1999). Consequently, the children's home takes care of a child's physical and mental development, his nutrition, social, medical and educational development. Children's homes provide for permanent, temporary, daily, half day or weekly accommodation taking care of a child's education, health and all others necessities. Specially trained children's homes staff members cooperate with the Public Centre for Social Care with the aim of shortening a child's stay in an institution and providing for a child to be raised in a family environment. Children without an adequate parental care are underaged children who are orphaned, abandoned or been taken away from their parents. In order to protect children's rights and interests, Public Centres for Social Care allocate a guardian for each child who looks after them (Ministarstvo socijalne politike i mladih, 2012).

For a child to be allocated a place in a children's home, a Public Centre for Social Care should first issue an adequate document. However, before referring a child in a children's home, a Public Centre for Social Care should get permission from parents or the court instructing for a child to be referred to an institution or entrusted with a person other than a child's parents. In special circumstances when parents are absent, mentally or otherwise unable to take of a child, a Public Centre for Social Care is obliged to separate a child from his family without parental consent (Zakon o socijalnoj skrbi, 2013). This decision is made in regards to a child's best interests being in accordance to a child's abilities, reasons for referring him to a children's home and the urgency of a procedure.

## **2.1. Establishments of the SOS Children's Villages**

The consequences of the Second World War were massive villages and cities destructions accompanied by numerous casualties resulting in many children becoming homeless and orphaned. Hermann Gmeiner (23<sup>rd</sup> June 1919 – 26<sup>th</sup> April 1986), who himself participated in the Second World War as an Austrian soldier fighting on the Russian border, witnessed horrors and sufferings of soldiers and children. Upon the ending of the war, Hermann Gmeiner established the first SOS Children's Village in Imst in the Austrian federal state of Tyrol in 1949.<sup>1</sup> Originally, the SOS Children's Village looked after children who lost their parents in the war. However, it eventually started looking after children without an adequate parental care or otherwise orphaned children. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the SOS Children's Village, as the nongovernmental organization, spread all over Europe. Moreover, the spreading continued and nowadays SOS Children's Villages can be found worldwide. Furthermore, the first SOS Youth Facility was founded in Innsbruck, Austria in 1959 and in the same year, the first SOS Children's Villages were established in Italy, France and Germany. Equally important, the umbrella organization *SOS Children's Villages International* with the aim of taking care of all SOS Children's Villages associations in the world was established in 1960. The same year, the first SOS Children's Village was established in the South America in Uruguay. Further, the first SOS Children's Villages in Asia were established in North Korea and India in 1963 and in

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<sup>1</sup> SOS Children's Villages International (Brief history of the SOS Children's Villages).

Africa in the Republic of Ivory Coast, Kenya, Ghana and Sierra Leone in 1970. In the North America, more specifically in the United States of America, the first SOS Children's Village was established in 1991. To summarize, nowadays there are more than 500 SOS Children's Villages worldwide, 2310 additional SOS projects in 133 states on 5 continents.

Hermann Gmeiner was the SOS Children's Village president until 1985 when he was succeeded by Helmut Klein. Further, at the time Hermann Gmeiner died on 26<sup>th</sup> June, 1986 there were 230 SOS Children's Villages worldwide. Helmut Klein, born in 1941 in Bolzano, Italy, led the organization *SOS Children's Villages International* for 27 years after which in 2012 he was succeeded by the current president Siddhartha Kaul, born in 1951 in Pilana, India.

The purpose of an SOS Children's Village is to build families for children in need and help them plan for their own future. It provides the opportunity for children to build lasting family relationships and to live according to their religious and cultural beliefs. In addition, it helps them recognize and develop their individual abilities, interests and talents. Equally important, it ensures that children receive the formal education and skills needed to be contributing members of society (SOS Children's Village-Manual for the SOS Children's Village Organisation, 2004).

The SOS Children's Village principles are international and implemented in every SOS Children's Village in the world. Hermann Gmeiner has composed four basic principles, which are still being applied, and those, according to the Manual (SOS Children's Village-Manual for the SOS Children's Village Organisation, 2004) are:

**1) An SOS Mother** – each child has a caring parent

An SOS Mother builds a warm and loving relationship with an every entrusted child and provides love, security and stability. She has to be specially trained to work with children, lives with them, takes care of their development and runs a household. Moreover, she has to accept and respect each child's background, religion and cultural roots.

