



TITLE: Care of Children and Youth in the Cities under Siege: The Case of Croatia

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ABSTRACT

This study deals with the care of children and youth in Croatia during the war in the nineties with a special reference to two cities under siege. This unique model of childcare was recognized by UNICEF as a specific effective practice that subsequently resulted in building up a network of professionals from eight frontline cities in Croatia, where each town was a focal point for specific programs of childcare: education, health and nutrition, mine awareness and protection, psycho-social rehabilitation of traumatized children, etc.

Although, at the first sight different, primarily because of different geographic positions within the country, deep in the continent and at the seacoast, Croatian towns Dubrovnik and Vinkovci share a similar geographical uniqueness: both towns are most distant from the country's capital urban centers in butterfly shape territory of Croatia. Their positions next to the frontline resulted in heavy military offensives and the siege that practically lasted for five years, till the end of the war.

The traditional model of UNICEF interventions consisting of sectoral interventions in health, education, CEDC (Children in especially difficult circumstances), and social mobilization was, in this program, turned into catalytic interventions in social mobilization for CEDC which translated into interventions in health, education, nutrition, based on cross-section parenthood and using exclusively local health, education, and psycho-social rehabilitation experts fostering further development of local expertise and inter-sectoral collaboration.

The case study is based on qualitative research (document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and participants' observations). The uniqueness and the adaptability of the model make it a worthwhile source of consideration for efficient ways of childcare in war circumstances in cities under siege in Europe and beyond, particularly in the current war in Ukraine.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Majda Tafra-Vlahović is a professor of sustainability and communication at the University of Dubrovnik. She has published seven books and more than a hundred scientific articles. In her previous career, she was UNICEF officer for children in especially difficult circumstances and an executive in the private sector. Dr. Tafra currently teaches at Croatian universities and a number of EU universities as visiting professor. She also works as a consultant, and journalist and holds the position of the President of the Board of the national news agency HINA.



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