**2) Siblings** – family ties develop naturally

Boys and girls of different ages and backgrounds live together in a family as brothers and sisters while biological siblings always stay within the same family. Together with their SOS Mother, they build warm emotional relationships labeling them as a family.

**3) A House** – each family creates its own home

Each SOS Family has its own House that has a unique atmosphere, rhythm and routine. Children are brought up together; they learn and share responsibilities, joys and sorrows of everyday life.

**4) A Village** – An SOS Family is part of a community

SOS Families live in a village environment where children enjoy a safe and happy childhood. Within an SOS Village, families share experiences and mutually help each other. They are integrated in a local community being active participants in its cultural activities. The final aim is, through a family, SOS Village and community, for an each child to become an active and successful participant of a society.

An SOS Children's Village Director is responsible for, on the one hand, overall children's development and on the other, financial and personell activities. He directly communicates and cooperates with SOS Mothers, SOS Aunts, SOS Family Assistants and SOS Youth Facility Directors. An SOS Children's Village Director tightly works with a senior child development coworker and a senior administrative coworker. The Table 1 illustrates how responsibilities in an SOS Children's Village can be organized.

The most responsible people are a Village Director, SOS Mothers and Youth Facility Directors. SOS Mothers look after their families being responsible for an each child

entrusted to them. An SOS Mother reports to a Village Director who she works with in the spirit of openness and trust. SOS Mothers work together supporting and helping each other.

Table 1 Organization of an SOS Children’s Village responsibilities

<b>VILLAGE DIRECTOR</b>	<b>SOS MOTHERS AND YOUTH LEADERS</b>	
	They ensure that the children feel at home in the SOS Children’s Village and develop according to their abilities into independent and contributing members of society.	
	<b>Leading child development coworker</b>	<b>SOS AUNTS AND FAMILY ASSISTANTS</b> They support and substitute the SOS Mothers
		<b>CHILD DEVELOPMENT COWORKERS</b> <i>Educators, social workers and psychologists</i> They support the SOS Mothers and youth leaders by providing their professional assistance in the children’s development.
<b>Leading administrative coworker</b>	<b>ADMINISTRATIVE AND MAINTENANCE CO-WORKERS</b> <i>Administrator, bookkeeper, secretary, handyman, driver, gardener and cleaner</i> They are responsible for maintaining administrative systems and village property.	

Source: SOS Children's Village - Manual for the SOS Children's Village Organisation

A Youth Facility Leader is responsible for taking care of and bringing children up upon the completion of primary and during their secondary education in addition to guiding them towards independence. They directly respond to the Village Director except for the cases when a Youth Facility Leader is appointed as the overall youth programmes coordinator. Further, they usually live in or close to the youth community.

Together with SOS Mothers and Youth Facility Leaders, SOS Aunts, SOS Family Assistants and Child Development Coworkers are responsible for the children’s development. The SOS Aunts and Family Assistants provide many kinds of general support to the SOS Mothers. The SOS Aunts live in the Village, while Family Assistants may live outside the Village.

A Child Development Team consists of educators, social workers and psychologists. Educators are responsible for providing opportunities and programmes supporting each SOS Mother in promoting her children’s development.

Furthermore, the primary goal of Administrative Coworkers is to maintain the administrative system in the SOS Village building financial responsibility within each SOS Family. The Administrative Coworkers include an administrator and a secretary.

In addition to the Administrative Coworkers, Maintenance Coworkers ensure the upkeep of the Village facilities (administration building, SOS houses), vehicles and grounds. The Maintenance Coworkers include the positions of a handyman, driver, gardener and cleaner.

An SOS Family composed of six or seven children of different sex and ages together with an SOS Mother live in one SOS House. The SOS Mother takes care of children, their development and education, runs a household, builds mutual trust among family members,

creates tolerance and interaction based on mutual trust of all SOS family members. Having this said, the SOS Mothers criteria are high implying a lot of sacrifices from the prospective SOS Mothers. SOS Children's Village is usually built near local primary schools so that children can be educated and their skills and competencies developed. In the SOS Children's Villages, children live in the environment which is very alike to the normal family environment; to paraphrase, each child has his own home, siblings and the SOS Mother who he lives with (Vukasović, 1995).

### **3. AIM AND METHODOLOGY**

This paper aims at providing the historical overview of the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci; its organizational structure, purpose and working principles as a children's friendly community. Furthermore, it aims at emphasizing the pedagogical dimension of such institutions and the importance of their activities.

For the purpose of this paper, pedagogical documentation and the annual reports of both SOS Children's Village Croatia and SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci have been analyzed. Applying both qualitative and quantitative analysis, the fluctuation of children in the period from 1995 to 2014, i.e. from the establishment of the above mentioned institutions until the present date is elaborated on. Additionally, the paper presents the overview of the pedagogical activities undertaken in the Village, identifies the activities that annually take place and presents the working principles used for pedagogical purposes.

### **4. SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES IN CROATIA**

The SOS Children's Village Croatia has been active since 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1992. It is composed of two SOS Children's Villages, namely the SOS Children's Village Lekenik and Ladimirevci, four SOS Youth Facilities and one SOS Kindergarten. The first SOS Children's Village was established in March, 1992 in Lekenik, a small place located between Zagreb and Sisak. The same year, in four months period, 15 SOS Houses with additional facilities were built. The first SOS Mothers and children moved to the Village at the beginning of 1993. Given the children expansion and the work automation, the Village was officially opened on 8<sup>th</sup> October, 1993. In addition to the SOS Children's Village, the SOS Kindergarten has been active in Lekenik since 1995. Furthermore, there are two SOS Youth Facilities; one in Zagreb since 1996 and one in Velika Gorica. Upon the completion of primary and when starting their secondary education, children are referred to SOS Youth Facilities which prepare them for independence and teaches them how to be responsible young people.

#### **4.1. An overview of the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci working principles**

The decision on founding the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci was made on 12<sup>th</sup> May, 1994. It was decided for the Village to be located on the address August Šenoa 30 in Ladimirevci, a place located between Valpovo and Osijek in the Osijek-Baranja County. Furthermore, it was decided for the Village to be composed of 21 houses able to admit up to 100 children (Odluka o osnivanju, 1995). The foundation stone was laid on 17<sup>th</sup> September, 1994 and in June, 1995 the Village was built. When built, the Village had 21

objects: 16 houses for SOS families, guests and aunts, an administration building, a house for a handyman, a house for a village director and a house for an educator. On 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1995 the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci had 16 employees (6 SOS Mothers, 4 SOS Aunts, a Village Director, an educator, a secretary, a psychologist, a handyman and a cook) and was looking after 20 children of different ages; from 6 months to 12 years of age (Izvješće o radu, 1995). Despite started working in 1995, the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci was officially opened on 25<sup>th</sup> May, 1997, thus being celebrated as the Day of the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci. In addition, the important event was opening of all 16 SOS Houses. Needless to say, the number of admitted children rapidly grew.

The SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci was, together with the SOS Children's Village Lekenik, opened for the orphaned children who were victims of the Croatian War of Independence fought from 1991 to 1995. Eventually, the number of orphaned children whose parents died in the Croatian War of Independence decreased; hence the SOS Children's Village changed its policies and started admitting children without an adequate parental care or otherwise orphaned children. Therefore, on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 1999 the SOS Children's Village Croatia board appointed *Odluku o osnivanju Dječjeg doma Ladimirevci*. According to *Odluka*, the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci is a children's home looking after children without an adequate parental care, orphaned, neglected or otherwise in need children on a permanent basis (*Odluka o osnivanju Dječjeg doma*, 1999).

Considering the fact the SOS Children's Village share the postal code number, the houses are not appointed numbers. The Village Director, together with the SOS Mothers and the teams, appointed the decision on the SOS Houses' names. In comparison to other countries where SOS Houses are named after the location of a village or other easily understandable terms, the SOS Houses in Ladimirevci are named after the fruits and vegetables grown in the region, namely, Peach, Quince, Grapes, Strawberry, Chestnut, Pear, Blackberry, Watermelon, Hazelnut, Raspberry, Apricot, Walnut, Sweetbrier, Plum, Cherry and Sour Cherry. Employees live in the Houses named Apple, Onion and Black Radish and guests are situated in the House Pumpkin.

In addition to the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci, there are two SOS Youth Facilities in Osijek which were opened in 2004. When being admitted to the SOS Youth Facility, children are given more freedom but simultaneously they take greater responsibilities.

#### **4.2. The pedagogical principles of the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci**

Analyzing the pedagogical documentation and annual reports, the fluctuation of children in the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci from 1995 to 2014 has been illustrated in the Table 2 clearly showing that the number of children has changed. To clarify, the lowest number was naturally in 1995 and continuously growing stabilized at around 80.

The SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci admitted the first children, 20 war orphans, in 1995. The number continuously grew reaching the Village's almost full capacity in 1999. The highest number of 97 children was recorded in 2002 resulting from the fact that the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci decided to admit children referred there by the Public Center for Social Care. The number of children decreased from 79 in 2007 to 55 in 2008 and 52 in 2009 when only 13 in 2008 and 12 in 2009 houses were active. Given the analyses of the children fluctuation, one can draw a conclusion that the SOS Children's Village

Ladimirevci has always provided a loving home being the children's friendly community for 1508 children. The Village admits children of different ages; from infants to 15-year-olds due to the adaptation and acceptance of SOS Mothers as persons young children can embrace as future mothers.

Table 2 The number of children in the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci

<b>Year of the report</b>	<b>Total number of children</b>	<b>The number of children who came during the year</b>	<b>The number of children who left during the year</b>	<b>Active SOS houses</b>
<b>1995</b>	20	20	-	4
<b>1996</b>	54	34	-	13
<b>1997</b>	81	27	-	16
<b>1998</b>	88	7	-	16
<b>1999</b>	86	-	-	16
<b>2000</b>	86	-	10	16
<b>2001</b>	82	6	-	16
<b>2002</b>	97	11	-	16
<b>2003</b>	94	-	3	16
<b>2004</b>	88	7	9	16
<b>2005</b>	82	-	6	16
<b>2006</b>	82	15	15	16
<b>2007</b>	79	-	3	16
<b>2008</b>	55	-	14	13
<b>2009</b>	52	-	3	12
<b>2010</b>	80	42	14	15
<b>2011</b>	75	-	5	15
<b>2012</b>	75	-	-	15
<b>2013</b>	74	11	12	16
<b>2014<sup>2</sup></b>	78	5	1	16

Children are usually taken away from their biological families due to parents' alcohol-related problems, parents' drug abuse and lately economic reasons, i.e. the inability of parents taking care of their children. The Table 2 shows children's arrivals and departures. According to the analyzed reports, the reasons for children leaving the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci is returning to their biological families, moving to other institutions (usually closer to their biological families), moving to other institutions due to various behavioral disorders (reformatories), identification of behavioral disorders and referring children to reformatories, adopting orphaned children or their relocation to SOS Youth Facilities upon the completion of primary education. There are, however, situations when children are urgently referred to the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci because they have to legally be separated from their family for at least 6 months after which, if the problems have been solved, they may return to their families. By analyzing the available documentation, we have selected the Public Centres for Social Care which have so far

<sup>2</sup> According to the data for January, 2014



cooperated with the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci and those are the following: Čakovec, Nova Gradiška, Osijek, Požega, Velika Gorica, Vinkovci, Zadar, Županja, thus implying that children are referred to the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci from all over Croatia. This leads to the conclusion that Croatia lacks in the institutions for helping socially neglected and otherwise in need children.

Pedagogical and education activities include planning on monthly and yearly basis which is the responsibility of the Expert team for children's development. Since children are lately referred to the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci due to neglecting and maltreatment, the special attention is paid to their emotional and social adjustment.

Table 3 Pedagogical principles of the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci

<b>Pedagogical principles</b>	<b>Content and working modules</b>	<b>The group of children who need help</b>
<b>Care about psychophysical health</b>	individual psychotherapy and expert psychological help	children with emotional and social issues
<b>Logopaed and defectologist help</b>	correcting and eliminating speech impediments; correcting and eliminating specific difficulties and disabilities	children with speech impediments; children with learning difficulties
<b>Help for studying</b>	tutoring; help for studying and fulfilling education requirements	School children
<b>Help for social adjustment</b>	help for social adjustment to the SOS Children's Village; help for social adjustment to the SOS Youth Facility; educational roadtrips	newly-arrived children; 8 <sup>th</sup> grade children
<b>Learning social and life skills</b>	communication; assertive behavior; conflict resolution; team work; learning how to cook; learning how to sew	peer groups; primary school children
<b>Acquiring additional knowledge and skills</b>	informatics; model-making; music, art and journalist workshop; foreign language classes; alcohol and drug abuse prevention workshops; instruments playing	primary school children

The analysis of the documentation and annual reports from 1995 to 2014 has shown that children who are referred to the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci have serious developmental disabilities, thus needing the help from a psychologist, defectologist, logopaed, psychiatrist and other therapists. Those children live in very difficult conditions lacking in both pedagogical and educational elements. Consequently, they have learning disabilities; therefore, the study help regarding homeworks and papers writing is organized. Furthermore, it has been proved that the aforementioned children are eventually referred to

enroll in the education adjustment programs (individualization, personalized program or special needs program). In addition, it has been proved that those children show very low level of cognitive skills so they usually continue their education in specialized educational institutions. Hence, children are taught various skills (cooking, sewing, ironing, etc.) with the purpose of becoming more responsible and independent young people once they leave the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci. Several working methods are applied in the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci, namely individual work, group work, counseling, psychotherapy work, help study, educational and pedagogical workshops, etc. Every SOS House has its counselor who visits SOS Houses on a week basis and helps SOS Mothers in solving problems. When arriving, many children are neglected in terms of health and hygiene so a special attention has to be paid to their psychophysical development.

Analyzing the pedagogical fields and contents, one comes to the conclusion that children's development regarding health, hygiene, intelligence, moral, work and esthetic values is taken care of in the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci.

Different sport and cultural activities, roadtrips, summer and winter camps are annually organized in the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci. The Table 4 shows the activities so far organized in the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci.

Table 4 Activities in the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci

<b>Sport activities</b>	“Old Sports” Olympic Games; judo club; local community sport meetings; bowling; dancing; swimming; football; gymnastics; riding; handball; basketball
<b>Cultural activities</b>	Sculptor's colony; Vinkovačke jeseni; carnivals; Christmas and Easter party; monthly visits to the cinema and theatre; Children's week; SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci Day; Saint Nicholas Day; children's works exhibition; Bread Days; art workshops; Valentines Day; chestnut festival; quizzes; Cultural Arts Association Ladimirevci; young journalist group
<b>Road trips, summer and winter camps</b>	A roadtrip to Orahovica; summer camp in Caldonazzo; winter camp in Slovakia; roadtrip to Stubičke toplice; roadtrips for nature lovers; summer camp in Zadar; summer camp in Fažana; summer camp in Rogoznica; diurnal or half-diurnal roadtrips to the wider local community

The presented activities are essential for children socializing, building up relationships, actively participating in sport and cultural events in both the SOS community and the local community. With respect to the sport activities, the judo club “SOS Children's Village” has achieved the best results in 1998 when children participated in 13 international tournaments and won 92 medals. Together with participating in competitions, sport activities provide children with the opportunity to be physically active. In addition to that, they can be used for therapeutical purposes where riding is the mostly used activity.

The cultural activities listed in the Table 4 show that children in the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci are provided with activities they would probably be provided if being with their birth families. Furthermore, building strong relationships affect the children's psychosocial development. Children do these activities in the interaction with their friends. Moreover, they are the basis for cognitive, social, communicational and emotional

development. Given the fact many children, when referred to the SOS Children's Village, lack in motor, perceptual, cognitive, linguistic, communicational and social skills, the activities presented above are necessary for children to develop in normal social adults. According to the reports and documentation, summer camps are financed by private donations which implicates the high social sensitivity for this group of children. Further, involving in different activities result in children connecting with the local community and not feeling isolated or abandoned being one of the SOS Children's Village as a friendly community goal.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This paper aimed at elaborating on the historical development, purpose, working principles, organization and pedagogical principles of the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci based on the annual reports and pedagogical documentation from 1995 to 2014 study. Quantitative analysis has shown that the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci applies the principles Hermann Gmeiner formulated. The annual reports analysis has demonstrated the children's fluctuation over a period of time by illustrating pedagogical and educational principles applied in the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci whose importance is confirmed by children's continual arrivals. Furthermore, the analysis has shown that children are provided with numerous sport, cultural and educational activities for the purpose of their socialization and resocialization.

Both quantitative and qualitative analysis clearly demonstrate that the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci is a big family and friendly community providing children with love, affection, warmth, welfare, friendship, affiliation and a chance for a normal development. SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci provides children with emotional and physical stability for them to enjoy their childhood preparing for the future.

Considering all the above said, one comes to the conclusion that the SOS Children's Village Ladimirevci is undoubtedly children's friendly community. It should also be pointed out that the SOS Children's Villages have always claimed to be an adequate substitute family. Needless to say, the SOS Children's Village is not only an example of a good practice but also, considering today's developed and globalized world, essential.

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